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MALE AND FEMALE HE CREATED THEM: ÆLFRIC'S *LIVES OF SAINTS*
AND PATRISTIC THEORIES OF GENDER

by

Rhonda L. McDaniel

A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
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Western Michigan University
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MALE AND FEMALE HE CREATED THEM: ÆLFRIC'S *LIVES OF SAINTS*
AND PATRISTIC THEORIES OF GENDER

Rhonda L. McDaniel, Ph.D.

Western Michigan University, 2003

My dissertation researches the writings of the four Latin Doctors, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, and Gregory the Great, in order to challenge the scholarly stereotype of misogyny and anxiety about women in the writings of these influential figures and, more importantly, to build the cultural foundation upon which to base an interpretation of Ælfric's portrayals of male and female saints in the *Lives of Saints*.

Accordingly, in the first chapter I focus on the writings of the Latin Doctors concerning the practice of virginity and on their explications of the Trinity and the Creation and Fall of humankind. I then trace the transmission of the ideas of the Latin Doctors into early Anglo-Saxon England through Aldhelm, Bede, and Alcuin in the second chapter by analyzing how each Anglo-Saxon scholar used and modified the writings of the Latin Doctors that were available to him, maintaining the focus on treatises about virginity and on exegesis of the Trinity, Creation, and Fall. By observing how each early Anglo-Saxon scholar used the patristic sources to voice his own ideas, I determine which of the attitudes about women and theories about gender were most readily accepted by these churchmen and then passed on in their own writings. In the third chapter, attention turns to the late Anglo-Saxon writer and

translator, Ælfric, in order to demonstrate *which* of the cultural ideas that he received were most likely to influence his own understanding of women and of gender. Then, by careful close reading and analysis of both female and male saints' lives, comparing Ælfric's Old English translations with the Latin sources, I seek to build a more culturally contextual understanding both of Ælfric's own views about men and women, and of the attitudes he expected his audience to share.

The results of this study provide a more nuanced view of the attitudes of the Latin Doctors and the Anglo-Saxon scholars towards women. By taking language, culture, and history into account, the readings from Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* provide insight into how these Lives were understood by Ælfric and his audiences.

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Rhonda L. McDaniel

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	ii
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION: WOMEN, GENDER, BELIEF, AND ANGLO-SAXON CULTURAL STUDIES.....	1
1. Issues in Reconstructing the History of Women.....	1
2. Problems in Approach and Perception	10
3. Monolithic Patriarchy?	19
4. The Reinvention of Belief	22
II. THE SINS OF THE FATHERS: PATRISTIC THEOLOGIES OF GENDER.....	23
1. Monolithic Patriarchy?	23
2. Jerome.....	26
3. Ambrose.....	40
4. Augustine.....	51
5. Gregory.....	65
6. Conclusion	82
III. THE SINS OF THE SONS: EARLY ANGLO-SAXON THEOLOGIES OF GENDER.....	85
1. Questions Concerning Inheritance	85
2. Aldhelm	92
3. Bede.....	114

Table of Contents—Continued

CHAPTER

4. Alcuin	134
5. Conclusion	151
IV. THE DAUGHTERS OF EVE	154
1. The Legacy of the Fathers: Ælfric and the Garden	154
2. Ælfric and the Lives of Saints: The Discourse of Holy Desire	165
3. Agnes: Sponsa Christi	169
4. Eugenia: Ecce Feminam!	180
5. Æthelthryth: Virgo Incorrupta	200
6. Agatha: Femina Tamen	208
7. Lucia: Virgo Immobilis	217
8. Cecilia: Doctrix Christianorum	223
9. Female Sanctity?	232
V. THE SONS OF ADAM	236
1. Why Male Saints?	236
2. Abdon and Sennes: Reges Credentes	239
3. Sebastian: Emissarius Clandestinus Dei	246
4. George: Nunquam Deceptus Est	262
5. Oswald: Rex et Famulus	271

Table of Contents—Continued

CHAPTER

6. Male Sanctity?	286
ENDNOTES.....	291
Notes to Introduction.....	291
Notes to The Sins of the Fathers.....	295
Notes to The Sins of the Sons.....	311
Notes to The Daughters of Eve.....	328
Notes to The Sons of Adam.....	348
APPENDIX	359
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	369

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION: WOMEN, GENDER, BELIEF, AND ANGLO-SAXON CULTURAL STUDIES

1. Issues in Reconstructing the History of Women

In the past twenty years or so (but especially within the last ten years), a significant portion of scholarship across the disciplines in Medieval Studies has focused on women.¹ What social factors and attitudes framed and formed their lives? Did women exercise greater autonomy and self-determination in some times, places, or societies than in others? Did the influence of patriarchal Christianity always lead to oppression of women? Is there any evidence that medieval women resisted their own oppression, or were they forced to be complicit by prevalent social attitudes and the withholding of knowledge and opportunity by a male hierarchy? These questions, previously unasked or given only fleeting attention, provide a sampling of the issues and inquiries that have driven much of the research into the social status, daily lives, and the socially conditioned self-perceptions of women in the Middle Ages, thus opening up new areas of study and simultaneously providing new venues for interaction between medieval studies and women's and gender studies. Judith Bennett remarks that

information about women that scholars once proclaimed simply irretrievable has been sought out, recovered, and reported by feminist scholars. . . . And throughout medieval studies this process has revitalized research, as feminist medievalists have developed new methods of archival investigation, extracted new sorts of information from old sources, and searched out new documents and texts.¹

The contributions of these projects to the field of Medieval Studies in general and to Anglo-Saxon Studies in particular have been invaluable both in terms of the new insights they have produced and the amount and fervor of scholarly discussion their results have kindled. One major debate among scholars of women's history in Anglo-Saxon England concerns the so-called golden age of women during the Anglo-Saxon period. Some feminist scholars argue that this period was a time when women were highly respected and exercised a degree of authority that was denied to women in continental societies and in post-conquest English society. Christine Fell, for example, uses a variety of documentary evidence from poetry to charters, wills, and court records to build a view of the Anglo-Saxon centuries as a sort of golden age for women in comparison to the high and late Middle Ages. She states

In the handling of any kind of evidence we are obliged from time to time to read between the lines. But it is salutary to remember that scholarship does not require us to read only, always and inevitably a history of oppression and exploitation of the female sex. The real evidence from Anglo-Saxon England presents a more attractive and indeed assertive picture.²

Helen Damico takes a more literary approach, focusing on the Anglo-Saxon poetic writings to overturn the traditional view of *Beowulf's* Wealhtheow as a passive, merely ornamental figure by interpreting her character in the context of Anglo-Saxon poetic female saints' Lives and the heroic women of Norse saga and mythology.³ Of the female saints she notes that

generally the treatment of the warrior-women Elene, Judith, and Juliana corresponds closely to the treatment given the Anglo-Saxon heroic male warrior. . . . Although the female characters undergo slight alterations—their femininity is usually diffused, while their heroic attributes (sobriety of mind,

nobility of birth, courage in action) are emphasized—the heroic temperament is equally appropriate to male and female.⁴

Such positive interpretations of the evidence about women in Anglo-Saxon society have sparked great interest in Anglo-Saxon studies by suggesting that Anglo-Saxon women may well have had greater status and independence than their continental counterparts. Even non-literary evidence, such as Roberta Gilchrist's archaeological study of religious women, seems to support these positive interpretations, for Gilchrist notes that the gender distinctions she finds in post-Conquest monastic sites were less apparent in the pre-Conquest nunneries of Wessex.⁵ Carol Neuman de Vegvar's study of the architecture of the early Anglo-Saxon double monastery at Whitby also concludes that "as far as building types are concerned, Anglo-Saxon women monastics were clearly not excluded from currents of architectural development, neither in terms of access to design or media of construction nor in terms of financial means."⁶

But should the Anglo-Saxon literary portrayal of women be considered so positively? No, say Stephanie Hollis, Jane Chance, Clare A. Lees, and Gillian R. Overing. Hollis argues that, with the arrival of Christianity, the status that women held in pagan Anglo-Saxon society began to decline as the church gained a place and authority in the early kingdoms and fused its teachings with those of its new milieu:

the misogyny that the church inherited from the early Fathers found points of contact with the unconverted societies with which missionaries came into contact, and . . . it achieved social effectiveness by virtue of its fusion with existing inequalities.⁷

Hollis agrees with Fell's assessment that the lot of Anglo-Saxon women after the arrival of Christianity was significantly "better" than that of women in post-Conquest English society, but she strongly questions whether it was as good as Fell makes it appear. Focusing her argument on Bede's treatment of women and on *Theodore's Penitential*, Hollis portrays clerical misogyny as gradually gaining influence in all levels of society, but especially as building up the power of bishops over the power of royal female monastics.⁸

Jane Chance argues that the ideal woman constructed in Anglo-Saxon poetry is a "peace-maker and mother,"⁹ passive in nature; aggressive, so-called "Germanic" women are generally treated pejoratively in Anglo-Saxon poetic texts because they assume the masculine role of the retainer instead of the feminine role of peace-maker. Chance uses portrayals of women in religious poetic texts, especially the "female fighting saints" (Elene, Judith, and Juliana), the Virgin Mary in the *Advent Lyrics*, and Eve from *Genesis B*, and compares them to the women in the elegiac poems "The Wife's Lament" and "Wulf and Eadwacer" in order to argue that any inversion of the ideal of female passivity was frowned upon in Anglo-Saxon society because activity and heroism belonged to men.¹⁰ She states, "clearly, feminine heroism was not countenanced by Anglo-Saxon society."¹¹ The exception to the rule, according to Chance, is the case of the female saints who, because of their emulation of the Virgin Mary, dissociate themselves from their sex to the degree that they can exercise "masculine" traits (such as ruling and reasoning) without condemnation. The strength of the saints' chastity and sanctity preserves them from censure.¹² All other females

who attempt to fill “masculine” roles without this protection of sanctity are considered “lascivious, immoral, and even diabolic.”¹³ But can the attitudes and women portrayed in the religious literature Chance examines, much of it translation and/or reinterpretation of earlier Latin hagiographic or biblical texts, be trusted to represent Anglo-Saxon culture accurately? If the answer is yes, then how are we to interpret the evidence we find in such material?

Lees and Overing take the issue of the interpretation of evidence as their starting point. They challenge the idea of a “golden age” of Anglo-Saxon women by questioning and calling for reflection upon the very methodologies that produce such readings and by bringing such issues as class, material production, and cultural change to bear in their analysis.¹⁴ While acknowledging the evidence of the accomplishments of individual aristocratic women, especially during the period during and immediately following the missionary efforts of the Irish and Roman churches in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, Lees and Overing point out the absence of women in general from the cultural record—the lack of information about the daily lives and material products of “real” women, or even the daily commonalities in the lives of the royal abbesses whose names and accomplishments in religion have been preserved in Anglo-Latin and Old English literature. By addressing such concerns, Lees and Overing also seek to address the marginalization of Anglo-Saxon Studies within the larger field of Medieval Studies.¹⁵ Their methodology highlights several concerns, including gender, periodization, and the importance of including the effects of religious performance and belief in any analysis of cultural attitudes and

ideological structures within Anglo-Saxon England. In the process, much of their analysis focuses upon one of the most abundant sources of information about women in Anglo-Latin and Old English texts: hagiography.

As Lees, Overing, Chance, Hollis, Damico, Fell, and other scholars from various theoretical and methodological backgrounds seek ways to know and understand Anglo-Saxon culture, and the place of women within it, hagiographic texts such as the poetic Lives or those collected in Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* have taken on a new significance. For example, recent gender and feminist scholarship has brought the study of saints' Lives to the fore because, as Jane Schulenburg states, "unlike many other sources of the Middle Ages, saints' lives focus a great deal of attention on women."¹⁶ Saints' Lives have not always been considered a valuable resource, however. In the early twentieth century Ferdinand Lot warned the scholars of his day that

The study of the lives of saints . . . has in store for us great critical difficulties and also painful literary disappointments. Very few of these *vitae* are sincere and have real emotion. The vast majority of them are abominable trash. Hagiography is a low form of literature like the serial novel of our own days.¹⁷

One has only to read a sampling of saints' Lives to understand Lot's mixture of despair and disdain for hagiographical writing. Though some Lives are examples of high literary skill (for example, Cynewulf's *Elene*), the majority of them frustrate both the historian and the literary aesthete with their generic conventions, predictable outcomes, free borrowings from other Lives and from the Bible, implausible miracles and folkloric elements, and the unambiguous 'goodness' and 'badness' of the saints and their adversaries. Thomas Hill freely admits that "many saints' lives are indeed

badly composed series of stereotypes,”¹⁸ but he also points out that some of the Lives are the “primary written witness to the life and deeds of a medieval saint” (as opposed to evidence found in annals, chronicles, or other documents):

For this reason, primary saints’ lives are among other things important historical sources, both for what they reveal about the life and the historical world of the saint and perhaps more important for what they reveal about the *mentalité* of the author and his or her audience.¹⁹

There is a degree to which this significance can be found in any saint’s life, however bad a read it may be, for each redaction was written by some scribe for an audience that would presumably be interested in the material as presented. The way more recent scholars have approached these Lives, according to Felice Lifshitz, has been “moving away from bobbing for data to reconstructing mentalities.”²⁰ Any investigator, however, who uses saints’ Lives as a direct source for history or biography, or as an indirect source to measure cultural attitudes must use care when gleaning information from hagiographic records. In addition to the conventional nature of the writing, there are also different forms within hagiography that complicate the picture. Thomas Hill describes differences between primary and secondary hagiographic records, and also calls attention to “classic” hagiography (late patristic Lives), “art lives” (such as Cynewulf’s *Elene*, mentioned above), and the ways in which native forms influenced hagiographic texts in particular regions.²¹ In addition, there was the practice of translating Lives from Latin into the vernacular, a practice, as Ruth Waterhouse has demonstrated, that provides interesting insights into how the translator interpreted one culture so that it could be understood and appreciated by another.²²

In the realm of Old English prose hagiography, the most prominent research has focused on Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*. Originally a collection of forty Lives, arranged according to the *Sanctorale*, or calendar of fixed feast days, the *Lives of Saints* was compiled and translated from Latin sources, according to Ælfric, in response to a request from his noble patrons, Æthelweard the Ealdorman and his son, Æthelmær. Although no known manuscript contains the collection as it was originally compiled by Ælfric about the year 996, there are a number of manuscripts that were written in the early eleventh century. The most complete collection is that contained in London, British Library, Cotton Julius E. vii, the primary manuscript for W. W. Skeat's standard edition of the *Lives*.²³ Joyce Hill notes that this manuscript "does not represent the collection as issued by Ælfric . . . [but] Julius E. vii is the best extant witness."²⁴ The evidence of Julius E. vii and of other manuscripts, shows that Ælfric included the single Lives of six female saints (Eugenia, Agnes, Agatha, Lucy, Æthelthryth, and Cecilia), plus two double Lives that include female saints (Julian and Basilissa, and Chrysanthus and Daria). Though not directly honored with their own Lives, there are women who feature in the Lives of Ælfric's other saints as well, such as Constantia, whose story is attached to the end of Agnes's Life. In addition to the female saints in Ælfric's original collection, the compiler of Julius E. vii added two more female saints' Lives: Mary of Egypt and Euphrosyne. Although, even with the two non-Ælfrician Lives, the number of Lives of female saints is not equal to the number of Lives of male saints, women do receive significant attention and focus; in fact, they receive more attention than the native English saints in Ælfric's

collection.²⁵ The amount of attention the women receive is especially interesting when we remember that Ælfric was specifically portraying the Lives of saints such as “þe mynster-menn mid heora þenungum betwux him wurðiað.”²⁶ Add to that the fact that Ælfric’s collection was compiled for male patrons and one begins to wonder why women were as well represented in the *Lives* as they were and how their Lives were received by the male audience. Given the patterns of dissemination in the early eleventh century outlined by Joyce Hill, we can reason that the collection was read by both male and female religious in addition to Ælfric’s lay patrons and perhaps their households.²⁷ The matter of audience reception, especially in terms of how women and men might have identified with the examples of the saints, then becomes further complicated by the fact that Ælfric used examples of both male and female saints to encourage and exhort both male and female audiences.

Interest in the analysis of audience reception has grown along with the burgeoning interest in recovering medieval women’s history. The publications of scholars such as Clare A. Lees, Gillian R. Overing, Shari Horner, Stacy S. Klein, and Mary Clayton have been instrumental in pointing out the tension between the exhortations of authorities such as Ælfric and their possible reception by audiences like Ælfric’s lay patrons or female religious.²⁸ Others, such as Paul E. Szarmach, Gopa Roy, and Jane Chance, have outlined the influence of early Christian ideas concerning gender and the body, focusing on the ways in which women are encouraged to “become men,” or, at least, to cease being women in the saints’ Lives.²⁹ For the most part the scholarly dialogue has focused on how Anglo-Saxon

female audiences may have understood and internalized the example of these “masculine” women, the implied cultural *mentalité* of Ælfric’s translations, and the violence contained in the Lives of female saints. Klein and Clayton broaden the scope of the question, however, when they point out that Ælfric’s “Homily on Judith,” for example, was sent to both a female religious audience of nuns and a male secular recipient, the nobleman Sigeweard.³⁰ As with the earlier interpretations of poetic texts and official documents by Damico, Fell, and Chance, the conclusions reached by these scholars of Anglo-Saxon hagiography have been by no means univocal. Given that fact, they serve to highlight the tension between “traditional” and feminist scholarship within medieval studies in general, but particularly in Anglo-Saxon studies.

2. Problems in Approach and Perception

Feminist scholarship has challenged traditional scholars to reconsider and defend the assumptions and theoretical bases on which they operate.³¹ Within the realm of Anglo-Saxon scholarship, for instance, Clare A. Lees challenges the long-standing scholarship of source criticism in the vernacular prose works, stating that she “has looked in vain for a theoretical examination of the premises of source criticism; there is none.”³² In the field of medieval social archaeology, Roberta Gilchrist remarks that some feminist archaeologists “have argued that progress in gender archaeology can be made only by rejecting the attitude that ‘testable’ data is fundamental to commenting on the past.”³³ In seeking ways to avoid the “traps of a

traditional approach,”³⁴ feminists have relied heavily on theoretical interpretations of the texts and material remains of past cultures. One of the more controversial ideas brought out by the clash of traditional scholarship with feminist and revisionist scholarship is the matter of possible histories. Judith Bennett observes that “one of the most threatening aspects of feminist scholarship has been its assault on positivism, on the idea that any scholar can uncover the ‘truth’ about the past.”³⁵ Lees agrees, stating that “the source analyst assumes that the Old English homily can be understood only in terms of some larger historical context that it is the role of the scholar to reconstruct, *objectively*.”³⁶ There is much to be criticized in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century certainty with which scholars held their interpretations of the past and the beliefs of past cultures, and feminist and revisionist scholars have done scholarship a favor in pointing out the ways in which the assumptions of earlier scholars influenced the positivist framework within which they interpreted the past. Contemporary feminism can be criticized, however, for obliterating the positivist “enemy” too completely, so that in the assertion of many possible histories, some conclude that there is no knowable “real” history that should be taken into account. Interpretations that rely heavily on theory without acknowledging the insistent realities of the ideas and beliefs expressed in medieval texts and evidence of material remains often project modern feminist political and social ideals as being the same goals and longings of women centuries removed in goals, ideals, and intellectual, religious, and social contexts.³⁷ Though Bennett acknowledges in a footnote that there is such a thing as an “impossible history,” little has been done to iterate the

difference between possible and impossible histories.³⁸ Feminist archaeologist

Roberta Gilchrist comes closest to a statement of the problem when she writes that

by adopting gender as an analytical category, it should be possible to proceed from a strongly developed theoretical position. . . . [however], feminist archaeologists must traverse the distance between archaeological hypothesis and data. Thus certain problems remain surrounding the issues of epistemology and method in making the leap of faith towards interpretation.³⁹

Herein lies the problem, not just for archaeologists but for all scholars of the past: by rejecting the insistence of traditional methodology on tying theories and conclusions to “testable data,” or to the evidence in the text, feminist and other revisionist scholars open up their theories and interpretations to charges of groundless speculation, ignoring evidence, and unrestrained imposition of contemporary motivations and standards upon cultures different in time and context. Nowhere is this more prominent in Anglo-Saxon studies than in the matter of women as the audiences of texts because, as Stephanie Hollis points out in her assessment of Christine Fell’s and Jane Chance’s arguments:

On the influentiaity of the church, Fell and Chance are diametrically opposed. Whereas Fell’s portrayal of the favourable social position of Anglo-Saxon women rests upon the argument that patristic conceptions had no real effect on social actualities, Chance assumes a society thoroughly penetrated by them.⁴⁰

The matter of audience reception, especially female audience reception, has been the subject of many feminist studies of Ælfric’s female saints’ Lives, but the interpretive agendas they bring to bear often exclude or minimize the historical context of audience reception. Helen Bennett, Clare Lees, and Gillian Overing jointly state that their criticism “attempts to theorize, reconstruct, or dismantle existing constructions of femininity in non-patriarchal ways.”⁴¹ Such reconstructions

contribute much toward the goal of feminist consciousness-raising and restructuring twenty-first-century social conceptions of femininity and women, but for that very reason they may be less effective in helping scholars understand the *mentalité* of Ælfric and his readers/hearers. Even when such a project acknowledges the historical situation of the texts and the audiences that read them, the act of redefining and dismantling cannot avoid at the same time judging and obscuring the ways in which a past culture defined femininity, masculinity, and other abstract values such as goodness and justice in social relationships as found in Ælfric's works. The very pursuit of such present concerns shrouds the past complexity of the beliefs that influenced both Ælfric and his audiences of both sexes with the veil of present political and social interpretations. The assumptions and expectations that would have been at work in the cultural milieu that produced the demand for a work like the *Lives of Saints* and the beliefs that informed the meanings of such Lives at the end of the tenth century remain unspecified and unapprehended beneath that veil.⁴²

Lees and Overing comment on the problem of limiting the perspectives from which we study a particular culture or society and the place of women within it, focusing specifically on the institutionally "secular" perspective of modern scholarship, which often excludes important concepts of belief, concepts that may affect our understanding of medieval perceptions and valuations of women. Such exclusion, they maintain, removes an important component of meaning from the "*cultural* notion of Anglo-Saxon Christian identity."⁴³ They mention this because their main interest is to explore how Anglo-Saxon women may have constructed their

concepts of their own bodies from saints' Lives—saints' Lives that were composed and translated by men and were understood in a society that was influenced by patristic teachings on the subordinate status of women and denial of the body, especially the female body.⁴⁴ They conclude that the Western patristic tradition transmitted through Augustine would have led women to deny their own female bodies in exchange for a masculine spirituality that degraded and despised the place and role of women.

Having pointed out the importance of including matters of belief in any study of audience reception, however, they do not explore the tricky question of *how* to factor belief (and *whose* beliefs should be factored) into an analysis of the Lives of female saints. The kind of reception theory promoted elsewhere by Lees, though, provides a starting point that

examines the relationship among author, work, and public (reader/listener) at any given historical moment. . . . Thus, all literary works can be accessed synchronically and diachronically through temporally constituted horizons of expectations and, moreover, are to some degree determined by them.⁴⁵

The “temporally constituted horizons of expectations” could be translated to mean the beliefs, social perceptions, and expectations that Ælfric and his audiences could assume each other to have. This would include their belief in and understanding of Christianity as received from the Church Fathers—a belief and understanding that the evidence of the time in history, the text, and its reception shows was considered to be both good and just precisely because Ælfric (and presumably his audiences) believed in the goodness and justness of God.⁴⁶ Yet feminist interpretations of Ælfric's writings frequently produce the same stereotypical

conclusions of fear, anxiety, ambivalence, and domination in Ælfric's attitude toward women as some of the studies noted above.⁴⁷ Doubtless some men did have such feelings but, as Dick Harrison asserts:

There is more to it. The *real stereotypes* exist in the minds of the historians themselves. We like to build systems, construct images of the past and make bold interpretations. In doing so, we often oversimplify the past to a degree that turns it into something it never was.⁴⁸

Part of the interpretive problem, here, seems to lie in the feminist construction, or reconstruction, of late classical and early medieval Christianity itself. Feminist reinterpretation, largely influenced by the scholarship of Elaine Pagels and Rosemary Radford Ruether and often concerned with constructing a spirituality for women in the present day by deconstructing patristic writings from late antiquity, does not seek to understand how women within Western medieval Christianity could see their place within that tradition as just and good but rather asserts, in Ruether's words, that

classical justifications of women's subordination as due to natural inferiority, subordination in the order of creation, and punishment for sin are *assumed* to be false ideologies constructed to justify injustice. The domination of men over women is sinful, and patriarchy is a sinful social system.⁴⁹ (emphasis mine)

The problem inherent in applying Ruether's view to the beliefs of past cultures is that, by assuming injustice, one excludes the possibility of a different interpretation. By refusing to allow the Church Fathers' understanding of their own beliefs (and subsequently the beliefs of Ælfric and his audience) the possibility of being just and good within their own contexts, the assumptions of Ruether and those who agree with her rule out *a priori* any possible interpretation of late antique and

medieval orthodox Christianity other than that stated above. Within such an interpretive framework, the writings of Augustine, Alcuin, Ælfric, and others have no option but to be instruments of male domination; the belief and devotion of their female audiences is then ejected from the realm of choice and belief and reduced to blind, helpless complicity in their own subjugation. Such conclusions follow logically from Ruether's assumptions about the Church Fathers and medieval Christianity, but they oversimplify a complex situation and do little justice to the intelligence and beliefs of the writers and audiences in question. Indeed, regarding saints' Lives in particular, John Kitchen notes, "the most striking feature of modern research in general is how little it actually engages the religious thought and theological outlook presupposed and expressed by the hagiographic texts."⁵⁰ Thus, the intellectual and religious context of the *Lives of Saints* needs to be taken into account if we are to have any sort of accurate understanding of Anglo-Saxon views about women and men or the audience's reception of a male or female saint's life.

Such an analysis calls for the sort of historical criticism described by J. R. de J. Jackson, a historical criticism that allows us in some fashion "to read past works of literature in the way in which they were read when they were new."⁵¹ The point of this analysis is not to search for authorial intention (though intention may be discussed), nor does it try to discover what significance a text may have had for any particular reader. Rather, the focus of this approach is to approximate what meaning Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* may have had in its religious context for the readers of its own time. This sort of study of the religious context of the *Lives of Saints* brings its

own set of difficulties because such a project may remind too many of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century methodology of positivism or of the later twentieth-century method of patristic exegesis, both of which have passed into disfavor.⁵²

Another reason for discomfort is that admitting the medieval Christian belief system into any hypothetical construction that aims at understanding a past culture and its people means dealing with that belief system by its own definitions at that time in history, thus necessitating a broad knowledge of early medieval theology.⁵³ As James Boyd White puts it, “the kind of knowledge that is required to understand this [work] is not just the capacity to articulate theological positions or to repeat doctrine, but the understanding of what these things meant to living people.”⁵⁴ Such a project always runs the risk of being misconstrued as a Christian apologetic or a profession of Christian faith instead of an attempt to address the belief that shaped Ælfric’s view of reality. But the goal of understanding, however limited, incomplete, and prone to correction that understanding ultimately may be, is reached not solely through the application of modern paradigms that analyze in terms of socio-cultural structuralist theories or post-modern ideologies, but also by suspending our disbelief long enough to construct an understanding of the writings from *within* the text’s own historical framework of belief. In pursuing such a goal, however, we must always be aware that the reconstructed framework is only approximate and that our own assumptions may be impinging on our interpretation of the past in unknown ways. Our problem in constructing past frameworks of belief “is not that we cannot learn what [past readers] learned but that we must develop the ability to think as if we had forgotten

what has been learned since.”⁵⁵ That historical framework of belief is foundational to the “horizons of expectation” in audience reception mentioned by Lees; for Ælfric and his audiences, this foundation would have been set in the writings of the Church Fathers. Ruth Waterhouse observes how “the prevailing loss of Christian belief in the twentieth century . . . cannot help but influence readings of Ælfric’s stress on ‘belief in God.’”⁵⁶ Modern audiences, separated from Ælfric and his audiences by time, culture, language, and belief, also possess differing perceptions of what genre a saint’s life would belong to, which may affect a reader’s perceptions of the thematic and symbolic aspects of the *Lives*:

The different impact of the broad context upon a reader is increased because of different assumptions about the type of genre in which the narrative discourse is cast, hagiography, which would presumably be perceived as a type of historical fact in the tenth century and as a type of fiction in the twentieth.⁵⁷

These thoughts, among others, feature in Waterhouse’s exploration of the relationship between the writer, the text, and the audience and she points out that Ælfric acted as a translator between the culture of his sources and his own tenth-century, Anglo-Saxon, religious audience, making the *Lives* accessible by rendering them in language that drew its meaning from within the horizons of expectation that Ælfric shared with his audience. Waterhouse then goes on to conclude that modern readers now need someone to act as translator between Ælfric’s *Lives* and themselves—not just on linguistic grounds, but in terms of “the whole complex context in which the transaction between writer, text, and reader takes place.”⁵⁸

3. Monolithic Patriarchy?

In order to access the religious context that shaped the attitudes of Ælfric and his audience, it is especially important to examine the theories of gender contained in the writings of the Church Fathers in order to construct the theological reasoning behind the various medieval concepts of gender. Ælfric is notable for his adherence to the orthodox positions of the Church as expressed by Fathers such as Augustine, Gregory, Bede, and Alcuin, and he did not hesitate either to clarify orthodox positions or silently omit what might confuse his audience when he translated material.⁵⁹ This study seeks to understand how patristic concepts of gender, especially in relation to the image of God in men and women, were transmitted into the Anglo-Saxon monastic and lay cultures, and how they provided a conceptual framework in which men could be exhorted and encouraged by the example of women, and women by the example of men. To assume one overarching, monolithic concept of gender in the Middles Ages would be fallacious, especially since Church Fathers such as Jerome, Ambrose, and Augustine disagreed with each other on the nature of such things as the masculine and feminine functions within the soul,⁶⁰ and in their theologies of virginity and marriage, as is demonstrated by Peter Brown and Dyan Elliott.⁶¹ Nor is gender the only possible matter on which differing strands of patristic teaching circulated in Anglo-Saxon England. Milton McC. Gatch's study of Ælfric's theology notes a different disagreement between Ambrose and Augustine regarding the nature of the Eucharist, how both interpretations were current in Ælfric's time, and how Ælfric followed the Augustinian interpretation.⁶² With such crucial differences even

among closely associated Fathers like Ambrose and Augustine, it behooves scholars to know whose teachings influenced Ælfric's own works the most and how those teachings came to Ælfric.

Ælfric's orthodoxy, as well as his sensitivity to his audiences, is well-established amongst Anglo-Saxonists. James Hurt comments that

In the *Lives of Saints*, as in the *Catholic Homilies*, his selection of material, his interpretations, and his doctrine are highly orthodox; his style is lucid and eloquent; and his attitude toward his audience is sensitive and sympathetic without being condescending.⁶³

In faithfully passing on that which he had received, Ælfric was doing exactly what he was supposed to do, for, as Gatch explains, "the task of the early medieval theologian was to hand on the traditional teaching of the church," and those traditional teachings were iterated in the writings of the Church Fathers.⁶⁴ As Mary Clayton points out, even Ælfric's attitude towards the Virgin Mary was quite conservatively orthodox for his day, as was shown by his rejection of apocryphal accounts of Mary:

In this respect, he is a lone voice, a maverick rather than a representative, protesting in a world where such niceties meant little. We can see where he comes from in terms of the Carolingian traditions behind him, but it is difficult to know why he alone adopted this particular stance.⁶⁵

Clayton's demonstration of Ælfric's unique attitude underscores Gatch's statement that

it has not always been understood by those who have commented on Anglo-Saxon theology that, derivative though it may be, any body of thought is unique by virtue of the historical moment in which it was produced and by which it was conditioned.⁶⁶

We can see by these reminders and examples that to think that there was one overarching concept of gender among the Church Fathers or subsequently in the early medieval church can set us up to misunderstand the context and contribution of a specific text or writer. If we desire to understand the attitudes of Ælfric and his audience, we must step back from the reinterpreted feminist version of patristic gender theology and seek instead to rediscover the way in which these Fathers and their religious heirs such as Bede, Alcuin, and Ælfric understood their ideas about men, women and gender.⁶⁷ Roberta Gilchrist succinctly states the most prevalent feminist view of patristic contributions to the medieval construction of gender when she states

In medieval society hegemony was created through the ideology of formalized religion which was sexually divisive and misogynistic. Examples of theological treatises and biblical exegesis are thought to have conveyed negative perceptions of women and of female sexuality. . . . The gender relations relevant to . . . medieval monasticism originated with the Patristic writers who formulated a dualistic psychology in which women were hated while virgins were praised. The Augustinian view of Creation equated humanity's maleness with the soul, spirit, and intellectuality, whereas woman was the body, carnality, and sinfulness.⁶⁸

This view informs many feminist constructions of Christianity in the early Middle Ages.⁶⁹ It may be sexually divisive and misogynist in terms of contemporary feminist definitions and beliefs, but was it understood to be so in 415 CE, or 731 CE, or 996 CE? In order to grasp more accurately how Ælfric and his Anglo-Saxon audiences may have perceived the examples of the saints and the doctrines they propounded in the *Lives of Saints*, a detailed examination of Ælfric's sources is necessary so that we may distinguish between the varying strands of patristic teaching

and Ælfric's own contributions to the ideas and assumptions about gender at work in the *Lives*.

4. The Reinvention of Belief

The project carried out in the following chapters entails the reinvention (in the medieval sense of finding again) of the interpretive *mentalité* that Ælfric and his religious audiences might have brought to their reading of saint's Lives, especially to their understandings and interpretations of women and gender. This study takes an interdisciplinary approach, bringing together history and theology with a literary critical methodology that combines aspects of source study and philology with traditional close readings of the texts, focusing specifically on ideas about gender and attitudes towards women. Reinvention, however, should not be confused with an apologetic for or personal profession of the late patristic and early medieval beliefs outlined below, nor should it be perceived as an argument for a return to such beliefs in the present. Instead, by analyzing the ideas about gender put forward by the four Latin Doctors, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, and Gregory the Great, and then tracing the movement of their concepts into early Anglo-Saxon England and up to the time of Ælfric, this study builds a basis upon which to offer a historically and theologically situated reading of some of Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*.

CHAPTER II: THE SINS OF THE FATHERS: PATRISTIC THEOLOGIES OF GENDER

1. Monolithic Patriarchy?

The scholar who begins reading through books and articles on gender and women in the Middle Ages often finds one common idea stated or implied in these publications: “the misogyny that the church inherited from the early Fathers.”¹ The thought is treated as a given, something everybody knows, and has served to evoke an impression of the early Fathers and later monks and bishops as men riddled with hatred and anxiety over the sexual power of women, as men who feared that their power and social dominance might be jeopardized if women were allowed out of the home and the cloister.²

The early Fathers who are considered most influential in the West and who have done the most to shape Western ideas about women and gender in the Middle Ages are the four Latin Doctors: Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine (especially), and Gregory the Great. These men receive so much attention from scholars because much of Western Christian doctrine was hammered out, distilled or transmitted through their writings. Both churchmen and churchwomen in the early Middle Ages actively participated in preserving and transmitting the works of the Latin Doctors, which reached every principal city and wilderness outpost of medieval Western Christianity.³

But is it accurate for us to assume that the writings of each of these men resonated in the same way in all places throughout the breadth of Western Christendom and across the thousand or so years of what we call the Middle Ages? And does it do justice for scholars of any variety to treat these men collectively, as though they always spoke with one voice, especially when we address matters such as their ideas about gender and their attitude(s) toward women? Despite the recent arguments against a monolithic view of the medieval Church, many of the feminist scholars discussed here seem to apply a single overarching interpretation to late patristic views on gender and women and on the influence of these views throughout the Middle Ages.¹ Some are willing to admit of isolated exceptions to the charges of misogyny and anxiety among individual churchmen, but these exceptions are treated as few and far between.² The “misogyny . . . inherited from the early Fathers” remains the overarching interpretive framework in which many scholars read and write about concepts of women and gender in medieval literature, especially medieval religious literature.³ These concepts are consistently interpreted as being “sexually divisive and misogynistic,”⁴ but one may question whether or not Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine, and Gregory would have considered themselves misogynists, or whether their audiences, male and female, would have thought of them as misogynists, especially when their writings are considered within the framework of early Christian theology and the context of late Roman society.

The development of early Christian concepts about gender and attitudes toward sex and women was a complicated matter that was influenced by Jewish

rabbinical tradition, Greek philosophy, and late Roman social attitudes, as well as the exhortations of Jesus and of the apostles.⁵ In the first 300 years or so after the apostolic era, various treatises on virginity and the place of women in the church map the movement of the early church toward an orthodox theology of gender.⁶ The Eastern ascetic movement exerted great influence within the church, especially since it dovetailed nicely with the Neoplatonic philosophical disdain for sex and the necessity of controlling the body so that it would not interfere with contemplation.⁷ The Latin Doctors received from earlier Fathers such as Origen an explication of Genesis 1–3 that posited that Adam and Eve existed only spiritually before the Fall, and that existence in physical bodies that were sexually differentiated was a consequence of the Fall.⁸ Neither sexual nor gender distinctions would be part of the resurrection of believers after death, since they would return to their former angelic mode of being.⁹ Souls were to care for their bodies as husbands care for their wives and in such a way that the bodies may eventually cease being material and become all soul again.¹⁰ Sex was the means by which sin and death were perpetuated along with the human race.¹¹ Such interpretations of Creation and Fall were then applied to Galatians 3:26–28:

omnes enim filii Dei estis per fidem
in Christo Iesu
quicumque enim in Christo baptizati
estis Christum induitis
non est Iudaeus neque Graecus
non est servus neque liber
non est masculus neque femina
omnes enim vos unum estis in Christo Iesu¹²

The explication of these verses that followed from the early views about Creation and Fall led to the idea that the gender distinctions represented by bodily sex were negated through baptism into the body of Christ and by the practice of chastity, and that those who vowed themselves to chastity were no longer constrained by gender distinctions and roles.¹³ While the idea itself was fairly straightforward, its formulation and explication in languages that had gender systems of nouns and lacked personal neuter pronouns led to complexities both of expression and interpretation. The four Latin Doctors did not uniformly accept these formulations, although Jerome seems to have appropriated them with variations that will be examined more closely below.

2. Jerome

Without doubt, Jerome's most (in)famous work and the one most damning in the eyes of feminists is *Adversus Jovinianum* 'Against Jovinian,' a polemical treatise that excoriates marriage and exalts virginity. Written in order to oppose the teaching of a monk named Jovinianus that marriage possessed equal dignity and merit with virginity (among other ideas that undercut the ideals of asceticism), *Adversus Jovinianum* became Jerome's hammer, his "opportunity to pulverize all his opponent's propositions."¹⁴ John Oppel notes that, because of its hyperbolic rhetoric and enormous influence on later misogynist texts,

Virtually all discussions of the pros and cons of marriage from late antiquity to the early Reformation take Jerome's [*Against Jovinian*] as their point of departure. If the Middle Ages was hostile to marriage, as is sometimes asserted, and bitterly antiwomen, some of this—or, at least, some of these

tendencies insofar as they *are* characteristically “medieval”—can be attributed to the influence of Jerome’s work. . . . The two themes of *Against Jovinian* are sex and women, and Jerome appears to be against them both.¹⁵

Oppel argues that *Adversus Jovinianum*, while being most decidedly against sex and against the idea put forward by Jovinian that virginity is no more meritorious than marriage, is not altogether antiwomen: “Jerome, like the other church fathers, has both a negative and a positive view of women,” and this ambivalence is expressed in his portrayal of women as both nymphomaniacs and virginal exemplars.¹⁶

Adversus Jovinianum, however, is not so much antiwomen as it is simply antimarriage. Jerome passes over many opportunities to deal harshly with women in general (for instance, in the sections that address the Fall), demonstrates that virginity was honored even among the pagans, and praises faithful wives. Ultimately he says, however, that “uxores sitas in bonorum malorumque confinio”¹⁷ because no one can tell whether he will marry a good or a bad woman, and therefore wise men seldom marry. He did not say that therefore wise men have no traffic with women—if he did he would have had to condemn himself—but simply that marriage brings many difficulties and uncertainties. Because of Jerome’s vituperative rhetoric against marriage, however, Peter Brown reports that the treatise “was a disaster. . . . It was a memorable statement of the ascetic viewpoint at its most unpleasant and impracticable.”¹⁸

However, it is difficult to read the entire work and still maintain the view of *Adversus Jovinianum* and its author as misogynist.¹⁹ Of all the places where Jerome could have displayed bitterness, ill-will, and malice toward women, we would

reasonably expect his treatment of the Fall to condemn and blame Eve. What we find, however, is an unexpectedly disinterested reference to conditions in Paradise prior to the Fall—both man and woman upright and pure virgins—and a general acknowledgment of the guilt of all humans in the Fall: “ipsi vitio nostro sumus ad pejora delapsi: et quod in paradiso rectum in nobis fuerat, egredientibus de paradiso depravatum est.”²⁰ He shows this same disinterest when he mentions the Fall again in Book II—not mentioning either the serpent or Eve or suggesting that either one played a role in Adam’s eating of the forbidden fruit.²¹

In fact, in the whole text of *Adversus Jovinianum*, there is only one place in which Jerome says much of anything at all about Eve, in the context of quoting Jovinian’s appeal to I Timothy 2:13–15 in support of marriage. In the biblical passage, the Apostle reminds his readers that Eve was formed second and was the one who was beguiled and fell into sin, but that she will be saved through childbearing. Again, however, Jerome does not make any misogynist capital out of the text, but rather seems concerned that married women, who are *in conditionem Evae* ‘in the condition of Eve,’ not feel oppressed, for he says, “Et ne videretur mulieris dura conditio, quae eam in mariti redigeret servitutem, legis recordatur antiquae.”²² Jerome explains that marriage places women into the condition of Eve (cursed by being placed under the rule of their husbands) but that the Apostle refers to childbirth as a way for women to escape this condition as long as they raised their children to know and love Christ. Jerome interprets Paul as saying that the children should also be raised to live in chastity and on the basis of this point interprets the passage to

support the case for the superiority of virginity by saying that Paul meant that married women would be saved by bearing and raising virgins (in the ascetic sense) for Christ. If a married woman raises her children to be virgins, she will attain through her children what she herself has lost by being married.²³ Jerome explains this passage not so much in order to say that women should stay home and bear children if they want to be saved—he would far rather they became virgins devoted to the study of holy books—but in order to turn Jovinian's use of the biblical passage in support of marriage to Jerome's own ascetic ends of supporting the superiority of virginity.

At the end of Book I, Jerome repeats the pagan Roman sentiment that purity was an especial virtue of women: "Mulieris virtus proprie pudicitia est. Haec Lucretiam Bruto aequavit, nescias an et praetulerit: quoniam Brutus non posse servire a femina didicit."²⁴ Jerome's comments seem to support the late antique double standard that defined sexual misconduct differently for women than for men.²⁵ Yet elsewhere in *Adversus Jovinianum*, in the context of arguing for chastity among the male clergy, Jerome asserts that "In omni gradu et sexu, tenet pudicitia principatum."²⁶ And in his letter to Oceanus, Jerome specifically condemns the double standard that prevails in late Roman society, pointing out the difference between what was acceptable in the empire and what was acceptable in the church:

aliae sunt leges Caesarum, aliae Christi; aliud Papinianus, aliud Paulus noster praecipit. apud illos in uiris pudicitiae frena laxantur et solo stupro atque adulterio condemnato passim per lupanaria et ancillulas libido permittitur, quasi culpam dignitas faciat, uoluptas. apud nos, quod non licet feminis, aequae non licet uiris et eadem seruitus pari condicione censetur.²⁷

Far from approving the double standard, Jerome condemns it as it applies to both sex and class, insisting that the Christian standard, unlike the Roman, applies equally to both men and women regardless of class or status. Jerome confronts the social mores of the society in which he lives with the theology in which he believes and shows that, when the two conflict, he follows his theology. In this instance, his own views place men and women on an equal moral footing that expects the same degree of sexual responsibility from women and men alike.

There is no denying, however, that in the process of pointing out the dangers of sex and marriage Jerome's *Adversus Jovinianum* has its moments of polemical misogyny, as when he writes:

ecce et hic inter malorum magnitudinem uxor ponitur. quod si responderis, sed uxor odiosa, dicam tibi quod et supra. atqui hoc periculum in memet fieri graue est. qui enim ducit uxorem, in ambiguo est, utrum odiosam, an amabilem ducat. si odiosam duxerit, ferri non potest. si amabilem, amor illius inferno, et arenti terrae, et incendio comparatur.²⁸

Certainly Jerome tries to make marriage look as dangerous and unattractive to his male readers as possible. He addresses the issue from a male perspective and writes scathingly of marriage in a way that addresses the concerns of men rather than of women. Yet he cannot condemn marriage outright as something deserving censure because such a view had already been determined to be heresy.²⁹ The charge that he seriously meant to disparage women in general and wives in particular is called into question by his own relationships with women, by his comments elsewhere in *Adversus Jovinianum*, and in other works such as *Adversus Helvidium*, *Epistula ad Eustochium*, and *Epistula ad Furiam* in which Jerome outlines the married woman's

trials and responsibilities of caring for children and stepchildren, supervising servants, and dealing with inconsiderate husbands who bring home guests unexpectedly.³⁰ His point in all of these works, however, is that marriage binds both men and women to the world with its temporal cares and distractions in such a way that they cannot devote themselves to prayer and to a life of single-minded devotion to God.³¹ In fact, Jerome even argues that when women turn from the earthly cares of motherhood and fulfillment of their wifely duties to a life of prayer, they no longer live under the curse that God laid upon Eve and her female descendants after the Fall:

Defecerunt, inquit scriptura, Sarae muliebria: post quod dicitur ad Abraham: omnia quaecunque dicit tibi Sara, audi uocem eius. Quae non est in partus anxietatibus et dolore, quae deficientibus menstrui cruoris officiis, mulier esse desiit, a dei maledictione fit libera: nec est ad uirum conuersio eius, sed e contrario uir subiicitur ei, et domini ei uoce praecipitur, omnia quaecunque tibi dicit Sara, audi uocem eius: et sic incipiunt uacare orationi. Quia quandiu in coniugio debitum soluitur, orandi praeteritur instantia.³²

And again, he writes in his letter *Ad Eustochium*:

nolo illi subiacere sententiae, quae in hominem est lata damnatum: in doloribus et anxietatibus paries, mulier—lex ista non mea est—, et ad uirum conuersio tua. Sit conuersio illius ad maritum, quae uirum non habet Christum, et ad extremum “morte morieris” finis iste coniugii: meum propositum sine sexu est. habeant nuptiae suum tempus et titulum: mihi uirginitas in Maria dedicatur et Christo.³³

It becomes evident from this and other passages that Jerome's objection to marriage and the reason that he considers it to be an undesirable state is not because he hates women, but because the duties of marriage distract both men and women from pursuing a life devoted to prayer. The vow to chastity deliberately rejects both sexual behavior and the gender roles imposed by late Roman society upon both sexes. Jerome teaches that once her menses ceased, the roles of dominant husband and

submissive wife between Sarah and her husband, Abraham, inverted and he then was commanded to submit to her. Jerome also urges Eustochia, whom he addresses in the neuter gender as “Eustochium” in order to show that she is no longer female or male now that she has committed herself to virginity, explicitly to reject God’s sentence upon Eve from Genesis 3:16. By not participating in the marital relationship and the procreative activities that were the objects of the curse, Eustochium could signal her entrance into the prelapsarian condition, the “angelic life” by refusing the curse itself and the subordination to man that came with it.

Nor are these the only times that Jerome describes the equality with men that comes to women when they turn from a life focused on earthly matters. In his comments on the letter to the Ephesians contained in *In epistolas Pauli*, Jerome writes: “quamdiu mulier partui servit et liberis, hanc habet ad virum differentiam, quam corpus ad animam. Sin autem Christo magis voluerit servire quam saeculo, mulier esse cessabit, et dicetur vir, quia omnes in perfectum virum cupimus occurrere.”³⁴ From this comment it seems easy to conclude, as Joyce Salisbury does, that

[s]ince by nature women were primarily carnal, in order to achieve spirituality they had to renounce those things that defined them as women. In other words, since by nature women were lustful temptresses who were open to sexuality, they could not act as women if they were to be spiritual. By choosing a spiritual life women had to reject or transcend their gender, which was by definition sexual and reproductive.³⁵

Salisbury’s explanation illustrates one possible interpretation of Jerome’s comment, however, it is not the only possible interpretation. A reading of Jerome’s idea within the broader context of figurative meanings of *vir* ‘man’ and *mulier*

‘woman’ that were often employed by patristic authors suggests a different, more theologically contextual meaning that reflects the way Jerome’s audience may have understood this passage. The *Moralia in Iob* by Gregory the Great explains the figurative use of *vir* and *mulier* in this way: “In sacro eloquio mulier aut pro sexu ponitur aut pro infirmitate. . . . Vir etenim fortis quilibet et discretus uocatur, mulier uero mens infirma uel indiscreta accipitur.”³⁶ In late antique society it was a commonplace that women were weak because they possessed less physical strength than men because of the effects of menstruation and child-bearing.³⁷ The greater physical strength of men gave them greater endurance and enabled them to persist in physically demanding conditions and activities that women were considered too physically weak to bear. This contrast of physical strength and weakness between men and women lies behind the figurative meanings that Gregory gives to *vir* and *mulier*.

With Gregory’s figurative meanings in mind, Jerome’s comment above could be read: “but when she wishes to devote herself to Christ more than to the world, then she will cease to be frail-minded and will be called strong-minded, because we all desire to meet into a perfect strong-mindedness.” The *virum perfectum* to which Jerome refers is found in Ephesians 4:13, and refers to the goal towards which all, both male and female, who serve Christ strive: to be equipped and built up into perfect spiritual strength, the fullness of Christ. Thus, when a woman ceases to serve others (husband and children) and serves Christ alone, she can attain mature spiritual discretion in all its fullness, just as any man can. Here we begin to see the nature of

gender distinctions in Jerome's thought and the intractability of the language with which he must express it. He is not saying that women must physically become men, nor is he suggesting that a woman has to deny her sex or her essential female self when she devotes herself to Christ; in fact, he specifically argues against such a view when he insists that men and women will be "resurgentes in proprio sexu" and therefore cannot deny the nature of the sexes, and when he expresses his disgust at women who cut their hair and dress like men.³⁸ Rather, a woman ceases to "be woman" figuratively inasmuch as she no longer concerns herself with the worldly, temporal things (such as family) that entice and hold the frail minds of women and men alike. In this example from Jerome's commentary on Ephesians, gender is a metaphor for developing moral and mental strength, the ability to sustain contemplation of the divine by turning away from the good but temporal matters of family.

If the frail mind concerns itself with temporal matters, then the strong mind should concern itself with prayer and the contemplation of the eternal God. The inability of the frail mind to attain this level of contemplation, however, is best exemplified by Augustine in his *Confessiones*, where he describes his first feeble attempts to turn his mind to contemplating "That which is," the eternal nature of the Divinity:

... et peruenit ad id, quod est in ictu trepidantis aspectus. Tunc uero inuisibilia tua per ea quae facta sunt intellecta conspexi, sed aciem figere non eualui et reperiussa infirmitate redditus solitis non mecum ferebam nisi amantem memoriam et quasi olefacta desiderantem, quae comedere nondum possem.³⁹

The weakness of the mind as understood by Augustine and Jerome was a matter of attending to the material and temporal world, not of native intelligence *per se*. If one did not discipline oneself to the contemplation of the eternal, then the mind remained weak and frail, as though suffering from hunger, whereas contemplation of the divine would nourish and exercise the mind to perfect strength—the *virum perfectum*. The mind that gorges itself upon material goods and pleasing the bodily senses deprives itself of the nourishment that comes from interaction with the divine through prayer and study, thus weakening and starving itself through malnourishment. But the mind that hungers after God and that feeds and exercises itself by single-mindedly pursuing relationship with Christ through prayer and study builds itself up into a condition of mental and spiritual strength that Ephesians 4:13 describes as the *virum perfectum*.

The language of Jerome's translation of this verse reflects the Greek, which uses *άνήρ* 'man, husband' in this passage rather than the more generic *άνθρωπος* 'man-faced, human being.'⁴⁰ Jerome translates the passage literally, although the explication in his commentary clearly shows that he does not think that only men can be *virī perfecti*. Rather, he understands the part to mean the whole and teaches that this state of perfect mental and spiritual strong-mindedness is equally accessible to those men and women who have shunned the distractions of the temporal world and committed themselves to chastity in order to devote themselves to prayer and study. As a way of showing that he does not mean that women should literally become men or that he does not attach a necessarily physical and bodily interpretation to his

metaphors of gender, Jerome also puts forth the idea that men, in turning from worldly matters and pursuing a life of chaste devotion to Christ, cease to “be men” and become metaphorical eunuchs, as he comments in *Epistola ad Heliodorum Monachum*: “tu autem perfectum te esse pollicitus es. nam cum derelicta militia castrasti te propter regnum caelorum, quid aliud quam perfectam sectatus es uitam?”⁴¹ Similarly, in his letter to Eustochium Jerome states, “alium eunuchum necessitas faciat, me uoluntas.”⁴² In *Adversus Jovinianum*, he takes the idea even further, equating the idea of being a eunuch for the kingdom of heaven with great faith and moral virtue, holding up two eunuchs from the Bible as examples of manhood because of their virtue, exemplified by their lack of sexual ability.

Here Jerome expresses the perfect life for men in terms of metaphorical castration (becoming like a woman?) as a means of depicting men’s rejection of the worldly cares of family and of temporal power. The implication theologically is that he was not so truly distant from the ideas of Origen as he would later want people to believe.⁴³ The idea that both men and women lose their sexual and gender distinctions when they devote themselves to “the angelic life,” comes from part of Origen’s teaching that is clearly implicated in Jerome’s ideas about women overcoming their sex and men becoming eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Thus, women become “manly,” and men become “womanly” in a way that is considered to be positive (becoming “angelic”) for both.⁴⁴

This idea applies equally to both sexes—the difficulty lies in the terminology used (or not used) to express the idea. As mentioned above, the Greek word that

Jerome translates as *vir* in the Vulgate version of Ephesians 4:13 is *ἀνὴρ* ‘man, husband.’ This specificity in the biblical text opens the door to the idea of women “becoming” men in Christ as they strive to attain the *virum perfectum*, but there is no place in New Testament that specifically states the parallel idea of men “becoming” women in pursuit of the same goal. Jerome clearly understood the biblical concept as a metaphor, however, since he taught that both women and men could attain the *virum perfectum* and both must give up sexual activity and the physical gratification of sexual desire in order to become “perfect” by pursuing the angelic life. For men, this entailed being like eunuchs, living as men figuratively castrated because they remained unmarried in a late antique culture that continued to place a high value on the male role of *pater familias*.⁴⁵ The biblical example for this movement from man to eunuch comes from Christ’s comments regarding marriage and divorce in Matthew 19:11–12: “qui dixit non omnes capiunt verbum istud sed quibus datum est sunt enim eunuchi qui de matris utero sic nati sunt et sunt eunuchi qui facti sunt ab hominibus et sunt eunuchi qui se ipsos castraverunt propter regnum caelorum qui potest capere capiat.”⁴⁶ Jerome comments upon this biblical passage elsewhere in *Adversus*

Jovinianum as he argues for male virginity, saying

Quid ipse Dominus qui eunuchorum praecipit varietates? Certe apostolus, qui ad suam nos provocat pudicitiam, debet constanter audire, cur portas veretrum, o Paule? Cur a sexu feminarum, barba, pilis, aliaque membrorum qualitate distingueris? Cur tuae non intumescunt papillae, non dilatantur renes, non pectus arctatur? Vox obsoletior est, sermo ferocior, et hirsutius supercilium. Frustra haec omnia virorum habes, si complexu non uteris feminarum. . . . Quod alii postea in coelis futuri sunt, hoc virgines in terra esse coeperunt. Si angelorum nobis similitudo promittitur (inter angelos autem non est sexus diversitas), aut sine sexu erimus, quod angeli sunt; aut certe quod

liquido comprobatur, resurgentes in proprio sexu, sexus non fungemur officio.⁴⁷

In Jerome's thought, then, being of the male sex is of no use if the man refuses to engage in sexual intercourse. This very refusal, however, involves rejecting late antique social constructions of manhood based upon sexual activity and turning to the idea of the *virum perfectum* that runs contrary to the expectations of Roman society. On this basis, Jerome's comments to Heliodorus about leaving the army and becoming a eunuch in order to pursue the perfect life of a chaste monk reflect the male equivalent for the idea of women "becoming" men in order to attain the *virum perfectum*.

The complex issue of gender and translation comes to the fore in Jerome's translation of Genesis as well. He indicates the complexity of the practice of translation in *Hebraicae quaestiones in Genesin*, when he explains his choice of words in translating Genesis 2:23:

Non uidetur in graeco et in latino sonare, cur mulier appelletur, quia ex uiro sumpta sit, sed ἐτυμολογία in hebraeo sermone seruatur. Vir quippe uocatur *his* et mulier *hissa*. Recte igitur ab *his* appellata est mulier *hissa*. . . . quod nos latine possumus dicere: haec uocabitur uirago, quia ex viro sumpta est.⁴⁸

In Hebrew, the words used for man and woman are artfully utilized to reflect the idea that woman came from, or was derived from, man when God formed Eve from Adam's rib. Jerome tries to preserve the artistry of such usage by translating the terms for man and woman as *vir* and *virago*. By doing so, however, he apparently confuses his readers, for the Latin term *virago* denotes 'a man-like woman or female warrior.'⁴⁹ The implication of Eve as masculine, undifferentiated from Adam by sex

or gender before sin and death had entered the world may have caused some of Jerome's readers to suspect him of slipping Origenist implications into his translation of scripture, thus necessitating his explanation for his aesthetic choice of words in *Hebraicae quaestiones in Genesin*.

Even with all of these contextual interpretations of his writings, no one would deny that Jerome was the literary curmudgeon of the late patristic era. In life, however, he was both surrounded and supported by several prominent women of Rome—aristocratic women who literally provided for him by means of their own fortunes and who even followed him to Bethlehem after he was forced out of Rome in 385 CE.⁵⁰ Jerome taught and counseled these women and their daughters, corresponded with them, and even addressed or dedicated several of his biblical commentaries to some of them, most notably to Paula and her daughter, Eustochium.⁵¹ Peter Brown points out that

Jerome, for all his fashionable misogyny and his sharp sense of sexual danger, would never for a moment have doubted that the minds of Paula or Marcella, and his other female allies and clients, did not have their full share of “male” bone and muscle.⁵²

Jerome thought most highly of those chaste women who devoted themselves to the study of scripture and biblical exegesis, for they exemplified his ideal of the life devoted to attaining the *virum perfectum*, perfect humanity in Christ, through prayer, intellectual training, and the study of holy books. In this intellectual realm, women could be every bit as strong as their male comrades in faith, and, according to Jerome, sometimes even stronger.

3. Ambrose

While Jerome's psychology of gender points toward a basic spiritual equivalence between men and women once both sexes commit themselves to chastity, Ambrose of Milan's views seem to be less generous. Ambrose's treatise on Genesis 2–3, *De paradiso*, allegorically interprets the biblical Creation in terms of soul, mind, and body. It portrays the human soul as Paradise, tended and cultivated by the mind (the man), bringing forth the fruits of virtue. The woman dwells there, but does not seem to have much purpose, since the emotions/senses (represented by the woman) do not themselves cultivate virtues in the soul. The woman (sense) was tempted to sin by the serpent (pleasure); she then seduced the man (mind) into eating the forbidden fruit. In this same allegory, the woman is inferior because she represents the bodily senses and emotions; the man is superior because he represents the spiritual and immortal mind, which is by nature of a higher order in creation than the physical and mortal body.

The confusing thing about *De paradiso*, especially in the later parts, is that Ambrose, in the process of answering various criticisms and objections to the Genesis passage, moves very quickly and fluidly from speaking of the woman in the sort of figurative sense pointed out above in the works of Jerome to speaking of her in terms that are more applicable to Eve or to a "real" woman. At times this fluidity strains his allegorical interpretation to the breaking point:

Fortasse moueat cur ante increpatur Adam, cum mulier ante gustauerit? Sed a praeuaricatione sexus infirmior coeperit, a uerecundia et excusatione fortior, ut femina erroris causa fuerit, uir pudoris.⁵³

This multivalence of interpretive possibilities makes it easy to forget that Ambrose is speaking in the context of the controlling metaphor of Paradise as the human soul, man as mind, woman as sense, and the relationship of husband and wife as the relationship between the mind and the bodily senses. Were Ambrose questioned about this passage today, he might reply that only the mind can respond to a rebuke or understand shame, know forgiveness. The senses are incapable in themselves of any of these responses. Thus, even though the weak, bodily senses disobeyed by succumbing to the deception of pleasure, the stronger, spiritually capable mind is rebuked so that it can know guilt and repent.

Ambrose challenges his readers, however, by requiring them to keep in mind the figurative meanings that he established earlier in the book, especially when he engages in page after page of responses to objections and criticisms without reminding his readers of the figurative framework in which he is working. It is one matter for such a highly literate man to write an entire book under one controlling metaphor to be read by a sophisticated audience;⁵⁴ it is another matter entirely to assume that all of his audiences, especially those beyond his own time and culture, would possess the necessary subtlety to keep in mind throughout the length of this work the figurative context of soul, mind, and senses that Ambrose established in the early chapters when he speaks of “*in specie serpentis figuram accipiens delectationis, in figura mulieris sensum animi mentisque constituens.*”⁵⁵

Further on, Ambrose refers to “*Eua, hoc est sensus primae mulieris,*”⁵⁶ when he speaks of the cause of the first sin. He is not blaming woman, but rather the

emotions of the first woman as the cause for sin and he explicitly reminds his audience of the point. When he later comments that Adam was deceived by Eve, however, “bene praetermissum est ubi decipitur Adam, quia non sua culpa, sed uitio lapsus uxorio est,”⁵⁷ he seems to be blaming the woman entirely for the Fall. Keeping in mind Ambrose’s metaphor, though, he should actually be understood to mean that the senses deceived the mind and were to blame for luring the rational soul into sin. What, then, are we to make of Ambrose’s explanation of Eve’s punishment, her subjugation to the rule of her husband? Ambrose writes:

Ergo quia Eua ipsa confessa est delictum, mitior sequitur et profutura sententia, quae condemnaret errorem et ueniam non negaret, ut ad uirum suum conuersa seruiret. Primum ne eam facile delectaret errare, deinde ut sub fortiore uase locata non transduceret uirum, sed magis uiri consilio et ipsa regeretur.⁵⁸

How is this condition different from the relationship that existed between Adam and Eve before the Fall? Was the woman not considered inferior to the man even before the Fall? In Chapter 4 Ambrose treats this issue rather indirectly, commenting that the woman “shared grace” with the man, but, in a mystery, only man had the responsibility to till and protect the garden of Eden. He interprets the relationship as one of shared grace:

Unde nemo debet facile alteri se credere nisi cuius uirtutem probarit nec adrogare sibi qui se pro auxilio putarit adscitum, sed magis si inuenerit fortiolem, cui se putabat esse praesidio, ab ipso gratiam mutuetur, sicut et uiros mulieribus honorem inpertire apostolus praecepit Petrus dicens: uiri similiter cohabitantes secundum scientiam tamquam infirmiori uaso muliebri inpertientes honorem tamquam coheredi gratiae uitae, ut ne inpediantur orationes uestrae.⁵⁹

From these brief comments we can extrapolate that Ambrose considered the prelapsarian relationship between man and woman to have been one of mutual help and protection by which both grew in virtue and experienced “shared grace,” but it is difficult to know from these comments exactly what Ambrose meant by the idea. Perhaps his observation from *De viduis* can clarify the matter, when he writes of marriage that, “Bona mutui amoris gratia.”⁶⁰ Ambrose’s metaphorical interpretation suggests that the senses/emotions represented by the woman were to assist the mind represented by man in the cultivation of virtues in the soul, which both shared in mutual love, and that the mind was to protect the senses/emotions from any loss of virtue. Such protection need not imply that the man, or mind, dominated the woman, or senses, to keep her from doing what she desired because prior to being deceived by the serpent she would not have desired anything wrong or evil, therefore the man would have had no need to overrule her desires. The woman’s postlapsarian sentence of subjection to the man, however, indicates a change to a more authoritative relationship between the mind and the senses, wherein the senses are to be governed and curbed by the mind from any inclination to wrongdoing. Here also Ambrose softens the impact of the woman’s sentence by likening her to the church in that the church also lives in submission to and under the guidance of Christ, even as the woman was put in submission to and under the authority of her husband.⁶¹

Ambrose does make several comments in *De paradiso* that could be interpreted as misogynist, however, as long as these comments can be reasonably interpreted as referring to the emotions/senses of the human soul instead of to

“actual” women, we must look to his other works in order to form a more balanced view of Ambrose’s thoughts about women.

Ambrose’s *De virginitate* probably comes closer to expressing his attitude towards “real” women. The first chapter of the first Book contains a typical reflection on the writer and his hopes that he may prove worthy to write on his chosen topic. The second chapter, however, tells the *passio* of St. Agnes, virgin and martyr.⁶² In this brief narrative of St. Agnes’ martyrdom, Ambrose’s enthusiastic panegyric reflects a very different attitude from that found in *De paradiso*. He opens with the exhortation: “mirentur viri, non desperent paruuli, stupeant nuptae, imitentur innuptae.”⁶³ Ambrose plainly thought the story of St. Agnes to be one that men would find admirable and the unmarried (presumably of both sexes) could take as an example. Such an attitude opens the door of possibility to something other than a misogynist influence from this Latin Father.

Ambrose goes out of his way in a short space to point out the power of Agnes’ faith, her maturity despite her tender age (12 years), and the efficacy of her testimony. He does so by applying contrasts, pointing out first the cruelty that would not spare a child of twelve, then stating that “immo magna uis fidei, quae etiam ab illa testimonium inuenit aetate.”⁶⁴ Ambrose notes how young girls of twelve often cry at an angry look or the prick of a sewing needle, but Agnes, who was so small that she hardly had a body big enough to take the blow of the sword, “habuit quo ferrum uinceret.”⁶⁵ Then she faces the executioner:

Quanto terrore egit carnifex ut timeretur, quantis blanditiis ut suaderet
Stetit, orauit, ceruicem inflexit. Cerneris trepidare carnificem, quasi ipse

addictus fuisset, tremere percussori dexteram, pallere ora alieno timentis periculo, cum puella non timeret suo.⁶⁶

Ambrose does not hesitate to imply a crossing of gender characteristics between the executioner and Agnes: she conducts herself with manly fortitude; the executioner trembles with womanly fear before her. Though Ambrose does not use the metaphorical ‘man’ and ‘woman’ to describe the shift, the implication probably would not have been lost on his contemporary Roman audience. His audiences would certainly have understood the issues of sex and age at work when he wrote: “Effecit denique ut ei de deo crederetur, cui de homine adhuc non crederetur.”⁶⁷ Late Roman society forbade both women and children in their minority to testify in court, and Agnes’s evidence concerning God flouts the social practice on both counts, for she testifies as a minor and a female not on behalf of a man, but on behalf of God himself.

Such portrayals of independent female agency certainly challenged late antique social conventions, but the attitudes of the Church Fathers toward such behavior did not always conform to the views of Roman society. Joyce Salisbury states that “independent women practicing celibacy disturbed the Fathers’ understanding of gender roles and of sexuality itself.”⁶⁸ Ambrose’s story of St. Agnes, however, lauds the independent action (no parents or churchmen figure in the telling) and the assumption of “masculine” characteristics *and* privileges by its young protagonist. If Ambrose is “disturbed” by Agnes’s independent practice of virginity, then he hides it well when he urges his audience to follow her example.

Ambrose later addresses his audience of virgins, saying, “non humanis iam, sed caelestibus, quorum uitam uiuis in terris, digna es comparari.”⁶⁹ Ambrose, like

Jerome, considers the practice of virginity to be the living of the angelic life, and his words imply that he considers women who lived such a life to have entered a different society wherein they no longer suffer by comparison to men. Such women have entered the transcendent society of God and angelic beings, for further on Ambrose says “De hoc mundo estis, et non estis in hoc mundo. Saeculum uos habere meruit, tenere non potuit.”⁷⁰ In this transcendent society concepts of gender are constructed along different lines because all beings are defined by their relationship to God rather than to each other. This reconstruction itself blurs the boundaries of sex and gender that obtain in the temporal world, for God, as a spiritual being, has no sex and yet manifests personal and abstract qualities that are associated with both genders.

Ambrose demonstrates how Christ himself blurs the boundaries of gender as he writes of how Christ is the source of all virginity:

Christus uirginis sponsus est et, si dici potest, Christus uirgineae castitatis; uirginitas enim Christi, non uirginitatis est Christus. Virgo est ergo quae nupsit, uirgo quae nos suo utero portauit, uirgo quae genuit, uirgo quae proprio lacte nutriuit. . . . Qualis est haec uirgo quae trinitatis fontibus irrigatur, cui de petra fluunt aquae, non deficiunt ubera, mella funduntur? *Petra autem* est iuxta apostolum *Christus*. Ergo a Christo non deficiunt ubera, claritas a deo, flumen ab spiritu. Haec est enim trinitas, quae ecclesiam suam irrigat, Pater, Christus et Spiritus.⁷¹

This association of Christ with the female body serves to illustrate his role and the role of the entire Trinity in the nurturing of believers with spiritual food. Carolyn Walker Bynum points out this same motif in later medieval artistic depictions of *Ecclesia*, which is the body of Christ, as a woman, and of how later medieval theologians such as Bernard of Clairvaux and Julian of Norwich also repeat the idea

of Christ as a nurturing mother who feeds his children with maternal breasts.⁷² In this case, the female body represents nurturing, a characteristic associated with feminine gender as well as female sex, yet also associated with Christ in a way that continues to blur the distinctions of sex and gender when later theologians write about the characteristics of Christ.

In the *Life of the virgin of Antioch*, Ambrose illustrates how the boundaries between sex and gender become fluid and unstable when women and men commit themselves to virginity and enter the angelic society in which the distinctions of male and female begin to dissolve. This virgin (who remains unnamed throughout Ambrose's account) becomes caught up in a wave of anti-Christian persecutions because of her professed virginity for the sake of Christ and must choose between making a pagan sacrifice or losing her virginity at a brothel. Ambrose provides the reflections of the young woman through first person narration, allowing the audience to follow the process of the saint's thoughts as she reasons her way through her dilemma, finally deciding that "*Tolerabilius est mentem uirginem quam carnem habere. Vtrumque bonum, si liceat. si non liceat, saltem non homini castae, sed deo simus.*"⁷³ By following the rational process the saint employs in the making of her decision, Ambrose instructs his audience in the importance of both physical and mental purity while also asserting the greater importance of mental virginity and loyalty to Christ rather than to a physical practice. The virgin could preserve her mental and spiritual purity even if she lost her physical virginity through rape.

Ambrose is remarkably coy about describing what comes next—the virgin’s removal to a brothel—but does not refrain from describing the wanton men closing in on the house, contending like hawks over the prey.⁷⁴ The virgin prays that her virginity might yet be preserved, and no sooner finishes her prayer than a man *militis specie terribilis irrupit* ‘with the appearance of a dreadful soldier rushed in.’⁷⁵ Frightened but not panicking, the young woman reminds herself that “Potest in hoc lupi habitu ouis latere. Habet et Christus milites suos qui etiam legiones habet.”⁷⁶ The saint’s mental reflection suggests an inversion of masculine roles that might be fulfilled in the soldier in front of her: he may live up to his appearance and fulfill the wolfish ferocity associated with fighting men, or he might yet turn out to be a secretly, a fellow Christian whose fierce aspect belies the ovine gentleness inside his believing heart. If he turns out to be a soldier of the emperor, he might rape and/or kill her in his lupine fierceness; if he is a soldier of Christ, however, he might help her preserve both her life and her virginity through his sheep-like meekness.

The soldier puts all fears to rest immediately, revealing himself to be a Christian and indeed a sheep in wolf’s clothing. Maintaining the idea of outward appearances that obscure the realities beneath, however, this soldier suggests “Vestimenta mutemus; conueniunt mihi tua et mea tibi, sed utraque Christo. tua uestis me uerum militem faciet, mea te uirginem.”⁷⁷ The symbolism of the act of exchanging clothes is nothing short of stunning. The unnamed soldier clearly states that attiring himself like a woman will make him a true soldier, not violence or aggression on the virgin’s behalf, and certainly not sexual conquest of the woman

before him. In what may very well be the only instance in patristic literature wherein male cross-dressing is depicted in an approving manner, Ambrose suggests that, for a man, becoming more like Christ (attaining the *virum perfectum*) meant figuratively becoming more like a woman by setting aside violence and submitting to martyrdom.⁷⁸ By the same token, however, the donning of male attire would make the young woman a virgin by allowing her to escape the danger of rape. She would thus with the courage of a soldier preserve not only her purity of mind, but her purity of body as well. Accordingly, the act of changing clothes symbolizes the way to attaining the *virum perfectum* in Christ for both the man and the woman. The virgin, in fact, shows how much of a soldier she herself has become when she contends with her erstwhile rescuer for the right to be martyred first and wins.⁷⁹ The soldier demonstrates how much of a woman he has become when he bows to her will. Both then become martyrs and together attain sainthood.

Virgin women are not the only women that Ambrose finds admirable, however, for in *De viduis* he claims that courage is characteristic of a good widow, saying that “Haec enim vero est fortitudo, quae naturae usum, sexus infirmitatem mentis deuotione transgreditur.”⁸⁰ Not only does such bravery surpass the nature of her sex, but of men and warriors as well, as exemplified by Judith, who, “armatis pauentibus et de extrema iam sorte tractantibus, extra murum processit; et illo praestantior exercitu quem liberauit, et eo fortior quem fugauit.”⁸¹ Ambrose speaks even more directly of the valor of Deborah, the only female judge of the early people of Israel recorded in the Bible:

Haec enim docuit non solum uiri auxilio uiduas non egere, uerum etiam uiris esse subsidio: quae nec sexus infirmitate reuocata, munia uirorum obeunda suscepit, et suscepta cumulauit. . . . Et ideo lectum istius puto esse iudicium et gesta eius arbitror esse descripta, ne mulieres a uirtutis officio muliebris sexus infirmitate reuocentur: Vidua populos regit, uidua ducit exercitus, uidua duces eligit, uidua bella disponit, mandat triumphos. Non ergo natura est rea culpae nec infirmitati obnoxia: strenuos non sexus, sed uirtus facit.⁸²

The phrase “weakness of their sex” in this context can only refer to the physical weakness of women compared to men, a weakness that in no way prevents women from being mentally or spiritually as strong as any man, or, in the cases of Judith and Deborah, stronger. Ambrose uses Deborah’s example to encourage widows to chastity and to urge them not to marry again just because they fear what may happen to them without the protection and provision of a husband. However, he does not disparage marriage as Jerome does, even though, like Jerome, he views marriage as bondage for both men and women:

Bona mutui amoris gratia, sed maior est seruitus. *Neque enim mulier sui corporis potestatem habet, sed uir.* Et ne forte non coniugii tibi uideatur ista seruitus esse, sed sexus: *Similiter et uir sui corporis potestatem non habet, sed mulier.*⁸³ (italics in original)

In his writings on virginity and widowhood, Ambrose demonstrates a positive attitude toward women and lauds women’s ability to be as brave and capable as men, or even to rule over men. These works on virginity and widowhood, since they address “real” women in real life with examples of ideal devotion rather than explicating allegorical women representing spiritual truths, more reliably indicate Ambrose’s true attitude towards women, an attitude of considerable respect for the capabilities of women who pursue godliness above all and of encouragement to women to live up to those capabilities in the faith.

4. Augustine

Of all the Latin Fathers, the one who draws the most scorching commentary with regard to his comments about women seems to be Augustine. In her most recent book, Rosemary Radford Ruether passes over Ambrose and Jerome completely, focusing on Augustine and concluding that

not only was Augustine's God . . . an arbitrary tyrant who acted coercively from outside the human condition rather than from within its natural capacities for goodness, but also Augustine's view of the fall justified social hierarchy and coercive relations of men over women, masters over slaves, state over subjects.⁸⁴

Contrary to Ruether's assertion, Augustine believed that God's changeless nature and divine freedom were the antithesis of arbitrary, and that God's sovereignty entailed a divine right to rule over the affairs of men. For Augustine, God's love and humility made it impossible for the divinity to be guilty of tyranny. The bishop of Hippo denied that humans possessed any natural capacity for goodness after the Fall, for his understanding of original sin held that every human being was inherently rebellious against God's order from his or her earliest days, thus necessitating God's intervention (rather than coercion) from outside human affairs. Augustine did indeed argue for a natural social hierarchy, but he did not see "coercive" relations of men over women as "justified" by the Fall. Rather, as stated in *De bono coniugali*, he viewed the social hierarchy of men over women as natural according to the order of creation, not sex, and the fact that woman was said to be created from the side of the man, instead of separately from him: "Poterat enim esse in utroque sexu etiam sine tali commixtione alterius regentis, alterius obsequentis amicalis quaedam et germana

coniunctio.”⁸⁵ To Augustine, the Fall explained “coercive” relations of men over women (and over other men) as a result of sin, but did not justify them.

As mentioned above, Jerome’s acrimonious rebuttal of Jovinian’s claim that marriage and virginity were equal in virtue managed to offend so many that he wrote an apology for it. Augustine wrote *De bono coniugali* in order to strike a balance between Jerome’s position and Jovinian’s. Because it was written fairly early in Augustine’s career (circa 401 CE), it reflects some of his less mature ideas about such matters as whether or not there might have been a place for sex in the prelapsarian lives of Adam and Eve. Augustine is already developing ideas about marriage being more than a matter of procreation, however, as Dyan Elliott notes when she writes that, “Augustine may rightly be considered the architect of spiritual marriage in the West since he was the first to develop a full and coherent theory of marriage that was not dependent on the conjugal debt.”⁸⁶ Augustine notes that Jesus bestowed his approval on the institution of marriage by attending a wedding and says:

...cur sit bonum merito quaeritur. Quod mihi non uidetur propter solam filiorum procreationem, sed propter ipsam etiam naturalem in diuerso sexu societatem; alioquin non iam diceretur coniugium in senibus, praesertim si uel amisissent filios uel minime genuissent. Nunc uero in bono licet annoso coniugio, etsi emarcuit ardor aetatis inter masculum et feminam, uiget tamen ordo caritatis inter maritum et uxorem.⁸⁷

It is within this context of marriage being more than just a matter of sex and procreation that Augustine can call marriage a social relationship, the “prima . . . naturalis humanae societatis copula,”⁸⁸ and apply his psychology of gender relationships. As Jacqueline Murray observes, “gender is only meaningful in relational terms,” and in Augustine’s thought, the relationship between male and

female encompassed more than just the sexual relationship, but also a natural relationship between masculine and feminine gender.⁸⁹ Because his belief in a natural order of relationships was based on the order of creation, Augustine wrote that a subordination like that of the woman to the man in marriage would have existed even if God had made a second man to be Adam's helper, and not a woman,⁹⁰ further indicating that Augustine's concept of subordination was considered by him to be a matter of the order of creation, not a matter of sex. Like Jerome and Ambrose before him, however, Augustine agreed that virginity was superior in virtue to marriage because it freed men and women especially from being constantly dragged from contemplation of the eternal into living in the temporal realm because of the troubles and burdens of marriage.⁹¹ On the other hand, Augustine probably did more than the other Doctors to uphold the goodness and dignity of marriage, as when he writes "Quod uero femina illi ex eius latere facta est, etiam hic satis significatum est quam cara mariti et uxoris debeat esse coniunctio."⁹²

As with the other Fathers, Augustine's theology of gender is grounded in his interpretation of the Creation and Fall of human beings recorded in Genesis 1–3. His most extensive and mature treatments of the subject are found in his later works, especially in *De trinitate*, *De Genesi ad litteram*, and *De civitate Dei*.

De trinitate is an extended meditation on the nature of the triune Godhead and the analogous trinities of the intelligible world whereby humans may know and love the divine Trinity. In reading through Augustine's *De trinitate* with an eye on gender matters, one finds three separate but related ideas coming to the fore: his use of a

feminine allegorical figure when referring to Christ as *Sapientia* (the Wisdom of God); Augustine's view of the relationship (or lack thereof) between grammatical gender, social gender, and sex; and his figural construction of the "male" and "female" functions of the rational soul.

The figure of Wisdom in Judeo-Christian tradition and teaching goes back to the wisdom books of the Old Testament. In the first several chapters of Proverbs, Wisdom is portrayed allegorically as a woman who claims that, "Dominus possedit me initium viarum suarum antequam quicquam faceret a principio. . . . quando praeparabat caelos aderam . . . cum eo eram cuncta componens."⁹³ All of the characteristics of Wisdom here and elsewhere in the Old Testament are attributed to Christ when the Apostle Paul calls Christ the wisdom and power of God.⁹⁴ What is intriguing is that when Augustine refers to Christ as Wisdom, he does so by means of a female figure as when he says "*Ubi enim non operatur quod uult dei omnipotentis sapientia quae pertendit a fine usque ad finem fortiter et disponit omnia suauius?*"⁹⁵ [italics in original] Christ, who was most definitely a biological male, is spoken of by means of a female allegorical figure and Latin nouns of the feminine gender. Augustine is not confused about whom he is writing, yet he does not hesitate on more than one occasion to speak of Christ as though he were female in much the same way that Ambrose did above. If Augustine was squeamish or ambivalent about the blurring of gender distinctions in the second Person of the Trinity then he presumably could have found less problematic ways to make his point.

We can better understand what Augustine is doing when we read his comments on grammatical gender, worth quoting here in their full context:

Sed tamen in spiritalibus illis summis, ubi non est aliquid uiolabile aut corruptibile nec natum *ex tempore* nec ex informi formatum, si qua dicuntur talia ad quorum similitudinem etiam ista inferioris creaturae genera quamuis longe remotissime facta sunt, non debent cuiusquam sobriam perturbare prudentiam ne cum uanum deuitat horrorem in perniciosum incurrat errorem. Assuescat in corporibus ita spiritalium reperire uestigia ut cum inde sursum uersus duce ratione ascendere coeperit, ut ad ipsam incommutabilem ueritatem per quam facta sunt ista perueniat, non secum ad summa pertrahat quod contemnit in infimis. Nec enim erubuit quidam uxorem sibi eligere sapientiam quia nomen uxoris in prole gignenda corruptibilem concubitus ingerit cogitanti, aut uero ipsa sapientia sexu femina est quia feminini generis uocabulo et in graeca et in latina lingua enuntiatur.⁹⁶

Augustine's rather impatient tone reminds his less astute readers that the feminine gender in grammar cannot be taken to mean the female sex, nor should anyone be timid about using the figure of a wife to talk about God. His point here is to remind his readers that they are looking for the traces of the *imago Dei* in the following exploration of the metaphorical genders of the human psyche, not definitive structures of the value of actual men and women. This detail is the very point on which "body feminists" run aground.⁹⁷ Rosemary Radford Ruether states:

For the classical Christian tradition found in Augustine and Aquinas, maleness and spirituality are equated. Women as women cannot be made in the image of God or represent Christ because God and Christ are male, and maleness represents rationality, spirituality, and the divine. So women can be included in the image of God restored in Christ only in a sex-neutered form.⁹⁸

The insistent materialism of the "body feminist" approach urges them to take Augustine's metaphors of gender too literally, for Augustine stolidly affirms in more than one work that the *imago Dei* is not reflected in any body, male or female.⁹⁹ The only way in which the human body, male and female, symbolizes the *imago Dei* is by

its upright posture, by which it could look to the heavens, as opposed to the posture of beasts who could only look at the ground: “congruit ergo et corpus eius animae rationi non secundum liniamenta figurasque membrorum, sed potius secundum id, quod in caelum erectum est ad intuenda, quae in corpore ipsius mundi superna sunt.”¹⁰⁰ Tarsicius Jan van Bavel explains:

When speaking about physical inferiority within the context of the image of God, it is . . . important to avoid the pitfall of a bodily interpretation. Augustine always combats the opinion that the image of God can reside in the body, and this applies not only to the female, but also to the male body.¹⁰¹

Thus, not only in terms of grammatical gender, but in terms of metaphorical gender when used as an analogy for spiritual things, one should not be overly fastidious about the exactness of the analogy, for “quamuis longe remotissime facta sunt.”¹⁰² The radical feminist view that the Christian deity is a “male” God because the Bible speaks of God as a father, uses masculine personal pronouns when referring to “him,” and because God’s claim to sovereignty over all creation, including mankind, establishes a “patriarchal” hierarchy with all of that label’s attendant negative connotations, dismisses Augustine’s point that God is a non-sexed spiritual being.¹⁰³ At the same time, however, when Augustine asks rhetorically “Quid enim non pro suo genere ac pro suo modulo habet *similitudinem dei* quandoquidem deus fecit *omnia bona ualde* non ob aliud nisi quia ipse summe bonus est?” he teaches that all created things bear a likeness to God in some way because he created them and made them good, but this likeness is remote—a dim impression rather than a picture.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, this dim impression takes its fundamental form from the God who created it and so both masculine and feminine genders bear a likeness to the

eternal God who created them. Accordingly, God both encompasses and transcends all gender definitions: encompasses because they find their source in deity, transcends because the divine is infinitely more than just the sum of these two genders. Thus could mankind be created male and female in the image of God. Thus can Augustine and other Church Fathers speak of Christ in feminine terms, of female saints in masculine terms. Thus neither men nor women can be said to reflect the *imago Dei* in their bodies although both bodies bear a likeness.

Yet even such careful studies of Augustine as that by Kari Elisabeth Børresen seem to miss this point:

In spite of possession by both man and woman of a rational asexual soul, there remains a kind of congruity between the male body and the asexual soul. And so the *vir* does not experience, as does the *femina*, a duality between the two elements of his being.¹⁰⁵

Never mind for the moment that Augustine has stated in more than one work that the human body, male or female, in no way other than its upright carriage is capable of reflecting the *imago Dei*! Børresen insists that there must be a correlation between the divine image and bodily maleness. She does not argue a direct relationship as do Ruether and some others, but she still insists that because the man represents the complete image of God, and the woman only participates in the complete image when joined to him, the differentiation between the two is one-sided: man is the norm, and woman is different from man. Because the difference goes in only one direction, instead of both being mutually different from each other, Børresen argues that woman experiences a duality between the soul and the female body that is not shared by man.¹⁰⁶

Børresen's point brings us to the passage from *De trinitate* that most troubles Augustine's critics:

Sed uidendum est quomodo non sit contrarium quod dicit apostolus non mulierem sed uirum esse imaginem dei huic quod scriptum est in genesi: *Fecit deus hominem ad imaginem dei; fecit eum masculum et feminam; fecit eos et benedixit eos. Ad imaginem* quippe *dei* naturam ipsam humanam factam dicit quae sexu utroque completur, nec ab intellegenda imagine dei separat feminam. Dicto enim quod *fecit deus hominem ad imaginem dei, fecit eum*, inquit, *masculum et feminam*, uel certe alia distinctione, *masculum et feminam fecit eos*. Quomodo ergo per apostulum audiuius uirum esse imaginem dei unde caput uelare prohibetur, mulierem autem non et ideo ipsa hoc facere iubetur nisi, credo, illius esse quod iam dixi cum de natura humanae mentis agerem, mulierem cum uiro suo esse *imaginem dei* ut una imago sit tota illa substantia; cum autem ad adiutorium distribuitur, quod ad eam ipsam solam attinet non est imago dei; quod autem ad uirum solum attinet *imago dei est* tam plena atque integra quam in unum coniuncta muliere.¹⁰⁷

Margaret Farley interprets Augustine to mean that "only the male body was (in its characteristics of activity and power) in the image of God. Hence, women shared in the image fully only in so far as they were corporally joined to men or virginally freed from their bodies."¹⁰⁸ In order to support her interpretation, however, Farley has taken her understanding of the male metaphor from outside the context of Augustine's reflections on the Trinity. She interprets "the man" in terms of the greater physical strength and the classical concept of male activity in procreation (as opposed to female passivity in receiving into herself the vital essence carried only by men). While it is true that this symbolism of male activity and puissance was common in the late patristic era, the ideas of power and activity are not the metaphorical images that Augustine is invoking in Book XII of *De trinitate*. Augustine is exclusively concerned with the part of the rational soul that is defined by its ability to recognize and contemplate the eternal Trinity because it has been created

to that same triune image. In fact, it is the “female” function of the mind that is designated as active because it has charge of all temporal and material matters. And so the “female” function is diverted from the contemplation of God to tend to temporal matters, leaving the “male” function to continue uninterrupted in contemplation of the eternal:

Sicut de natura humanae mentis diximus quia et si tota contempletur ueritatem, *imago dei est*, et cum ex ea distribuitur aliquid et quadam intentione deriuatur ad actionem rerum temporalium, nihilominus ex qua parte conspectam consulit ueritatem *imago dei est*; ex qua uero intenditur in agenda inferiora non est imago dei.¹⁰⁹

Herein lies the nature of the “female” function’s inferiority: by tending to temporal matters (which are by definition not God) it does not reflect the *imago Dei*, and so by itself is not to be considered the image of God. Only when it turns away from temporal affairs and engages in contemplation of the eternal (is joined to the “man”), does it participate in the *imago Dei*.

Yet even in this more contextual understanding of the passage we must still wrestle with the fact that the “female” function is inferior to the “male” despite the fact that men and women are equally made to the image of God. That Augustine means this inferiority to be relational and functional (conditional) rather than qualitative and essential (natural) is not immediately apparent unless we keep in mind that Augustine’s focus is on how this relationship reveals the nature of the Trinity. These themes of condition (relationship and function) and nature (quality and essence) are discussed extensively when Augustine explores the nature of the Second Person of the Trinity, Christ, in the first several books of *De Trinitate*.

Up to Augustine's time, the Trinity had been discussed using the philosophical language of substance (essential being) and accident (appearance).¹¹⁰ Words of accident describe appearance or changeable traits and words of substance articulate what a thing or person is in terms of essential being. The limitations of language became increasingly problematic when grappling with the nature of the unlimited divinity, a point Augustine made early on in *De doctrina christiana* when he wrote "Non enim facile nomen, quod tantae excellentiae conueniat, inueniri potest."¹¹¹ When terms of accident and substance were used in reference to God, it was believed that God, being immutable, could not truly be said to have accidents, or changeable characteristics, and so accident words (adjectives such as good, wise, just, etc.) always become substance words (nouns) when used in reference to God: "Secundum hoc ergo dicuntur illa simplicia, quae principaliter uereque diuina sunt, quod non aliud est in eis qualitas, aliud substantia."¹¹² (E.g.: The statement, "God is just," does not mean that God possesses the quality of justice, but that God *is* justice.) In one of his most significant contributions to the development of Trinitarian theology, Augustine recognized the need for a language beyond substance and accident; he saw that any discussion of the Trinity also needed the language of relationship, for how else is fatherhood or sonship to be understood except in terms of relationship?¹¹³ Accordingly, the persons within the Trinity are distinguished by their relationship to each other, not by any kind of difference in accidents or substance. The characteristics of divinity were possessed equally and eternally by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, so they could not be rightly distinguished by accident; if Father, Son,

and Holy Spirit are all God, then they cannot be distinguished by substance. Co-equal, co-eternal. If it were not for the Incarnation the discussion might have ended there.

The Incarnation translated God out of the eternal and into the temporal in the person of Jesus Christ, the God-man. It brought into sharp relief both the relational, personal aspect of God's nature and the real distinction between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit within the Godhead. The Incarnation also implied an order, a hierarchy within the co-equal members of the Godhead itself, which led to the Arian heresy: the idea that Jesus Christ was created and of a like but different substance than the Father and the Holy Spirit because of his humanity. This view was defeated at the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE, but orthodox theologians still had to explain why Jesus had said that the Father was greater than he, and why St. Paul had written that Christ would be subject to the Father.¹¹⁴ Augustine addresses the problem by introducing the language of relationship, so that, while Christ retained all of the qualities and characteristics of divinity, in taking the role of a servant in the Incarnation, the Son subjected himself to the Father.¹¹⁵ This subjection was not one of nature (for Christ was not inferior in his substance to the other members of the Trinity) and so was not a matter of domination, but of love within the Godhead and of Christ's temporal condition (relationship) as the God-man.

The critical point in this discussion is that Christ loses none of the characteristics of deity by being in subjection to the Father, even though it did mean

that he set aside some of the prerogatives and dignities of deity in order to enter the temporal realm by becoming human.¹¹⁶

Non itaque immerito scriptura utrumque dicit, et *aequalem patri* filium, et patrem maiorem filio. Illud enim propter *formam dei*, hoc autem propter *formam serui* sine ulla confusione intellegitur. . . .Est ergo *dei filius deo patri natura aequalis, habitu minor*.¹¹⁷ (italics in the original)

Christ's inferiority and subjection were matters of his condition in the Incarnation and of his filial relationship to a heavenly father. They were willingly assumed by him out of love for the Father and for humanity, not as a result of any sort of coercive mastery by God the Father over a somehow lesser or weaker divinity.

In this same way, the representations of gender in Augustine's psychology of the soul also reflect the *imago Dei* in a more complex way than even Augustine explicitly states, for they reflect the intricate mystery whereby Christ could be considered both equal to the Father and yet subject to the Father without losing anything of his nature as deity. In light of this parallel, the "woman" images Christ in a way that the "man" does not, as the "man" images the Father in a way that the "woman" does not; yet, even as the Son and the Father are one divine substance, distinguished not by nature but by relationship, and joined by the love that is the Holy Spirit, so the "woman" and the "man" are one human substance made to the image of God, distinguished not by nature but by relationship, and joined by the love that one ought rightly to bear for oneself and others. Augustine believed that such subordination existed among the very Persons of the Godhead without loss of equality, and accordingly he and those who accepted, preserved, and transmitted his theology of the Trinity could consider subordination as just and good not solely

because of their own cultural contexts, but because it was exemplified within the Godhead itself.

Therefore, when Augustine wrote that “even before her sin woman had been made to be ruled by her husband and to be submissive and subject to him,”¹¹⁸ he did not have in mind a relationship of domination and servitude between husband and wife. In Augustine’s mind the ruling and subject positions in the prelapsarian social relationship between the man and the woman would have been based upon mutual love, reflecting the relationships within the Trinity, rather than a relationship of power and powerlessness. This reflection of the Trinity meant a relationship in which each spouse for love of the other would set aside himself or herself for the sake and good of the other, rather than each looking to his or her own self-interests out of self-love.

Augustine makes this point explicit in *De Genesi ad litteram* when he writes:

Hi duo amores—quorum alter sanctus est, alter inmundus, alter socialis, alter priuatus, alter communi utilitati consulens propter supernam societatem, alter etiam rem communem in potestatem propriam redigens propter adrogantem dominationem. . . . alter hoc uolens proximo quod sibi, alter subicere proximum sibi, alter propter proximi utilitatem regens proximum, alter propter suam.¹¹⁹

The self-love that dominates and seeks its own advantage is an “unclean” love, characteristic of fallen humanity. Thus what began in Paradise as a relationship in which one ruled for the good of the other and the other submitted for the good of the one, in the image of the relationships within the Trinity, became perverted through sin into a relationship of domination and subjection. Yet, even though subjection to the husband was Eve’s sentence for her disobedience, Augustine clearly states that this punishment was not given to her because of her nature (substance) as

woman (nor by implication Adam's as a man), but as a result of her sin: "hoc enim uiro potius sententia dei detulit et maritum habere dominum meruit mulieris non natura, sed culpa."¹²⁰ Kari Børresen notes that:

As for the subordination of woman to man, it belongs to the order of creation and does not constitute a punishment in itself. But when it degenerates into a kind of slavery as a consequence of the first sin, then it becomes a punishment. Opposing himself to this kind of servitude Augustine quotes the texts of Paul, like that of Gal. V, 13; "By love serve one another", and I Tim. II, 12, both of which describe the kind of subordination ordained by the Creator.¹²¹

Sin twisted the image of loving relationship within the Trinity that Adam and Eve originally shared in their innocence into the perverted relationship outside of the Trinity of male domination and female subjection. For Augustine, only salvation could bring the cacophony of marital relationships as images of the fallen "male" and "female" functions within the soul back into the harmony of the prelapsarian perfection of mutual love that imaged the relationships within the Trinity. Only God's gracious intervention could restore the "male" and "female" functions of the mind to their pre-Fall unity and cooperation, as well as restoring the individual believer to the harmony of right relationship to God.

The exploration of the scope and implications of Augustine's theology and psychology of gender could fill a minor library. This brief overview seeks merely to recreate in some fashion the way in which Augustine understood his own views about gender and women to be both good and just. In order to find out how his readers understood his views, we must look both to the evidence for the dissemination of the works under consideration and to the writings of those who followed him.

5. Gregory the Great

Separated by time and culture from Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine, the fourth Latin Doctor, Gregory the Great, holds an intriguing place in the understanding and promulgation of the teachings of the three earlier Doctors in the Western Church. By the end of the sixth century, the authority of the three Doctors was well established and Gregory was thoroughly versed in their writings. Their views permeate his own writings, and so he may rightly serve as a measure of how their works were understood and how their views influenced and were developed in his own psychology and theology of gender.

Gregory's *Moralia in Iob* is an excellent example of three-fold biblical exegesis (historical, moral, and allegorical), and the psychological wisdom shown by Gregory sometimes astonishes the reader with its relevance to even our own problems in the age of technology.¹²² Patristic influence permeates the book, for Gregory pulls together the received wisdom of the earlier Fathers and applies it to the text, drawing in clarifying passages from other parts of scripture and adding his own digressions when the opportunity for instruction presents itself. In so doing, he brings not only the interpretations and doctrines of the earlier Doctors into his own day, but adds his own considerable insight into human nature in a way that reinforces their teachings and enables his audiences to understand more fully the loftiness of earlier teaching. Thus, Gregory's treatment of Eve and of Job's wife and daughters in the *Moralia* can reveal both how the views of the earlier Fathers were understood and the attitude of Gregory himself toward women.

Job's wife plays an unattractive and equivocal role in Gregory's exegesis of Job. In the biblical book, Satan afflicts Job (and, by extension, his wife) with a series of increasingly personal disasters and torments. First Job loses all of his material wealth, then all of his children, and finally his own health. At the height of his suffering, Job's wife comes to him and asks why he keeps clinging to his integrity, why does he not just go ahead and curse God and die.¹²³ Ann Astell demonstrates that Gregory interprets Job's wife's role in the story as parallel to Eve's role in the story of the Fall—she is a source of temptation just as Ambrose portrays Eve in *De paradiso*.¹²⁴ But was she a source or a tool? There is a fine distinction between the two, but it is a distinction that Gregory himself makes. Gregory's treatment of Job's wife is quite circumspect: even though her part in the story of Job is not particularly admirable, at no time does Gregory ever indicate or imply that she is wicked or perverse by nature. Instead, he emphasizes in his historical interpretation that she was goaded by Satan, was used, like Eve, as the devil's tool in tempting Job to depart from his devotion and curse God. Gregory does not call the wife wicked, but calls her persuasion wicked.¹²⁵ This circumspection recalls Ambrose's point in *De paradiso* that what is called Eve's fault indicates the weakness of the senses of the flesh, not inherent wickedness in the woman herself.¹²⁶ Gregory emphasizes this element in his historical interpretation of Job's response to his wife's advice to give up his simplicity, curse God, and die. Job compares his wife to a "foolish woman," and Gregory explains that:

Sanctus igitur uir ut oppressam mentem inter uulnera mulceat in flagellorum doloribus blandimenta donorum pensat dicens: *Si bona accepimus de manu*

*Domini mala quare non sustineamus? Vbi et bene praemittit: Locuta es quasi una ex ineptis mulieribus. Quia enim sensus prauae mulieris non autem sexus in uitio est, nequaquam ait: Locuta es quasi una ex mulieribus sed ex ineptis mulieribus, ut uidelicet ostendatur quia quod prauum sapit, accedentis stultitiae, non autem conditae sit naturae.*¹²⁷

In this passage Gregory not only evokes Ambrose's comments about Deborah and Augustine's comments about Eve, but uses the biblical text to prove the point that women are not by nature foolish or wicked. Job's wife gives wicked advice not because of her sex, but because she is unwittingly being used as a tool for temptation by Satan. Thus, Job's wife not only serves as a parallel to Eve, but also as a representation of what Gregory calls "carnal" Christians within the Church: those who are used by Satan to tempt and try the Church, and whose fickleness allows them to be so used. In like manner, Gregory explains elsewhere that she represents the flesh through which Satan tempts individual believers to sin by appealing to the pleasures of the senses.¹²⁸ Gregory's moral and allegorical interpretations of Job's wife are not particularly flattering to her or to women, especially when he says that people who exhibit fickleness can rightly be called women:

*Quia igitur sancti uiri sic sciunt foris aduersa tolerare, ut intus etiam nouerint peruersa corrigere, dicatur recte: Locuta es quasi une ex stultis mulieribus. Quia enim electis dicitur: Viriliter agite et confortetur cor uestrum, mentes carnalium quae fluxa Deo intentione deseruiunt, non immerito mulieres uocantur.*¹²⁹

Gregory points out later, however, that fickleness is not reserved only for Job's wife or women when he refers to Job himself as the fickle prophet who represents the changeable aspect of human nature that is the punishment for sin,¹³⁰ thus balancing his association of fickleness with women by applying it not only to a

man, but to Job himself. Gregory often balances the potentially negative effect of some of his interpretations of women by citing men as parallel examples of the points he is making, examples that show men in the same light as Job's wife. For example, although Gregory interprets Job's wife as the carnal Christians, "carnalium in Ecclesia,"¹³¹ his examples of such carnality are men:

Sciendum uero est quia carnales in Ecclesia aliquando metu, aliquando uero audacia suadere peruersa contendunt; cumque ipsi uel pusillanimitate uel elatione deficiunt, haec iustorum cordibus infundere quasi ex dilectione moluntur. Carnalem uidelicet mentem Petrus ante Redemptoris mortem resurrectionemque retinebat; carnali mente Saruiae filius duci suo Dauid adiunctus inhaeserat; sed tamen unus formidine alter elatione peccabat. . . . Male itaque suadentes, angeli apostatae appellatione censentur, qui blandis uerbis ad illicita quasi diligentes trahunt.¹³²

In a balancing positive interpretation of a woman, Gregory gives an example of a true "spiritual" Christian by adding the story of the woman in the crowd who touched Jesus' garment and was healed. Though the crowds pressed against Christ, they were in reality distant from him; this woman humbly touched the hem of his garment, but was so close to him that his power went out and healed her affliction.¹³³ Thus Gregory uses a positive example of a woman to indicate the true "spiritual" Christians within the Church, and uses not only the wife of Job but also St. Peter and another biblical man to represent allegorically the carnal Christians within the Church. Given the lengths to which Gregory went to provide male examples of the weaknesses Job's wife represented, it is difficult to conclude that he was trying to associate woman *qua* woman with these frailties. Rather he uses the narrative of a specific woman in a specific context to illustrate a spiritual truth that applies to both sexes. The *Moralia* is hardly a misogynist text simply because of Gregory's spiritual

interpretation of the wife's role in Job's story. The actions and advice of Job's wife in the biblical narrative do not admit of a positive interpretation on any level, but Gregory carefully tries to avoid any kind of condemnation of Job's wife as a woman by providing examples of women who illustrate the strengths that were lacking in Job's wife and examples of men who embodied those weaknesses.

Just as Gregory interprets Job's wife in a variety of ways, he does the same with Job's daughters, who have no less than four diverse interpretations. Gregory explains how more than one meaning can be appropriately taken from any one person or object in scripture when he says that, "Quia natura uniuscuiusque rei ex diuersitate componitur, in sacro eloquio per rem quamlibet licite diuersa figurantur."¹³⁴ Thus the daughters variously represent the "less gifted" faithful who are the hearers of preaching; the three classes of the faithful (preachers, the continent, and the married); Noah, Daniel, and Job; and the three theological virtues, faith, hope, and love. In the first two interpretations we can see the association of weakness with women, but the last two interpretations give no indication of this association and we are faced with the complication of women representing men, and heroes of the faith at that. The example of Job's daughters demonstrates that in exegetical works, for Gregory as for the earlier Latin Doctors, female and male were fluid metaphors that were interpreted in a variety of ways.¹³⁵

Another work by Gregory that remained popular for many centuries is the *Dialogi*. Although some scholars dispute the authorship of the *Dialogi*,¹³⁶ the men and women of the Middle Ages did not question whether or not the work had been

written by Gregory the Great and thus the weight of his name joined with the subject matter of saints' lives helped to shape medieval concepts of gender and of men and women. In telling the legends of various saints, Gregory included several that either featured women or gave them a prominent supporting role. He includes tales of both good and bad women, just as he includes tales of good and bad men—only there are more tales about men than about women. By examining Gregory's treatment of some of these women and men, however, we may come to a better understanding of his ideas about gender.

The tale of St. Galla, the bearded woman, amuses us because we usually associate bearded women with cartoons and not with early medieval saints. Gregory himself seems aware of the potential humor of the story, for he introduces it by saying that it was told to him "*personarum grauium atque fidelium . . . relatione.*"¹³⁷ Galla was married as a young girl, but became a widow only a year after her marriage. Young and wealthy, she could have easily married again on her own terms but she chose to devote herself to chastity as a bride of Christ. Her nature was unusually passionate, however, and physicians warned her that if she did not marry again, she would grow a beard. Galla cared nothing for the potential disfigurement, and, entering a convent shortly after her husband's death, grew a beard as had been predicted. Undaunted, she lived a life of prayer and service, happy in the love of her spiritual spouse, and as her death approached, was called to heaven by St. Peter, who told her when she would die and who would die soon after her.

Gregory tells the story of St. Galla in the fourth Book of the *Dialogi*, as he is offering proof for the life of the soul after death. Thus the brief Life is not meant to be a commentary on women or gender, but for that very reason it offers insight, especially in the relationship between Galla's highly passionate nature and the beard. By refusing to be ruled by her passions, Galla endures the disfigurement of a beard, perhaps as a way of symbolizing her "manly" strength of virtue in restraining her nature.¹³⁸ In her later years she suffers a further attack on her physical femininity when "cancro ulcere in mamilla percussa est."¹³⁹ At no time, however, does Gregory make any reference to manly strength or steadfastness on the part of St. Galla. Rather he extols her love of Christ and praises her simplicity, generous charity, and indefatigable prayer without ever qualifying these virtues as characteristics of a particular gender. He attempts no moral or allegorical interpretation of the phenomenon of the beard, so the reader is left to attach whatever significance, if any, he or she may deem appropriate.

Among the lives of male saints that Gregory includes in the *Dialogi* is the story of Equitius, who dreamed one night that, "adsistente angelo eunuchizari se uidit."¹⁴⁰ As with Jerome earlier, Equitius (and Gregory, apparently) considered this symbolic castration highly desirable, for it meant that one was no longer subject to the temptations of lust, and that one had moved closer to the ideal of the *virum perfectum*. Thus Gregory, like Jerome and Ambrose, illustrates that for men it was considered desirable to at least metaphorically lose one's sexual ability for the sake of

God and that virginity and sexual purity were primary concerns for men, as well as for women.

The most renowned story in the *Dialogi* is Gregory's celebrated *Life of St. Benedict* in Book II where, among other vignettes, we find the story of a visit Benedict makes to see his sister, Scholastica, shortly before her death. As with most of the other episodes in the *Life*, this meeting between Benedict and Scholastica serves a didactic purpose. Gregory mentions the story as an example of how Benedict could not always obtain what he desired when, in the story, he wanted to return to his monastery at nightfall but Scholastica desired him to remain and talk with her. If Gregory had any qualms about crediting women with power or making them appear stronger than men, he could easily have left this story out since there was no other *Life* written about Benedict to contradict him.¹⁴¹ The lack of any other corroborating source of information about Benedict has led many to question how much of the *Life* is based on information from outside sources and how much is the product of Gregory's own instructional agenda. Terrence Kardong notes that "even if the basic outline is accurate, the framework has been completely decorated to serve Gregory's didactic purposes . . . [teaching] us more about Gregory than about Benedict."¹⁴² What, then, does the *Life* teach us about Gregory's attitude toward women?

The episode with Scholastica illustrates the lesson that even holy men such as Benedict cannot always get what they desire from God, but there are other lessons taught through the story as well. One of the most important lessons is that love is

more important than the letter of the monastic rule, the other is that a woman can be stronger spiritually than a man without being a threat to him. After spending a rare day with his sister, Benedict desires to return to his monastery. Scholastica, however, desires him to stay the night so that they might continue their conversation. When Benedict insists upon leaving, Scholastica weeps and prays that God will prevent him from leaving. In response to her tears and prayer, God sends a storm that prevents Benedict from traveling and the monk is forced to remain the night with his sister, talking with her to the benefit of both, as she had desired. Gregory concludes:

Qua de re dixi eum uoluisse aliquid, sed minime potuisse, quia, si uenerabilis uiri mentem aspicimus, dubium non est quod eandem serenitatem uoluerit, in qua descenderat, permanere. Sed contra hoc quod uoluit, in uirtute omnipotentis Dei ex feminae pectore miraculum inuenit. Nec mirum quod plus illo femina, quae diu fratrem uidere cupiebat, in eodem tempore ualuit. Quia enim iuxta Iohannis uocem *Deus caritas est*, iusto ualde iudicio illa plus potuit, quae amplius amauit.¹⁴³

This particular scene with Scholastica, especially if it came from Gregory's own mind instead of an outside source, teaches us specifically that Gregory had no qualms about portraying a woman as spiritually stronger than a man. Yet Gregory does not focus his audience's attention on the idea of Benedict being humbled by having his desires thwarted by a woman. Rather, he emphasizes the Augustinian teaching that love is the central practice of any religious life and shows that, in this most important area of love, Scholastica is stronger than her brother. Since Scholastica's love is greater than Benedict's, God honors her prayer over her brother's wish to return to his monastery, or as Thomas D. Hill notes, "it is God's will to respect the law of charity more than the monastic rule."¹⁴⁴

It seems odd, however, that Gregory does not use Augustine's profound exploration of the nature of the soul in Book IV of the *Dialogi*, in which he discusses the nature of the soul, especially since he does refer to the idea that sin causes humankind to fall from a more noble nature into a less noble state in which they are no longer able to contemplate the heavenly things Adam once contemplated. Most of the book is taken up with further stories of holy men and women (including St. Galla) that are simply intended to prove that the soul does exist after death and that it continues on in anticipation of either eternal reward or eternal punishment. Such an approach, however, may be a matter of Gregory's intended purpose, since the *Dialogi* is not an exegetical work like *Moralia*. Rather, the *Dialogi* is an inspirational work, meant to encourage in its readers a love of heaven and humility in how they regard themselves.¹⁴⁵ As such, Gregory may have considered the radically different style and simplicity of hagiography a better vehicle for such lessons, demonstrating that he knew that narrative can often accomplish what propositional discourse cannot.¹⁴⁶

Gregory did not, however, consider theology or church government inappropriate subjects in his letters to certain women. These letters are almost all to royal or great noblewomen, though some were written to the young daughters of a friend, and in them Gregory does not seem to be condescending, nor does he shy away from the obvious political power that some of these women wield. His tone varies according to the degree of relationship he has with the woman to whom he is writing. For instance, Gregory's letters to the Patrician, Rusticana, are tender in tone, as one would address a long-time, comfortable friend:

Unum uero aegre suscepi, quia in eisdem epistulis ad me, quod semel esse poterat, saepius dicebatur “ancilla uestra” et “ancilla uestra.” Ego enim, qui per episcopatus onera seruus sum omnium factus, qua ratione mihi se illa ancillam dicit, cuius susceptum ante episcopatum proprius fui?¹⁴⁷

Even as Gregory chides his friend for her excessive humility, he seems to vie with her for the status of servanthood. He continues the letter with a report of his ill-health and commiseration with Rusticiana for her bodily ailments. Similarly, when Gregory writes to the Patrician Clementina, he speaks with fatherly concern: “De nobis autem, sicut re uera carissimae et filiae, fiducialiter in cunctis praesumite et, quia de uestra cupimus prosperitate semper audire, discurrentibus nos saepius epistulis releuate.”¹⁴⁸ By comparison, the letters to the Abbesses Respecta and Thalassia are more formal and authoritative in tone, but they are meant to be taken as legal charters for their monasteries, so this tone can be excused.¹⁴⁹ The letters to the empresses and queens often accompany letters to their husbands or sons, but there is little, if any, appreciable difference in tone or content, for he speaks to the women as wielders of power and as advisors to their husbands and sons. Indeed, the fact that he addresses these royal women in the same terms with which he addresses their husbands indicates Gregory’s knowledge of and respect for the capabilities of women.

Yet not only does Gregory address women, he maintains a fairly active correspondence with many of them, such as Brunhild, queen of the Franks in Austrasia. In the letters to Queen Brunhild, he obviously relies upon her to implement matters of church government and discipline in the Merovingian realm:

Ut ergo haec uobis cura ante oculos creatoris nostri in fructu sit, christianitatis uestrae sollicitudo diligenter inuigilet et nullum, qui sub regno uestro est, ad sacrum ordinem ex datione pecuniae uel quarumlibet patrocínio personarum seu proximitatis iure patiaturs accedere.¹⁵⁰

In Gregory's letters we can see that his own relationships with these women were always respectful, at times affectionate. He treats them as fellow laborers and co-defenders with their husbands and sons of their earthly realms, and with him of the heavenly realm of the Church. But is this appearance of egalitarianism on Gregory's part limited to powerful royal women or does it extend to all women? Our answer may best be found in what is arguably his most widespread and influential work, the *Liber regulae pastoralis*, and in his homilies.

The *Liber regulae pastoralis* is a guide for the selection, conduct, and instructional responsibilities of "rulers" or bishops in the church. It contains detailed instructions on how to exhort diverse peoples to greater lives of godliness: all must be exhorted in the same truths, but because there is such a diversity of temperament and personality these truths must be presented in different ways—a difficult and challenging job for any preacher/pastor, as Gregory readily acknowledges.¹⁵¹ The book contains a few passages that directly address the differences between men and women, but on the whole Gregory assumes that the strengths and weaknesses of personality and temperament that he discusses are *human*, not belonging exclusively or predominantly to men or to women. He carries this assumption over into his *Homiliae in Euangelium*, which also may be used to illustrate and clarify the occasionally ambiguous wording in Gregory's advice.

The first of the passages that address the difference between men and women says: “Aliter igitur ammonendi sunt uiri, atque aliter feminae, quia illis grauius, istis uero sunt iniungenda leuiora, ut illos magna exerceant, istas autem lenia demulcendo conuertant.”¹⁵² What does Gregory mean by directing “weightier” admonitions towards men and “lighter” admonitions toward women? His use of *exerceant* ‘drill, exercise, practice’ and *lenia* ‘smooth, soft, mild or gentle’ in the second part of the sentence suggests that Gregory had in mind not so much a difference in mental abilities as a plain difference in psychology: men should be challenged (another meaning of *exerceo* is ‘harass’) and women should be won or persuaded.¹⁵³ Since he is addressing preachers, however, the best way to understand what Gregory means by this statement is to study his own practice in his own homilies.

Gregory’s homilies on the Gospel were preached *ad populum*, to an audience of the general population, during the early years of his pontificate (591–92).¹⁵⁴ These homilies became quite influential in the early Middle Ages, as Thomas N. Hall notes when he writes:

By the ninth century, these were the best known and most influential collection of exegetical homilies in the Latin West, abundantly represented in the inventories of monastic libraries, and often named in Carolingian capitularies, conciliar decrees, and episcopal statutes which specify that priests should own a set of Gregory’s Gospel homilies.¹⁵⁵

Thus, the Gospel homilies not only provide an illustration of Gregory’s own practice in preaching, but also give us a context for understanding his advice on how men and women should be encouraged differently. When he contrasts women and men in this collection of homilies, Gregory generally does so to the praise and honor of women

(especially female saints) and to shame and challenge men to lives of greater love and devotion. In Homily 3 Gregory praises St. Felicity for this purpose:

Considerate, fratres carissimi, in femineo corpore uirile pectus. . . . Consideremus, fratres, hanc feminam, consideremus nos qui membris corporis uiri sumus, in eius comparatione quid existimabimur. Saepe namque agenda aliqua bona proponimus, sed si unus contra nos leuissimus sermo ab ore irridentis eruperit, ab intentione actionis nostrae fracti protinus et confusi resilimus. . . . Cum ergo ad illud terribile examen districtus iudex uenerit, quid nos uiri dicemus cum eius feminae gloriam uiderimus? De debilitate mentis suae quae tunc erit uiris excusatio, quando haec ostenditur quae cum saeculo sexum uicit?¹⁵⁶

Even though Gregory mentions the body of Felicity and the bodies of his male listeners, the manliness that he exalts in this passage is not one of the body and has nothing to do with sex or worldly power, but rather has to do with spiritual strength. In this case, Gregory holds up Felicity as an example of spiritual strength (manliness) that puts Gregory and his fellow men in the body to shame for their spiritual weakness, deliberately reversing the ideas of gender and making Felicity a manly (strong) woman, and making himself and other men womanly (weak) in the spiritual sense. In this way Gregory demonstrates what he means by laying heavier injunctions (the burden of shame) upon men while winningly converting women with the example of a strong and triumphant woman (the lightness of hope). One phrase presents a problem, however: what does Gregory mean when he says that Felicity *sexum uicit* ‘overcame her sex’?

Gregory is not the first of the Doctors to use this phrase and he uses it again in Homily 14 when speaking of the various inhabitants of the heavenly kingdom:

Ibi fideles uiri, quos a uirilitalis suae robore uoluptas saeculi emollire non potuit; ibi sanctae mulieres, quae cum saeculo et sexum uicerunt; ibi pueri, qui

hic annos suos moribus transcenderunt; ibi senes, quos hic et aetas debiles reddidit, et uirtus operis non reliquit.¹⁵⁷

When speaking of *sexum uicerunt* ‘overcoming their sex’ Gregory, like Ambrose and Jerome earlier, means that these women overcame the fact that they had less physical strength than men, which put the women at a disadvantage. Gillian Clark explains the late antique commonplace that women were weak, saying: “What was this weakness? Women, it was thought, were physically hampered by lack of strength and especially by child-bearing.”¹⁵⁸ As with Jerome, Ambrose, and Augustine before him, Gregory thought women possessed inferior physical strength, which made them less likely to endure harsh conditions and also rendered them less physically capable of enforcing rule over men. The physical strength of men, on the other hand, enabled them to endure harsh treatment and conditions. It also allowed them to enforce their rule upon other men as well as women.¹⁵⁹ Therefore, any woman who rose above her physical disadvantage either by persevering steadfastly in the face of torture as did Felicity or by ruling effectively over men as in the case of Deborah overcame her sex. Women were believed to be more likely to give in to threats and harsh treatment, thus showing the weakness of their sex by seeking relief from the physical pain and pursuing the comforts of worldly pleasures. Women, who could be physically overpowered by men, were therefore generally considered to be incapable of ruling men.

These physical “facts” formed the basis of the figural meanings of ‘man = strong-minded’ and ‘woman = frailty of mind’ that Gregory sets forth in the *Moralia*.¹⁶⁰ The mind can change genders, so to speak, when strengthened by love

for Christ and the study of holy books, thus providing the way for women to overcome the physical disadvantages of their sex through becoming strong-minded in Christ. Since Gregory uses “manly” to refer to the strong-minded, and he uses the term as a description not only of women, but also of men who do not succumb to worldly pleasures, he apparently does not consider maleness to be the equivalent of “manly.” Rather his statements refer to the strength of mind that characterized the saints and enabled both women and men steadfastly to contemplate and love the eternal God, thus attaining the *virum perfectum*, instead of falling into the distractions of temporal pleasures.

Later in the *Liber regulae pastoralis* Gregory repeats Jerome’s and Augustine’s statements that married people focus on temporal matters such as spouse and family, thereby remaining in a state of weakness of the soul or mind that prevents the contemplation of the Divine, and that this weakness afflicts both men and women:

Itaque animus Christianorum coniugum et infirmus et fidelis, qui et plene cuncta temporalia despiciere non ualet, et tamen aeternis se coniungere per desiderium ualet, quamuis in delectatione carnis interim iacet, supernae spei refectioe conualescat.¹⁶¹

Gregory also refers to the carnal union of marriage as a yoke that “ad curas mundi . . . inclinatur”¹⁶² although, unlike Jerome, he does not maintain that it is impossible to contemplate the divine when in a married state. The weakness of mind that afflicts the married is not limited to just the woman, nor is it a result of her involvement. Rather the temporal duties and responsibilities of marriage and family life result in a weakness of the mind, an inability to maintain consistently the contemplation of the Divine that is the defining characteristic, the “manly” strength,

of chaste men and women. Gregory describes family life as a binding and a burden throughout the section treating the married and the unmarried; marriage is a state of affairs that renders opportunities for single-minded meditation upon the Godhead almost non-existent.

Singleness, on the other hand, Gregory believes to be a freedom and a lightness. The freedom can be understood as release from the bondage of marriage but we must ask what Gregory means by “lightness.” Since it is contrasted with the “burden” of marital life, this lightness must be seen as a positive matter, and such an interpretation can illuminate the earlier dilemma presented by Gregory’s suggestion that women be won over by “light” things. There is an undercurrent of debate in some patristic writings on virginity as to whether or not women should be held to the same ascetic standards as men because of their weaker physical bodies. Jerome seems to have considered ascetic rigor equally appropriate for women and men alike, but Ambrose advised women to be more moderate in their ascetic practices, and Augustine’s monastic rule showed the same moderation toward men and women alike.¹⁶³ Gregory, too, seems to follow his more moderate forebears, encouraging bishops to challenge men with “weightier injunctions,” but to win the conversion of women with “light ones.” Thus, Gregory’s “lightness” may also have been an indication of a preference for less burdensome practices for women than for men, in acknowledgment of their different physiological make-up.

In his letters and homilies and in his exegetical and inspirational writings Gregory does not hesitate to acknowledge the ability of women to wield power in a

wise manner for the good of both heavenly and earthly kingdoms. His writings reflect and redeploy in his own time and cultural context the teachings of the earlier Doctors, teachings that acknowledge the ability of women to be strong and valiant in faith and a reflection both in themselves and in their marriages of the Trinity in Unity that is God.

6. Conclusion

This brief overview of the influential thought and writings of the four Latin Doctors regarding gender and women has demonstrated that these writings uniformly project neither misogyny nor anxiety toward women. On the contrary, these Fathers seemed on occasion to be at some pains to show that there was nothing in the nature of the female sex that should prevent women from attaining the same spiritual heights available to men or hinder them from effectively wielding political power. These Fathers considered the social subordination of women to be indicated by the order of creation, and not to be a result of any inherent flaw or defect or lesser ability in the body, mind, or nature of the female sex. That subordination was considered just and good, however, because it reflected the relationships within the Trinity, in which Christ, while fully divine in every aspect, for the sake of love willingly took upon himself the role of a servant by being incarnated in human flesh. Thus women, both individually and in their relationships with their husbands, carried in themselves the *imago Dei* just as much as men. In this light, not just in the light of cultural context, the four Latin Doctors could see their teachings on women and their place in society

and the Church as just and good, reflecting even the relationships within the just and good triune Being of God.

In discussing both the nature of the Trinity and the idea of the *virum perfectum*, both Augustine and Jerome encountered the limitations and inadequacy of language to express thoughts about God and about relationship with God. As a personal being, God could be referred to by personal pronouns, but as a spiritual being, God possessed no sex and so the masculine pronouns used when speaking about God were at the same time appropriate in indicating that a person was being referred to, but inappropriate in that they assigned a sex, and by extension a specific gender, to a spiritual being. The grammatical genders within the Latin and Greek languages further complicated the problem, but also gave rise to metaphors and meanings beyond the literal denotations of words that expressed certain concepts with greater facility than would have been possible otherwise, such as Augustine's extended meditation on Christ as the feminine *Sapientia* in *De trinitate* and *De doctrina christiana*, or Ambrose's depiction of Christ with a female body, nourishing believers with his breasts. In the same way, Jerome portrayed both female and male followers of chastity as *viri perfecti*, Ambrose lauded both a female and a male cross-dresser, Augustine describes how God created the first human as simultaneously male and female, and Gregory depicts female saints taking on masculine features and male saints being made eunuchs by God as they pursued the goal of chaste perfection in their desire to know and love God through prayer and study.

This fluidity of gender among the chaste reflected the fluidity of gender representations of Christ and God in patristic writings and came about as a direct result of entering into a relationship with God. The Latin language, and Greek also, had difficulty adequately conveying this relationship too, however, for it involved gendered beings, the chaste, interacting with a being transcendently Other—not so much non-gendered as metagendered. This metagendered Other was such not because it was the sum of the masculine, feminine, and neuter genders, but because it encompassed and transcended these genders, indeed, was itself the origin and source of the genders and everything good associated with them. Jacqueline Murray points out that “all identities are constructed against an Other, all identities are relational,” thus, as men and women committed themselves to virginity, the *virum perfectum* became the identity they sought for themselves, an identity defined by its relationship to the transcendent, metagendered Other, the triune God.¹⁶⁴ Entry into this relationship, into God’s transcendent society, turned the relationship between the masculine and feminine genders inside out, reorienting them in a radically different direction away from each other and towards Christ.

CHAPTER III: THE SINS OF THE SONS: EARLY ANGLO-SAXON THEOLOGIES OF GENDER

1. Questions Concerning Inheritance

The arrival of the Gregorian Mission in Kent in 597 CE inaugurated the joining of two cultures (that of the Roman church and that of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms) that had had little direct official interaction from the time that Rome abandoned its British province in 410 CE until Augustine and his fellow missionaries arrived.¹ (This is not to say that there was no interaction with Christianity during the interval, for the Celtic church had remained active after the collapse of the Roman province, but the interaction seems to have had little effect upon the Anglo-Saxons.²) While the Roman mission gained ground in Kent, Irish missionaries were preaching and teaching in Northumbria. The Irish church operated rather independently from Rome, but it still possessed the writings of Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, and later of Gregory, and these four among others were often cited in Irish exegetical writings.³ The confluence of the three cultures, Irish, Anglo-Saxon, and Roman, proved fruitful and held important ramifications for the future of Christian culture in the West. The intersection of preliterate Anglo-Saxon culture and literate Celtic and Roman Christianity continues to present an interesting set of problems to scholars who try to measure how the arrival of Christianity and the writings of the Latin Doctors may have influenced Anglo-Saxon concepts of gender and what impact those changes may have had on social attitudes towards women.

One distinct result of the arrival of Christianity was the rapid proliferation of monastic foundations. The activity and influence of Anglo-Saxon women in the spread of monastic Christianity sheds light on the place of women in the upper echelons of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, giving us clues about preconversion attitudes toward women. This activity also provides insight into their place within the church, helping us to understand how pre-conversion attitudes blended with the ideas promulgated by the Latin Doctors and then manifested themselves in the deeds and writings of the new Anglo-Saxon converts.

As Christianity took root in the island kingdoms, women of noble and royal Anglo-Saxon birth contributed to and participated in monastic learning on the continent as well as at home.¹ The Anglo-Saxon slave-become-queen, Balthild, was instrumental in the re-establishment of the foundation at Chelles in western Francia, which was one of the chosen destinations of several royal women from the island who wanted to pursue religious education before England established its own monastic culture.² This same double monastery, under the leadership of Abbess Bertila, helped found English monasteries by providing books as well as men and women from its own community.³ The significance of this relationship between the continental double monasteries and the royal houses of Anglo-Saxon England is that royal women valued and participated in the life of religious observance and education.⁴ When the opportunity for such was not available in their own lands, these women with the means to do so sought the religious life on the continent, as did men. Peter Hunter Blair demonstrates that women's lack of opportunity for religious life and

education in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms before the mid-seventh century was not the result of opposition to women's education from either the church or Anglo-Saxon culture, but rather was because of the tenuous foothold that the church had among the kingdoms at that time.⁵ Sarah Foot notes that once the monastic movement caught hold,

The picture of female monasticism that can be constructed from the sources for the period before 900 is one of a vibrant dynamic institution of economic and spiritual significance whose protagonists were evenly spread over most of the Anglo-Saxon areas of Britain.⁶

Part of this dynamism can be attributed to the new opportunities monasticism afforded to royal women, both for deepening their understanding and participation in the new religion and for providing an innovative way to participate in Anglo-Saxon society. Henrietta Leyser observes that "the high profile such women achieve would indeed seem to be explicable only if Christianity was in fact offering a continuation, albeit with significant variations, of roles in which aristocratic women were already well versed."⁷ The responsibilities of running an important household and seeing to its continuing smooth operation fitted noble and royal Anglo-Saxon women perfectly to the responsibilities of running monastic foundations. The diplomatic roles played by royal women also prepared them well for the ruling of monastic foundations, as noted by Carol Neuman de Vegvar:

By supporting the establishment of monastic foundations, Anglo-Saxon kings were able to provide a niche and position of rank for some of their female relatives, from which they might draw upon their diplomatic talents, in an intermediate position between church and state, just as their secular sisters provided the same kind of social and diplomatic bonding within and between kingdoms.⁸

The diplomatic roles expanded to include the local communities, also, since the monastic foundations often served the spiritual needs of areas that had no other place of Christian worship in the early conversion period. Thus, the royal abbesses formed a link between the king and the community outside of the social structure of the royal kin group and retainers.

Such abbesses also had considerable latitude in establishing a Rule for their new foundations. The *Rule of St. Benedict* had not yet gained ascendancy as the standard of monastic observance, therefore the Rules of most of the new Anglo-Saxon foundations were probably like the Rule established by Benedict Biscop for Wearmouth and Jarrow, compilations or adaptations of the Benedictine and other Rules practiced in earlier continental monasteries, designed to fit the goals and circumstances of the particular foundation.⁹ The Anglo-Saxons also had the example of the Frankish double monasteries, which frequently combined elements of the Benedictine and Columbanian Rules, as well as parts of the Rule established by Caesarius of Arles.¹⁰ The continental example contributed to the rise of the English double monasteries, occupied by both men and women, and ruled by abbesses who were usually prominent members of Anglo-Saxon royal families. Neuman de Vegvar notes that

As at the Frankish double monasteries, the rule and consequently the custom of abbess and community varied substantially among the Anglo-Saxon double houses. Each founder was essentially free to assemble his or her own rule, establishing the priorities of life within the community, providing that the rule was consistent with the tenets of monastic life as based on preexisting models and was applied with a degree of consistency.¹¹

Accordingly, when Bede tells his audience that Abbess Hild set about establishing a Rule in the monastery at Hartlepool and later in her reorganization of the double house at Whitby, we need not assume that she enforced observance of the Benedictine Rule.¹² In all likelihood, Hild received considerable advice in formulating her Rule from Bishop Aidan and others, advice that may have given her Rule strong Irish rather than Benedictine tendencies.¹³ Later, under Hild's guidance the double house of Whitby flourished, becoming a center of influence and education.

The period of the double monasteries, while influential if not vital for the establishment of the Anglo-Saxon church, did not last beyond the middle of the eighth century. Under the governance of their aristocratic abbesses, these monasteries of both men and women had flourished during the time of Aldhelm and Bede but were passing out of existence in Alcuin's day. Looking to factors beyond the devastation of monastic foundations by the Vikings in the ninth century, scholars have put forth a variety of reasons that may have contributed to the demise of the double houses, some political, some ecclesiastical, some more broadly social.¹⁴ The records of church councils and of Merovingian and Carolingian law codes testify to increasing restrictions upon religious women within the Gallic church, but there is some evidence that these restrictions were not accepted into the Anglo-Saxon churches immediately or without question.¹⁵

The double monastery was the peculiar manifestation of royal female piety in Francia and the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Archbishop Theodore was unsettled by the practice, but not enough to interfere with the custom during his years in Canterbury.¹⁶

While within the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms themselves, the legal ramifications of such establishments point to attempts to keep lands donated for certain (female?) religious foundations within the control of aristocratic families rather than the church, one cannot forget the significance of the fact that Christianity spread through Anglo-Saxon society from the top down. The rapid proliferation of monastic establishments mirrored the rapidity with which the new religion gained converts among the royal houses of the Anglo-Saxons and with which the value of literacy and religious education for both men and women rose as a consequence. The role played by certain double monasteries, especially Whitby while under the direction of Abbess Hild, cannot be discounted or ignored.¹⁷

As much as the phenomenon of the double monastery can tell us about broad inclinations within the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms during the conversion period, they cannot give us specific insights into the influence of patristic doctrines and theories among the new converts except that these doctrines were not perceived as preventing women from exercising the roles taken on by the royal Anglo-Saxon abbesses. The roles played by the double monasteries can tell us even less, however, about preconversion ideas about women. Since the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms were primarily oral cultures before the Roman missionaries arrived, scholars must extrapolate from the indirect evidence they find in post-conversion works, whether they use *Beowulf*, Bede, or even the later Icelandic sagas. As indicated in the Introduction, many scholars have attempted to sift pre-conversion ideas about gender out of post-conversion texts, but with little agreement about the results. As Stephanie Hollis

points out, one of the reasons that the results of such studies have been so varied is because scholars approach their task with widely different assumptions about how influential the teachings of the Anglo-Saxon church were upon Anglo-Saxon society as a whole.¹⁸ A more productive, if less broadly applicable, approach would be to measure the influence of the Latin Doctors on individuals within the Anglo-Saxon church, individuals who left writings of their own by which we might gauge with some certainty the degree to which the ideas about gender and metagender that were discussed in Chapter One were accepted, internalized, and then reproduced in the writings of the three Anglo-Saxon Fathers—Aldhelm, Bede, and Alcuin. Such an approach should also enable us to glimpse the native attitudes that influenced the choices these three churchmen made regarding which passages from the earlier Fathers they reproduced in their own writings, and what kind of adjustments, additions, or omissions they made to texts that treated the subjects of gender and of women. These three early Anglo-Saxon authors form a crucial link in the transmission of the ideas of the Latin Doctors not only into Anglo-Saxon culture, but also into the rising Carolingian culture on the continent. A better understanding of the ways in which Aldhelm, Bede, and Alcuin each comprehended and re-expressed the ideas of the Latin Doctors regarding gender and women will result in a more accurate appraisal of the influence of these ideas upon Anglo-Saxon society, an appraisal that acknowledges the differences as well as the similarities in each Anglo-Saxon author's sources, contexts, and ideas.

2. Aldhelm

The case of Aldhelm is unusual among the Anglo-Saxon Fathers in that many scholars believe that this nobleman did not receive a purely Roman Christian education, but an education also strongly influenced by Irish scholars.¹⁹ Although this assessment of Aldhelm's education has been called into question, many scholars think that Aldhelm received part of his education from an Irish scholar, perhaps Maeldubh, at Malmesbury, before traveling to Canterbury to round out his education under Theodore and Hadrian.²⁰ M. L. W. Laistner evaluates Aldhelm's extensive reading as having included "some writings of Augustine and much of Jerome; the *Collationes* of Cassian; Gregory the Great and Isidore . . . and a considerable body of hagiographical literature."²¹ Michael Lapidge and James L. Rosier expand on Laistner's evaluation, noting that "even the learning of Bede, whose knowledge of patristic literature was impressively wide, will not bear comparison with that of Aldhelm who, in addition to patristic and hagiographical literature of many kinds, had an enviable knowledge of Latin poetry, both Classical and Christian."²²

Andy Orchard adds to these evaluations of Aldhelm's accomplishment by stating that because of his place at the beginning of recorded English history and his influence on later scholarship, "Aldhelm is perhaps the most important figure in the history of Anglo-Latin, indeed of Anglo-Saxon, literature."²³ Such a claim gives considerable weight to Aldhelm's works over those of his contemporary, Bede, yet both men made important, albeit different, contributions to Anglo-Saxon and Continental religious culture and education. A brief comparison between the "Index

Auctorum” quoted in just one of the works of Bede and the “Index Locorum” of the quotations noted in Rudolf Ehwald’s edition of Aldhelm’s corpus demonstrates that Bede used a far greater range of works from the Latin Doctors than did Aldhelm.²⁴ Even such a comparison provides information of limited usefulness, however, for Bede wrote a greater variety of works than Aldhelm. Moreover, it is probable that both men read more than just the works from which they quoted. In addition, most of Bede’s works focused on the explication of biblical books whereas Aldhelm’s works, while often addressing religious topics such as virginity, were more literary than theological.²⁵ Thus, we find that Bede quotes throughout his corpus from some classical works and from a wide range of patristic works, especially the works of the Latin Doctors, but Aldhelm, though he cites the earlier Fathers and particularly Jerome, quotes copiously from Christian and classical Latin poets, especially Virgil.²⁶ The demand for Bede’s exegetical works is well attested both in the letters of Anglo-Saxon missionaries on the continent and by the manuscript evidence that remains from the eighth and ninth centuries.²⁷ Aldhelm’s influence is also strongly attested by manuscript evidence and the testimony of stylistic imitation of him in the works of Anglo-Latin authors that followed after him.²⁸ This evidence, however, also supports the claim that Aldhelm’s influence was primarily literary, while Bede’s was primarily theological. Bede’s many exegetical works demonstrate how he absorbed and transmitted the theologies of gender that he received, while Aldhelm’s works manifest his understanding of those ideas in literary form.

Aldhelm's most famous work is *De virginitate*, written in the *opus geminatum* format that Caelius Sedulius, the Christian Latin poet, and others had used before him.²⁹ The prose version was written first, possibly as early as 675 CE, and followed later by the poetic work written in hexameters.³⁰ Both versions are renowned for their arcane vocabulary and serpentine syntax and are known to have been the object of much study throughout the Anglo-Saxon period, though only the most intrepid of Latin specialists have dared to tackle Aldhelm's texts in more recent years.³¹ In this work that encourages modesty and virginity, Aldhelm immodestly revels in his own command of Latin rhetoric and in the high degree of Latin literacy that he credits to his stated female audience, Hildelith and the nuns of Barking Abbey.³² Within this milieu of Latin literacy, Aldhelm uses the metaphors and concepts of Latin Christianity to express the ideals of Christian virginity and chastity. In so doing, he presupposes an audience that knows how to interpret and understand the rhetorical devices he employs in outlining both the spiritual foundations for the practice of chastity and the exemplary Lives of his catalogue of saints, an audience that shares a classical, patristic, and hagiographical education similar to his own.

How, then, might the women to whom Aldhelm dedicated his prose "De virginitate" understand what he wrote with reference to their own place in the new Christian community? How would they understand the relationship between their souls and their bodies? The answer to such questions depends in large part on how they might have understood the teachings of the Latin Doctors, whose ideas Aldhelm assumes his audience will know and understand. As Clare A. Lees and Gillian R.

Overing observe, “acknowledging that didactic discourses enact a Christian subject necessitates a close examination of their rhetoric and of the power of their metaphors, both of which are heavily influenced by patristic conventions.”³³ But which patristic conventions? Which patristic metaphors?

As we saw in Chapter One, the Latin Doctors used the metaphor of gender frequently and in a variety of contexts, but we might fairly ask how Aldhelm translated the concepts expressed by the metaphorical genders for his own audiences. Lees and Overing point out the complexity of determining what audience he may have had in mind:

Aldhelm specifically and at some length dedicates his prose *De Virginitate* . . . to Abbess Hildelith and her nuns at Barking abbey, circa 675. On the one hand, the author’s dedication genders the issue of audience and reception. On the other, commentators have assumed a mixed audience for the text because Barking was a double monastery and because Aldhelm unprecedentedly includes male virgins in his list of *exempla*.³⁴

The question of audience for the “De virginitate” need not be as vexed as Lees and Overing’s statement seems to imply: Aldhelm dedicated the work to the nuns, who in fact requested that Aldhelm write such a treatise for them, but neither the specific request nor the dedication limits the possibilities regarding Aldhelm’s audience.³⁵

The elaborate Latinity and rhetoric of the work may have been Aldhelm’s tribute to a group of women whom he admired and respected, but he also probably had in mind a broader circulation for the work into which he invested so much erudition, and thus audiences of both men and women. Even if we proceed with the idea that Aldhelm intended his work solely for the nuns of Barking Abbey, the presence of male exemplars presents no particular problem. As we saw in Chapter One, the Latin

Doctors held virginity up as the highest attainment of purity, approaching the “angelic life” (in Jerome’s phrase) for both men and women, and these Fathers did not presume that only women could be encouraged by the example of women, nor men only by the example of men, but that both sexes could be strengthened in resolve by exemplars of both sexes.³⁶ Thus, Aldhelm’s inclusion of the Lives of male virgins emphasizes the fact that he understood the earlier Fathers to be encouraging virginity for men as well as for women, and that he understood that the demonstrations of holy power manifested through virginity were the province of both women and men, not of the former more than the latter. The point is important because by including a catalogue of male virgins, Aldhelm plainly teaches that both men and women who desire the crown of virginity must curb their own sexual desires before they may enter into God’s transcendent society.

In Aldhelm’s writings the sanctity of virginity is not a power of the body, but a power of the mind restored to proper order by Christ. Accordingly, Aldhelm drives the strength of the saints’ minds home repeatedly as he tells the legends of both male and female saints, for virginity is maintained by “*integritas animae regnans in corpore casto*.”³⁷ In fact, he emphasizes this equality of mind as he shifts the focus from male saints “*ad inclitas itidem secundi sexus personas, quae in sanctae virginitatis perseverantia inflexibili mentis rigore usque quaque durauerunt*.”³⁸ Aldhelm indicates clearly that women, the second sex due to the order of creation, not because of any inherent inferiority, can and do exercise the same mental strength in pursuit of holiness that men do.³⁹ This expression is not an isolated example, but a synopsis of

a theme that Aldhelm establishes in the very preface of the prose work as he writes about the intellectual exploration and mental disciplines exercised by his female audience.⁴⁰ The way to such mental strength lies through the study of sacred books; the way to weakness lies through concentration upon worldly wealth, which results in idleness and atrophy of the mind.⁴¹ Indeed, Aldhelm's hagiography equates worldly wealth with marriage, and he encourages the audience(s) to shun both in pursuit of purity for the sake of Christ. In Aldhelm's eyes worldly pursuits, manifesting themselves through the eight "principal vices," pose the greatest threat to the goal of preserving oneself (whether male or female) as a pure bride of Christ, for through the temptations of these vices, the first human fell into sin.

The subject of the Fall makes its first appearance in Aldhelm's comments on the eight "principal vices" (Gula, Fornicatio, Philargiria, Ira, Tristitia, Accidia, Cenodoxia, and Superbia) that come before the catalogues of saints in "De virginitate."⁴² As he comments upon the pride that caused Lucifer's fall, Aldhelm notes that the angelic fall occurred before "protoplaustus, recentis paradisi colonus et totius terrestris possessor, buccis ambronibus et labris lucronibus vetitam degustans alimoniam in gastrimargiae voraginem crudeliter cecidisset."⁴³ Though Aldhelm does not specifically name Adam, his use of the singular masculine *protoplaustus* and *colonus* as opposed to feminine or plural forms leaves no doubt that he means Adam rather than Eve or both together. Thus, in this account Aldhelm places the responsibility for the Fall on the man, not the woman. The same point arises twice,

and with rather more emphasis, in the final section of the “Carmen de virginitate,” when he writes:

Nam protoplaustus, quem rex formavit Olimpi
 Ruricolamque rudem palmis plasmaverat almis
 Pectora fecundans caelesti flamine vitae,
 Iamdudum cecidit prostratus fraude gulosa,
 Dum vetitum ligni malum decerperet ambro;
 A quo pestiferum glescebat semen in orbe,
 Unde seges spissa spurcis succrevit aristis.⁴⁴

In the context of these lines, also, Aldhelm addresses the issue of the eight “principal vices,” but this time he goes into much greater detail, making each vice into an allegorical war-leader who is opposed by the militant virgins of Christ. In this context, however, the man is still the one who succumbs to “gluttonous deceit” rather than the woman, who is not even mentioned, and the pestilence of sin grows up in the world because of him. Almost two hundred lines later, Aldhelm repeats the idea, only this time the man is tempted by Vainglory instead of Gluttony:

Haec protoplaustum pellexit fraude colonum
 Dirum persuadente scelus fautore malorum,
 Tales ex atro dum rupit pectore voces:
 ‘In quacumque die vultis decerpere fructum,
 Mox patefacta fiunt vestratis lumina frontis
 Necnon divini vobis comitantur honores.’
 . . .
 Heu! scelus, heu! facinus miseris mortalibus ortum
 Ex hoc est: vana praesertim gloria fretus
 Haud metuit princeps, spe circumventus inani.⁴⁵

The way in which Aldhelm puts the words of the serpent into the mouth of Vainglory as she deceives Adam seems to turn the gendered interpretations of the Fall set out by Ambrose and Augustine onto their heads. No longer does the serpent (pleasure) deceive the woman (the senses) and seduce the man (the mind) into sin, as

Ambrose had it, nor do Augustine's "male" and "female" functions of the soul operate in Aldhelm's scenario. Instead, Vainglory dangles before the man the deceptive promise that he will have *honores divini*, and the man bites.

Aldhelm's treatment of the story bears closer inspection. The Devil is the instigator of temptation and Vainglory seduces and deceives the man into eating the forbidden fruit. The very mention of the Genesis story would evoke in the minds of Aldhelm's religious audience the actual biblical account, through which they would analyze his present comments, yet he makes no correlation between the woman and Vainglory and draws no attention to the fact that he has apparently replaced both Eve and the serpent with Vainglory. In fact he urges his audience to think that Vainglory represents the serpent alone when he puts the serpent's words into the vice's mouth, thus sidestepping the role of the woman in the story altogether and making the man the one who, deceived, fell into sin. Instead of conflating Eve and the serpent in the role of Vainglory, Aldhelm has instead conflated Eve and Adam in the role of the man. Has Aldhelm written Eve out of the story in order to deny her any agency whatsoever? If so, then he has made Adam look so much the worse for being seduced and deceived into choosing disobedience to God's command. Nevertheless, anyone hearing this version of the Fall without knowing the original would not know that a woman ever played a part.

Aldhelm's source for this scenario is John Cassian, who contrasts the three ways that Satan tempted Christ in the desert with the three ways in which the devil, through the serpent, tempted Adam in Paradise: gluttony, vainglory, and pride.⁴⁶

Cassian's structure of temptation, however, illustrates an idea found in Augustine. In *De trinitate*, Augustine directly opposes Ambrose's construction of the Fall as the serpent (pleasure) deceiving the woman (the senses), who then seduces the man (the mind) into sin. Instead, Augustine said, "aliquid uolui quod bestiae non haberent, sensumque corporis magis pro serpente intellegendum existimaui. . . ." ⁴⁷ While Cassian may have developed such an interpretation on his own or received it from another source, he does depict Augustine's idea in his own treatment of the Fall in the *Collationes*, and thus the idea comes to Aldhelm. Unlike Cassian, however, Aldhelm does not draw the parallel between the temptation of Adam and the temptation of Christ, nor does he mention the parallel roles of Eve and Mary that one finds in Cassian. His sole purpose is to describe an example of vainglory from scripture. Indeed, he may not have considered a fuller description necessary if he could count on his audience's familiarity with Cassian's *Collationes* as well as with the biblical account; an allusion to the temptations of the first man through gluttony and vainglory would have been enough to invoke the rest of the parallel in the minds of the nuns of Barking. ⁴⁸ If this is the case, Aldhelm, like the *Beowulf*-poet, relies on his audience's knowledge of other works outside the immediate text (in this case, patristic works) in order to make his own work more complex and resonant.

Since Aldhelm's depiction of the Fall did not come directly from the four Latin Doctors, it would be good to determine exactly which of their works discussed above he actually knew. Rudolf Ehwald identifies only one quotation from Ambrose in Aldhelm's works, although we may add the passage quoted in "De virginitate"

from Pseudo-Ambrose's *Life of St. Agnes*, since Ambrose received credit for that work throughout the Middle Ages.⁴⁹ The only work of Ambrose that Aldhelm mentions is the *Hexameron*, and he never gives any sign that he knew *De paradiso*.⁵⁰ It seems unlikely that Aldhelm would have neglected to refer to Ambrose's *De virginitate* or *De viduis* in his own work on virginity if he had known them. This unusual silence combined with the absence of any manuscript evidence that Ambrose's works were widely known throughout the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms or in Anglo-Saxon foundations on the Continent makes it unlikely that Aldhelm possessed copies of these works, although he may have heard of them (see Appendix I).⁵¹ Thus, we may safely say that Ambrose exercised little, if any, real influence upon Aldhelm except through the *Hexameron*.

Aldhelm did know and quote from Augustine's treatises on virginity and widowhood, however. In fact, he quoted from Augustine's *De virginitate* three times and from *De bono viduitatis* once, all in the prose work on virginity. By comparison, Aldhelm quoted a total of four times from *De civitate Dei*, once each from *De haeresibus* and *Epistola CXXXVIII*, and twice from *Enarrationes in Psalmos*. Such is the extent of Aldhelm's use of the works of Augustine in the corpus of his own works. *De trinitate* and *De Genesi ad litteram* are conspicuous by their absence, and there is no evidence that Aldhelm knew them at first hand. Even such a short list, however, allows us to define further the catalogue of books known to Aldhelm in the westernmost reaches of Wessex, although it is possible that he knew some of these works only in part, through florilegia or collectanea.⁵²

Gregory the Great appears no more than Augustine. The *Dialogi* take precedence over all of Gregory's other works, as it is quoted six times by Aldhelm. He also cites the *Moralia in Iob* twice, *Homiliae in euangelia* twice, and *Regula pastoralis* and *Liber sacramentorum* once each. The surviving seventh- and eighth-century manuscripts from England support the evidence of what Aldhelm's citations suggest—that he knew all of the works of Gregory listed here in their entirety.⁵³

As noted by Laistner (see Appendix I), Aldhelm shows more familiarity with the works of Jerome than with any other Latin Doctor; Ehwald's "Index Locorum" of Aldhelm's citations witnesses to the accuracy of Laistner's statement, listing almost as many quotations from this one Doctor as from the other three combined. Aldhelm quotes from Jerome's treatise on virginity, "Ad Eustochium," five times, *Quaestiones Hebraicae in Geneseos* once, and *Adversus Jovinianum* twice.⁵⁴ The quotations from "Ad Eustochium" and *Adversus Jovinianum* all occur in Aldhelm's *De virginitate*, thus they make a good starting point from which to analyze Jerome's influence upon Aldhelm.

If the preponderance of citations from Jerome does not convince us that Aldhelm held a special regard for this irascible Father, then Aldhelm's own words testify to the fact. The opening lines to Jerome's Life in "Carmen de virginitate" are unusual in that they reveal what deep affection Aldhelm felt for the saint: "Ecce sacerdotis pandam praeconia lauti, / Mentio dum sancti pulsat penetralia cordis."⁵⁵ This is the only time in either version that Aldhelm's praise carries such a personal tone. Even Aldhelm's commendation of Gregory the Great, while full of joyful

acknowledgment of the pope's role as apostle to the English, does not resonate with the warmth of feeling that Aldhelm expresses for Jerome.⁵⁶ So great is Aldhelm's regard that, when Jerome and Augustine disagree on the matter of whether or not suicide is ever allowable, Aldhelm sides with Jerome, quoting from his commentary on the Gospel of John: "*propria, inquit, manu perire non licet absque eo, ubi castitas periclitatur.*"⁵⁷ Aldhelm brings up the point in the midst of the catalogue of male virgins just before he writes about the Life of Malchus (taken from Jerome's Life of the same saint). He has to provide some sort of justification for including this saint's story, for it is the oddest one in the collection. Malchus is the only saint, male or female, who wavers in his pursuit of virginity. Having resisted his parents' pressure to marry and continue the family line, Malchus's religious fervor cools and he begins to think about returning to his parents and receiving the inheritance. He makes up his mind to leave the monastery and travel to his home, but before going very far, Malchus is captured and enslaved by a robber. After some time, he is forced at swordpoint to marry, but, remembering his previous determination, prefers to fall upon his own sword instead.⁵⁸ As with the story of Adam and the Fall, Aldhelm does not give his audience all of the facts. He leaves his audience with Malchus's decision to die rather than lose his virginity, not telling them that before he can actually kill himself, his would-be wife intervenes with the recommendation that they present the appearance of marriage while both maintain their chaste integrity.⁵⁹ Again, Aldhelm apparently relies upon the familiarity of the audience with the story to supply the happy ending while he focuses on making the point that suicide is acceptable in cases

where one's chastity is in danger. Aldhelm possibly received some criticism on this matter, for he leaves out both the comments on suicide and Malchus's Life when he writes "Carmen de virginitate." If criticism is the reason why Aldhelm removed these items, he asserts his continued high regard for Jerome by adding the Latin Doctor to the end of the catalogue of male virgins with warm words of praise.

As Aldhelm builds his case for the preference of virginity over marriage, he uses figurative language culled from "Ad Eustochium" and *Adversus Jovinianum*. From the letter Aldhelm employs the metaphors of virginity as the gold, the rose, the pearl that is collected from the earth, the thorn, the oyster of human marriage.⁶⁰ He takes a similar metaphor from *Adversus Jovinianum*, wherein Jerome compares earthly marriage to silver and virginity to gold, stating that silver is not devalued just because gold is preferred.⁶¹ Aldhelm cannot teach that marriage is bad because such teachings had already been deemed to be heresy even in Jerome's day, so he follows the earlier Fathers in commenting on the goodness of marriage in the long preface to "De virginitate," also repeating the threefold hierarchy of sexual status (first virgins, then widows, then married people) set forth by Ambrose and Augustine. While Aldhelm creates room in the traditional hierarchy of virgins, widows, and married for those who were formerly married but are not widows (he places them in the middle level with widows, thus creating a hierarchy of virgins first, then chaste people, and then married people), he never, at any time, qualifies the idea that virginity is to be preferred above all.⁶² Having offered the usual nod toward the venerable state of marriage, Aldhelm sets up two themes that run throughout both versions of the work:

(1) the allurements of worldly wealth that can fulfill a desire for outward beauty are inextricably intertwined with marriage; (2) virgins of both sexes by rejecting marriage reject worldly wealth as well.⁶³

Aldhelm goes to some lengths at the end of *De virginitate* to indict all religious, both men and women, who strive for outward beauty by wearing jewelry, silken and embroidered clothing, and by curling their hair.⁶⁴ As with Jerome before him, Aldhelm considers preoccupation with wealth and marriage to be a weakness of the mind that only the renunciation of wealth and family and commitment to a life devoted to the study of holy books can repair. Unlike Jerome, however, Aldhelm does not use the metaphors of male and female to represent strength and weakness of mind. Nor does he ever describe the strength that he attributes to the female virgins as “manly” despite the constant invocation of athletic and military metaphors and despite a wealth of narrative opportunities in which such language could have been employed. Instead, marriage is associated with weakness, and virginity with strength because “innupta cogitat, quae sunt domini, quomodo placeat Deo; nam quae nupta est, cogitat, quae sunt mundi, quomodo placeat viro.”⁶⁵ Thus, according to Aldhelm, “Denique nonnullos sortitur vita iugalis, / Qui recte vivunt concessa lege tororum / Et praecepta Dei toto conamine mentis / Conservare student thalami sub iure manentes.”⁶⁶ In other words, the married have to do the best they can to retain something of what they have been taught about God while they are married. The virgins in his catalogue, however, have the greatest advantage, an unencumbered mind, so that “mentem Deo dicatam nec minarum ferocitas reflectit nec

blandimentorum lenitas demulcet.”⁶⁷ For Aldhelm, however, the distractions that come with marriage do not arise from the constant demands upon the attention that come from running a household or having to render the conjugal debt. Rather, Aldhelm is concerned about the carnal pleasures themselves, the impurity inherent (from his perspective) in even marital intercourse. Regardless of whether the embrace comes from a man or a woman, Aldhelm portrays the pleasures of the bedroom as a source of corruption for all who indulge. In so doing, he reproduces Jerome’s idea that “ad munditias corporis Christi, omnis coitus immundus sit.”⁶⁸ Like Jerome before him, Aldhelm unleashes his full verbal and rhetorical arsenal in his castigation of marital intercourse and applause for virginity.

Having made his point that virginity is the ideal for both sexes, Aldhelm then turns his attention to providing exempla of faithful male and female virgins. Lees and Overing examine several of Aldhelm’s Lives of female saints, Agnes’s among them; they come to the conclusion that, while female martyrs share the same tortuous experiences as male martyrs, the females’ “bodies are exposed, via narrative technique, rather more and rather longer than male ones. The violation and destruction of the female body entails the added narrative dimension of exhibition, sexuality, and the threat of rape.”⁶⁹ This charge implies that all of the virgin martyr legends in *De virginitate* treat the female body in the same way, emphasizing the voyeuristic detail in Aldhelm’s rhetoric and the potential for rape of the female saints. No one will deny that Aldhelm’s linguistic enthusiasm sometimes gets the better of him as he narrates these Lives, but does he invariably revel rhetorically in the

mutilation and humiliation of the female body?⁷⁰ His *Life* of the early Roman virgin martyr, Agnes, argues otherwise.

In his free rendering of Agnes's *Life*, Aldhelm condenses Pseudo-Ambrose's narrative from three-and-one-half pages (seven columns) in the *PL* edition of Pseudo-Ambrose's epistle to the equivalent of one page in Ehwald's edition of "De virginitate," and to only fifty lines in the "Carmen de virginitate." Aldhelm most noticeably omits in both accounts any physical description of Agnes, contrary to his source, which makes much of her youth and her beauty. In the prose account he tells how Agnes is stripped of her clothing, but he leaves out the miraculous way her long hair covers her nakedness, mentioning only the robe of glorious light that God provided for her.⁷¹ Even this detail of the story, however, is omitted in the poetic account (as is her actual martyrdom by a swordthrust to the throat). In both renderings Aldhelm focuses his narrative solely on the saint's virginal disdain for the worldly wealth and luxurious trappings that her suitor offers to entice her into marriage: "Quae pro integritate servanda omnem ornamentorum gloriam a proco, praefecti filio, oblatam, quatenus optata impetraret conubia, ut lurida fetentis cloacae volutabra contempnens."⁷² Thus he shifts the focus of the story from the youth and beauty of Agnes to the two themes of shunning worldly goods and avoiding marriage.

In order to bend the original to his purposes, Aldhelm quotes only once from his source, an abridged version of Agnes's sharp refusal of the marriage offer from her suitor, which Aldhelm leaves in direct discourse in the prose version (though not in the poetic account), thus making the refusal an emphatic illustration of Agnes's

agency in his first rendition of her story.⁷³ In this citation, Aldhelm retains the string of insults Agnes delivers to her suitor when she calls him “fomes peccati, nutrimentum facinoris, pabulum mortis,” and he also retains Agnes’s statement that she already has another lover. Aldhelm then omits the phrase “qui mihi satis meliora obtulit ornamenta,” and several more phrases in which Agnes describes the riches and jewels with which her Heavenly Lover (Christ) has adorned her. He only quotes “annula [sic] fidei suae subarrhavit me . . . circumdedit me vernantibus atque coruscantibus gemmis Induit me cyclade auro texta” (with slightly changed word order), before skipping more description by Agnes of the ornaments that Christ as her other Lover has given her, her description of their embraces, and her comment that her Lover “sanguis ejus ornavit genas meas.”⁷⁴ Contrary to what one might expect, the man is portrayed here as the source of temptation and sin, proffering to Agnes all the allurements of worldly wealth and beautiful clothing, those things that make for outward beauty but only at the cost of the inward beauty of a virginal soul. Thus, the story reverses the roles that we find in Cassian and Augustine: the serpent is played by Agnes’s suitor, and Agnes herself takes on the role of Adam. The significant difference here is not the switching of sex among the players in this scene, but rather the fact that, unlike the first man, Agnes successfully resists the temptation that is placed before her. In the poetic version, Aldhelm even brings out the point that she detects the deceitfulness of the young man’s offering, describing how she thinks of these temptations as a snare for birds and a mousetrap.⁷⁵ Thus, this early Anglo-Saxon Father has a purpose in omitting so much material from Pseudo-Ambrose’s

Life of St. Agnes that focuses on bodily ornaments and wealth and implies that Christ would actually provide his blood to be used as rouge!⁷⁶

Aldhelm describes the inward beauty toward which he directs his readers as he narrates the *Life of St. Basil of Cappadocia*, who taught, as Aldhelm explains, that “nequaquam extrinsecus carnalis tantum pudicitiae immunitatem ad promerendas strenuae integritatis infulas idoneam fore ratus est, nisi spiritus quoque castimonia, cuius imperio indomita corporalis lasciviae petulantia refrenatur . . . intrinsecus contubernali soliditate concorditer adhaerescat.”⁷⁷ Aldhelm repeats this point again as he brings the treatise to a close: “Omne etenim purae virginitatis privilegium potius in solo liberae mentis praesidio servatur, quam in arto carnis clustello continetur, et magis inflexibili ultroneae voluntatis arbitrio salubriter tutatur, quam coacto corporis famulatu funditus ad nihilum redigatur . . .”⁷⁸

While Aldhelm plays down the role of wealthy ornament in Agnes’s *Life* and avoids mentioning her beauty, he does comment upon the physical beauty of several other saints, both male and female.⁷⁹ In most of the *Lives*, however, he does not provide any description of the saint at all except as he or she endures various tortures. One has only to read Aldhelm’s graphic description of how the heretic Arius met his end to realize that Aldhelm’s silence does not stem from any sort of reluctance to mention parts of the body or their functions.⁸⁰ Indeed, he attempts to turn his audience away from any desire for wealth and marital intercourse by associating sex and riches with images of a sewer or latrine full of urine and excrement, and also of vomit.⁸¹ The bodies of both male and female saints receive the focus of attention

only in those lives wherein Aldhelm describes their various punishments (and he does not go into details for all of the martyrs, just as he did not go into all of the details in *Agnes's Life*).

One martyr whose temptations and tortures did receive considerable attention from Aldhelm, however, is Chrysanthus. In both the prose and metrical versions, Aldhelm narrates how Chrysanthus won notice in his youth for his keen mind and mastery of all of the liberal arts. After his conversion, he began to preach Christ openly. For fear of reprisals from the Roman government, Chrysanthus's father imprisoned and starved his son, trying to convince him to give up Christianity.⁸² When harsh measures failed, the father brought his son out of prison, dressed him in purple silk, and provided for him a feast complete with wine and lavishly dressed young beauties who tried to tempt him away from his faith:

*Auferens illum de ergastulo squalente olosericis et bombicinis indutum vestibis misit in triclinium, ubi pulcherrimae virgines pretiosis comptae cicladibus delicatas defruti dilicias et sumptuosa ferculorum convivia praeperarent effrenatos laetitiae cachinnos et iocosos ludorum amplexus miscentes, ut in talibus blandimentis ferrea iuvenis praecordia mollescerent.*⁸³

Aldhelm's description of these temptations follows that of his exemplar and illuminates several points. First, the temptation offered by rich and colorful clothing is not one that appeals to women alone. Not only are the girls in luxurious clothing, but Chrysanthus himself is given a garment of royal color and comfort, showing that such things appealed to men as well as to women. Second, the temptations are all designed to appeal to the senses: colorful clothing, feasting and wine, sounds of revelry, comfortable silk, playful embraces. Chrysanthus's father, playing the part of

the devil in Cassian's interpretation of the Fall, tempts Chrysanthus through the vices of the senses (the serpent). Like Agnes, however, Chrysanthus successfully resists all of these temptations, his dedication to God rightly orders his mind so that Augustine's "female" function of the mind restrains his thoughts and his body from falling into sin. Like Agnes, Chrysanthus succeeds where Adam failed, signifying that he has entered the new mode of life in society with Christ. According to the metrical version, Chrysanthus resists the sexual temptations of the women around him by imagining kisses from Christ lingering upon his lips.⁸⁴ Aldhelm applies the idea of the virgins of God also being brides of Christ to both male and female saints, effectively placing the male virgins in the role of brides. He apparently has no qualms about the symbolic feminization of men who devote themselves to Christ, which resulted naturally from the entry of the metagendered Other into the life of a male virgin. As the saint redefined his gender characteristics in relation to the metagendered God, he moved toward becoming metagendered instead of being simply masculine. The image of Christ's lips lingering upon Chrysanthus's lips conveys both the closeness of the relationship and its transformative nature. Solidly situated within the love of Christ, Chrysanthus successfully resists the seductive advances of the women and the allurements of his luxurious surroundings.

When this plan to seduce Chrysanthus fails, the father brings in Daria, a vestal virgin dressed to emphasize her beauty. After Chrysanthus converts Daria, they enter into a chaste marriage and preach and teach the Gospel together. Then the persecution begins. Aldhelm describes Chrysanthus's torments in detail: bound with

wet, raw strips of leather, so that when the strips dried out the force of the binding would be unbearable; shins and calves confined in crippling stocks; soaked with urine; bound naked in a raw hide and placed in the hot sun; weighed down with chains and thrown into a dark prison; and beaten with rods and scourges.⁸⁵ All the various tortures prove fruitless and the soldiers and spectators are converted, then martyred. During all this time, however, neither the Latin original nor Aldhelm refers to Daria, and Aldhelm mercifully omits a great deal of dialogue.

Chrysanthus lives longer than his converts, though, and at this point Daria re-enters the story. Both are subjected to various punishments: Chrysanthus chained again and thrown into a dark and smelly prison, Daria sent to a brothel. As with Chrysanthus, Daria's torment comes to naught because God sends a lion from the amphitheater to protect her from anyone who might be tempted to rape her. At this point, Aldhelm decides that there are too many miracles associated with Chrysanthus and Daria for him to continue and he succinctly comments that they were martyred and buried together, then moves on to the next story. In this instance, the torments of Chrysanthus receive much more attention and description than those of Daria. Aldhelm mentions that Chrysanthus is naked when he is left to broil in the fresh rawhide, but he does not mention whether Daria was ever stripped or not. Aldhelm invites his audience to imagine Chrysanthus's attempted seduction by providing details that appeal to the senses of the readers as well as the protagonist, but he describes no attempted rape or seduction of Daria—in fact, he tells how the protective lion would maul anyone who dared to try to touch her.

Aldhelm's treatment of female and male saints in these two Lives should give us pause in taking Lees' and Overing's general statement without question. Much more analysis and comparison of Aldhelm's Lives with his Latin exemplars is necessary before we can determine the significance of his treatment of both his male and female saints. What this overview of *De virginitate* reveals, however, is that Aldhelm is very much the spiritual son of Jerome more than of any other early Father, although Augustine's influence, both direct and indirect, can also be detected. Aldhelm does not thoughtlessly parrot the ideas he received, though, not even from Jerome, and his most noticeable change in his transmission of the ideas of the Latin Doctors lies in his omission of their metaphors of gender for spiritual strength and weakness. Most significantly, he passes on to his followers a concept of equality of mind and of intellectual achievement among men and women in the new Anglo-Saxon Church, an equality achieved through their practice of chastity. The idea implicit behind his teachings on virginity is the same idea stated more explicitly by Jerome: when men and women commit themselves to chaste living, they become living proof that they are no longer either male or female—they are neither masculine or feminine but metagendered—for all are one in Christ.⁸⁶ In doing so, Aldhelm demonstrates that misogyny is not the automatic result of the influence of the Latin Doctors, at least, not of those whose ideas this Anglo-Saxon monk transmits to his own audiences.

3. Bede

The best known of the Anglo-Saxon churchmen, Bede, entered into monastic life at the age of seven. He spent all of his life in the monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow in Northumbria, teaching, writing, and observing the full scope of Western monastic duties and services. Thanks to the industry of such abbots as Benedict Biscop and Ceolfrith, Bede had access to a large, though not exhaustive, collection of works by the Latin Doctors.⁸⁷ Bede's life bespeaks a man immersed in the teachings of the four Latin Doctors (indeed, Bede was the first to give them that title)⁸⁸ from childhood on, yet whose understanding and acceptance of those teachings were influenced by his own non-Roman cultural and social surroundings. We must first, then, find out which of the writings of the Latin Doctors examined in the previous chapter were available to Bede, assess whether they were known to him in whole or only through excerpts of the works in question, and inquire into how he understood the writings of the earlier Fathers that dealt with matters of gender and with women. How did these writings influence his own attitudes as shown in his writings? Most of the studies that address these issues in Bede limit themselves primarily to his historical works, especially the *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*. Bede has been charged by some with deliberately muting the role of women in his *Historia*; others comment on the equality of treatment of women in this work.⁸⁹ Before we weigh his representation of women in his historical writing, however, we should look to his exegetical works for the theology behind his views on gender and women. We

will then be more adequately equipped to weigh his treatment of women in the *Historia*.

Of the works discussed in the previous chapter, scholars have determined that Bede certainly knew the following patristic texts: among Ambrose's writings, for instance, Bede knew *De paradiso* and *De virginitate*; among the writings of Jerome, *Hebraicarum questionum in Genesim liber*, *Adversus Jovinianum*, *Adversus Helvidium*, and *Apologia adversus Rufinum*.⁹⁰ And while it is certain that Bede knew most of Gregory's works firsthand, those that are most relevant here are the *Dialogi*, *Moralia in Iob*, *Liber regulae pastoralis*, and *Homiliae in Euangelia*. Bede knew certain letters among Gregory's *Epistolae*, but we cannot be sure which letters he knew other than those quoted in the *Historia*. Of Augustine's works, Bede knew significant parts, if not the whole, of *De Genesi ad litteram*, *De civitate Dei*, *De doctrina christiana*, *Confessiones*, *De sancta virginitate*, and *De trinitate*.⁹¹ Since his own manuscripts have never been identified, it is difficult to determine whether Bede knew these works in complete versions or if he knew them through abridgements, florilegia, epitomes, or as collections of lengthy excerpts such as the one compiled by Eugippius from the major works of Augustine.

Although Bede's immersion in patristic thought reveals itself in all of his various works, nowhere does it show itself more clearly than in his biblical commentaries. Some of these works are compilations and distillations of earlier patristic commentary, yet even the most derivative of these works reflects Bede's own mind at work, selecting, weaving together, and clarifying the thought of the

Latin Doctors for the sake of his less learned colleagues.⁹² Within these works Bede's own personality reveals itself. Scholars have often observed the personal character of Bede's transmission of the teachings of earlier Fathers. For example, Laistner observes:

However great his debt to his predecessors may be, Bede does not copy uncritically. He is careful to select what will be useful and intelligible to his readers, he adds his own comments and observations, and he has knit the whole together in a way which raises his theological works well above the level of mere compilation or *catenae* and which bears clearly the impress of his own mind and personality.⁹³

Hurst further states that "there is a distinctive humane approach to matters regarding religion distinguishable in the writings of Bede."⁹⁴ Indeed, as Benedicta Ward observes, "it is in his use of the Fathers in combination with his own insights that Bede's originality lies."⁹⁵ Observation of both Bede's own thoughts and his use of patristic texts reveals how he understood the comments of the earlier Fathers regarding gender and women, and how he passed along that understanding to later generations of Anglo-Saxon and continental religious.

In her analysis of Bede's treatment of Ælfflæd in his *Vita S. Cuthberti*, Stephanie Hollis suggests that Bede addresses the subject of women differently in his works for monastic audiences (in which she states that he equates them with Eve and the seductive temptations of the flesh) than in his *Historia*, a work intended for a secular audience:

The construction of women as Eve functions in Bede's *Life of Cuthbert* as it does in Eddius's *Life of Wilfrid*. It is a polemical tool in the conflict between churchmen and royal women, whether as queens or abbesses, whose employment testifies, not to royal women's absence of status, but to their power and prestige. *That Bede indulged in this form of polemic in a work*

*composed for a monastic audience, but made no use of it in the History — intended for a wider audience, and dedicated to the Northumbrian king — suggests that the misogynist undermining of royal women that was cultivated in ecclesiastical circles was not well-received in secular society.*⁹⁶

Hollis, however, builds her argument against Bede on one example found in one of his many exegetical and hagiographical works. Thus, we might wonder whether the charge of writing polemically misogynist works for his religious audiences while avoiding such rhetoric in the *Historia* finds support in Bede's other works intended for clerical audiences.

Bede's *Libri quatuor in principium Genesis*, in which he addresses the issues of Creation and the Fall, should be a primary vehicle of clerical invective against Eve and women if Hollis's suggestion is to be taken without question. Bede states in his letter to Acca, which serves as a preface to the commentary, that he intends for this work to make the erudite theology of the earlier Fathers accessible to his less-learned colleagues in such a way as to motivate the more learned to the pursuit of higher studies.⁹⁷ The Latin Doctors did not all interpret the story of the Creation in the same way, thus Bede's use of his patristic authorities reveals how Bede himself understood the event. Joseph F. Kelly notes Bede's pronounced preference for Augustine's interpretation, especially as found in *De Genesi ad litteram*, but also observes

This is not to say that Augustine overwhelms or marginalizes the other authorities, but rather that Bede thought so highly of Augustine that the English historian turned to the African doctor universally whereas he turned to others primarily for particular reasons.⁹⁸

For example, Bede pulls together an array of authorities to explain the four rivers of Paradise in Genesis 2:10–14, including Ambrose, Jerome, Isidore, Orosius,

and Pliny the Younger as well as Augustine.⁹⁹ The Jarrow monk quotes only Augustine, however, regarding the way in which humankind is made to the image of God when he says “Non ergo secundum corpus sed secundum intellectum mentis ad imaginem Dei creatus est homo. Quamquam et in ipso corpore habeat quandam proprietatem quae hoc indicet, quod erecta statura factus est. . . .”¹⁰⁰ While explaining the *imago Dei* in humans, Bede directly addresses the question of whether this image extends to women and not just men:

Masculum autem unum et *feminam* in primis *creavit* Deus unam, non ut animantia cetera quae in singulis generibus non singula sed plura creavit, ut per hoc humanum genus artiore ad inuicem copula caritatis constringeret quod se ex uno totum parente ortum esse meminisset. Cuius causa unionis scriptura sacra cum dixisset, *Et creavit Deus hominem, ad imaginem Dei creavit illum*, statimque subiungeret, *Masculum et feminam creavit eos*, noluit addere “ad imaginem Dei creavit eos.” Et femina enim ad imaginem Dei creata est secundum id quod et ipsa habebat mentem rationalem. . . .¹⁰¹

The last statement, which specifically addresses the fact that women *do* possess the image of God, comes from Augustine’s *De Genesi ad litteram*, Book III, wherein Augustine briefly restates his argument from Book XII of *De trinitate*. As a result, there can be little doubt that Bede knew and understood Augustine’s psychological model with its “male” and “female” components. Augustine is Bede’s chosen authority for the explication of material regarding human creation, the image of God, and the nature of the human being in the first three chapters of Genesis. Given the variety of explanations available, including Ambrose’s, Bede’s choice, informed and deliberate, signals his own agreement with Augustine’s interpretation. Bede considers different Fathers to be authoritative upon individual topics, then, rather than naively thinking that all of them have equal weight on every issue. In this work,

Ambrose, Jerome, and others provide explanations of a geographical and etymological nature, but Augustine explains the creation and significance of human beings and the way in which they bear the image of God. As Kelly observes, “On the central questions of . . . the fall of humanity, Bede depended heavily on Augustine, not slavishly, but out of deference to Augustine’s brilliant exegesis of the creation and fall—Bede simply had nothing better to put in its place.”¹⁰² Yet with a full arsenal of patristic commentary on the topic at his disposal, Bede does not quote from Ambrose, who bluntly asserts the woman’s fault in *De paradiso*, but rather he quotes from Augustine’s passing surmise in *De Genesi ad litteram* that the woman already had a love of her own potential and an overconfidence in herself. Such love and overconfidence were not yet fully realized sins themselves, however, because the serpent’s temptation could still have worked for good, resulting in conviction and humbling. Bede also goes on to quote Augustine’s speculation that the woman only ate because she reasoned that God’s warning about death had some other meaning than literal death: this thought was the only reason that she ate and gave to her husband to eat.¹⁰³ Nothing more. After quoting Augustine’s thoughts here, Bede moves on to address the next verse. He could have just quoted the portion about overconfidence and love of independence without including Augustine’s attempt to explain away the woman’s guilt. Moreover, Bede had a perfect opportunity to add his own comments here, as he frequently did elsewhere, if he wanted to undermine the authority of royal women to his monastic audience, as Hollis asserts. Instead, Bede says nothing.

Bede still says nothing of his own when addressing the man's and woman's responses to God's questions after they ate the forbidden fruit. The commentary here, complete with the plays on words, is all from Augustine. When the man blames his wife in the Genesis account, Augustine exclaims: "Superbia, numquid dixit, Peccavi? Habet confusionis deformitatem, et non habet confessionis humilitatem"; when the woman blames the serpent: "Nec ista confitetur peccatum, sed in alterum refert—impari sexu, pari fastu."¹⁰⁴ Both are condemned for the pride that would not allow them to confess their disobedience, but Augustine now brings out the equal yet unequal position of the woman in a new way. Inasmuch as she is man's equal in *imago Dei*, she is now also his equal in that image's deformity through pride—just as strong in sin, even if weaker in sex. Yet Bede does not berate either the woman or the man. He simply lets Augustine's words stand on their own.

Bede extends Augustine's comments, however, when it comes to the punishment of the woman. He first quotes the earlier Father's explanation of how the subordination that is a punishment for sin differs from the subordination by order of creation that existed before the couple sinned.¹⁰⁵ Following Augustine's comments, Bede adds his own allegorical interpretation of the passage, finding in it an illustration of the trials and pains of the church in the temporal world.¹⁰⁶ At no time does he inveigh against the woman, nor does he engage in misogynist sniping at Eve's expense.

Bede's use of Augustine and other Fathers in his commentary on Genesis demonstrates the deliberation that went into Bede's selections from his authorities.

The most simple, though not simplistic, use that Bede makes of Augustine can be found in his collection of excerpts from the Latin Doctor's writings concerning the Pauline epistles. The Jarrow monk carefully weaves together from a broad range of Augustine's works a verse-by-verse commentary on the Apostle's letters. The excerpts that Bede brings together to explain I Corinthians 11.3 and 7 (which are juxtaposed in his arrangement) suggest that he understood very well the parallel that Augustine made in *De trinitate* between Christ's equality in nature (divine essence) but inferiority to the Father in condition (form of a servant) and woman's equality in nature (human essence) but inferiority to man in condition (subject to her husband). In explicating verse three, Bede quotes from Book VI of *De trinitate* to clarify how it might be said that "the head of Christ is God":

The Father and the Son together are God, but the Son alone is Christ—especially since the Word already made flesh is speaking in accord with his lowliness. The Father is greater than this—as he says, 'The Father is greater than I.' Thus this very God that consists of himself as one with his Father may be the head of the human mediator, which he alone is. If we rightly call the mind the principal part of a human being—that is, the head of the human substance, so to speak, since the mind makes a human human—why is it not more appropriate and more truly the case that the Word, which is God together with the Father, is the head of Christ—although we cannot understand the human Christ except together with the Word which became flesh?¹⁰⁷

Augustine suggests in this passage a duality of relationships with and within Christ: one as the coequal and coeternal Second Person of the Trinity, another as the subordinate Christ, the Word made flesh in human form, which he alone is out of the Godhead. This idea is followed immediately in Bede's work by a quotation from *De trinitate* Book XII. Anyone consulting the commentary as such would know that the

context of these biblical verses sets up the parallel between God as the head of Christ, and man as the head of the woman, thus, they would know how to understand these comments by Augustine in light of the previous quotation:

Have female believers, then, lost their bodily sex? But as they are being renewed in the image of God there where there is no sex—‘human beings were made to the image of God’ there where there is no sex, that is, in the spirit of their minds— . . . as though the woman is not being renewed in the spirit of her mind, ‘which is being renewed in knowledge of God according to the image of the one who created it’? Because a woman differs from a man by her sex, her bodily cover can well represent that part of [human] reason directed to the management of temporal matters. The image of God remains, then, only in that part of the human mind that holds fast to eternal reason, contemplating and reflecting upon it. This, it is evident, females as well as males possess.¹⁰⁸

By juxtaposing these two passages from *De trinitate*, Bede not only demonstrates that he understands the parallel that Augustine sets up between the “male” and “female” aspects of the mind and the relationship between the Father and the Son in the Trinity, but he conveys that parallelism in miniature to his readers. Further, he illustrates this concept in his commentary on the book of Acts.

Bede’s early work, *Expositio actuum apostolorum*, shows his own originality in biblical commentary as well as the diversity of his reading in the works of the early Fathers. He quotes abundantly from the Latin Doctors, especially Jerome and Augustine, but also applies his own understanding of biblical and patristic ideas to the text before him, including such explanatory examples from life in coastal England as his audience of Anglo-Saxons could readily understand.¹⁰⁹ For example, Bede explains the passage in Acts 27 that describes the measures that Roman sailors took to provide for the safety of their ship during a violent storm by comparing the Roman

actions with those of Anglo-Saxon sailors, using the familiar to explain the foreign to his audience.¹¹⁰ Throughout the commentary Bede follows a fairly literal interpretive method, interspersed with occasional allegorical readings. Even in this early work, however, the specific influence of Augustine's psychological model is reflected in Bede's thinking and is especially noticeable in Bede's comments on the story of Dorcas (also known as Tabitha) from Acts 9. Bede draws upon Isidore to explain the meaning of Dorcas' name ('deer' or 'fallow deer') and to inform his readers that such deer are known to dwell high upon the mountains and to have such sharp vision that they can see anything that approaches, no matter how far away.¹¹¹ Bede's explanation of the allegorical significance of this name, however, follows very closely the "male" and "female" functions of the soul that were outlined in Book XII of Augustine's *De trinitate*: "Sic nimirum sancti meritis operum in excelsis habitantes mentis contemplatione et supernis sagaciter intendunt et suimet cauta circumspectione semper inuigilant."¹¹² This explanation illustrates the harmonized working of the "male" and "female" functions within the souls of the saints: simultaneously the "male" aspect contemplates heavenly things while the "female" aspect keeps watch over the saints' temporal behavior and needs. Bede, however, does not use Augustine's gendered metaphors, nor does he elaborate upon the nature of the soul in this passage. He does, on the other hand, continue to build his allegorical interpretation of this episode in Acts upon Augustine's model of the soul.

The story in Acts tells of many widows who were mourning the death of Dorcas and who recounted to the Apostle Peter when he arrived the many good works

that Dorcas had done. The book of Acts says that the widows stood around Peter, weeping. Bede explains the allegorical meaning of Dorcas's death as the fall of a saint into sin through the weakness of mortal nature, and of the preparation of her body as the soul's turn toward repentance. He then explains the weeping widows thus: "Viduae sunt piae cogitationes animae paenitentis, quae sensus pristini uigorem quasi uiri regimen ad tempus omiserant, quae pro anima delinquente necesse est suppliciter exorent."¹¹³ Interestingly, Bede outlines a situation in which the "female" aspect of the mind can continue in pious thoughts while the "male" aspect has been distracted from its contemplation of heavenly matters into sin. Such holy thoughts may lose their intensity (vigor) because the "male" aspect of the mind has abdicated its responsibility of guidance by falling into sin, but the "widows" need not follow into sin and, indeed, are portrayed by Bede as participating in the restoration of the harmonious ordering of the soul in repentance. An example of how this scenario might work out would be the case of a monk or nun whose contemplations (the "male" aspect) turn from God to lust while at the same time he or she continues to preserve the actual chastity of the body through the exercise of the "female" aspect. Indulgence in lustful thinking might make the commitment to bodily purity weaken (the holy thoughts losing their vigor), but that does not mean that bodily sin will actually occur. In fact, the attention given to the maintenance of bodily purity, even while the mind is seized with lust, could help bring the thoughts to repentance and thus restore the harmony of purity within the soul. By interpreting the passage as he has, however, Bede modifies Augustine's thought. In *De trinitate*, Augustine

outlined a metaphorical situation in which, because the temptations of the body must come to the will (the “male” aspect) through the “female” aspect of the mind, the “female” part would be the part to fall into contemplating sin, but the “male” part would not fall unless it gave the “female” aspect clearance to enact the sinful thought.¹¹⁴ Bede modifies Augustine’s model so that, while retaining the “male” responsibility for sin, Bede allows the “female” not to sin with it.

Turning to other of Bede’s exegetical works, one begins to see more facets of Bede’s attitude towards women. In some of these works, such as the commentary on the book of James, Bede treats the topics of temptation and falling into sin and also the matters of soul and body, but he never writes of them in terms of the male/female imagery used by the earlier Latin Doctors. Bede even uses quotations from Jerome’s *Adversus Jovinianum*, but not from any of the passages that could be interpreted as denigrating women. In fact, his only references to women in this particular commentary are to the biblical harlot, Rahab, who is held up as an example of righteous works, and a passing comment on the wicked queen Jezebel, whom he refers to as a *muliercula*, ‘little woman, mere woman, or unimportant woman’ (a term of pity or contempt), while recalling the story of Elijah.¹¹⁵ Bede uses the term only this once in all of his works, and here he has taken the expression from Gregory, who uses this word only in the context of talking about Elijah’s flight from Jezebel in the *Moralia in Iob*.¹¹⁶ Did Gregory, and Bede after him, call her *muliercula* because she was a woman, even though she was a queen? Or did they call her *muliercula* because she was wicked or because, compared to God and to the power that had just been

displayed through the prophet, the opposition of even a queen would be unimportant? If Bede had wanted to make a point about women being wicked or incitements to sin, then the mention of the Jezebel story would have invited some sort of comment, especially if this early Anglo-Saxon Father had an axe to grind against women in positions of influence and power. But, assuming that his readers are familiar with the biblical story and will thus know whom he means by *muliercula*, he declines to even name this queen, and thus avoids distracting his readers from his purpose—comforting his audience that they need not feel intimidated by the deeds of biblical saints, for his audience’s human frailty was shared by even so great and powerful a prophet as Elijah.

The commentary on I Peter follows in much the same literal vein as the commentary on James, but, since there are passages in the biblical text that address marriage and the role of women, we find here more direct statements on the matter. Bede’s comments on I Peter 3:1 (which instructs wives to be subject to their husbands so that the husband may be won to faith through the wife’s conduct) are brief and make no reference to the patristic reasoning based on the order of creation, consequences of sin, or guidance and protection. Instead he assumes that the idea needs no explanation other than to outline the exception wherein a wife should *not* submit to her unbelieving husband: if he desires her to do something evil.¹¹⁷ The implication of this treatment is that the idea of wives being subject to their husbands is neither new nor unusual to Bede’s audience, and thus needs no elaboration.

In Bede's comments on I Peter 3:7, however, Benedicta Ward notes an oddity:

"There is one section only in these commentaries in which Bede writes in the first person and it has a curious ring to it."¹¹⁸ The passage reads thus:

Si abstinemus nos a coitu, honorem tribuimus; si non abstinemus, perspicuum est honori contrarium esse concubitum. . . . Impediri ergo orationes officio coniugali commemorat, quia quotiescumque uxori debitum reddo, orare non possum. Quod si iuxta alium apostoli sermonem sine intermissione orandum est, numquam ergo mihi coniugio serviendum est ne ab oratione cui semper inistere iubeor ulla hora praepediar.¹¹⁹

Ward comments that "Such a passage comes strangely in the first person from such a monk Perhaps his own assurance of celibacy gave him a certain freedom to make use of this rhetorical device."¹²⁰ However, this passage is not Bede speaking at all, but is a quotation (although rearranged to suit the flow of Bede's own thought) of Jerome's *Adversus Jovinianum*, I.7 which reads:

Jubet idem Apostolus in alio loco, ut semper oremus. Si semper orandum est, numquam ergo coniugio serviendum, quoniam quotiescumque uxori debitum reddo, orare non possum. . . . Ecce eodem sensu . . . impediri dicit orationes officio conjugali. . . . Si abstinemus nos a coitu, honorem tribuimus uxori; si non abstinemus, perspicuum est honori contrarium esse contumeliam.¹²¹

Small wonder these words have such a curious ring, for they are Jerome's, not Bede's. Bede uses them while explaining I Peter 3:7, which admonishes husbands to treat their wives with honor as the weaker vessel. As with the earlier Fathers before him, Bede argues that the obligations of marriage are a kind of bondage that obstruct a life devoted to prayer.

Bede's commentaries also demonstrate that he had no qualms about using female characteristics to describe the church and the church Fathers. While

explaining a different passage in I Peter, Bede refers to young believers who “simplicia fidei rudimenta primo de ecclesiae matris uberibus quaerite, hoc est de utriusque testamenti doctoribus qui diuina eloquia uel scripsere uel etiam uiua uobis uoce praedicant.”¹²² In so doing, he attributes the qualities of a nourishing breast to the church, the church Fathers, and to all preachers. The association of the breast with the church would not be unusual, since *Ecclesia* was often represented as female. Calling the Fathers and preachers breasts, however, indicates that Bede had no qualms or anxieties about that aspect, at least, of female anatomy. Nor did he apparently consider it inappropriate to use the female body to represent the pastoral function and responsibilities of preachers and teachers in the church.

Clare A. Lees and Gillian R. Overing have taken exception to the use by churchmen of metaphors based upon the female body, claiming that such metaphorical representations appropriate the female body and specifically female bodily functions to men, thus colonizing the female body to masculinist discourse (called the ‘patriarchal symbolic order’) for patriarchal purposes.¹²³ The end result is the disappearance of “real” women and references to “real” women’s bodies from the works of men like Bede or Aldhelm, or later, of Ælfric. Lees and Overing’s commentary upon Bede’s treatment of Abbess Hild’s role in the “Cædmon Story” serves as a case in point.

Lees and Overing argue that Bede, by calling Abbess Hild a “mother” to all who knew her, deprives her of participating in cultural production, a privilege reserved for men: a Father God inspires Cædmon to produce Christian poetry, an

event that is recorded (produced) by Bede without mentioning Hild by name. Hild, for whom Cædmon worked, who recognized his gift as divinely inspired, who ordered him to enter religious life, who sponsored his poetic gift, is suppressed, according to Lees and Overing, from active participation in this patriarchal story of origins, so that cultural production remains an adamantly masculine prerogative. Hild is allowed, as “mother,” to reproduce (running a “nursery for bishops”), but not to produce. Thus, by reproducing patriarchal Christianity through her patronage of Cædmon’s evangelistic poetry, Hild becomes complicit in her own disappearance from the myth of the origin of Christian poetry in England and from any pivotal place in the scholarly discussion of that myth in our own time.¹²⁴

There are a number of points in Lees and Overing’s argument that may be called into question. The first is whether, in speaking about Bede’s treatment of Hild and Cædmon, we are dealing with one narrative that treats both people, or two narratives, each person with his or her own. Frequently in the course of their chapter, Lees and Overing refer to “the narrative [singular] of Hild and Cædmon.”¹²⁵ Such a description is disingenuous, for structurally in terms both of narrative and of format there are two Lives, not one; two stories, not one; two narratives, not one. There is a “Life of Hild,” and there is the “Life of Cædmon.” Lees and Overing do occasionally note the difference, but the distinction is minimized into near nonexistence in the main body of their argument, as when they discuss the significance of dreams in the “narrative”:

The comparison [of Breguswith’s dream about Hild] with Cædmon’s dream is instructive, for, while Breguswith’s is the first and female annunciation dream

of the narrative, Cædmon's is its masculine counterpart, and assumes the more novel role in this variant of the annunciation (he received news not of a child but of a song).¹²⁶

Bede tells the dream of Breguswith in his "Life of St. Hild" (Chapter Twenty-three), and describes Cædmon's dream in Cædmon's own Life (Chapter Twenty-four). The blurring of Bede's clearly demarcated narrative division serves Lees' and Overing's purpose well, but does little justice to the planning that Bede put into juxtaposing these related, but distinct, stories. The two chapters are linked by the person of Hild as the Abbess of Whitby, but only the first chapter is primarily about Hild. The second is primarily about Cædmon, although it occurs at Hild's double monastery. As Lees and Overing point out, Hild plays a supporting role in Cædmon's story, but it is, after all, *Cædmon's* story.¹²⁷ She has no business stealing the scene and Bede, like a good director, keeps his actors in line so that the star of this particular act can shine.

Lees and Overing note that in the account of Cædmon, Bede never names Hild even though he refers to her several times. They assert that, by not naming Hild, Bede relegates her to the margins. Even more than that, because she dies at the end of her story (just before Bede begins Cædmon's), they assert that "he silences her textually by the more radical method of 'killing' her. To be sure, Bede praises Hild in her own story, but the Mother of the monastery is only the Abbess of poetry."¹²⁸ What exactly Lees and Overing mean by the last statement is open to speculation, but the matter of Bede "killing" Hild textually in order to "silence" her is rather extreme. Hild's Life comprises in itself a complete narrative unit. As with his "Life of

Gregory” (than for whom Bede had no greater love nor admiration), Bede begins and ends Hild’s Life with her death, a formula that often appears in hagiographical accounts.¹²⁹ Bede places Cædmon’s Life in the chapter immediately following Hild’s Life. Like any good writer, he provides continuity between the chapters by “hooking” the topic of the last section into the opening line of the new thought: “In huius monasterio abbatissae . . .”¹³⁰ Thus, the first person that we meet in Cædmon’s story is Hild. Even though she is not named, there is no doubt about which abbess Bede is referring to when he uses *huius abbatissae*. The context and the Latin allow for no uncertainty; he is talking about Hild. Thus, the structure of Bede’s work does his naming for him as long as the account remains within the larger work, and there is no need to distract his audience from his new subject, “frater quidam diuina gratia specialiter insignis,” by reminding them any more directly of the famous abbess.¹³¹

Yet in the comment quoted above, Lees and Overing call Hild the “Mother of the monastery,” focusing on Bede’s laudatory observation about Hild, “quam omnes qui nouerant ob insigne pietatis et gratiae matrem uocare consuerant.”¹³² Lees and Overing assert that

Bede, after all, goes out of his way to stress Hild’s role as “mother” in her *Life*. But as “mother to all,” emptied of female presence and political force, Hild may be creator/originator of none: her power to create and to produce is initially dissipated and then specifically forgotten.¹³³

Has Bede really gone “out of his way” to write Hild as a “mother”? The Latin text of Hild’s Life takes up almost six full pages in the Colgrave-Mynors edition, and Bede never calls Hild *mater* until three and a half pages into the Life, when it is more than half over and he has already established her importance as an abbess. If he had

wanted to stress Hild's "motherhood" as much as Lees and Overing claim, surely he would have gone out of his way to get the epithet onto the first page! Hild is called 'mother' two other times in her Life. In both cases the nun, Begu, who in a dream saw Hild taken into heaven by a company of angels, refers to Hild as 'mother.'¹³⁴ Having been a nun for some thirty years and now residing in Hild's new foundation at Hackness, Begu would naturally have referred to Hild as mother as a term of respect as well as of spiritual relationship.¹³⁵ Bede reports how Begu and her sister nuns referred to the founder of their monastery and the abbess who had probably established their Rule of monastic life and been their teacher in previous years. Such hardly constitutes Bede going out of his way to impose a motherly role upon Hild.

Instead, Bede's "Life of Hild" paints a clear picture of this woman's forceful personality even though he never provides a physical description. As abbess, she establishes a Rule of monastic life, founds or sets in order monasteries, teaches strict observance of the Rule, gives counsel to ordinary people and to kings, pushes her subjects (*subditos*) to study and do good works, trains men so well that several go on to become bishops, sets an example for all in her own life, endures seven years of a tormenting illness, teaches both publicly and privately, and charges her fellow nuns to continue in peace after she dies.¹³⁶ Hild is clearly the agent in her own Life, very much the center of the action, very much present as a personality even if not as a body. Bede does not put words into her mouth in the form of direct discourse, yet he does tell us that she taught, counseled, commanded, presided, gave thanks, urged, and warned. Thus he shows us Hild in action, and the force of her personality impresses

itself upon Bede's audience. Bede provides a colorful miniature of the "real" Hild, the spiritual instructor and advisor, the woman who demanded from her subjects no less than what she required of herself: "Nam eisdem, quibus prius monasterium, etiam hoc disciplinis uitae regularis instituit, et quidem multam ibi quoque iustitiae pietatis et castimoniae ceterarumque uirtutum, sed maxime pacis et caritatis custodiam docuit."¹³⁷ In Bede's view, "real" power and influence lay not in the political sphere of activity nor in material production, but rather in instructing and encouraging others in Christian virtue, thus, the "real" woman whom he portrays in his "Life of Hild" is focused upon the eternal spiritual pursuits proper to those who have entered God's transcendent society rather than upon the ephemeral, transitory shadow-world of temporal power. As Benedicta Ward points out: "[The saints'] lives were not interesting, either to Bede or his audience, as a reflection of life in the kingdom of Northumbria but as accounts of how life in that place had been lived oriented towards the kingdom of heaven."¹³⁸

While one cannot hope to examine Bede's works exhaustively in the brief space allotted to this chapter, the weight of the evidence presented here shows that Bede did not just thoughtlessly accept everything that he received from the Latin Doctors or anyone else. Rather, when presented with differing interpretations of such things as the meaning of the stories of Creation and the Fall, he recognized the differences, weighed the evidence, and chose for himself which explanation he believed to be most accurate. In this way, he perpetuates the Augustinian interpretation of the Fall rather than the Ambrosian, and so on. Significant, too, is

Bede's general omission of the metaphors of male and female gender, especially in his exegetical works. The equality of mind with subordination of relationship in women that Bede learned from the Fathers, he both teaches in his exegetical works and illustrates in his Lives of such strong personalities as Hild. Bede was no mere "yes man" in the transmission of patristic teachings about women, but rather a thoughtful and fair-minded teacher who did not hesitate to chide his fellow religious when they went astray from orthodox doctrine and faithful practice, but who also was quick to praise the efforts and pious lives of all those, male and female, who strove for the same heavenly reward as he.

4. Alcuin

Another important figure in the history of the dissemination of patristic ideas, Alcuin of York probably had access to a better library than Aldhelm and even Bede, although even he did not have access to all the patristic works that he would have liked.¹³⁹ Archbishop Ælberht of York took the example of Benedict Biscop and Ceolfrith, making trips to the Continent and collecting books to bring back to England: "Non semel externas peregrino tramite terras / iam peragravit ovans, sophiae deductus amore, / si quid forte novi librorum seu studiorum, / quod secum ferret terris reperiret in illis."¹⁴⁰ These books built up the cathedral library at York and they, as well as the school, became Alcuin's responsibility after Ælberht retired.¹⁴¹ Alcuin's famous list of authors whose works could be found in the library at York, however, does not often tell us which of the works of these writers made up

the library's holdings. In addition, Alcuin later had access both to Charlemagne's palace library and to the library at the monastery of St. Martin of Tours. Given how much we do not know about these libraries, our best witness to the works of the four Latin Doctors that were known to Alcuin may be his own writings. Even this approach, however, is prone to frustration because, while scholarly editions of several of Alcuin's works are under way, they have yet to be published and so information regarding Alcuin's sources must be pieced together from the comments of other scholars. A number of the texts discussed in Chapter Two, however, figure prominently in Alcuin's works and clearly influenced his ideas.

In Alcuin's day, York was "the educational centre of England and indeed of Europe," thus, when Charlemagne had the opportunity to recruit the schoolmaster of the premier center of learning in western Europe, he did not let the moment pass.¹⁴² In 782, Alcuin joined Charlemagne's court and took charge of the palace school and the king's ambitious plans for educational, religious, and cultural revival. He produced most of his own works after relocating to Charlemagne's court. Now one of the number of Anglo-Saxon *peregrini* among the Franks, he wrote a large collection of letters, instructional books for the schools, poetry, hagiography, and theological treatises, and he made abundant use not only of the four Latin Doctors (especially Augustine) but also of Bede and Aldhelm.¹⁴³ Like Bede before him, Alcuin is accused by scholars of the mid-twentieth century as not being "in any way original or stimulating" in his theological treatises, nor are his educational works, "judged by any standards, remarkable; indeed they are mediocre."¹⁴⁴ Yet such

evaluations of Alcuin's work downplay the intelligence and instructional talent that Alcuin displayed in taking the essential teachings of the earlier Fathers and councils and making the kernel of those teachings accessible to an audience that was either newly converted from paganism or recently reinvigorated in the study of the central doctrines of the Christian faith under the Carolingian educational program. Alcuin's works brought the ideas of the earlier Fathers and of the first generation of Anglo-Saxon scholars into the dynamic context of the Carolingian court, with its international circle of scholars, at the height of Charlemagne's power and influence.¹⁴⁵ His agenda focused on a "return to first principles" intended to spread the core doctrines of Christianity beyond the monastery and cathedral walls into the hearts and souls of the laity.¹⁴⁶ While doing so, he "translated" the earlier Fathers' ideas about women into a different cultural context, one in which new theological challenges (the Adoptionist Controversy and the Iconoclast Controversy among others) needed to be addressed. Alcuin addressed these challenges by relying upon the authority and acknowledged orthodoxy of the four Latin Doctors plus Bede, thus ensuring that their works and ideas would continue to shape religious culture in the new Carolingian world.¹⁴⁷

While Alcuin orchestrated the renovation of ecclesiastical culture that took place under Charlemagne, the king himself remained keenly interested and active in the implementation of Alcuin's plans through royal legislation:

The education of the clergy was one of the aims of his legislation; they should be able to understand the Latin texts they had to deal with, and to interpret them to the laymen. A minimum of knowledge was repeatedly prescribed, and was to be tested by examinations.¹⁴⁸

In order to implement a plan for a required minimum of religious knowledge, however, there had to be a supply of “handbooks” on theological topics of importance that could be reproduced on a large scale and carried with ease, and a set of examination questions on which priests and other religious instructors could be tested and that they could use as an aid to memory. One such handbook is Alcuin’s *Interrogationes et Responsiones in Genesin*, a collection of 280 questions and responses on the book of Genesis that Alcuin wrote ostensibly to answer questions posed by the priest, Sigewulf. Katherine O’Brien O’Keeffe observes that

quite apart from the content of the commentary, its form made it ideally suited for quick gleaning of information on various aspects of Genesis. . . . The work, answering questions of varying difficulty which Sigewulf is said to have posed, should function as a prod to the memory, and its answers are kept deliberately short and to the point.¹⁴⁹

Alcuin’s questions are not about the basic narrative content of Genesis, but rather about how that content should be interpreted and explained. O’Brien O’Keeffe demonstrates that Alcuin relies upon various commentaries and books concerning Genesis to provide the material for his answers and chief among his resources, especially for material on the first part of the biblical account, is Bede’s *Libri quatuor in principium Genesis*.¹⁵⁰ Thus, Alcuin’s *Interrogationes* provides us with insight into his own understanding of Bedan exegesis regarding Adam, Eve, and the Fall. For example:

[Inter. XL:] Cur iterum dixerit “Et creavit Deus hominem ad imaginem suam” cum ante dixerit “ad imaginem nostram”?
[Resp.:] Vt utrumque et pluralitas personarum et unitas substantie insinuaretur.¹⁵¹

This question is part of a sub-group of questions that delineate the doctrines of the Trinity and the *imago Dei* in humans. The answer, brief to the point of being cryptic, presumes a thorough knowledge of trinitarian doctrine. The point of the question is not to teach the doctrine, but to remind the reader of which doctrine explains the grammar of the biblical account. The verbal echo, *pluralitas personarum*, from Bede's explanation of this grammatical implication of the Trinity, though it may have been unconscious while Alcuin was writing, triggers the thought of Bede's more detailed comments on the matter. Bede's comments themselves, however, derive ultimately from Augustine's *De trinitate*.¹⁵² First compressed by Bede, then distilled by Alcuin, the Augustinian grammatical explication of these phrases from Genesis made its way into the preaching and teaching of Carolingian Europe by means of Alcuin's handbook. What teaching about Eve, then, did this handbook disseminate?

Concerning Eve's beginning, Alcuin wanted his readers to remember this:

[Inter. LVII:] Cur mulier de latere uiri dormientis edificata legitur et non de terra plasmata sicut uir?

[Resp.:] Certi misterii causa significans, quod Christus propter ecclesiam dormiuit in cruce ex cuius latere fons salutis nostre manauit.¹⁵³

For Alcuin, the most important idea associated with Eve's formation from Adam's side was not her subordination to Adam, but rather the mystical idea of the blood from Christ's side that gave life to his Church. The thought, found several times in Augustine, probably came immediately from Bede's commentary, which says "Significabatur enim quod de latere Christi in cruce per mortem sopiti

sacramenta essent salutis exitura, uidelicet sanguis et aqua, de quibus sponsa illi conderetur ecclesia.”¹⁵⁴

Likewise, Alcuin adapts his answers to questions about why Eve listened to the serpent, why she contemplated the forbidden tree after the serpent spoke, and why Adam joined her in eating the fruit from the same passages of *De Genesi ad litteram* that Bede quotes in his commentary, thus precluding certainty as to whether the source in front of Alcuin was Bede or Augustine (though I think it most likely to have been Bede). Augustine reads:

Dixit ergo serpens mulieri, “Non morte moriemini. Sciebat enim Deus, quoniam quo die manducaveritis de eo, adaperientur vobis oculi, et eritis sicut dii, cognoscentes bonum et malum.” Quando his verbis crederet mulier a bona atque utili re divinitus se fuisse prohibitos, nisi iam inesset menti amor ille propriae potestatis, et quaedam de se superba praesumptio, quae per illam tentationem fuerat convincenda et humilianda? Denique verbis non contenta serpentis consideravit lignum, *viditque bonum ad escam, et decorum ad aspectum*, et non credens posse inde se mori, arbitror quod putaverit Deum alicuius significationis causa dixisse, *Si manducaveritis, morte moriemini*: atque ideo sumpsit de fructus eius, at manducavit, et dedit etiam viro suo secum; fortassis etiam cum verbo suatorio, quod Scriptura tacens intelligendum relinquit. An forte nec suaderi iam opus erat viro, quando illam eo cibo mortuam non esse cernebat?¹⁵⁵

Bede quotes this passage verbatim (except where he replaces Augustine’s quotations from the Old Latin Bible with the same passages from the Vulgate) as part of his own commentary on Genesis 3:4–5.¹⁵⁶ Alcuin bases questions sixty-six through sixty-eight on this one passage, but his answers extrapolate Augustine’s meaning:

Inter. 66: Quomodo potuit mulier credere serpentis sermonibus, quod divinitus a re bona fuisset prohibita?

Resp.: Quia forte ante inerat menti illius amor quidam propriae potestatis, et quaedam de [se] superba praesumptio, quae per illam tentationem fuerat vincenda et humilianda.

Inter. 67: Cur mulier consideravit lignum post serpentis persuasionem?

Resp.: Ut exploraret si quid in eo mortiferum esset; dum autem nihil in eo tale reperiret, confidentius gustavit ex eo.

Inter. 68: [Sed] unde vir consentit feminae?

Resp.: Quia forte illam eo cibo mortuam non esse cernebat; et potuit fieri, ut putaverint alicujus significationis causa dixisse creatorem: Si manducaveritis ex eo, morte moriemini.¹⁵⁷

The implication both of Augustine's passage and of Alcuin's response to

Interrogatio 66 is that the woman's love of her own potential and her lofty confidence in herself were not yet matters of corruption, for they could have been subdued and humbled through the temptation without her ever having fallen into sin. They are the reason why the woman had a state of mind in which she could be deceived, and yet could also have overcome the temptation and remained sinless. Alcuin inverts the sense of Augustine's (and Bede's) interpretation, however, in Interrogatio 67. Both Augustine and Bede use the words from Genesis 3:6 to describe how Eve saw the goodness and beauty of the tree when she looked at it after hearing the serpent. Alcuin, on the other hand, shows Eve exercising intellectual discernment, inspecting the tree to see whether or not she could find anything in it that looked deadly. Confident in her ability to identify something that might be fatal, she finds nothing in the tree that strikes her as harmful and thus she eats. Through the technique of inversion, Alcuin implies what Augustine states: that the woman is not yet satisfied with the serpent's argument and so looks for proof that his words are true. By finding

nothing evil, indeed by implication finding what is good, Eve becomes convinced that it will be good for her to eat the fruit.

In his answer to Interrogatio 68, Alcuin emphasizes the idea that the man, seeing that the woman had not died, thought it possible to eat the forbidden fruit and not die. At this point Alcuin brings in an idea that, in Augustine and Bede, was associated only with the woman: that God's statement about the consequence of eating the fruit being death had something other than a literal meaning. By using the plural subjunctive form of the verb *puto*, Alcuin applies this thought to both Adam and Eve instead of to just Eve as in his source(s). By mentioning it in the answer to why the man could have assented to the woman in disobedience, Alcuin implies that this answer is to be preferred over Augustine's alternative speculation about an unrecorded conversation in which the woman encourages the man to eat. In this way, Alcuin suggests what is essentially a mutual error in interpreting God's warning, rather than ascribing any sense of inherent wickedness or fleshly concupiscence to Eve. The whole episode is an intellectual and spiritual challenge for both the woman and the man, a totally platonic process, literal yet also restrained as Alcuin makes little in the way of value judgments upon the actions he explains.

How, then, does Alcuin address the matter of the woman's punishment for her part in the Fall? We would expect Alcuin to follow the material in Bede's commentary, as he has on matters pertaining to Eve up to this point. But here Alcuin surprises us:

Inter. 78. Quaeritur, dum dicitur: Et sub viri potestate eris, si ante peccatum [quoque] mulier sub potestate viri esset?

Resp. Fuit utique, sed ea servitute, quae per dilectionem operatur, et foras mittit timorem; post vero, conditionali servitutis timore, quae per disciplinam operatur.¹⁵⁸

While Augustine makes this distinction between kinds of subjugation in *De Genesi ad litteram*, and Bede transmits Augustine's thought in *In Genesim*, Alcuin chooses to quote from an anonymous work that was attributed to Eucherius of Lyons, *Commentarii in Genesim in tres libros distributi*, which states:

Quaeritur cum dicit. Sub viri potestate eris, si non peccasset mulier, si esset sub potestate viri? Esset utique, sed ea servitute quae per dilectionem operatur, et foras mittit timorem; post peccatum vero conditionalis servitutis timore, qui per disciplinam operatur, veniens de maledictionis poena, et non potius de aequalitate naturae.¹⁵⁹

Alcuin omits the last thought regarding the difference in servitudes not resulting from the equality of the nature of the man and woman, nor does he refer to the anonymous writer's subsequent Ambrosian interpretation of the woman as the pleasures of the flesh that needed to be disciplined to obedience. Nevertheless, it seems as though Alcuin has gone out of his way to quote from "Eucherius" when much of the rest of the time he has taken his material from Bede. Perhaps the best explanation is that Alcuin had at some point memorized this quotation from the anonymous work because it was the most succinct statement of the idea that he had encountered. When he came to that point in writing his *Interrogationes*, the question and answer automatically took the form that he had memorized. By using the words of the anonymous exegete Alcuin is not necessarily changing the thought of Bede or Augustine (especially since he leaves out the parts that reflect a more Ambrosian view), but rather presenting it in a more concise form than that used by either of those

two Fathers. Interrogatio 78 elegantly illustrates John Cavadini's observation about Alcuin's treatment of his sources elsewhere:

When a close examination is made of the way in which Alcuin handles the many passages which he takes over from earlier writers, one cannot fail to be almost shocked by the degree to which he felt free to cut up these sources as he wished, to combine them with his own comments and with other sources, and to leave them without acknowledgement. Alcuin is clearly not relying on an understanding of these texts which would see them as untouchable oracles from a hallowed age.¹⁶⁰

It appears that to Alcuin the authority of the earlier writers inheres in the unity of the orthodoxy of their ideas, not in their individuality or in the immutable formulation of those ideas. Cavadini goes on to say that Alcuin "uses their texts, rather, much more like a kind of raw material, one which he appropriates and molds freely, pressing it into structures of his own choosing, and indeed, creating these structures out of the shards of earlier ones."¹⁶¹ We have seen Alcuin press such methods into service in the *Interrogationes et responsiones in Genesin*, but he uses them in his other works as well.

Cavadini made the comments quoted above in regard to Alcuin's *De fide sanctae et individuae trinitatis* (also known more briefly as simply *De fide* or *De trinitate*), another theological handbook that drew heavily from the works of Augustine.¹⁶² The *De fide* is one part of a three-part "suite of works dealing with Trinitarian questions" in the extant manuscripts, whose other two parts consist of the *Quaestiones XXVI ad Fredegisum* and a treatise known as *De ratione animae*.¹⁶³ E. Ann Matter observes that "this particular set of works by Alcuin is generously witnessed in the extant manuscripts, almost embarrassingly so."¹⁶⁴ The treatise on the

Trinity is based upon Augustine's *De trinitate*, but "although Alcuin uses Augustine's *On the Trinity*, his focus is not on its famous psychological analogies. Rather than being speculative, this work is meant to instruct teachers and preachers on how to expound orthodox faith."¹⁶⁵ With this goal in mind, Alcuin loosely arranges both the treatise and the questions around the Creed, a structure that would both aid the memory and associate particular concepts with specific aspects of the credal profession.¹⁶⁶ Since lay people were to be taught the Creed, it would provide the most likely source of many of their religious questions. Alcuin's structuring of his work and questions on the Trinity around the Creed was a thoughtful move that would enable priests and other instructors to have answers readily associated with specific matters about which laymen might inquire. The accompanying *Quaestiones*, as aids to a priest's or a teacher's memory, assured at least a bare-bones answer to the most likely questions, such as Interrogatio 24: "Si una substantia est Pater, et Filius, et Spiritus sanctus, quare solus Filius incarnatus dicitur?" to which the response is: "Quia alia est persona Filii, alia Patris, alia Spiritus sancti. Et sola siquidem persona Filii incarnata est: operante tamen eadem incarnationem tota sancta Trinitate, cujus opera sunt inseparabilia."¹⁶⁷ If the inquisitive lay person pursued this complicated subject further, then the priest or teacher could fall back upon the more complete explanation of the idea given in Alcuin's handbook.

Alcuin's *De fide*, while compressing Augustine's thought and trimming it to the bare essentials, does not approach its subject matter simplistically. The work addresses the issue of the equality of substance/inequality of condition of Christ

within the Trinity and the dual nature of Christ in chapter VII of Book III, explaining this complex material succinctly, but with clarity:

Ex una sententia Apostoli duae in Filio Dei naturae intelliguntur: una, in qua est per omnia aequalis Patri: altera, in qua minor est Patre, ubi ait: Qui cum esset in forma Dei, non rapinam arbitratus est esse aequalis Deo, sed semetipsum exinanivit formam servi suscipiens. Proinde quaedam ita dicuntur in Scripturis sanctis, ut minor Filius intelligatur, sicut ipse ait: Pater major me est; quaedam vero ita dicuntur, ut aequalis Patri ostendatur, sicut [ibi, ubi idem] ipse ait: Ego et Pater unum sumus; unum, propter substantiae unitatem; sumus, propter personarum proprietatem. Quod diligentissime prudens lector considerare debet, quid pro qua dicatur forma: cum tamen et in forma servi, et in forma Dei, idem ipse sit Filius, unus, unigenitus Dei Patris; in forma Dei aequalis Patri, in forma servi minor Patre.¹⁶⁸

In this chapter, Alcuin begins first by establishing the biblical basis for the doctrine of the two natures of Christ. Using the same quotations from the Gospels and Paul's epistle to the Philippians that Augustine used in Book I of the earlier *De trinitate*, Alcuin ties the idea, the orthodoxy of Augustine, and the passages from scripture to a credal formula about the two natures of Christ. The rest of the chapter further addresses the idea of the *Verbum Dei* made flesh, so that there might be no doubt, no possibility for a different interpretation of the two natures of Christ other than the one set forth in the Creed and in Augustine. In this manner, Alcuin preserves and transmits to the priests and teachers (and through them to the laity) the concept that equality of substance or nature can exist within unequal conditions. He does so by demonstrating these relationships within the Trinity without reference to any human social parallel. Accordingly, by means of the Carolingian educational program the concept of equality of nature coexisting with inequality of condition moved beyond the purview of the monasteries and into lay society. Alcuin dedicated

De fide sanctae et individuae trinitatis to Charlemagne and, as E. Ann Matter observes, “although this series of texts was preserved by scribes for monastic and cathedral schools, it may have been originally intended for the theological education of the nobility.”¹⁶⁹

The passage from Alcuin’s *De fide* discussed above also demonstrates the radical difference between Alcuin’s handbook and Augustine’s theological treatise. Alcuin does not use Augustine’s elaborate ternary evidence for the *imago Dei* in the human soul, nor does he seek to draw his readers into the experience of contemplating the divine as did Augustine.¹⁷⁰ Alcuin’s goal is different from Augustine’s. Augustine’s *De trinitate* is a leisurely and profound meditation, designed to lead the reader into contemplation of the Triune nature of the divinity through the very act of reading. It persuades and awes its readers by the sheer volume and complexity of the analogies adduced to illustrate the Trinity and the relationships within it, making both reading and comprehending into acts of faith. Alcuin, on the other hand, chiefly wants to make sure that his readers have the facts of faith, and so puts his own *De fide* into a dialogue in the pedagogic question-and-answer form. If his readers desired to contemplate the matter further, they could consult a copy of Augustine’s *De trinitate* or the extensive extracts from Augustine’s book that could be found in Eugippius’s collection.

Alcuin does not always use the question-and-answer format for his treatises, however, nor does he necessarily write them under the cover of manuals for priests or other teachers. The third work often included in Alcuin’s trinitarian *suite* is his letter

to “Eulalia” (Alcuin’s alias for Gundrada, Adalhard of Corbie’s sister and a lady at Charlemagne’s court), better known as the treatise *De ratione animae*.¹⁷¹ In this work, Alcuin addresses the subject of the soul, primarily by using ideas from Augustine’s *De trinitate* and *De Genesi ad litteram*.¹⁷² Peter Clemons observes that “typically Alcuin re-expresses the thought of these passages: there is a word-for-word borrowing only once.”¹⁷³ J. J. M. Curry carries the observation further: “Alcuin does more than simply repeat received ideas in condensed form; he combines them into a unified system whose parts function harmoniously to achieve his epistemological and ethical purposes.”¹⁷⁴ Alcuin states his “epistemological and ethical purposes” for writing *De ratione animae* in the first paragraph:

Sanctae sollicitudini vestrae et laudabili in Deo studio placuit deprecari de ratione animae aliquid nostram scribere devotionem; propter quasdam inquisitiones, ut ais, anno transacto inter vos ventilatas.¹⁷⁵

Alcuin may simply be employing the “topos” of responding to a reader’s questions, but he is known to have exchanged some correspondence with Gundrada. If he is responding to actual inquiries, whether from Gundrada or not, nothing has yet been discovered that specifies what sparked these *quasdam inquisitiones* and so the reader is left to speculate what the context for the request may have been. It does not seem farfetched, however, to infer that they may have had to do with the *imago Dei* in humans. Charlemagne’s biographer, Einhard, tells us that “Inter caenandum aut aliquod acroama aut lectorem audiebat. Legebatur ei historiae et antiquorum res gestae. Delectabatur et libris sancti Augustini, praecipueque his qui de civitate Dei praetitulati sunt.”¹⁷⁶ The fact that Charlemagne especially enjoyed *De civitate Dei*

does not exclude the reading of other Augustinian works in this public venue and Jaroslav Pelikan's observation of an echo from Augustine's *De trinitate* in one of the ruler's letters suggests that this work on the Trinity might have been part of Charlemagne's public reading program.¹⁷⁷ Such readings provided plenty of grist for intellectual discussion among the members of Charlemagne's court and the ready access that court personnel had to the palace library would allow them to pursue their own research on whatever topics piqued their interests.¹⁷⁸ Within the context of the increasing restriction of women's participation in religious rites and duties, questions about the *imago Dei* and the nature of the soul, especially in women, may have been on people's minds.¹⁷⁹ Whatever the cause, Alcuin's claim to be responding to an inquiry from Gundrada is probably genuine given the evidence of other correspondence between them.¹⁸⁰

The most immediately noticeable difference between Alcuin's discussion of the nature of the soul and that of Augustine is the absence of the metaphors of "male" and "female" describing the contemplative and active functions of the soul. The only time that Alcuin uses the metaphor of a woman is when he describes reason as ruling like a queen:

Sicut enim loquela praecellit in carne ceteris animantibus ita et in anima ratione sola nobilior est eis; quae omnes carnales concupiscentias et animi motus quasi domina et regina de sublimi aequitatis sede regere et temperare debet.¹⁸¹

There is nothing new in Alcuin's depiction of the soul ruling over the body as a queen; this image can be found in Ambrose's *De virginitate* and Aldhelm's *De virginitate*.¹⁸² In Augustine's trinitarian structure, the masculine function of the

contemplative will guides the feminine function of active knowledge in caring for the bodily needs and avoiding evil, but it is still the work of the feminine function to do the ruling and restraining of the body. The queen in Alcuin's example exercises the offices of this active knowledge, which "omnes carnales concupiscentias et animi motus . . . regere et temperare debet."¹⁸³

Alcuin avoids the gendered metaphors used by Augustine in *De trinitate*, however, and this avoidance suggests a number of possibilities. Alcuin and his audience were separated by time, place, and culture from the interpretive milieu in which Augustine wrote. As a result, they may have had considerable disagreement and difficulty with the subtle distinctions of Augustine's gendered metaphors. During the intervening centuries the center of Western Christian literary culture had shifted to the far west, the island kingdoms of England and the northern Frankish empire of Charlemagne. Classical culture was preserved in these centers, yet not without being affected by the Germanic culture of the Anglo-Saxons and of Charlemagne and his court. As a result, no one could assume that any particular reader of Augustine (or the other Doctors) would possess the social and theological understandings of the gendered metaphors that the earlier Fathers could expect the educated Roman Christian audiences of their own day to bring to their reading.¹⁸⁴ Alcuin understood the *imago Dei* to be present in women as well as men, and he transmitted the teaching of Augustine without using the gendered metaphors Augustine used. Whether Alcuin avoided these metaphors because they led to misunderstandings or even offended members of the court is unknown, but does not seem improbable.

We see the influence of the ideas from Book XII of *De trinitate*, however, even if Alcuin does not specifically quote from his source. For example, he reproduces in his own words this idea from Augustine:

Potestatem quippe suam diligens anima a communi uniuerso ad priuatam partem prolabitur, et apostatica illa *superbia* quod *initium peccati* dicitur, cum in uniuersitate creaturae deum rectorem secuta legibus eius optime gubernari potuisset, plus aliquid uniuerso appetens atque id sua lege gubernare molita... et phantastica fornicatione turpiter inquinatur¹⁸⁵

Alcuin's rendition is much shorter, reducing the idea to its most essential elements and demonstrating the importance of keeping the soul turned toward God, in whose image it was made, in order to avoid falling into pride: "Nobilis a conditore creata sed ignobilis vitio proprio facta, id est dum a Dei declinat servitio sua volens uti potestate quod est primum malum omni rationali creaturae."¹⁸⁶ Alcuin captures the two basic points in the passage from Augustine: the soul's love of its own power, pride as the basis of all evil. Where Augustine points out what the soul would have if it obeyed God, Alcuin uses inversion to show the result of turning away from obedience. Both make the soul responsible for its own defilement.

Though, as observed before, Alcuin does not use Augustine's metaphors of gender, he does instruct his readers on the two functions within the soul, which he identifies as *intellectus* and *ratio*:

. . . in quo est amor naturaliter qui amor intellectu discernendus est et ratione ab illicitis delectationibus cohibendus ut ea amet quae amanda sunt. Atque secundum officium operis sui variis nuncupatur nominibus: anima est dum vivificat, dum contemplatur spiritus est, dum sentit sensus est, dum sapit animus est, dum intellegit mens est, dum discernit ratio est, dum consentit voluntas est, dum recordatur memoria est. Non tamen haec ita dividuntur in substantia sicut in nominibus quia haec omnia una est anima.¹⁸⁷

All of these dual processes of the soul fall neatly within the areas of responsibility that Augustine outlines for the “male” (contemplating, comprehending, knowing, determining) and “female” (life-giving, perceiving, examining, remembering) components of the mind, yet Alcuin makes no association of them with men or women, with masculine or feminine characteristics. They are aspects of one mind, one soul in each person, and when they function in harmony together they transcend the sum of their parts, again reflecting the metagender of the *imago Dei* as God had created it. Thus, Alcuin teaches the Augustinian structure of the mind, but without using Augustine’s metaphors. The Anglo-Saxon scholar and teacher understood the erudite thought of the Latin Doctor, but put it into a form that made sense in the context of the Frankish court and educational program of the late eighth century. John Cavadini expresses Alcuin’s cultural translation of Augustine best in these comments on *De fide*:

The Augustine that emerges here is decidedly more accessible, more optimistic, less guarded, and less authoritarian, and in some ways almost charming. . . . Alcuin in this regard . . . has an ebullience and idealism so great that it managed even to catch up the sometimes gloomy, ever-suspicious bishop of Hippo in its enthusiasm, presenting us with an Augustine who, despite certain new naïvetés, some might regard as an improvement on the original.¹⁸⁸

5. Conclusion

Based upon this survey of selected Anglo-Latin works, it is inaccurate to say that the gender attitudes reflected in the writings of the Latin Doctors were accepted without question and repeated by all early medieval monastic writers. Aldhelm,

Bede, and Alcuin each weighed and chose for himself which of the theories and images of gender put forward by the earlier Fathers he thought most accurate. Aldhelm followed Jerome more closely than Bede or Alcuin while the two Northumbrian scholars showed a marked preference for Augustine's views. None of these Anglo-Saxon authors seemed to accept Ambrose's attitude towards women. While Aldhelm regales his audiences with his own rather less acid brand of Hieronymian literary rhetoric, Bede values economy in his exploration and explanation of Augustinian and Gregorian theology. Alcuin, always the schoolmaster, condensed and adjusted the Latin Doctors and Bede, transmitting the essence of their teachings without the elaborate allegorical interpretations or metaphorical figures. Directly or indirectly, each one adapted Augustine's psychology of the soul to fit the cultural milieu of his own day without violating Augustine's essential teaching—an act that shows that the gendered understandings of theological matters were not thought to be inherent in the teachings themselves, but were rightly viewed as metaphors that could be set aside or adapted to express the same ideas in new contexts. When the theological and psychological metaphors of gender no longer suited the cultural milieu or led to misunderstanding, the metaphors were abandoned while the essential psychology and theology remained. The attitudes of these Anglo-Saxon Fathers, as revealed in their writings, certainly reflect different ideas about the nature of equality and difference between men and women, influenced by but also adapted from the earlier Latin Doctors. The independence with which these Anglo-Saxon scholars handled the texts and ideas of their patristic forebears and

the readiness with which Aldhelm, Bede, and Alcuin repeated, adapted, or ignored what the earlier Fathers had written argues against the idea that these churchmen were instruments of misogyny. Rather, the evidence points to an appreciation of the intellectual, managerial, and spiritual capacities of women on the part of these three Anglo-Saxon Fathers that would be preserved and transmitted within the monastic communities for centuries to come.

CHAPTER IV: THE DAUGHTERS OF EVE

1. The Legacy of the Fathers: Ælfric and the Garden

The writings of Aldhelm, Bede and Alcuin discussed in Chapter Three express the early Anglo-Saxon understanding of the major teachings of the four Latin Doctors on Creation, the Fall, the Trinity, and the nature of the human soul, especially as these matters pertain to early Anglo-Saxon perceptions of women and gender. Their adaptations and recastings of patristic texts show how they understood those older texts. Their writings also elucidate a process of cultural translation that calls into question the idea that each new generation of Christian writers uncritically received everything that came to them from the Doctors as a hallowed text that must be accepted without discernment or change. The dynamic of lay education that Charlemagne and Alcuin put into motion spread the writings of Bede and Aldhelm, as well as Alcuin's own considerable corpus, to the major religious centers of Francia and Germany on the continent and from those centers into the minds and beliefs of the laity.

The religious education of the laity, however, came with its own set of problems, as Ælfric, a monk educated at Bishop Æthelwold's school at Winchester in the tenth century, acknowledged in his own works.¹ When the nobleman Æthelweard asked Ælfric to translate the first part of the book of Genesis into English for him, Ælfric reluctantly complied, voicing his concerns in his *Preface*:

We secgað eac foran to þæt seo boc is swiþe deop gastlice to understandenne, and we ne writap na mare buton þa nacedan gerecednisse. Þonne þincþ þam ungelæredum þæt eall þæt andgit beo belocen on þære anfealden gerecednisse, ac hit ys swiþe feor þam.¹

Ælfric knew well the distance between the concrete, literal, “naked” history of biblical narrative and the resplendent spiritual truths hidden within that history, for his monastic education had steeped him in the orthodox teachings and ideas of the Latin Doctors and the earlier Anglo-Saxon Fathers concerning the meanings of the book of Genesis. Ælfric’s translation projects made both the literal texts and the sermons, homilies, and other materials that explained the spiritual meanings available to his countrymen both inside and outside of the monastery walls.

Several scholars have commented upon Ælfric’s consideration for his audiences both in terms of his desire to make religious works available in English and of his desire to convey orthodox teachings through his translations.² For example, Mary Clayton makes Ælfric’s concern for orthodoxy clear in her evaluation of Ælfric’s relation to the Marian cult in tenth- and eleventh-century England. She objects to taking Ælfric’s rejection of the apocryphal accounts of the Virgin Mary as representative of a “school of thought,” saying:

There are difficulties with this, however: . . . it involves making Ælfric into a school, whereas he was unique in his condemnations. While it is clear that Ælfric was attempting to reform Anglo-Saxon preaching on the Virgin, his stance is not at all self-evidently a reflection of reform thinking.³

The context for Ælfric’s unique stance lies in the explosion of Marian devotion that accompanied the Benedictine Reform of the tenth century in England. New monasteries and re-established monasteries were often dedicated to the Virgin,

and the evidence of artwork and the material in the anonymous sermons and homilies shows that the apocryphal material on Mary was known and accepted throughout England.⁴

The notable exception, according to Clayton, was Ælfric. Ælfric remained steadfastly uncommitted (like his orthodox sources, Adamnan and Bede) on the matter of the bodily assumption of Mary, although he had no quarrel with the doctrine of her spiritual assumption. He was strongly outspoken in his rejection of the apocryphal material regarding Mary's nativity, insisting that she was conceived and born in the ordinary way of all humans and indicating that she was purified from all sin when the Holy Spirit came upon her to generate Christ within her.⁵ But Ælfric was not taken all that seriously on this topic by his fellow religious, especially in Winchester, which soon became the first Western establishment to incorporate the Eastern Marian feasts of the Immaculate Conception and of the Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple.⁶ These feasts spread briefly to Exeter (through Leofric) and to Canterbury before the Conquest.⁷ Yet Clayton observes that, in rejecting the apocryphal accounts of Mary,

[Ælfric] is a lone voice, a maverick rather than a representative, protesting in a world where such niceties meant little. We can see where he comes from in terms of the Carolingian traditions behind him, but it is difficult to know why he alone adopted this particular stance.⁸

Nor were Ælfric's views regarding the apocryphal accounts of Mary the only evidence of independent thinking on his part. Christopher A. Jones notes several differences between Ælfric's customary for his monastery at Eynsham and the *Regularis Concordia* written by his teacher, Æthelwold, and adopted by a council of

bishops, abbots, and abbesses approximately thirty years before Ælfric became an abbot.⁹ One such difference concerns the frequency of receiving communion (the *Regularis Concordia* recommends daily reception, Ælfric only on Sundays and feast days); another concerns the psalms to be chanted when a brother of the monastery dies (Ælfric stipulates the fifteen gradual psalms, or psalms of ascent, while the *Concordia* indicates that the seven penitential psalms should be sung).¹⁰ The evidence of these changes, among others, shows that “While he might not parade his dissent, Ælfric was not timid about asserting his own standards where he felt those of his colleagues to be inadequate.”¹¹ Ælfric’s changes reflect his willingness to assert his own ideas regarding monastic observance, but they also demonstrate his attitude toward the *Regularis Concordia* and its authority. He uses it as a guide, but not as an absolute or binding law of monastic practice.

Another difference that Jones points out is how Ælfric’s customary avoids almost completely the political aspects of the *Concordia*. Jones suggests that in Ælfric’s customary, “the distribution of collects and intentions, which in the source heavily favour the king over the queen and benefactors, is not specified and so, perhaps, effectively levels the distinctions among them.”¹² The political disputes among royal heirs in the years following the writing of the *Concordia*, the erratic support that the monasteries received from the heirs, and Ælfric’s own close association with his noble lay patrons may have led him to an increasing difference of opinion with his teacher regarding the royal-monastic alliance so idealistically portrayed in Æthelwold’s document, a difference of opinion that expressed itself in

the quiet omission of most of the *Concordia*'s statements concerning the king from Ælfric's customary.¹³ Such reticence, in combination with Ælfric's departures from the unified monastic observance that the *Concordia* was designed to implement, bespeaks both the limits of the effectiveness of the *Concordia*'s plan and the degree of Ælfric's realism and practicality in running his own monastery at the beginning of the new millennium.

Two things that may be determined with certainty from Clayton's and Jones's examinations of Ælfric's relationship to his religious contexts are that Ælfric had the independence to stand by himself if necessary and that he did not uncritically adopt the ideas of the religious social milieu in which he lived. In doctrine he followed an orthodoxy based upon the scriptures and the writings of the Latin Doctors, transmitted especially through Bede, Alcuin, and the texts of the Carolingian reform, and then passed on to Ælfric himself by means of Æthelwold's school in Winchester. Ælfric was familiar with Gregory's *Homiliae in euangelia* and *Moralia in Iob*, Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*, and Alcuin's *Interrogationes Sigwulfi* and *De ratione animae*, as well as other orthodox patristic works not addressed here.¹⁴

Such orthodoxy did not hold sway over all of England in Ælfric's time, however. Milton McC. Gatch remarks that, just as there was more than one stream of theological influence in late Anglo-Saxon England, so also there were people who did not share Ælfric's "sense that one could and ought to discriminate among theological sources."¹⁵ Ælfric knew the writings of Aldhelm, Bede, and Alcuin and so had their own examples of critical preferences for the writings of one or another Latin Doctor

over the rest when it came to different aspects of interpretation. Ælfric thought highly of all four Latin Doctors, but like Bede and Alcuin before him, he reveals through his writings a strong Augustinian influence, as Lynne Grundy suggests.¹⁶ The presence of Augustine's ideas in Ælfric's works does not automatically mean that Ælfric knew the earlier Father's works directly. As was demonstrated in Chapter Two, both Bede and Alcuin transmitted Augustinian ideas through their own works and Ælfric had access to other intermediary authors, as well. Yet, while acknowledging the authority of these authors, Ælfric did not treat them as sacred vessels of orthodoxy that could not be adapted to his own purposes. James Hurt states that "Ælfric . . . handles his sources very freely," and that in his translations,

Ælfric reshaped his sources and put them into the language of his own country. The result was a carefully organized summary of the religious learning of his day, but Ælfric made it thoroughly English and at the same time Catholic in its authority and orthodoxy.¹⁷

For instance, Ælfric translated an abridged version of Alcuin's *Interrogationes et Responsiones in Genesin*. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, Alcuin's treatment of Eve in the questions about the creation of woman and the Fall into sin depended heavily upon Bede's commentary on Genesis, which in turn quoted Augustine's *De Genesi ad litteram* extensively. Ælfric does not translate all of the questions as they are found in Alcuin's Latin text, but sometimes makes free to combine the thought of two questions into one question of his own, as when he combines *Interrogationes* 37 and 40 into his own formula:

Alcuin:

[Inter. 37:] Cur plurali numero dixit "Faciamus"?

[Resp.:] Ut ostenderetur trium una operatio personarum.

[Inter. 40:] Cur iterum dixerit “Et creauit Deus hominem ad imaginem suam”
cum ante dixerit “ad imaginem nostram”?

[Resp.:] Vt utrumque et pluralitas personarum et unitas substantie
insinuaretur.

Ælfric:

Hwi is gecweden þæt God cwæde “Uton wyrcan mannan to ure anlicnyssa”?
Forþi is gecwedon “Uton wyrcan” þæt wære geswutelod þære halgan
þrynnysse weorc on annysse. Seo halige þrynnys is undergiten on þam
worde “Uton wyrcan”, and seo soðe annysse is understanden on þam
worde “to ure anlicnyssa”.¹⁸

Even though he does not preserve Alcuin’s exact structure or wording, Ælfric does cover all of the information that is found in Alcuin’s questions and he treats the rest of the suite of questions concerning the Trinity and the image of God found in the rational souls of humans in similar fashion. Here, he translates and demonstrates by means of English grammar the same trinitarian theology that Augustine derived from the Latin translation of Genesis 1:26. Yet Ælfric not only adapts Alcuin’s text free-handedly, he also adds details to it when he thinks those details will help clarify the thought and forestall the possibility of erroneous interpretation. In translating the *Interrogationes*, Ælfric not only provides the text, but he also interprets the figurative language for his audience so that they receive sound orthodox instruction, as when he translates the allegorical interpretation of Eve’s creation from Adam’s side that Alcuin reproduced from Bede and Augustine:

Alcuin:

[Inter. 57:] Cur mulier de latere uiri dormientis edificata legitur et non de terra plasmata sicut uir?

[Resp.:] Certi misterii causa significans, quod Christus propter ecclesiam dormiuit in cruce ex cuius latere fons salutis nostre manauit.

Ælfric:

Hwi wolde God gescyppan Euan of Adames sidan, þa þa he slep, and na of eorþan, swa swa he hine gesceop?
For þære getacnunge þæt Crist sylf wæs mid deaðe geswefod on þære rode, and wæs on þære sidan gewundod, of þære arn water and blod to alysenne his gelapunge, seo is gecweden Cristes bryd and clæne mæden.¹⁹

One interesting change that Ælfric makes to Alcuin's text is that he uses Adam and Eve's names instead of referring to "the man" and "the woman" as the earlier writers (including Bede) had done. This change possibly indicates that Ælfric thinks of Adam and Eve more literally, as actual people instead of symbols or figural representations, or perhaps that he expects his audience to think of these two figures more literally than figuratively. A third possibility (and the most likely) is that Ælfric uses the proper names in order to avoid confusion, so that his readers would always know who the man and the woman in the question are. This same motivation of clarity might lie behind Ælfric's insertion of specific literal details where Alcuin only gives the spiritual idea, as when Ælfric specifies that blood and water flowed from Christ's side while Alcuin refers metaphorically to the font of salvation.

Continuing with the focus on Adam and Eve, Ælfric opens the discussion of the Fall with Alcuin's clarification about whether the serpent could understand speech:

Alcuin:

[Inter. 62:] Si serpens sonum verborum eius qui per eum loquebatur intelligere potuit?

[Resp.:] Non est credibile eum intelligere potuisse quae per eum diabolus agebat; sed sicut daemoniacus et mente captus loquitur quae nescit, ita serpens verba edebat quae non intelligebat.

Ælfric:

Hweþer seo næddre þurh hire agen andgit to Euan spræce?
 Nis hit na geleaflic þæt se wurm þurh his agen andgit Euan beæhte, [ac] se
 deofol spræc þurh þa næddran, swa swa he deð þurh wodne man, and heo
 ne undergeat þa word þe ma þe se woda deð.²⁰

William Stoneman notes that the comparison between the serpent and the madman appears in both Bede and Augustine.²¹ While Alcuin's Latin text makes a distinction between the insane and the possessed, Ælfric's translation omits any reference to possession, stating that when the devil speaks through madmen, the madmen have no understanding of what they are saying. The point implies that the devil uses the insane as tools, just as he used the serpent—a point that comes into very clear focus in the Lives that Ælfric translates.

After addressing the question about whether the serpent understood the conversation it had with Eve, Ælfric omits all of the questions about how the woman could believe the serpent, why she contemplated the tree, and how the man came to enter into sin with his wife.²² The Old English *Hexameron*, however, succinctly outlines Ælfric's view on how Adam was tempted: "Wel wyste ure Scyppend ða ða he geworhte Adam, / ðone frumsceapenan mann, ðæt he syngian wolde / ðurh ðæs deofles lare, swa swa he dyde syððan."²³ Here Ælfric's interpretation of the Fall reflects the Augustinian concept, paralleled in Cassian's work, that the devil tempted Adam through the serpent rather than through Eve.²⁴ When Ælfric actually describes the Fall, he demonstrates a remarkably egalitarian attitude:

Ða wæs ðam deofle waa on his awyrgedum mode
 ðæt se mann sceolde ða myrhðe geearnian
 ðe he of afeoll for his upphefnysse,
 and he mid micclum andan ða menn ða beswac,
 ðæt hi buta æton of ðam forbodenan treowe
 and wæron ða deadlice and wið heora Drihten scyldige,
 and hi cuðon ða ægðer ge yfel ge good.²⁵

In Ælfric's version, both Adam and Eve fell into sin together, deceived by the devil into disobeying the one command that God had given them. As a result, "Heora gecynd eac ða wæs eall on costnungum / and him ungewylde to rihtre wissunge."²⁶ Ælfric's description reflects Augustine's figurative interpretation of Genesis as an illustration of the fall of the human soul into sin, hinting at, but never actually stating, the roles of the "male" and "female" functions of the mind.

The opening sermon in the collection of Ælfric's saints' Lives found in BL, Cotton Julius E.vii contains his most direct and detailed statement about the nature of the soul or the mind.²⁷ The sermon, titled "Natiuitas Domini nostri Iesu Christi" (LS I), addresses two main topics, the Trinity and the human soul.²⁸ In putting this text together, Ælfric draws from a number of sources including Boethius's *De consolatione Philosophiae* and an abbreviated version of Alcuin's *De ratione animae*.²⁹ In his analysis of the definitions of "mind" found in Alcuin, Alfred, and Ælfric, Malcolm Godden concludes that "soul and mind are . . . very closely associated, although as a matter of terminology Ælfric prefers, at least when being careful, to call the intellectual inner self *saw**l*, reserving *mod* for the locus or instrument of the soul's thought."³⁰ If one were to express this idea in Augustine's terms, *saw**l* would be equivalent to the "male" and "female" functions together,

whereas *mod* would represent the “male” function. In Ælfric, the entire soul “is distinctly the thinking power or agent,” thus reflecting Augustine’s formula that includes the “female” function in reason rather than following the Ambrosian formula that equates the woman with the beasts in representing the senses.³¹

Through the works of Bede and Alcuin especially, Ælfric received the Augustinian psychology of the human mind and its structure as the image of the Trinity, but what he received through his Anglo-Saxon forebears came largely without Augustine’s metaphorical male and female figures.³² Even if Ælfric knew Augustine’s *De trinitate* or *De Genesi ad litteram* directly in their entirety, he also had before him examples that showed him how to interpret Augustine’s figural meanings so that in his own writings one might find how Ælfric himself understood these teachings. The best measure of Ælfric’s understanding of Augustine’s psychology of the soul, however, lies not so much in his sermons or homilies, but in his translations of the Lives of saints. As will be demonstrated below, Ælfric did not follow just one approach toward translation. In most of his Lives he stayed very close to his Latin exemplar, but occasionally he radically deleted material and even shifted the focus of the story as he translated it into English. The evidence shows that such shifts were not the result of carelessness or ineptitude, but rather were carefully considered, deliberate redirection of the material for the sake of Ælfric’s Anglo-Saxon audience at the end of the tenth century.

2. Ælfric and the Lives of Saints: The Discourse of Holy Desire

The remainder of Chapter Four and Chapter Five will focus on reinventing (in the medieval sense) how to read and understand Ælfric's translations of the Lives of various saints as they might have been read and understood when they were new. Ælfric and his audiences perceived the men and women in these Lives from within an Anglo-Saxon Christian context influenced by patristic tropes and interpretations that shaped the attitudes and experiences of living people. It would be a mistake to say that Ælfric (and his audiences) represented the whole of attitudes that existed in Anglo-Saxon England at the time. Yet judging by the dissemination of his translations he was well received by monastic audiences and, if his various dedications and letters to aristocratic laymen are any indication, by a small, devout, educated, lay audience as well.³³

The Lives can serve as windows especially into the attitudes and perceptions of early medieval monastics of both sexes, since the Lives that Ælfric includes in this collection are not those generally honored by the laity, but those “þe mynster-menn mid heora þenungum betwux him wurðiað.”³⁴ These Lives illustrate an understanding of the religious life known to those within the walls of the monasteries, but that *læwedan men . . . nyston* ‘laypeople did not know.’³⁵ In translating the Lives from Latin into English, Ælfric also translated two cultures, late Roman culture and contemporary Anglo-Saxon monastic culture, for his lay patrons. Observing how Ælfric translated and interpreted the Latin Lives, however, also provides insight into Ælfric's ideas about men and women and into the early Christian monastic culture

that shaped his views. The combined focus on theology and history as well as source, linguistic, and literary analysis in the readings below provide a glimpse into the “remote” *mentalité* of Ælfric and his audience and into the beliefs and assumptions that shaped it.³⁶

When Ælfric translated the Lives of various saints from Latin into English, he literally moved the textual relics of the saints from their shrines in Latinate monastic manuscripts to new reliquaries in Anglo-Saxon books that were more accessible to the laity and those among the religious who did not have Ælfric’s educational advantages. Yet, like the physical relics of the saints, these translated Lives lost none of their spiritual potency. Hagiographical literature formed its own place within the Latin literature of the Middle Ages and in his translations Ælfric, as Malcolm Godden demonstrates, developed his own personal style of written endeavor:

In clearly identifying [hagiography] as a special form of writing, a genre with its own mode of discourse, he was implicitly inviting his public to read it in a particular and appropriate way, which could be different from the way they read history or homily.³⁷

By their nature the Lives of saints invite the audience to identify with the saint, to actually become the saint in the realm of imagination and experience the trials and triumphs of the saint in a way that would build the same characteristics in each reader or hearer. Saints’ Lives invite the readers literally to ‘lose themselves in the story’ and emerge at the end a changed people, encouraged, instructed, fortified by their own encounter with the power of God through their identification with the saint.³⁸ Augustine describes the process as one of recognition whereby the audience

apprehends the unchangeable truth in another and longs to know it through relationship with that person:

Nam unde in me fraterni amoris inflammatur ardor cum audio uirum aliquem pro fidei pulchritudine et firmitate aciora tormenta tolerasse? Et si mihi digito ostendatur ipse homo, studeo mihi coniungere, notum facere, amicitia conligare. Itaque si facultas datur, accedo, alloquor, sermonem confero, affectum meum in illum quibus uerbis possum exprimo, uicissimque in eo fieri quem in me habeat atque exprimi uolo, spiritalemque complexum credendo molior quia peruestigare tam cito et cernere penitus eius interiora non possum. Amo itaque fidelem ac fortem uirum amore casto atque germano. . . . In illa igitur aeterna ueritate ex qua temporalia facta sunt omnia formam secundum quam sumus et secundum quam uel in nobis uel in corporibus uera et recta ratione aliquid operamur uisu mentis aspiciamus.³⁹

In this way, the recognition of the eternal truth in the Life of a saint conceives in the audience a desire for relationship with that truth through relationship with the person who reflects it. For a brief time, the audience has entered into and participated in the transcendent society, has imaginatively encountered the very Other who through love had so powerfully transformed mere, sexually differentiated flesh and blood into a metagendered saint before and who might deign to do the same again. For while the imaginative didacticism of a saint's Life purports to instruct its audience in moral living, Gregory the Great teaches that on a deeper level it intends to arouse desire: "Et sunt nonnulli quos ad amorem patriae caelestis plus exempla quam praedicamenta succendunt."⁴⁰ Augustine and Gregory thus provide a way to understand that the desire kindled by the process of identification in a hagiographical text is not sexual desire, but a desire just as strong, just as driving—a will that is love.⁴¹ Such desire is not directed at the saint, but through the saint it is reoriented toward God, and it seeks above all to know and love God. In *LSI*, Ælfric emphasizes

this point, saying, “Nis nanum menn on ðisum deadlican life libbendum nanes þinges . swa mycel neod . swa him biþ þæt he cunne þonne ælmihtigan god mid geleafan . and siþþan his agene sawle.”⁴² Ælfric places this statement at a crucial point in his sermon, as he finishes writing about the Trinity and turns the attention of his readers to the matter of their own souls. By addressing these matters at the beginning of his collection of saints’ Lives, Ælfric “primes the pump” of his readers’ expectations, so to speak, by providing an organizing principal and interpretive framework within which a saint’s Life might be read, a framework based upon the nature of proper love and proper desire:

Ðam men is gecyndelic þæt he lufige þæt þæt god is. Hwæt is god butan gode anum se þe is healic godnisse . butan þam ne mæg nan man nan þing godes habban. Ðas godnysse we sceolan simble lufian þe us ælc god ofcymþ . ac þissere godnysse lufu ne mæg beon butan on þære sawle . and seo an sawul is æðelboren þe ðonne lufað þe heo fram com . þe hi þyllice gesceop þæt heo on hire andgyte habban mihte godes anlicnesse and gelicnesse . and þæs wyrðe wære . þæt hyre god onwunode. . . . Gewylnung is þæm menn forgifen to gewilnienne þa ðing þe him fremiað to nit-wyrðum þingum and to þære ecan hæle.⁴³

The Life of a saint serves as a vehicle for both knowledge of God and knowledge of one’s own soul by evoking a desire for knowledge of the immaterial, transcendent, metagendered nature of God and the image of God in human beings. The second Person of the Trinity, by being both God and human, possesses the knowledge of both and so becomes the rightful object of desire. The incarnate Christ embodies the point of contact between the transcendent spiritual realm and the temporal physical realm; inasmuch as a saint demonstrates a likeness to Christ, she or he also acts as a point of contact wherein, as Peter Brown has said, heaven and earth

are joined because the immortal image of God within the mortal body has been restored to wholeness and purity.⁴⁴ Above all else, a saint's Life inflames desire in its audience, not a desire for the saint but a desire to *be* the saint, to be the one whose love for Christ is so great that the Son of God returns that love and performs marvelous deeds for and through his beloved. As the soul of the saint becomes more and more like Christ, the restored image within the soul displays more clearly the characteristics of its metagendered nature by showing itself to be not merely an amalgam of masculine and feminine attributes, but by showing itself to be, like God, greater than the sum of its gendered parts. Within this context of the saint's desire for a transcendent relationship with Christ, the readers of a saint's Life come to know both God and their own souls in relationship to each other.

3. Agnes: Sponsa Christi

Ælfric's Life of St. Agnes appeals to its audience precisely in these terms of desire, the desire of the saint for a relationship with Christ, which then reproduces itself in the reader as she or he identifies with the saint and thus participates in desiring the Son of God. From the first, Ælfric emphasizes that Agnes "on ðone hælend gelyfed," even when there is no matching phrase in any of the published Latin texts.⁴⁵ In Augustine's psychology of the soul, the part of the human mind that recognizes God is the "male" understanding, regardless of the sex of the person:

Nulli dubium est non secundum corpus neque secundum quamlibet animi partem sed secundum rationalem mentem ubi potest esse agnitio dei . . . Quis est ergo qui ab hoc consortio feminas alienet cum sint nobiscum gratiae

cohaeredes et alio loco idem apostolus dicat: *Omnes enim filii dei estis per fidem in Christo Iesu.*⁴⁶

The recognition of God brings about a desire for God, because he is the source of all goodness, and this desire leads to belief. By believing, Agnes does not deny her own sex but rather she believes and becomes a “son” through the exercise of the “male” function of her mind, although neither the Latin text nor Ælfric describe the process in terms of gender as Augustine did. (In fact, Ælfric consistently avoids using the “male” and “female” metaphors throughout Agnes’s Life.) Following the Latin text closely, Ælfric describes Agnes as *snotor* ‘wise’ and *eald-lic on mode* ‘elderly in mind’ in contrast to her youth and these descriptors emphasize that the “male” function of her mind is being rightly exercised according to its nature.⁴⁷ Does the exercise of this “male” aspect of her mind mean that Agnes must give up her femininity, must become masculine in her appearance and concept of herself? Not at all, according to Augustine: “Numquidnam igitur fideles feminae sexum corporis amiserunt? Sed quia ibi *renouantur ad imaginem dei* ubi sexus nullus est, ibi *factus est homo ad imaginem dei* ubi sexus nullus est, hoc est *in spiritu mentis* suae.”⁴⁸ Similarly, Ælfric’s Life shows that Agnes has not lost any of her female attractiveness when he translates the Latin description, “pulchra facie sed pulchrior fide.”⁴⁹ Both accounts testify to Agnes’s lovely features, “heo wæs wlitig on ansyne,” but also show how her physical beauty was subject to her believing mind by adding “and wlitigre on geleafan.”⁵⁰ Hers was not just dry belief, however, for Ælfric says “heo lufode crist,” making the object of Agnes’s love more specific than the Latin version, which says that Agnes “dilexit auctorem.”⁵¹ In the compact space of two lines, Ælfric

has balanced in Agnes the “masculine” function of belief with the “feminine” function of caring for her body and appearance. Through the harmony of the gendered functions of the “spirit of [her] mind,” the beauty of Agnes’s outer appearance reflects the inward beauty of her faith because *heo lufode crist*.⁵²

The reason that Agnes even has a story to be written into a Life is summed up in those three words: *heo lufode crist*. Christ has become her betrothed spouse, and her desire is for her husband. In this way, Agnes represents the believing soul’s desire for God, a desire that redirects Agnes’ love away from a female/male sexual relationship to a gendered/metagendered spiritual relationship. In the same way, desire that her Life arouses in the audience is not the desire of a man for a woman, but a movement of the will toward Christ for which the closest analogue in strength and intensity is erotic desire, the erotic desire of a woman for her lover, her bridegroom. No other can rival the Son of God in Agnes’s affections, not even the son of the Roman prefect. Agnes returns to this point time and again during her answer to the young Roman’s proposal of marriage. Unlike Aldhelm, Ælfric translates almost the entire speech, maintaining the lyrical quality of the Latin original. Agnes, “in the impolitic way of virgin martyrs,”⁵³ first delivers a sharp rejection of the tempting offer of gems and worldly riches her suitor has made to her, calling him “synne ontendnys / leahtras foda . and deaðes bigleafa,” words that place him in the serpent’s role as tempter.⁵⁴ Agnes herself succeeds, however, where Adam and Eve failed: the “female” rational function that manages worldly matters submits to the “male” rational function that contemplates truth so that her decisions with

regard to marriage and worldly wealth reflect her proper desire for Christ. This belief in and love for the transcendent Other translates Agnes's life out of the material order of riches and marriage into the transcendent order of grace, salvation, and relationship with God. Agnes's submission to Christ gives her freedom from the physical and temporal demands of men like Sempronius' son just as the submission of the "female" function of the mind to the "male" function results in freedom of the mind from the tyranny of the physical passions.

Does this freedom from the dominance of sensual desire then negate the body and sex? Agnes declares "Ic hæbbe oðerne lufiend / þinne ungelican . on æðelborennysse."⁵⁵ She claims Christ as her own lover, a better lover than the son of the prefect will ever be. The language of the rest of Agnes's speech is unblushingly embodied and sexual in its portrayal of her womanly perception of her standing as a virgin bride of Christ. In the Latin text, she speaks not only in terms of the imperishable riches her heavenly Lover possesses, but speaks of Christ himself in frankly sexual and desiring terms, which Ælfric reproduces from the Latin text almost word for word:

Pseudo-Ambrose:

Iam mel et lac ex eius ore suscepi .
iam amplexibus eius castis astricta sum .
iam corpus eius corpori meo sociatum est :
et sanguis eius ornauit genus meum [*sic*]

Ælfric:

Of his muðe ic under-feng meoluc . and hunig .
nu iu ic eom beclypt . mid his clænum earmum .

his fægera lichama is minum geferlæht .
and his blod ge-glende mine eah-hringas .⁵⁶

While not quite so frankly embodied, the closing words to Agnes' speech also speak of her union with the transcendent Bridegroom in sexual terms:

Pseudo-Ambrose:

quem cum amauero casta sum :
cum tetigero munda sum :
cum accepero uirgo sum nec deerunt post nuptias filii
ubi partus sine dolore succedit et fecunditas quotidiana cumulatur

Ælfric:

Ðonne ic hine lufige . ic beo eallunga clæne .
þonne ic hine hreppa . ic beo unwemme .
ðonne ic hine under-fo . ic beo mæden forð .
and þær bærn ne ateoriað . on ðam bryd-lace .
Þær is eacnung buton sare . and singallic wæstmbærnyss .⁵⁷

In both the Latin and Ælfric's version, the climax of Agnes's love for Christ will come with fulfillment of her desire: the wedded state, the consummation of pure and holy desire that is perpetually fruitful, perpetually satisfying. The recognition of one's true love gives rise to desire, which in turn gives rise to belief in the fulfillment of that desire. Agnes shows absolute confidence in her transcendent Lover, so much so that she turns down every offer of wealth that the prefect's son makes as though he were offering sewage.⁵⁸ In doing so, she embodies the ideal of the soul that refuses to be tempted by material, temporal allurements from its contemplation of and devotion to the divine.

In sharp contrast to Agnes's example of the restored harmony of the gender functions in the mind through relationship with God, the young Roman and his father, Sempronius, both illustrate Ælfric's comments on the three parts of the soul in *LS I*:

Uþwytan sæcgað . þæt þære sawle gecynd is ðryfeald . An dæl is on hire gewylnigend-lic . oðer yrsigend-lic . þrydde gesceadwislic. Twægen þissera dæla habbað deor and nytenu mid us . þæt is gewylnunge and yrre. Se man ana hæfð gescead . and ræd . and andgit. Gewylning is þam menn forgifen to gewilnienne þa ðing þe him fremiað to nit-wyrðum þingum and to þære ecan hæle . Þonne gif seo gewylnung mis-went . þonne acenð he gyfernesse . and forlygr and gitsunge. Yrre is ðære sawle forgifen . to ðy þæt heo yrsige ongean leahtres . and ne beo na synnum under-þeodd. . . . Gif þæt yrre bið on yfel awend . þonne cymð of þam unrotnisse . and æmylnysse. Gescead is ðære sawle forgifen to gewyssienne and to styrenne hire agen lif . and ealle hire dæda. Of þam gesceade gif hit miswænt . cymð modignysse and ydel gylp.⁵⁹

Sempronius' son exhibits errant desire in that he longs for the pleasure of a sexual relationship instead of relationship with his creator. Sempronius himself illustrates wrath gone astray: instead of restraining vice in his son he takes offense at Agnes's refusal of marriage and becomes filled with rage.⁶⁰ These two men also portray Augustine's concept of the unbelieving mind in which the "male" function has turned away from the contemplation of truth and fallen into pride: "Ita cum uult esse sicut ille sub nullo, et ab ipsa sui medietate poenaliter ad ima propellitur, id est ad ea quibus pecora laetantur."⁶¹ The very act of desiring to be above God results in a plunge to a sub-human level, slavery to the passions that humans share with beasts. The animal pleasures are those carnal activities that excite the senses but require no understanding, such as copulation.

Sempronius' son certainly seems to have been motivated by just such animal desires. When Agnes frustrates him, the Latin text describes him as being *insanus* 'of

unsound mind'; according to Ælfric, he is first *ge-ancsumod and wið-innan ablend* 'vexed and inwardly blinded,' then stricken with *mod-least*, literally 'lack of heart or mind.'⁶² The "male" aspect of the young Roman's mind cannot recognize God because it has turned away from spiritual matters to pursue the body's pleasures. In Ælfric's psychology, when the human mind turns away from God in this manner, it loses more and more of its likeness to its creator, becoming instead more and more like the unreasoning beasts by allowing the parts of the soul that humans share with beasts, desire and wrath, to overrule reason and to direct and govern the actions of the person. According to Augustine, only the grace of God can restore the harmony and order of God's image in a man (or woman) once he (or she) has descended to this bestial level.⁶³

Sempronius, in his own desire "to be like God under nobody," sinks not into beast-like lust as his son did, but into bestial rage when frustrated by Agnes' refusal to participate in his material and temporal order by submitting to marry his son. He turns away from the wrath that he rightfully wields as a government official in order to restrain vice and crime and falls into an errant wrath that attacks the saint of God, trying to persuade her with flattery and then with threat of dire punishments if she does not abandon her devotion to Christ.⁶⁴ Agnes, however, repeatedly proclaims her love of Christ in both Pseudo-Ambrose's and Ælfric's versions.⁶⁵ When Sempronius warns her to not anger the Roman gods, she responds:

Pseudo-Ambrose:

Fides enim non in annis sed in sensibus inuenitur: et deus omnipotens mentes magis comprobat quam aetates.

Ælfric:

Se ælmihtiga herað
swiðor manna mod . þonne heora mycclan ylde .
and se geleafa ne bið on gearum . ac bið on glæwum andgitum .⁶⁶

Agnes's words again underscore the importance of the "male" function of the mind in belief. Her knowledge of God provides her with the knowledge also of the importance of her own mind, the image of God in her own soul. Armed with such knowledge, Agnes remains unmoved by the persuasions and threats of Sempronius. Indeed, Agnes herself finally describes the judgment of God that awaits Sempronius, which sends him into a mindless fury.⁶⁷ The Latin text calls him *insanus iudex* 'the insane judge.' The word Ælfric uses is *woda* 'madman.' Again, the picture is of a man who has lost his mind, "male" and "female" functions alike, and become like an animal by giving rein to beastly rage.

On Sempronius' orders, Agnes is stripped of her clothing but miraculously "þæs mædenes fex . befeng hi eall abutan . / sona swa þa cwelleras hire claðas of abrudon . / and þæt fex hi behelede on ælce healfe gelice."⁶⁸ The immediacy with which Agnes's hair covers her allows for no gazing upon her nakedness. She is stripped, to be sure, but the reader's attention is directed not to the naked body of the saint, but to the abundance of hair with which God miraculously clothes her. This episode takes us back to the same Pauline passage in I Corinthians 11 that Augustine addresses in Book XII of *De trinitate*, which discusses a woman's covering for her head. Paul comments that "quoniam capilli pro velamine ei dati sunt."⁶⁹ In this manner, the Life externalizes the inward reality of the ordered gender functions in

Agnes's mind, for Augustine states that the covering of hair for the woman that Paul speaks of in the Corinthians passage figuratively describes the authority of the "male" function of rationality, the part that faces God and reflects the divine image, that "covers" the "female" rational activity so that its interaction with the temporal will not lead the mind away from its rightful attention to God. In fact, the Life implies that God provided the covering precisely because Agnes did not let concern for her bodily condition distract her from being entirely focused upon God. Sempronius orders that Agnes be dragged to a brothel so that she might be raped and thus despoiled of her virginity, but God sends a shining angel to the harlots' house to protect her and provide her with a shining tunic that fits her exactly.⁷⁰

The importance of this relationship with the divine Other and the order such a relationship brings to the mind is illustrated in the death, restoration, and conversion of Sempronius' son. *Mid sceand-licum willan* 'with shameful desire' the youth rushes into the brothel to rape Agnes, but he is immediately struck dead.⁷¹ When Agnes prays for him, the youth is restored to life by the angel of Christ and he *immediately* begins praising the Christian God.⁷² Belief, as depicted in the Life of Saint Agnes, is the result of an encounter with the presence and reality of a transcendent Other, and is considered to be the proper response to such an encounter. It is brought about by the "male" function of the mind encountering and recognizing the One in whose image it is made, which begins the restoration of the *imago Dei* that was shattered by the effects of sin. The sign of this restoration is the harmony and proper ordering of the functions of the mind. After being raised, the youth no longer

is ruled by his animal desires because the proper order of mental functions has been restored. The animal has submitted to the “female,” which has submitted to the “male,” which has submitted to God.

Following this episode, the Romans accuse Agnes of practicing a sorcery that *mentes mutat* ‘perverts minds.’⁷³ Ælfric translates this idea as *awent . . . manna mod* ‘perverted the minds of men and women.’⁷⁴ Both Pseudo-Ambrose and Ælfric use words that point out the irony of the situation: *muto* primarily denotes ‘change’ and *awendan* variously means ‘turn aside, change, translate.’ In this context and from the point of view of the pagan Roman crowd, both words literally mean ‘pervert.’ But from the perspective of the authors and their religious readers, the words also literally mean ‘change,’ for the minds of Sempronius and his son have been changed through their encounter with Agnes and by seeing for themselves the power of God at work in her. What the perverse crowd sees as perverted is actually rightly-ordered and true *sub specie aeternitatis*. The unbelieving crowd cannot recognize this rightness, however, and being *hetelic gedrefede* ‘exceedingly disturbed,’ they attempt to burn Agnes. But instead of immolating the saint, the fire turns against the crowd and consumes them. Agnes praises God for the miracle, but after hearing her words of praise an even greater crowd clamors for her execution. Agnes receives the crown of martyrdom and the fulfillment of her holy desire by means of a sword stroke to the throat.

The devout Anglo-Saxons would have recognized the dynamics of this order of relationships in the Life of Agnes, not just by virtue of Augustine’s writings and

Ælfric's sermon on the Trinity and the soul, but also in light of their own experiences in identifying with Agnes, their own desires to be in relationship with the same Lover that Agnes loved so much. Looking from within this desiring relationship, one can begin to imagine how the religious in the time of Ælfric could have seen in Agnes an example worth following, not just for women but for men as well. The characteristics that made Agnes a beacon for the faithful, with the harmony of the gendered functions of her mind, could be emulated by both men and women because both men and women possess the "male/female" functions in their own minds. The believing Anglo-Saxons could obtain the freedom to pursue relationship with God by accepting and submitting to the exercise of these same mental functions when restored and harmonized by a relationship with the transcendent Other. In this way, the believer could escape the domination of the animal passions that kept him or her from pursuing the most noble and truest desire of the soul, to see and know God face to face, to be able to say as Agnes said:

Pseudo-Ambrose:

Ecce iam quod credidi uideo . quod speraui iam teneo . quod concupiui
complector . te confiteor labiis et corde . totis uisceribus concupisco . Ecce ad
te uenio uiuum et uerum deum: qui cum domino nostro Iesu Christo filio tuo
et cum spiritu sancto uiuis et regnas semper et in cuncta sæcula sæculorum .
Amen.

Ælfric:

þæt þæt ic gelyfde þæt ic geseo .
ðæt þæt ic gehihte . þæt ic hæbbe nu .
Ðe Ic andette mid muðe . and mid minre heortan .
and mid eallum innoðe . ic þe gewilnige .
æinne soþne god . þe mid þinum suna rixast .
and mid þam halgan gaste . an ælmihtig god æfre .⁷⁵

4. Eugenia: Ecce Feminam!

The first saint whose Life appears in Ælfric's collection is Eugenia, Virgin and Martyr.⁷⁶ Ælfric's placement of Eugenia's Life (December 25) is unattested in any English calendar from Ælfric's time, though Michael Lapidge notes that the Cotton-Corpus Legendary commemorates her on this day.⁷⁷ This placement may have allowed him to make a connective wordplay based on her name between *LS I* and Eugenia's Life. *Eugenia* in Latin means 'well-born, nobly-born' and in *LS I* Ælfric specifically refers to the *æðelboren* 'nobly-born' soul when he writes "seo an sawul is æðelboren þe ðonne lufað þe heo fram com."⁷⁸ Alcuin, whose work Ælfric was translating, used *nobilis* 'noble, nobly-born.' Ælfric could have translated Alcuin's word using *æðele*, *æðelcund*, or *æðellic* just as well, but chose the term ('nobly-born' rather than just 'noble') that would resonate the most with the name of Eugenia. Such a wordplay would not have been lost on Ælfric's patron, Æthelweard (who knew Latin well enough to translate one of the Anglo-Saxon *Chronicles* from Old English into Latin⁷⁹), nor on a monastic audience. Accordingly, Ælfric may have been foreshadowing or suggesting an interpretation of Eugenia's Life as the experience of the nobly-born soul as it comes to love God.

Eugenia's reputation as one of the "transvestite saints" renders considerations about sex and gender in her case problematic from the start, especially in the Latin texts of her Life.⁸⁰ The Latin text of the Life of Eugenia preserved in the Cotton-Corpus Legendary bears the closest relationship to Ælfric's translation (although the

manuscripts of the *Legendary* itself postdate Ælfric) and Grau's *Pasionario Hispánico* (*PH*) provides the closest printed edition. Unlike his treatment of the Life of St. Agnes, in this Life Ælfric departs repeatedly and significantly from his Latin exemplar. The first part of the Latin Life presents Eugenia's legend as both a journey and a liturgical progression from paganism into Christian faith that culminates in a symbolic apotheosis of the virgin, but when Ælfric translates the Life, it becomes instead an exemplum of how Eugenia "ðurh mægðhad mærlíce þeah . and þurh martyr-dom þisne middan-eard ofer-swað."⁸¹

The anonymous Latin author first describes Eugenia's background: born into a noble pagan family whose head is the prefect of Alexandria in Egypt, provided with the best education in Latin and Greek eloquence, and "etiam philosophiam docere permisit."⁸² Ælfric does not have this last statement in his translation and at first blush it seems as though he suppresses the idea that a woman might be able to teach philosophy. He may have left out this comment, however, because his Latin text reflected the variant found in the Cotton-Corpus *Legendary*: "etiam philosophiam doctrinam doceri permisit."⁸³ Ælfric's Latin source probably gave the variant reading because he combines Eugenia's philosophical instruction with her schooling in Latin eloquence when he writes that she went to school "þæt heo on woruld-wysdome wære getogen / æfter grecisre uðwytegunge . and lædenre getingnysse."⁸⁴ Instead of dismissing the idea that a woman could teach philosophy, Ælfric probably did not know a manuscript tradition in which Eugenia did so.

The anonymous Latin author then observes that Eugenia “erat . . . pulchra facie et eligans corpore, sed pulchrior mente et elegantior castitate.”⁸⁵ Here again one finds a different statement in the Cotton-Corpus Legendary: “Erat ergo eugenia pulchra mente et formosior castitate.”⁸⁶ Ælfric does not exactly follow either of these statements. He emphasizes Eugenia’s mind, noting the she “wel þeah on wisdome . . . and on uðwytegunge,” but he does not mention her chastity at this point.⁸⁷ In fact, Ælfric also omits the Latin text’s narrative detail about how the saint-to-be refuses a proposal of marriage from Aquilius, son of the proconsul Aquilinus.⁸⁸ He focuses the attention of his audience on how Eugenia obtained the teachings of the Apostle Paul, how “Þa wearð hyre mod mycclum on-bryrd / þuruh þa halgen lare.”⁸⁹ Ælfric presents Eugenia’s response to Christian teaching as a response of the mind, of the rational soul, the “male” function (in Augustine’s psychology) that is the part of the soul that recognizes the God in whose image it has been made. This recognition, while not yet belief, produces a will (desire) to know: “Heo . . . wolde swa cepan þære cristenra lare,” which causes her to leave her father’s house and Alexandria itself in search of some *geleaffulne mann* ‘believing person’ to instruct her in Christian doctrine.⁹⁰

In the Latin text, as Eugenia departs from the city she hears Christians singing: “Omnes dii gentium demonia, Dominus autem celos fecit.”⁹¹ With tears Eugenia addresses her two companions, eunuchs named Protus and Jacinctus, declaring her intention to cut her hair and go in disguise as a male with her companions to the Christians. (Ælfric, apparently concerned that his audience might

not immediately understand the nature of a eunuch, explains without further comment that such men are *belisnode* ‘castrated.’⁹²) The psalm from the liturgy, the departure from the city, and the change from the appearance of a female to the appearance of a male all combine to illustrate the spiritual significance of the moment: Eugenia leaves her pagan childhood for a journey to Christian maturity, leaves her pagan father’s house in search of a new home with a heavenly Father, leaves pagan Alexandria from whence all Christians have been expelled to seek the city of God, leaves the pagan philosophy in which she has been educated in order to learn Christian wisdom, and leaves the figurative ‘womanliness’ of pagan wisdom for the ‘manliness’ of Christian teachings, virtue, and chastity. For those who are familiar with the figural meanings of ‘man’ and ‘woman’ discussed in Chapter One, Ælfric’s translation maintains the rich texture of these parallel movements and all of their multifaceted symbolism. Eugenia’s change of appearance “on wæpmonna wysan” especially illustrates the Augustinian psychology of conversion, for now the “male” part of Eugenia’s rational soul begins to assert itself, to recognize and long for its creator.⁹³ Even more, the donning of male garb reflects Jerome’s concept of growing in spiritual strength (becoming a man) as one turns from the world to Christ. As of yet, however, the change is only in appearance for Eugenia has not yet been instructed in what to believe and so the conversion is not yet complete.

As Eugenia, now in disguise, approaches a monastery she again hears the Christians singing an antiphonal response: “Via iustorum recta facta est; iter sanctorum preparatum est.”⁹⁴ In the Latin text, the young woman once more turns to

her companions and recounts (in case the audience has missed the point) how she and the two eunuchs, having been instructed by the first song they heard, turned from the pagan gods to seek Christian salvation and now the singing is pointing their way to this monastery. Upon learning about the saintliness of the Bishop Helenus, who rules the monastery, Eugenia asks that she and her two “brothers” be allowed to come into the monastery. She and her companions enter singing a hymn: “Suscepimus, Deus, misericordiam tuam in medio templo tuo.”⁹⁵ Once again, the liturgy within the story tells the story as Eugenia’s entry into the monastery concretely symbolizes her entry into Christian belief. Ælfric, however, omits most of this scene. He provides and translates the first antiphonal response, but then abbreviates the conversation between Eugenia and her companions, only rendering the gist of her comments in indirect discourse, and does not provide either the text or a translation of the hymn with which Eugenia and her friends enter the monastery. From this point onward the entire liturgical theme disappears from Ælfric’s translation.

At this time in the story the bishop Helenus, having received the disguised virgin and her companions into the monastery, has a dream “in quo ad simulacrum feminae ducebatur, ut illi sacrificaret.”⁹⁶ Instead of offering a sacrifice, however, Helenus commands the goddess (*dea*) to know that she is a creation of God and not to permit herself to be worshiped. At once she comes down to Helenus and promises to remain with him until such time as she might be restored to her creator and maker.⁹⁷ From this point onward, Ælfric begins to make significant omissions from his translation of Eugenia’s legend. He has already said in the Latin preface to *Lives of*

Saints that “reticemus de libro uitæ patrum, in quo multa subtilia habentur quæ non conueniunt aperiri laicis, nec nos ipsi ea quimus implere,”⁹⁸ and apparently Helenus’ dream fits Ælfric’s description of something not fit to put before the laity. He does not describe the dream nor does he mention the fact that in the Latin text Eugenia’s name is not given in the dream—Helenus has to figure out that the dream referred to her. Ælfric notes only that “him wearð geswutelod on swæfne be þy-sum,” and adds that the dream reveals Eugenia’s intentions to Helenus by way of explaining how Helenus knows who she is despite her disguise.⁹⁹ Ælfric clearly considers Helenus’ dream too prone to misunderstanding, perhaps even among the presumably more capable religious, to set forth in his translation. In the Latin text, the dream serves as a foreshadowing device and later on in the story it works in coordination with the continuing liturgical elements to create a rich narrative resonance. Ælfric leaves all of these elements out of his translation from this point onward, changing the texture of the legend but at the same time demonstrating his own skill as a storyteller by retaining the drama, as we shall see.

In the Latin, after waking from his dream, Helenus ponders its meaning and a man named Eutropius arrives to ask that Eugenia and her comrades be admitted to the monastery. Helenus takes Eugenia aside and questions her apart from her “brothers.” When she gives her name as Eugenius (the masculine form of Eugenia), Helenus responds: “‘Recte . . . vocaris Eugenius, quia viriliter agendo, virum perfectum in agone dominico te obtulisti.’” After making this point, Helenus orders the virgin to remain in her man’s clothing (*virili habitu*) in the monastery.¹⁰⁰ Again, Ælfric tells

the story, but changes the details. He omits the exchange in which Eugenia calls herself Eugenius and he changes Helenus' response: "He genam hi þa onsundron . and sæde hyre gewislice / hwæt heo man ne wæs," after which Ælfric follows the Latin wherein the bishop tells Eugenia that her virginity has pleased God but that she will suffer persecution because of it.¹⁰¹ Not only does Ælfric avoid any implication of Eugenia changing into Eugenius, but he also sets aside the Latin text's language of behaving in a "manly" manner or of Eugenia becoming *virum perfectum*. Even if Ælfric declines to use the language of "manliness" only in order to avoid confusing the laity, his emphatic denial that Eugenia might even figuratively be a man affirms the saint both bodily and spiritually as a woman. He affirms the reality of her feminine body by insisting on her femaleness instead of following the Latin text in moving her towards sexlessness; he affirms her spiritually by asserting her capacity as a woman for the same spiritual growth and strength as men without her having to "become a man" in the process. In Ælfric's version of the legend Eugenia's male disguise is precisely that: an appearance, a covering, the clothes that do not make the man.

Ælfric continues to emphasize Eugenia's femaleness as he describes her life in the monastery after Helenus secretly baptizes her and her companions. In the Latin text, Helenus "iussit eam sic in uirili habitu permanere."¹⁰² The Latin term *habitus* means 'clothing, condition, habit, bearing' and more abstractly 'nature, character, disposition.' In this Latin context, Eugenia's continuation in the *habitus* of a man means more than just cross-dressing, at the same time it carries the weight of a

continuing figurative metamorphosis of gender toward the spiritual ideal of the *virum perfectum*. Ælfric, however, implies a distinction between wearing a man's clothing and undergoing a metamorphosis of gender. Instead of using language that duplicates the fluid mixture of outward sign and inward reality that is found in the Latin, Ælfric insists in Eugenia's case upon separating the two when he writes that "be-bead se biscop þam gebogenan mædene / þæt heo swa þurh-wunade . on þam wærlicum hiwe."¹⁰³ In Old English, *hiw* denotes appearance but can also mean 'kind or species' in the sense of biological kinship or religious affiliation. If Ælfric had wanted to retain all or at least most of the semantic potential of the Latin term, then Old English *wise* with its meanings of 'custom, habit, manner' and 'condition, state, circumstance,' or *cynd*, meaning 'nature, quality, character,' would have been a better choice of words. Ælfric, however, has shown himself above to be rather precise about his choice of words in the translations, and so it seems probable that he chose *hiw* deliberately.

And so Eugenia remains at the monastery with her "brothers," Protus and Jacinctus. The anonymous Latin author tells the audience:

Illa vero virili habitu et animo, in praedicto virum monasterio permanebat: que ita in divinis eruditionibus profecit, ut intra secundum annum omnes pene scripturas dominicas memoriae retineret. Tanta ei erat tranquillitas animi, ut unam eam dicerent ex numero angelorum. Quis enim eam deprehenderet quod esset femina quum ita virtus Christi et virginitas immaculata protegebat, ut imitabilis esset etiam viris? Sermo autem eius erat humilis in caritate, clarus in mediocritate, vitio carens, et facundiam fugiens, omnes in humilitate superabat. Nullus illi ad orationem inveniebatur anterior, tristem consolabatur, leto congaudebat, irascentem uno sermone mitigabat; superbientem ita suo edificabat exemplo, ut ovem subito factam ex lupo, credere delectaret.¹⁰⁴

The Latin text continues the theme of Eugenia's progression toward the *virum perfectum*: she grows in knowledge of Christian doctrine, memorizes nearly all of the Gospels (!), and sets the rest of the monastery such an example in speech that the anonymous author exclaims that Eugenia is truly able to be imitated by men. The tone and context make clear that this assertion is not a matter of her example shaming men so that they will do better—after all, within the context of the Life the men in the monastery did not know that she was a woman—but rather of Eugenia truly surpassing men at being “manly” in Christ. Not only is she smarter than the rest of her “brothers,” she is the *virum perfectum* and they are not. The author expresses no envy, no competitiveness, just straightforward admiration. In the Latin version the clothes do not conceal Eugenia's womanhood, rather her moral excellence (*virtus Christi*) and her virginity supersede the fact of her female sex, rendering her biological structure irrelevant. Ælfric, on the other hand, never allows his audience to forget that Eugenia is a woman. In his translation she triumphs not through sexlessness, but by demonstrating under cover in her own body that women can be not only men's equals in virtue, but their betters as well.

The Old English translation of the Latin passage above provides the one instance in which Ælfric retains the Latin language of manliness when he is not referring to Eugenia's outward appearance: “Eugenia þa wunode on þam mynstre / mid wærlicum mode . þeah þe heo mæden wære.”¹⁰⁵ Even while describing how Eugenia lived with a “manly or heroic mind,” Ælfric carefully insists that she is still a woman, never leading his audience to think that this manliness of mind could or

should change her essential womanliness. And what kind of characteristics did Ælfric want his audience to associate with Eugenia's "manly mind"? He outlines them as he describes how Eugenia

... heold on hyre þeawum halige drohtnunge
 ðurh modes līþnesse . and mycelre eadmodnesse
 and þurh halige mægnu . þam hælende ge-cwæmde.
 Heo þeah on lare . þæs rihtan geleafan
 and on godcundlicum gewrytum mid godum wyllan
 and wearð awend of wulfe to sceaþe.¹⁰⁶

Ælfric emphasizes gentleness and humility, focuses upon pleasing or serving the savior through holy strength and growing in spiritual knowledge. Oddly enough, he does not mention virginity; even more oddly, he does mention the change from wolf to sheep that is found in the Latin, but his translation (in which Eugenia is the one changed from a wolf into a sheep) shifts the focus of the change from the proud one instructed by Eugenia to Eugenia herself, creating an interpretive dilemma in the process. How would Ælfric have explained such a change in the saint, since, as Paul E. Szarmach notes, "Eugenia has hardly been wolvis in any of her actions or thoughts"?¹⁰⁷ This characterization of her as a former wolf does not seem to fit the context that Ælfric has provided, even though it does (in a rather heavy-handed way) accurately illustrate her moral redirection. On the other hand, Gopa Roy asserts that

It is not clear in the Old English, however, whether the reference to her turning from a wolf to a sheep denotes her spiritual growth, her progress from paganism to Christianity—or, at the same time, to her having become, in some way, though a woman, like a man. Perhaps Ælfric has not been careful enough about possible ambiguities in his adaptation.¹⁰⁸

While the possibility of a textual variant may explain the enigma of Ælfric's portrayal of Eugenia as a wolf, it still does not explain how he and his audience might

have made sense of such a depiction. One possibility is that, since in Latin both *vir* and *virtus* denote not only ‘man’ and ‘manliness, courage, moral excellence,’ but also connote ‘soldier’ and ‘military talents,’ Ælfric may have connected such an interpretation with the hagiographical theme of the saints as *milites Christi*.¹⁰⁹ The Old English words *wer*, *wær* and *werlic*, *wærlic* also bear the meanings, ‘man’ and ‘warrior, hero,’ in nominal and adjectival forms. If this is the case, then, Ælfric redefines the meaning of masculinity in this passage so that the *virī perfecti*, as both “men” and soldiers of Christ, are characterized not by ferocity on the battlefield but by gentleness in speech, not by heroic boasting, but by humility. In this wrenching inversion of contradictory characteristics, reminiscent of the cross-dressing soldier in Ambrose’s *Life of the Virgin of Antioch*, the warrior-wolves become warrior-sheep, armed with gentleness and humility.¹¹⁰ Far from being careless, Ælfric in translating the wolf-to-sheep transformation has preserved the Latin text’s idea of “manly” strong-mindedness without reproducing the negation of Eugenia’s female sex. In effect, he has genetically altered the metaphor of manliness, producing a new species from the old in order to emphasize Eugenia’s inward evolution towards Christian perfection.

To this point Ælfric has directed the attention of his audience toward the mental prosperity that Eugenia experienced as a result of her adherence to right belief.¹¹¹ Now, however, he returns to the Latin account of Eugenia’s pagan family and describes their mental state in contrast to the virgin’s: “*Philippus ða se fæder forwearð on mode / and seo modor claudia . mid murcunge wæs for-numen / and*

eall seo mægð on mode wearð astyred / and sohten þæt mæden mid myclere sarnysse.”¹¹² The Latin text also depicts the family’s response to Eugenia’s disappearance as one of overwhelming grief: “Erat itaque planctus inextimabilis, fletus inmensus: lugebantque universi inconfuse; parentes filiam, sororem fratres, servi dominam; et tenebat universos meror, et infinita animi tribulatio.”¹¹³ Both versions describe the grief of the entire household—parents, brothers, and servants—but Ælfric’s translation imposes rather more restraint upon the scene and emphasizes the debilitating effect that the distress has upon their minds. In the extremity of their sorrow, Philip and Claudia consult sorcerers and their pagan gods to find out what has become of their daughter. Upon being told (falsely, the Latin author and Ælfric point out) that Eugenia has been stolen into the heavens by the gods, Philip orders a golden image of his daughter to be made, so that she might be worshiped along with the other gods. Their minds disordered by grief, ignorant as yet of the God whose image they bear, the members of Eugenia’s family seek consolation from their pagan gods and sorcerers, but receive only deception and false hope.

The parallel oppositions in the Latin text between the bishop Helenus and Eugenia’s father, Philip, are striking: Philip is left behind and Helenus is sought; Philip loses his daughter and Helenus gains a “son”; Philip has a disordered mind and so is deceived into worshiping an image of his daughter but Helenus has a mind restored to right order by God and so sees the truth about Eugenia and orders the image in his dream not to allow herself to be worshiped. The disorder of Philip’s mind, however, shows most vividly in his anger.

After several years, Philip sees Eugenia again for the first time, but he does not recognize her. In the intervening time she has been made the abbot of the monastery by acclamation of the brothers, and has gained a reputation as a miraculous healer. One of her female patients, having been overcome with lust for the “abbot” after being healed of a disease, embraces Eugenia and receives a crushing rebuff for her efforts. Melantia, the woman scorned, rushes to Philip and accuses the “abbot” of attempted rape, whereupon Philip becomes violently or exceedingly enraged, *vehementer irascitur*.¹¹⁴ This same kind of language characterizes Philip’s conduct of Eugenia’s trial as the Latin author describes him as *vehementer iratus* (although the Cotton-Corpus Legendary version has *vehementer commotus*).¹¹⁵ Ælfric preserves the same characterization of uncontrollable rage when he translates *vehementer irascitur* as Old English *swiðe gehat-heort*, literally ‘exceedingly hot-hearted’ or ‘exceedingly enraged.’ In both versions Philip then imprisons Eugenia and her brethren while he prepares various tortures such as fire and beasts and other punishments for the Christians, although Ælfric does not name the tortures as the Latin does: “Abtantur eculei, verbera, ferae, flammae, tortores; et caetera, quae solent abscondita cordis exculpere, praeparantur.”¹¹⁶ In omitting these details, Ælfric’s translation loses the concrete vividness of words such as *flammae* ‘flames’ and *ferae* ‘wild beasts’ that illustrate some of the connotations of the Latin word *ira*.¹¹⁷ Philip’s own bestial ferocity illustrates the inward condition of his soul: he is like a beast, ruled by violent passion rather than by reason. Augustine describes the process as one which humankind, “incipiens a peruerso appetitu similitudinis dei peruenit ad

similitudinem pecorum.”¹¹⁸ Augustine concludes that “cum sit honor eius similitudo dei, dedecus autem eius similitudo pecoris: *Homo in honore positus non intellexit; comparatus est iumentis insensatis et similis factus est eis.*”¹¹⁹ The theme resonates with Ambrose’s description of the “manly” lion that refused to attack the virgin of Antioch and the “beastly” men that were ready to brutalize, rape, and martyr her.¹²⁰ As with the Latin text, Ælfric repeats the idea of Philip’s violent anger when he says that Philip addresses Eugenia (before he knows who she is) *mid fullum graman* ‘with utter rage.’¹²¹ Because Philip has made himself like God by making his own daughter into a goddess (in fulfillment of Helenus’s dream) and driving the Christians from Alexandria, Philip has fallen within his own soul from reflecting the image of God down to the level of unreasoning beasts, ruled by his own passions instead of by the *imago Dei* within himself.

“Pa wearð se geræfa . þearle gebolgen,” Philip’s anger only increases as all of Melantia’s servants falsely testify against Eugenia, describing how the “abbot” tried to rape their mistress on her sickbed.¹²² At this moment of heightened intensity and imminent danger, as the full wrath of the court hangs suspended over Eugenia’s head, Philip demands to know how Eugenia can ever prove her innocence. In the Latin text, this climactic confrontation brings the two opposing states of mind into sharp contrast. Eugenia’s mind, rightly ordered through belief in Christ, exemplifies gentleness, humility, calmness, strength in the midst of a seemingly hopeless situation; Philip’s mind demonstrates the bestial nature of the fallen, disordered,

deceived mind of the unbeliever. As the two face each other, every eye and every ear focuses upon Eugenia as she responds:

“Tanta enim virtus est nominis eius, ut etiam femine, in timore eius positae, virilem obtineant dignitatem. Neque enim diversitas sexus inveniri potest in fide, quum beatus Paulus, magister omnium christianorum, dicat quod apud Deum non sit discretio masculi et femine: omnes enim in Christo unum sumus. Huius ergo normam animo ferventiori suscipiens confidentiam, quam in Christo habui, nolui esse feminam. Consideravi enim non esse inimicam honestatis simulationem per quam femina virum simulat, sed magis hoc iure puniri, si pro affectu vitiorum vir feminam fingat. Et hoc iure laudandum, si pro amore virtutum sexus infirmior virilem gloriam imitetur. Idcirco nunc ego, amore divino religionis accensa, virilem habitum sumsi, et virum gessi perfectum, virginitatem Christo fortiter conservando.”¹²³

In this climactic moment, as the beastly man and the manly woman face each other in a highly symbolic confrontation between paganism and Christianity, Eugenia proves herself to be the *virum perfectum* by the very act of proving herself to be a woman. She tears apart her upper clothing and reveals the womanly feature of her breast for all to see, thus proving herself innocent of the charge of rape.¹²⁴ She obtains the status of *virum perfectum* first by refusing marriage (in the Latin text), then by preserving her virginity even though surrounded by men and by not lapsing into the kind of seductive lust displayed in her accuser, Melantia. Indeed, she has proved in her own body that in Christ there is neither male nor female by clothing herself outwardly as a man, but inwardly clothing herself with Christ so that she did not become a man, but became metagendered in Christ, reflecting both the feminine and masculine aspects of Christ's character. By living bodily and mentally as a metagendered *virum perfectum* among men, she set the example of Christian virtue for men and ruled over them.

By the same token, her two companions, Protus and Jacinctus prove the same point in the opposite direction through their status as eunuchs, for they “imitabantur eam, et erant in omnibus obtemperantes ei.”¹²⁵ The unmanned men follow Eugenia toward perfect “manliness” in the *schola Christi*.¹²⁶ By placing a woman and two eunuchs at the center of an exemplary narrative about achieving perfect “manliness,” the anonymous Latin author emphasizes the figurative and symbolic nature of this masculinity whereby it becomes a sign of a greater reality that has nothing to do with sex and everything to do with spiritual and moral strength. The sign of Eugenia’s perfection is the strength by which she preserves her virginity in Christ while becoming more like Christ in humility and other virtues in the process, and the sign that she has accomplished this perfection is her own distinctly female body, her own breast.

Eugenia’s entire speech about obtaining the *virum perfectum* receives only indirect and monothematic treatment in Ælfric’s translation. By means of indirect discourse, Ælfric focuses on the saint’s preservation of her virginity through her male disguise, again limiting Eugenia’s “masculinity” to her appearance, implicitly insisting upon her physical reality as a woman while simultaneously exalting her spiritual strength in maintaining her virginity and keeping her secret for so many years. This indirect treatment blunts the drama of the transformation of character in Eugenia’s spiritual quest, but it also circumvents any opportunity for confusion on the part of Ælfric’s audience. In the Old English text, the preservation of virginity is the

only acceptable excuse for Eugenia's transvestitism; there are no other symbolic implications to the disguise.

Eugenia's revelation of her womanhood, however, remains the dramatic focal point of the Life: "Æfter þysum wordum heo to-tær hyre gewædu / and æt-æwde hyre breost . þam breman philippe / and cwæð him to . þu eart min fæder."¹²⁷ The violence of the motion in the verb *to-teran* 'tear to pieces, lacerate, cut out, destroy' and the direct, blunt immediacy of Eugenia's assertion that the raging Philip is her father compensate for the loss of dramatic capital in Ælfric's handling of the previous section. In the Latin text Eugenia immediately covers her breast as soon as she has exposed it and before she says anything to Philip. In Ælfric's translation, however, the revelation of Eugenia's womanly body and of her relationship to her judge are simultaneous. Eugenia's statement in the Latin version is an almost leisurely observation: "Tu quidem mihi secundum carnem pater," whereas Ælfric renders Eugenia's words as a stark, forceful, almost accusatory declamation as she bares her breast.¹²⁸

In addition, Ælfric does not translate the Latin line wherein Eugenia immediately covers her breast. Rather, he leaves Eugenia exposed, leaves her covering of her breast indeterminate. In this instance, at least, the Latin original shows more modesty than Ælfric's translation, calling into question the idea that Ælfric possessed "a certain nervousness about the power of the gaze and the knowledge it yields."¹²⁹ Instead, Ælfric's translation makes Eugenia's bare breast the dramatic focal point of the story, inviting the gaze with electrifying results. The

knowledge revealed by her body joins with the knowledge of relationship revealed by her words to effect not only the conversion of her family, but also of the crowd of spectators who witness the event.

This moment of vindication and of recognition leads to a joyful reunion that includes the populace of Alexandria that had gathered for the spectacle of the trial and the tortures that had been prepared. Instead of hellish punishments, however, “*deferuntur vestimenta auro texta, et licet invita, induitur, atque in excelso tribunali inposita, in sublime adtollitur, et ab omni populo conclamatur: Unus Deus, Christus, unus et verus Deus christianorum.*”¹³⁰ Ælfric renders the passage in this fashion: “*Hi þa gefretewodon . þa fæmnan mid golde / hyre un-þances . and up gesætton to him.*”¹³¹ Philip has been seated on his tribunal, his two sons beside him, so that they formed a sort of family trinity as they sat together. Eugenia has now been brought to the highest tribunal (*in excelso tribunali*), clothed in gold, and seated with them. The mental image created by this scene is of Eugenia enthroned with three men in a highly suggestive parallel to artwork that places Mary with the Trinity in glory. Eugenia’s unwillingness to be so honored resonates with the Virgin Mary’s well-known humility. The symbolic apotheosis of the virgin in the text mirrors the apotheosis of the Virgin Mother of God.

Following this scene and its accompanying mass conversion of all those present, including Eugenia’s family, both the Latin Life and Ælfric’s translation narrate in short order the martyrdom of Philip (murdered while kneeling in prayer in the church), the departure of Eugenia and the rest of the family to Rome, and the

martyrdoms of Basilla (one of Eugenia's converts), Protus, and Jacinctus before describing Eugenia's own torments and martyrdom. Campbell Bonner, in his early analysis of possible folklore elements in the Latin Life, observes that "it will probably be conceded by most critics that the martyrdom of Eugenia and her family is a pious addition to the legend, which originally concluded with the scene of recognition and reunion."¹³² Certainly this second part of the story lacks the male/female dynamic of the first part, drops the liturgical elements entirely, and unlike the earlier part gets distracted into the sub-Life of a virgin named Basilla. By the time the legend reaches Ælfric, all the martyrdoms listed above have accreted to the story and he includes them in his translation. Ælfric's version of the story as a whole, however, is more uniform in tone and theme than the Latin version because Ælfric has removed the male/female imagery and has removed the liturgical progression of the first part of the legend out of his translation, so the original story blends more smoothly with the martyrdoms that were added later. When Ælfric's readers come to the added part in the Old English version, there is nothing to signal that anything has changed from the original story. The one theme that remains constant across the two sections is virginity. Ælfric uses this idea as his unifying concept, creating a more coherent work in the process.

As Eugenia's life nears its end, she again appears before a hostile judge. By refusing to worship an image of Diana, indeed, by bringing down the goddess's temple through prayer, Eugenia receives the emperor's condemnation. Various means of inflicting death are attempted, such as tying a stone around her neck and

throwing her into the river, burning her in an oven, and then starving her in prison when the first two methods failed. God miraculously saves Eugenia from all of these executions, first by breaking the stone and making her sit on top of the water, then by quenching the hot fires of the ovens, and then by illuminating the prison and providing the saint with a white loaf of bread.¹³³ Then Christ appears to Eugenia, saying, “Noli timere, Eugenia, ego sum salvator tuus, cui tota et integra semper mentis devotione servisti: eodem te die in celo suscipiam quod ipse descendi ad terras.”¹³⁴ The Latin text focuses on Eugenia’s virginity of mind rather than of body, showing the same emphasis on mental integrity that Augustine outlines in *De civitate Dei* and that Ambrose depicts in his *Life of the Virgin of Antioch*.¹³⁵ Ælfric maintains this same emphasis in his translation: “Ic eom þin hælend . þe þu healice wurðost / and mid eallum mode . and mægne lufast / On þam dæge þa scealt cuman to me . þe ic com to mannum / and on minre gebyrd-tide / ðu bist on heofonum gebroht.”¹³⁶ In Ælfric’s translation, these words of Christ to Eugenia are the first that are given in direct discourse in the entire second part, making them the climactic focal point of the events following Eugenia’s self-revelation. Again, Christ does not point out Eugenia’s bodily virginity but rather the fact that she has ever loved him with all her mind and strength. This emphasis removes the focus from her body not because her body is somehow shameful, but because bodily purity means nothing if the mind is not devoted to Christ. Ælfric makes this point more emphatically than the Latin text, for in the Latin Christ observes how Eugenia has faithfully served him, whereas in Ælfric’s translation Christ praises Eugenia for loving him with all her

strength and mind. In its reference to the totality of Eugenia's mental devotion the Latin text distantly echoes the wording of Mark 12:30: "[D]iliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo et ex tota anima tua et ex tota mente tua et ex tota virtute tua hoc est primum mandatum."¹³⁷ Ælfric recognizes the allusion and brings the thrust of the biblical passage to the forefront when he departs from the Latin wording by having Christ place the emphasis on the action of love rather than the action of service. The primacy of Eugenia's love for Christ demonstrates the right ordering of her mind, exemplifies the harmony of restored relationship to God that manifests itself in her love for Christ and her reflection of his metagendered *imago*.

Accordingly, in translating the Life of Eugenia, Ælfric deliberately focuses upon the right ordering of Eugenia's mind, showing her progress toward the spiritual ideal of perfect strength in Christ, contrasting her restored mind with the disordered mind of her father before his conversion, and then pointing out that the sign of a rightly ordered mind is whole-hearted love for the Savior. Ælfric does not deny the female body in his text—far from that, he affirms it by insisting upon the reality of Eugenia's womanhood. In so doing, Ælfric teaches that women do not have to give up being women in order to enter transcendent society. They only have to love Christ with all of their minds and strength.

5. Æthelthryth: Virgo Incorrupta

Of all the female saints that Ælfric includes in his collection, Æthelthryth seems to live the least dramatic life. All but one of the most important events in her

legend take place after her death, the one exception being her remarkable maintenance of her virginity through two marriages and over the course of a combined thirteen years of wedded life.¹³⁸ Æthelthryth's story differs remarkably from the stories of the Eastern and Roman female saints in that she has no dramatic confrontations with figures of authority or with demons, engages in no disputations with anyone else, faces no threats of corporal punishment or death, and overcomes no severe temptations.¹³⁹ Bede reports the attested facts of this queen's Life in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, complete with eyewitness testimony given in direct discourse, rather than just narrating the story of her triumphs in virginity. Ælfric does more to set the Life as a narrative piece when he translates it, but since he stays very close to the original, most of his narrative improvements lie in putting the story into a chronological form.

When Bede writes about Æthelthryth's two marriages, he seems to indicate that the marriages were thrust upon her rather than actively sought by her: "Accepit autem rex Ecgfrid coniugem nomine Aedilthrydam . . . quam et alter ante illum uir habuerat uxorem. . . . Sed illo post modicum temporis, ex quo eam accepit, defuncto, data est regi praefato."¹⁴⁰ Ælfric maintains this impression of Æthelthryth's marriages in his translation: "Æðeldryð wearð þa for-gifen anum ealdor-mann to wife . . . and heo wearð forgifen ecfride cunincge."¹⁴¹ Both writers make Æthelthryth the active agent in preserving her virginity, however, with Bede writing, "perpetua tamen mansit uirginitatis integritate gloriosa," and Ælfric rendering the feat as "heo . . . twelf gear wunode unge-wemmed mæden."¹⁴² Bede leaves her desire for virginity

unexplained at this point, but Ælfric inserts the cause for her behavior before going any farther. She pursued virginity because “Heo lufode þone hælend þe hi heold unwemme.”¹⁴³ In Ælfric’s translation, Æthelthryth’s love for the Savior moves her to action, to preserve her virginity through thirteen years of marriage to two different men. She may have been a passive participant in the contracted marriages, perhaps even reluctant, given her desire to enter into a monastic life, but her love for God motivated her to resist actively any and all attempts by her husbands to consummate the marriages. While Bede’s account implies this difference and takes the audience’s recognition of Æthelthryth’s motivation for granted, Ælfric makes the matter explicit.

Bede does address Æthelthryth’s desire for Christ further along in the story. He describes how king Ecgfrith offered the bishop Wilfrid great wealth if he would persuade Æthelthryth to consummate the marriage, then shows that the queen is not persuaded and over the course of many years she continually asks the king to release her to a monastic life:

Bede:

Quae multum diu regem postulans, ut saeculi curas relinquere atque in monasterio tantum uero regi Christo seruire permetteretur, ubi uix aliquando impetrauit.

Ælfric:

Æðeldryð wolde ða ealle woruld-þincg forlætan .
and bæd georne þone cynincg þæt heo criste moste þeowian .
on mynsterlicre drohtnunge swa hire mod hire to-speon .
Þa lyfde hire se cynincg þeah þe hit embe lang wære
þæs þe heo gewilnode.¹⁴⁴

In Bede's account, Æthelthryth delivers a kind of back-handed insult to her husband by asking that he permit her to serve the true king, Christ. Ælfric silently omits the implication that a human king is not a true king, simply telling how the queen *bæd georn* 'earnestly entreated' the king to let her go so that she might serve Christ. Gwen Griffiths interprets this phrase as a sign of Æthelthryth's powerlessness in Ælfric's translation of the saint's Life, of her inability to gain her own goals without male help and supervision:

Since Æthelthryth ostensibly submits to all male figures, and a male agent must finally expedite her entry to a monastery, male power and intervention in the achievement of God's will are privileged. Yet it can equally be argued that Æthelthryth's virginity demonstrates power in its denial of male power through physical withholding. Ælfric ignores this, as he must, for such denial challenges institutional power—royal, ecclesiastical, societal, or familial.¹⁴⁵

As Bede and Ælfric tell the story, Æthelthryth chooses virginity not as a means of subverting male power but so that she might serve Christ instead. Somehow Griffiths has overlooked the role of belief, both in Æthelthryth's choice of virginity and in Ecgfrith's submission to her will. There may have been other factors behind her choice, historically, but within the context of her legend there is only this one motivation. While the queen's desire for purity interrupts the usual course of establishing royal heirs, Ecgfrith does not force her into the marriage bed against her will and finally agrees to her monastic vocation. His agreement is necessary because of the church's teaching against one partner in marriage making a unilateral decision for a monastic vocation without consideration of its effects upon the other partner.¹⁴⁶ Since both Æthelthryth and Ecgfrith are Christians, he respects (albeit reluctantly) her decision for virginity, and she respects the necessity for his agreement before she can

leave the marriage for the monastery. In the process, Æthelthryth accomplishes her greatest living feat—she remains a virgin despite twelve years of her husband's entreaties for sexual union. As Griffiths succinctly puts it, “unfortunately for Ecgfrith, Æthelthryth desires God, not him.”¹⁴⁷ Both Bede and Ælfric focus upon Æthelthryth's proper desire to serve Christ through the monastic life and her perseverance in obtaining that desire. Ælfric's translation, however, makes the matter much more explicit because he actually speaks of her desire, referring to what she *gewilnode* in the same language that he used to describe the desiring part of the soul in *LS I*.

Having finally obtained the king's release from the demands of marriage (one gets the sense that she finally wore him down), Æthelthryth immediately takes the veil and enters into monastic life. After a year-long novitiate at Coldingham Abbey, she becomes an abbess herself in the region of Ely in East Anglia, “ubi constructo monasterio uirginum Deo deuotarum perplurium mater uirgo et exemplis uitae caelestis esse coepit et monitis.”¹⁴⁸ Æthelthryth establishes Ely as a double monastery, as shown by the presence of brothers of the monastery later in the Life, but Ælfric translates this passage straightforwardly so that it refers to the *myneceana* ‘nuns,’ who may have formed the majority of the monastery's population: “and heo syððan wearð gehadod / eft to abudissan on elig mynstre . / ofer manega mynecena . and heo hi modorlice heold / mid godum gebysnungum to þam gastlican life.”¹⁴⁹ Ælfric does not hide the fact that Æthelthryth and later her sister, Sexburh, ruled a double monastery, however, and that they directed men as well as women. He states

that “þa wæs þær sum læce on ðam geleaffullum heape . / cynefryð gehaten,” and later describes how Sexburh, Æthelthryth’s successor as abbess, “sende þa gebroðra” to seek stone for a new coffin for Æthelthryth’s remains.¹⁵⁰ Ælfric does not try to hide the fact that such houses formerly existed nor that they were *heold* ‘ruled’ by women. On the other hand, he does not emphasize the female rule of double monasteries in Æthelthryth’s Life either. For his purposes (which are more spiritual than political) the double monastery at Ely simply exists as the setting in which Æthelthryth prospered in her religious observance and service. He neither condones nor condemns the institution in the Life of Æthelthryth, nor comments upon it directly at all.

The focus of Ælfric’s attention, as with Bede before him, is on Æthelthryth’s ascetic life. The strict control that she exercised over her own body through fasting and avoiding baths and her continuing exercise of chastity demonstrates how she *wel drohtnode* ‘conducted her life well’ in temporal matters, a manifestation of the rightly-ordered functions of the mind.¹⁵¹ Such temporal concerns belong to the “female” aspect of the mind and combine with her persevering desire for Christ to illustrate a mind restored to the image of its creator. Ælfric emphasizes this matter by drawing his readers’ attention to the fact that the abbess conducted her life well. Bede simply describes Æthelthryth’s behavior, but Ælfric points out that this behavior has meaning beyond its simple performance: it indicates the abbess’s active rule over her own life and body, a function of the soul that Ælfric describes in *LS* I when he writes:

Ðas fif andgitu gewisseð seo sawul to hire wyllan . and hyre gedafnað þæt heo swa swa hlæfdige . geornlice foresceawige hwæt heo gehwylcum lime bebeode to donne . oððe hwæt heo gehwylcum lime gepafige on gewylnunge his gecyndes . þæt þær nan þing unpæslike ne gelympe on nanes limes þenunge.¹⁵²

Once Æthelthryth's Life is placed into the context of early medieval Christian belief, what seems to be a passive life from a political perspective turns out to be an active life of choice, of agency by which Æthelthryth grows toward Christian perfection, a gendered soul moving towards the metagendered Other in the pursuit of her greatest desire.

Æthelthryth even viewed the tumor that eventually led to her death as a bodily means toward that perfection. In his translation of Bede's work, Ælfric makes the abbess's diagnosis of the cause of her tumor and its function in her life the only passage of direct discourse in the Old English version:

Heo cwæð ic wat geara þæt ic wel wyrðe eom .
 þæt min swura beo geswenct mid swylcere untrum-nyse .
 forðan þe is on iugoðe frætwode minne swuran
 mid mænig-fealdum swur-beagum . and me is nu gepuht
 þæt godes arfæstnyss þone gylt aclænsige .
 þonne me nu þis geswel scynð for golde .
 and þæs hata bryne for healicum gymstanum .¹⁵³

The pain that came to Æthelthryth by means of her tumor served as a vehicle for grace from her perspective, allowing her to make amends bodily for the vanity of her youth. As the only direct speech in the whole Life, Æthelthryth's self-diagnosis again places her at the center of the reader's attention. In contrast, the physician, Cynefrith, is marginalized in Ælfric's account. In Bede's history, Cynefrith delivers his testimony about Æthelthryth's illness, the measures he took to cure it, and the

discovery of her uncorrupt body with the healed wound on her neck in direct discourse to emphasize its status as eyewitness testimony. His description of events is so long and so dramatic that it easily overshadows Æthelthryth's speech in the mind of the reader.¹⁵⁴ Ælfric, however, not only takes Cynefrith's information out of direct discourse, he does not even present it as indirect discourse. The physician's testimony becomes subsumed into the narrative line, impersonal and disengaged from the man himself. The primary source of information on the discovery of Æthelthryth's uncorrupt corpse in Bede's account is brushed aside to the margin in Ælfric's so that the saint herself always remains foregrounded in the reader's thoughts.

What, then, is Ælfric's point in translating the story of Æthelthryth? As a historical figure and an Anglo-Saxon saint, Æthelthryth's Life brings the possibility of successfully emulating her devotion and holy living much closer to Ælfric's Anglo-Saxon audience than the Lives of the Roman martyrs.¹⁵⁵ While it poses its own difficulties and complexities in terms of the differences between the historical queen and the queen of hagiographic legend, the Life of Æthelthryth instructs its readers in the value of chastity in an almost colorless fashion as it describes the "white (that is, bloodless) martyrdom of the ascetic life."¹⁵⁶ In order to make sure that his readers understand the point of the legend, Ælfric tacks on a brief moral: "Oft woruld-menn eac heoldon swa swa us bec secgað / heora clænnysse on synscipe for cristes lufe / swa swa we mihton reccan gif ge rohton hit to gehyrenne."¹⁵⁷ Yet even in this rather blunt attempt to encourage his male lay audience towards lives of

chastity, Ælfric brings up the matter of desire and why even lay folk ought to live chastely within marriage—they should do so because they love Christ, just as the saints in the books do.

6. Agatha: Femina Tamen

In her discussion of Ælfric's "corporeal hermeneutics," Shari Horner points out Ælfric's use of *lichamlic* 'bodily, carnal, physical, material' to denote a literal or historical reading of a text, saying that, "for Ælfric understanding a text *lichamlice* means understanding it both by means of the body, and in the literal sense."¹⁵⁸ Yet there is a *gastlic* 'spiritual' sense that Ælfric desires his readers to attain, for it is by means of understanding the spiritual sense of the Lives that Ælfric's audience may come to know both God and their own souls. The Lives that have already been analyzed here demonstrate the accuracy of Horner's observation inasmuch as the body of the saint has a *gastlic* meaning beyond itself. Both the saint's material body and the saint's temporal life function iconographically as images of the soul that draw the readers through identification and imitation into the greater presence of the *imago Dei* and eternal truths.¹⁵⁹ In the legend of Agatha, the opposition between reading the saint's body and the saint's life literally and spiritually moves the audience beyond merely identifying with the saint's physical sufferings to the more important (from Ælfric's perspective) identification and imitation of Agatha's mind and soul. The physical tortures that Agatha endures are means to an end for Quintianus, for the

anonymous author of the Latin Life, and for Ælfric himself, although obviously the ends are not the same.

The Latin Life makes Quintianus's motives regarding Agatha clear from the outset. His description comes even before Agatha's and focuses on his desire to gaze upon the young woman. Ælfric seems to be dissatisfied with such a beginning, however, and so inserts a very brief description of Agatha's character before describing Quintianus, saying that she is *snotor and gelyfed* 'wise and believing.'¹⁶⁰ Ælfric then provides a condensed description of Quintianus, setting up the opposition between the wise, rightly-ordered, believing mind of Agatha and the unbelieving mind of Quintianus, which is subject to the chaotic passions of desire and wrath that have overruled his reason: "Se wæs grædig gitsera . and his galnysse underpeod . / deofles þeowet-lincg . and drihten onscunode."¹⁶¹ The rest of the Life is a dramatic enactment of these opposing mentalities.

Yet the Life's focus on the opposition between a believing mind and an unbelieving mind has often been ignored in recent criticism in favor of a focus upon Agatha's breast as a representation of her sexual identity.¹⁶² The violence done to Agatha's body in the course of her opposition to Quintianus' will rightly deserves evaluation and critical attention, yet the context of the hagiographical setting and the idea that the described violence may have a purpose beyond itself do not always factor into recent analyses of the saint's body itself:

The breast emblemizes the hermeneutic function of the virgin martyr narratives: its violent mutilation stirs our horror and pity, yet the saint's denial of the significance of her own flesh reminds us that the truth of this text is not found at the literal level, but deep within its (her) beautiful surface. Agatha's

spiritual reading of her own body depends upon its literal sense, while the torturer's repeated assaults on her flesh demonstrate his inability to read beyond a literal level.¹⁶³

One must ask, though, whether or not the denial of the body is really the point of the virgin martyr narratives. The body figures significantly in each one, albeit some more than others, as both an object and a vessel of desire. Agatha has apparently cared well for her own body, since Quintianus finds it so desirable that he sends her to Aphrodisia and her nine *filiis turpissimas* 'very foul daughters' (a family brothel?) so that they might persuade her to yield to him.¹⁶⁴ The conflict arises when Agatha refuses to be persuaded, but according to both the Latin author and Ælfric Agatha's resolution is entirely a matter of the mind. Agatha does not speak about her body, nor does Aphrodisia attempt to change Agatha's chaste behavior. The older woman tries to change Agatha's mind instead, for she understands that the mind directs behavior, that virginity of the mind protects bodily integrity rather than the other way around. One might perform bodily chastity all one wants, but according to Ambrose and Augustine, and to Aldhelm after them, only the virginal integrity of *both* mind and body counts as true purity.¹⁶⁵ The body, then, is the outward expression of the inward purity, for a rightly ordered mind will manifest itself by the living of chastity, not just the outward performance of it. In its status as a visible sign the saint's body functions as an icon, a point of entry into the transcendent world of the saint's soul and of God, and so possesses value and importance to both the saint and the reader.

This said, the breast that has borne so much of the gaze of the faithful and of scholars of the body seems to matter very little to Agnes herself. Allen J. Frantzen comments that “Agatha annihilates her womanhood more effectively than her torturers when she disowns the breast she has lost in favor of the true faith in the breast of her soul.”¹⁶⁶ “Disowns,” however, is too strong a term, for Agatha is not unmoved by her loss. Rather she rebukes Quintianus for his cruelty:

Latin Life:

Agatha uero respondit: Impie et crudelissime non es confusus hoc amputare in femina quod ipse in matre suxisti? Sed ego habeo mammillas integras intus in anima mea: ex quibus nutrio omnes sensus meos: quos ab infantia domino consecraui.

Ælfric:

Agathes him cwæð to . Eala ðu arleasosta
ne sceamode þe to ceorfanne þæt ðu sylf suce .
ac ic habbe mine breost on minre sawle . ansunde .
mid þam ðe Ic min andgit eallunga afede .¹⁶⁷

In neither account does Agatha disown her flesh. Instead, she reproaches her tormentor for his cruelty and disrespect for a breast like the one that had nourished him when he was weak and helpless as a child. The reference is more specific in the Latin text than in the Old English, but the idea of disrespect for the nourishment that Quintianus had received from his own mother’s breast is not lost despite Ælfric’s omission of the specific mention of Quintianus’ mother. Far from rejecting her fleshly breast, Agatha points out the inhumanity of a man cruel enough to try to deprive a woman of her womanhood. In turn, she affirms her essential femininity by claiming to have other breasts within her soul by which she nourishes her thoughts.

Both the Latin author and Ælfric use active verbs in the first person, *nutrio* and *afede*, indicating that Agatha feeds herself by means of these inner breasts. Horner identifies these inner breasts with Christ: “Agatha herself is nourished through the breast (i.e., Christ) within her own soul,” an image that evokes Ambrose’s description of Christ as the virgin whose teats do not fail.¹⁶⁸ Yet Agatha claims these inward breasts for herself, saying *habeo* and *Id habbe* rather than *Christus est* or *Crist is*. With these words in mind it seems more likely that Agnes means the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, an allegorical interpretation of breasts made by Ambrose: “Ubera vel duo Testamenta dixit, quorum altero annuntiatus est, altero demonstratus. Et bene ubera, quoniam velut quodam nos spiritali lacte nutritos educavit, et obtulit Deo Filius.”¹⁶⁹ Agatha could nourish her thoughts at any time from the lifegiving words of the breasts of the Old Testament and New Testament scriptures.

Even while Agatha thus maintains her womanhood after the loss of her breast, she affirms her own womanhood even more after the Apostle Peter visits her that same night in her prison cell, offering to heal her wounds. Agatha refuses his aid, not realizing that the one before her is not a mortal physician but rather a heavenly messenger. Ælfric omits most of the conversation between Agatha and Peter, focusing on her reason for refusing medical treatment:

Latin Life:

Agatha Respondit [*sic*]: Quia habeo saluatorem dominum Iesum Christum: qui uerbo curat omnia: et sermo eius solus restaurat uniuersa: hic si uult: potest me saluam facere.

Ælfric:

Ne gymde Ic nanes læce-cræftes næfre on minum life .
 ic hæbbe minne hælend þe gehælð mid his worde .
 he mæg gif he wyle . mihtelice me gehælan .¹⁷⁰

While the refusal of medical aid may seem to support Frantzen's interpretation of Agatha disowning her breast, it is rather an assertion of hope that her dismembered flesh might yet be made whole. She knows that no medical skill can reattach her breast and so her only hope of being made whole again lies in Christ. And yet she does hope. She does not despair over her disfigurement, but demonstrates absolute confidence in her savior. Upon hearing Agatha's profession of confidence, Peter proclaims her restoration in Christ's name and disappears.¹⁷¹ Agatha praises God for her healing:

Latin Life:

Et dum compleret orationem suam respiciens ad omnes maculas corporis sui:
 sanata omnia membra sua cognouit.

Ælfric:

Æfter ðam gebede . beseah to hyre breoste .
 and wæs þæt corfene breost / þurh crist ge-edstaðelod .
 and ealle hire wunda wurdon gehælede .¹⁷²

Alone and in prison, Agatha gazes upon her own restored breast. The readers see Agatha's womanhood confirmed and affirmed through her own eyes, not through the objectifying gaze of a man. By restoring her flesh, God demonstrates the value and importance of her body; by viewing her own breast, Agatha does the same.

Five days later, Quintianus again calls the saint into his presence, demanding that she sacrifice to his gods or else undergo more torture. After what Agatha has just experienced, the charge appears ridiculous, as her response makes clear:

Latin Life:

Agatha respondit: Omnia uerba tua fatua et uana sunt: et iniqua praecepta tua aerem ipsum maculant: Vnde miser . et sine sensu et sine intellectu es . qui uult ad auxilium suum lapidem inuocare et non deum summum et uerum: Qui me dignatus est ab omni plaga curare: quam in me ita exercuisti: ut mammillam meam integerrimam meo corpori restitueret.

Ælfric:

Pa cwæð Agathes . þu earma andgit-leasa .
 hwa wyle clypian to stane . and na to þam soðan gode .
 ðe me fram eallum þam witum . þe ðu wælhreowlice .
 on minum lice gefæstnodest . for his naman gehælde .
 and min breost ge-edstaðelode . þe ðu arleasa forcurfe.¹⁷³

After the miraculous events in the prison regarding Agatha's healing, this scene brings back to the reader's attention the opposition between the saint's belief and Quintianus' unbelief that has been the consistent focus of the Life. The importance of the mind and of the body are brought together in Agatha's blunt response, for after both she and the readers have directly encountered the power of Christ, praying for help to deaf stones would be utter mindlessness. Moreover, Christ's regard for Agatha's female body, signaled by the restoration of her breast, points up the cruel disregard Quintianus displayed when he ordered her mutilation. The irony in this contrast deserves mention, for it calls into question interpretations of female saints' Lives that insist upon the denial of the female body or upon the necessity of "becoming male" in order to attain salvation: Christ, who supposedly

should confirm the saint's "disowning" of her breast, instead restores it; Quintianus, who supposedly desires to possess Agatha's breast, instead destroys it.

Quintianus refuses to learn his lesson, however, and he prepares another torture, that the saint should be rolled naked upon hot coals, but an earthquake forestalls further humiliation and suffering for Agatha. The populace of the city believes that his persecution of the virgin brought about the earthquake, and they demonstrate against Quintianus, causing him to flee the scene in fear, but not before ordering that Agatha be returned to prison.¹⁷⁴ Once in the prison, Agatha spreads her hands in prayer, saying:

Latin Life:

Domine qui me creasti: et custodisti me ab infantia mea: et fecisti me in iuuentute uiriliter agere: qui tulisti a me amorem saeculi: qui corpus meum a pollutione separasti: qui fecisti me uincere tormenta carnificis: ferrum: ignem: et uincula: qui mihi inter tormenta uirtutem patientiae contulisti: te deprecor: ut accipias spiritum meum modo: quia tempus est: ut me iubeas istud saeculum derelinquere: et ad tuam misericordiam peruenire.

Ælfric:

Eala ðu min drihten . þe me to menn gesceope .
and æfre fram cayldhade me gescyldest ofþis [*sic*] .
þu þe woruldlice lufe awendest fram me .
þu ðe dydest þæt ic ofer-com þæs cwelleres tintregu .
scearp isen . and fyr . and þa slitendan clawa .
þu ðe me on þam witum ge þyld forgeafe .
ðe ic bidde drihten . þæt ðu minne gast
nu to þe genime . forðan þe nu is tima .
þæt ic þas woruld forlæte . and to þinre liðan miltheortnysse
becuman mote . min leofa drihten .¹⁷⁵

And so saying, Agatha gives up her *gast* at a time of her own choosing rather than at the hands (or swords) of her executioners. Quintianus, helpless to obtain her

body, proves equally helpless to take her life. Agatha determines the moment of her own entry into heaven, not her persecutor. Quintianus had imprisoned her in order to possess her, but she eluded his temporal restraint, slipping beyond his reach into the realm of the eternal. As a sign to the people of her acceptance into heaven, an angel followed by *centum uiri* 'a hundred men' (or as Ælfric puts it, *fela cnapan* 'many youths') brings an inscribed stone to place at Agatha's tomb, which reads: "Mentem sanctam spontaneam, honorem deo, et patrie liberationem."¹⁷⁶

By contrast, Quintianus meets a most ignominious death, yet one that fully symbolizes his life and his disordered mind: he is caught on a boat between two horses, one of which holds him up with its teeth while the other kicks him overboard into the river, from which his body is never recovered.¹⁷⁷ The horse serves as a symbol for the animal passions in patristic and medieval literature and so Quintianus' death by means of these beasts illustrates the idea that the mental misrule of his own lustful desire and cruel wrath, his own beastliness, kills him.¹⁷⁸ And unlike Agatha, whose body remains intact, locatable, and memorialized within its sarcophagus, Quintianus' body disappears into the river's depths. It is consigned to oblivion and forgotten. In this final irony, Agatha preserves her body because she valued her soul more, demonstrating once more the right-ordering of the Augustinian "male" and "female" aspects of her mind. Quintianus, on the other hand, loses his body precisely because he valued it more than his soul, seeking gratification in the animal pleasures and thus losing both the "male" and "female" aspects of his mind together with his body.

7. Lucia: Virgo Immobilis

Closely associated with Agatha, Lucy of Syracuse first appears with her mother Eutychia at Agatha's tomb. They have come in response to Agatha's growing reputation, seeking physical healing for the saint-to-be's mother, who suffers from the uniquely feminine disorder of a continual flux of blood that no physician has been able to cure.¹⁷⁹ Eutychia's illness draws the reader's attention to the female anatomy, specifically the womb, and suggests the impurity that follows upon the loss of virginity in the marital embrace and childbirth. The broken integrity of Eutychia's body, the loss of stainless purity reflects the fallen nature of humanity, its integrity broken through Adam's disobedience, its soul, the *imago Dei*, stained and corrupted by sin, as desperately in need of salvation as Eutychia's own body is in need of healing. In contrast to Eutychia's plight, Lucy is healthy, whole, a virgin, although Ælfric's translation does not reveal this fact immediately.¹⁸⁰ Lucy and her ailing mother spend the night at Agatha's tomb, prostrate in prayer for so long that Lucy falls asleep. While asleep, Lucy sees a vision of Agatha, accompanied by many angels and richly attired. When Agatha greets Lucy, Ælfric finally reveals Lucy's virginal status: "Min swustor lucia . soð godes mæden / hwi bitst þu æt me þæs þe ðu miht sylf getiðian?"¹⁸¹ By changing the time at which the audience learns of Lucy's virginity, Ælfric increases the drama of Agatha's announcement. In this way, Ælfric creates the impression of a sort of annunciation of Lucy's virginity. Up to this point Lucy is just an ordinary young woman, but she learns through the vision that God has

claimed her for his own, naming her a true virgin apparently even before she has determined to be so. As a result of this knowledge of Lucy's status, God grants her ahead of time a reward for her future faithfulness—Eutychia's malady is healed. In the Latin text Lucy credits the saint with Eutychia's healing, but Ælfric shifts the credit, making Agatha explicitly emphasize that Christ healed the woman, not Agatha herself.¹⁸² Agatha then explains that Lucy had the faith to effect her mother's cure: "forðan þe þu gearcodeð criste . on þinum clænan mægð-hade . / wynsume wununge."¹⁸³ The comment bears both bodily and spiritual meanings: Lucy's virginity prepares a dwelling place for Christ just as Mary's virginity did. Having been engendered by the Holy Spirit, Christ literally dwelt in Mary's pure womb for nine months until birth. Spiritually, Lucy's virginity prepares both her body and her soul as a fit dwelling for the Holy Spirit of Christ, since the Apostle Paul writes that the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.¹⁸⁴

After Agatha finishes her announcement, Lucy wakes and quickly rouses her mother to tell her about her cure and to make a request:

Latin Life:

Per ipsam te deprecor quae te saluauit suis orationibus; ne tu mihi aliquando sponsum nomines . nec tu uolis de corporis mei posteritate fructum mortalitatis inquirere.

Ælfric:

nu bidde ic þe . þurh þa ylcan . þe þe mid ge-bedum gehælde .
 þæt þu nanne bryd-guman næfre me ne namige .
 ne of minum lichaman deadlicne wæstm ne sece .¹⁸⁵

In Ælfric's translation, Lucy makes the point that Christ, who has cured Eutychia's womb, now lays claim to Lucy's own so that it may never know the corruption of lust and begetting offspring as Eutychia's has known, and so that Lucy's offspring might be spiritual rather than mortal children who must themselves later die. By virtue of Lucy's pure womb, Eutychia's has been healed through Agatha's prayers and by Lucy's own heavenly Bride-groom. This same idea of virginal daughters thus saving their mothers is found in Jerome's *Adversus Jovinianum*, which makes the point that married women attain through their virgin children what they themselves have lost; the spiritual fruits of the child's virginity make up for the corruption of lust that accompanies copulation and of having borne bodily fruit.¹⁸⁶ In addition to warning her mother not to expect grandchildren, however, Lucy also wants the dowry that Eutychia would have provided to anyone who married her daughter, in order to use it in Christ's service. Eutychia tries to defer, but Lucy eventually persuades her to sell even the land as well as the jewels and together they distribute all of Eutychia's carefully guarded wealth to the poor and others in need. As a result, both Lucy's would-be husband and the prefect, Paschasius (whom Ælfric apparently mistakenly conflates into one person), bring her to trial.¹⁸⁷

At this point, Ælfric abridges an already short Life by editing much of the dialogue between Lucy and Paschasius at her trial out of his translation, condensing most of the debate into "and hi spræcon fela."¹⁸⁸ Ælfric does, however, retain the part of the dialogue in which Lucy describes how the Holy Spirit of God is present within

her. Paschasius has just threatened to beat Lucy if she says any more, but Lucy refuses to be silent, saying that he will be unable to stop God's words:

Latin Life:

Paschasius dixit . Tu ergo deus es? Lucia respondit . Dei summi ancilla sum . quia ipse dixit . Cum steteritis ante reges et presides propter nomen meum . nolite cogitare quem aut quid loquamini . Non enim uos estis qui loquimini . sed spiritus patris uestri . qui loquitur in uobis . Paschasius dixit . In te ergo spiritus sanctus est? Lucia respondit . Apostolus dicit . quod caste et pie uiuentes templum dei sunt . et spiritus sanctus habitat in eis . Paschasius dixit . Ego faciam te ad lupanar duci . et dum fueris scortata . fugiet a te spiritus sanctus . Lucia respondit . Numquam inquinatur corpus . nisi de consensu mentis.

Ælfric:

He axode ða mid olle . Eart þu la god?
 Lucia him andwyrde . Ic eom þæs ælmihtigan þinen .
 forþi ic cwæð godes word . forþan þe he on his godspelle cwæð .
 Ne synd ge þe þær sprecað . ac srycþ se halga gast on eow .
 eft þa pascasius orgellice befran .
 wunað se halga gast on þe eornostlice .
 Lucia andwyrde þam arleasan and cwæð .
 Se apostol behet þam ðe healdað clænnysse .
 þæt hi synd godes templ . and þæs halgan gastes wunung .
 Þa cwæð se arleasa . Ic hate þe ardlice lædan .
 to þæra myltestrena huse . þæt ðu þinne mægð-had forleose .
 þæ se halga gast þe fram fleo . ðonne þu fullice byst gescynd .
 Lucia andwyrde þus . ne bið ænig gewemmed .
 lichama to plihthe . gif hit ne licað þam mod.¹⁸⁹

Paschasius' literal (mis)understandings of Lucy's serious declarations carry great potential for a humorous interpretation. Shari Horner has already pointed out the symbolic lesson about literal and spiritual interpretations of both texts and saints' bodies at work in this exchange, but the lesson also carries an element of the ridiculous that seems to have been lost on Ælfric. Or perhaps Ælfric saw the potential for humor all too well, and took steps to make sure that the readers of this Life would

not find in Paschasius a source of comedy by interpreting his comments so as to leave no such possibility. For instance, when Paschasius asks Lucy if she is God, the Latin simply says *Paschasius dixit* 'Paschasius said,' but Ælfric interprets for his audience the attitude with which the prefect spoke, saying *He axode ða mid olle*, 'He then asked with scorn.'¹⁹⁰ Later the Latin text again says *Paschasius dixit* when the prefect inquires whether the Holy Spirit is in Lucy. Ælfric interprets again, however: *Eft þa paschasius orgellice befran* 'After that Paschasius asked insolently.'¹⁹¹

This exchange serves as more than a moment of potential comic relief, however. Underlying the ridiculousness of Paschasius' literal misunderstanding of Lucy's comments are the ideas evoked earlier by the healing of Eutychia and the theme of Lucy's virgin body prepared as a dwelling for Christ. Lucy ties together the concepts of chastity and the inward dwelling of the Holy Spirit by literally speaking God's words when she quotes the Apostle Paul's remark that the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.¹⁹² Paschasius makes the connection, but again takes the idea too literally and determines to take Lucy to a brothel where she might be raped, thus causing the Holy Spirit to flee from her. He understands the connection between virginity and the dwelling of the Holy Spirit to be a matter of bodily location, of the womb actually being the place in which the Holy Spirit lives. Lucy corrects the error of his thoughts, however, when she asserts that *Numquam inquinatur corpus . nisi de consensu mentis* 'the body may never be corrupted except by agreement of the mind.'¹⁹³ Here Lucy repeats the teaching of Ambrose, Augustine, and Aldhelm on the primacy of mental purity over mere physical integrity, adding that God, who *de*

uoluntatibus iudicat, will hold her guiltless of any impurity because of her unwillingness.¹⁹⁴ Even though threatened with rape, Lucy remains calm and fearless.

Not so with Paschasius. He starts to drag the saint to the brothel as he had threatened to do, but along the way Lucy becomes fixed to the ground, immovable. Paschasius and his men try everything they can think of to move the woman—pulling with ropes, magic spells, even a team of oxen—but all to no avail. Since Lucy cannot be brought to her torments, however, *torquebatur iudex insanus* ‘the insane judge was tortured [in mind]’ (Ælfric: *swiðor on mode* ‘violent in mind’). Paschasius orders the torment to be brought to Lucy and his men quickly build a large pyre around her.¹⁹⁵ As with the other persecutors of the saints, Paschasius depicts the mind gone mad, chaotic, violent, and disordered because ruled by the passions rather than by reason. In contrast, Lucy is quite literally ‘steadfast and immovable,’ both mentally and physically. The longer Lucy stands her ground, the more violent and *mod-least* ‘lacking in mind’ Paschasius becomes. Ælfric uses terms that vividly describe this state of mind (or mindlessness): *wodlice geancsumode* ‘insanely vexed,’ and *mod-least* ‘lacking in mind.’¹⁹⁶ Paschasius’ friends are unable to calm him from this violent state of mind, and so they order Lucy to be killed by jugulation, “*amici eius iusserunt gladium mergi in gutture*,” which Ælfric translates as “Ac heton acwellan þæt clæne mæden mid swurde . / heo wearð þa gewundod . þæt hire wand se innoð ut.”¹⁹⁷ The disagreement between Ælfric’s translation and the Latin text found in the Cotton-Corpus Legendary (a wound to the throat *versus* a wound to the belly) does not change Lucy’s actions after the event. The blow to the throat does not prevent her

from addressing the crowd that had gathered to watch her martyrdom, nor does her disembowelment prevent her from continuing to stand rooted in the middle of the street, addressing the crowd. Indeed, in both versions Lucy remains standing in the same place until Paschasius himself is brought before her in chains like a wild beast, on his way to be executed.¹⁹⁸ After Paschasius meets his ignominious end, Lucy finally consents to die. Like Agatha before her, she chooses the time of her own death, not her executioners.

Lucy's Life, while still demonstrating all of the aspects of Augustinian psychology that have appeared in each Life, provides a unique focus upon a different aspect of the female body from breasts that feature so prominently in Eugenia's and Agatha's Lives. Lucy's Life sets up an iconography of the womb as a dwelling place for God, both in terms of Christ as he was incarnated through the Virgin's womb into humanity and in terms of the Holy Spirit who dwells, according to Lucy, in believers who have prepared for the Spirit a clean and pure dwelling by living lives of chastity.

8. Cecilia: Doctrix Christianorum

Matters of the body hold no such prominence in Cecilia's Life, which 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 Life and in her discourse is teaching and instructing others in the faith. In his "drastic abridgement" of her Life, 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.¹⁹⁹ 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 half severed before she dies.²⁰⁰

The greater part of Cecilia's Life, both in Latin and in Old English, consists of didactic dialogue that covers 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. These dialogues 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

Latin Life:

Huius [Christi] uocem audiens Cecilia uirgo clarissima absconditum semper euangelium Christi gerebat in pectore: et non diebus non noctibus a colloquiis diuinis: et oratione cessebat.

Ælfric:

Ʒeos halige fæmne hæfde on hire breoste
swa micle 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 .²⁰¹

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 Life builds upon her response to him, a response that desires to know more about him and seeks relationship with Christ through this knowledge and through prayer. 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 desire that motivates her but also making her longing less for a person than a state of being.²⁰² Like the other female saints, when faced with the prospect of marriage Cecilia longs to preserve her virginity and to avoid "ælc gewemmednysse oððe weres gemanan."²⁰³

Such a statement deserves a moment of consideration, for it is not found in the Latin and so indicates that Ælfric did not consider women themselves to be inherently corrupt or to be the ones who invariably corrupt men. Ultimately, the corruption of lust lay not in the body itself, whether male or female, but in the passionate 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 spiritaliter pulchrioribus et incorruptibiliter suauioribus coaptamur."²⁰⁴ The body might be the means of access for temptation, 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.²⁰⁵

Accordingly, Cecilia exercises her own inward agency 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.”²⁰⁶ In this instance, as well, the Latin version puts the matter more poignantly: “Parentum enim tamen uis et sponsi circa eam erat exestuans: ut non posset amorem sui cordis ostendere: et quod solum Christum diligeret inditiis euidentibus aperire.”²⁰⁷ Cecilia has no room for anyone but Christ in her heart 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 as completely.

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:

Angellum dei amatorem habeo: qui nimio zelo corpus meum custodit. hic si uel leuiter senserit: quod tu polluto amore contingas me: statim contra te suum furorem exagitat: et amittes florem tuae gratissimae iuuentutis. Si autem cognouerit quod me sincero animo dilligas: et uirginitatem meam integram illibatamque custodias: ita quoque te dilliget sicut et me: et ostendet tibi [*sic*] gratiam suam.

Ælfric:

Eala þu min leofa man ic þe mid lufe secge .
 Ic hæbbe godes encgel þe gehylt me on [lufe] .
 and gif þu wylt me gewemman . he went sona to ðe
 and mid gramum þe slihð þæt þu sona ne leofast .
 Gif þu þonne me lufast . and butan laðe gehylst
 on clænum mægð-hade . crist þonne lufað þe .
 and his gife geswutelað þe sylfum swa swa me .²⁰⁸

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' four 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 loves her. She then appeals to Valerian's love for her as a motivation for him to both 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 is 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.²⁰⁹

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).²¹⁰ 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?"²¹¹ Confronted so tangibly with the transcendent, the young man immediately makes a profession of his faith and receives baptism and further instruction from Pope Urban.

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 or not. The angel of God tells Valerian that 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.²¹² The angel responds to Valerian's request by saying:

Latin Life:

Audiens haec angelus laetissimo uultu dixit ad eum: Quoniam hoc petisti quod melius est quod in 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 pertinges.

Ælfric:

þa cwæð se engel eft mid blisse him to . Forþan-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.²¹³

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: Caeli terraeque maris: et hominum ac uolucrum repentium pecudumque creator: ex semetipso antequam ista omnia faceret: genuit filium: et protulit ex uirtute sua spiritum sanctum . Filium: ut crearet omnia: spiritum: ut uiuificaret uniuersa . Omnia quae facta sunt filius ex parte [*sic*] genitus condidit: uniuersa autem quae condita sunt ex patre procedens spiritus sanctus animauit.

Ælfric:

Cecilia þa aris . and mid anrædnysse cwæð .
Ealle ge-sceafta scyppend ænne sunu gestrynde .
and forð-teah þurh hine sylfne þone frofer gast .
þurh þone sunu he gesceop ealle gesceafta þe syndon .
and hi ealle gelyffæste þurh þone lifigendan gast .²¹⁴

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.²¹⁵ By doing so he also brings the doctrines taught in the Life into line with what he has already said

about the procession of the Spirit in *LS I*: “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.”²¹⁶ 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 just as “uno homine dicimus esse sapientiam unam quam sapientiam dicimus habere ingenium memoriam et intellectum.” 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.”²¹⁷ However, Ælfric alters the unusual ternary provided in the Latin and uses instead the same Augustinian terminology that he used in *LS I*: *gemynd*, *andgit*, and *wylla*, and so again brings Cecilia’s teaching into line with the theology of the soul that he had propounded earlier.²¹⁸

Although both of the brothers also teach the Christian gospel in Cecilia’s Life, Cecilia herself is the principal teacher of the faithful and, as seen above, she teaches one of the most important and central doctrines of the faith: the doctrine of the Trinity. Ælfric maintains the Latin Life’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.²¹⁹ Cecilia speaks to the crowd, however, and points out to them the limits of their earthbound, bodily 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 wuldor-ful under-fo .
 sylle gewitendlic . and ungewitendlic under-fo .
 sylle wacne stan . and wurðfulne gym under-fo.²²⁰

Cecilia appeals to the crowd by suggesting that there is something more glorious 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 Life 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 of mixed sex.'²²¹ In her Life, 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 in either the Latin Life or 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 lives, 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 vaeheementer* '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. Even nearly headless, Cecilia instructs those around her in the faith for three more days before she dies, a true teacher to the very end.

Cecilia's Life stands out as clearly the most didactic and directly doctrinal of the Lives 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* I. 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 easily return that the same holds true for Valerian and Tiburtius as well. Neither of them is permitted to teach until he has committed himself to a life of chastity out of love for Christ. Such even-handed treatment of both the male and female protagonists of the legend calls into question the idea that chastity was considered a specifically female virtue, for here it is made as necessary for the men as for Cecilia—all of them become teachers in the faith after committing themselves to chastity.

9. Female Sanctity?

The defining characteristics of the female saints that Ælfric included in his collection are many; they are women who single-mindedly desire to present themselves as pleasing and acceptable to Christ. All of them maintain their virginity at various costs to themselves; all of them work miracles ranging from healing to refusing death to raising the dead; they teach publicly and privately; they defy the secular rulers who threaten both their purity and their faith; each woman suffers

bodily for the sake of Christ, either through torture and martyrdom or through disease; and, most importantly, they all desire union with Christ more than wealth, status, earthly power, or sensual pleasure. They demonstrate in a variety of ways the strong-mindedness through which both women and men might attain the *virum perfectum*, yet Ælfric carefully avoids ever suggesting that the women whose Lives he translates might want or need to become men in any sense; their goal is to become like Christ, which transforms them beyond secular societal definitions of gender into a relationship that moves them toward metagender through their desire for union with Christ. Ælfric does laud their triumph over sexual desire through virginity, but he does so for the men, such as Protus, Jacinctus, Valerian and Tiburtius, as well as for the women.

In all of these Lives, one sees Ælfric the teacher, Ælfric the theologian, and Ælfric the interpreter at work, molding his text to the end of creating a series of dynamic and coherent individual narratives that appeals specifically to his Anglo-Saxon audience through the use of his distinctive rhythmic prose and alliteration and his sense of dramatic narration, while also instructing them in orthodox doctrine. In Ælfric's translations, the bodies of the female saints are sites as well as sights of holiness, marked within by the beauty of their faith while demonstrating without the power of those beloved of Christ over the threats and blandishments of the earthly rulers. These women are strong, holy, triumphant because they are saints, but they are saints because their desires are directed toward God and they prove that the *imago Dei* in their minds has been restored by the way in which they preserve their devotion

to God while also caring as much as rightly possible for the body. They do not seek suffering and death, but when it comes they do not flinch from it, either.

Such triumphalism is a standard part of hagiography, for who would want to identify with someone who did not obtain the ultimate reward? Given as much, it should be no surprise that Ælfric's women are strong and victorious. His portrayals are all the more remarkable, however, for the dignity that he grants to women as he shows them attaining the highest ranks of holiness without ever having to be anything other than women.

At the same time, though, the female saints are not ordinary women. In the pursuit of the *virum perfectum*, they set themselves apart as distinct from their secular sisters, rejecting all the appeals to duty and enticements of luxury that their would-be suitors expected would win these women in the way that such things apparently won others. Æthelthryth frustrated the process of establishing royal heirs by her refusal to consummate her marriage in favor of preserving her virginity for Christ; Agnes spurns the jewels and beautiful clothing offered by her suitor; Cecilia converts her husband to chastity on their wedding night and sets in motion a wave of conversions; Eugenia turns her back on pagan philosophy and pursues a life of teaching Christianity in the guise of a man. In so doing, these believing women proved themselves to be stronger, according to the definition of the Latin Doctors, than their unbelieving counterparts by shunning temporal comforts for eternal joys. This same strength was the sign that their female gender had been reoriented by relationship

with God, the metagendered Other, and had been redefined according to this transcendent relationship.

CHAPTER V: THE SONS OF ADAM

1. Why Male Saints?

Leslie A. Donovan suggests two different ways that late Anglo-Saxon audiences might have interpreted the Lives of female saints, one by male audiences, one by female audiences, saying that

It is likely that male audiences, often composed of secluded, celibate male monastics, may have focused on the otherness of sexual dangerousness of the female saint. In contrast, female audiences may have recognized the tensions between the physical and spiritual in women saints' lives as mirroring their own struggles.¹

This assessment of men's interpretations of the female saints' Lives, while possible, does not address the framework of Anglo-Saxon Christian belief that informed the interpretive milieu of Ælfric's audience, the patristic examples of the interpretation of saints' Lives, and the value of hearing saints' legends for believing audiences in Ælfric's day. A more likely hypothesis is that the male audiences of female saints' Lives appreciated the saint's physical beauty as a sign of the beauty of her soul. They also learned lessons about fortitude in persecution, perseverance in the face of opposition, triumph in preserving integrity, the importance of the relationship between knowledge and belief, and, above all, a driving desire for the closest possible relationship with the most important Other in any saint's Life, the God in whose image women and men alike had been made. Men, as they are portrayed in the female saints' Lives, often exemplify disordered, bestial behavior that illustrates the outworking of their disordered, unbelieving minds. Yet monastic audiences of both

sexes would most likely have understood the behavior of such men as Quintianus and Sempronius' son in light of the teachings of Augustine, who clearly stated in *De civitate Dei* that lust resides in the eyes and mind of the beholder, not in the beauty of the woman beheld. Augustine gives an example of two men who see the same beautiful woman at the same time—one of the men continues in chaste thoughts, but the other lusts after the beauty of the woman he has seen. Augustine comments that “Neque enim pulchritudo illa corporis; nam eam non fecit in ambobus, quando quidem amborum non dispariliter occurrit aspectibus.”¹ The woman's attractiveness does not automatically present a danger to the purity of a man's thoughts, rather the danger to purity lies within the man himself, in the sinfulness of his own soul, as Augustine explains: “nec luxuria uitium est pulchrorum suauiumque corporum, sed animae peruerse amantis corporeas uoluptates neglecta temperantia, qua rebus spiritualiter pulchrioribus et incorruptibiliter suauioribus coaptamur.”² The lives of the female saints examined in the last chapter support Augustine's idea that lust, as well as rage, is considered not to be the woman's fault or to spring from the woman's beauty (obviously most of these women were not emaciated ascetics), but rather is the result of misdirected desire in the souls and minds of the men (and the women) who demonstrate these vices. In the legends, God constantly frustrates these inordinate desires while fulfilling the proper desires of the female saint in question. The lesson that men would most likely derive from the Lives of female saints, then, is of the reality of disordered desires within themselves and the dangers presented by such misdirected desire in their own minds. The male audience of a female saint's Life

might bear in mind Equitius' warning (found in the *Dialogi* of Gregory the Great) to his own male disciples: "Qua uirtute fretus ex Dei omnipotentis auxilio, ut uiris ante praeerat, ita coepit postmodum etiam feminis praeesse, nec tamen discipulos suos admonere cessabat, *ne se exemplo eius in hac re facile crederent, et casuri temptarent donum* quod non acceperant."³ (italics mine) Equitius says that if his male disciples work too closely with women without having his gift of symbolic castration, *they* will be the cause of their own downfall, not the women. Since Gregory's *Dialogi* were known in late Anglo-Saxon England, being available in both Latin and in Old English, Anglo-Saxon monks would likely have found sexual danger within themselves, rather than in the otherness of the female saint. They learned from the ignominious ends of men like Quintianus that the pursuit of such desires would end in their utter downfall, while imitation of the saint's heroic devotion to Christ alone, demonstrated by her preservation of her own chastity in the midst of cruel tortures and verbal bullying from government officials, would draw each man closer to God. As Ælfric makes clear in *LS I*, the highest and truest desire of the soul should be for God alone; all other desires should pale by comparison. In this aspect of the female saints' Lives, audiences of men as well as women could identify with the saint in her longing for union with Christ, a longing of the soul of a gendered being for the metagendered Other.

In light of such an interpretive environment, we must ask how Ælfric's audiences might have understood the Lives of male saints as well as how they perceived the Lives of the female saints, and we must ask how the juxtaposition of the

two within *Lives of Saints* may have influenced the perceptions of the audience. Why were the male martyrs persecuted? Did the men work different miracles from the women? Did they undergo different tortures? How important a factor is virginity in the Life of a male saint? Are the bodies of male saints treated differently than the bodies of the female saints? What exactly are the differences (if any) between male and female sanctity?

2. Abdon and Sennes: Reges Credentes

The Life of Abdon and Sennes is the second shortest Life in Ælfric's collection and is one of several male Lives that focus on devout kings.⁴ As Ælfric introduces the two kings, he immediately notes that they "on crist gelyfde," even before he gives their names, bringing in the same emphasis on the believing mind that he foregrounds in each of the female Lives.⁵ In the Latin account, the kings' Christian behavior, namely their refusal to worship and offer sacrifices to the pagan gods, comes to the attention of the Roman emperor Decius.⁶ Ælfric does not provide these details in his account, noting only that "Ða asprang heora word to ðam wælhreowan casere," and then continuing with a description of Decius' absolute and god-like rule over all the kings of the earth.⁷ Ælfric sets up the emperor as a type of Antichrist, ruling over all orders of men on earth, including kings, and yet possessed of that same proud will to power attributed to the devil, seeing himself as being like God, under nobody.⁸ Even when describing how Decius sent for the two kings to be brought before him, Ælfric writes that Decius "wolde hi gebigan fram godes

biggenegum,” even as Lucifer sought to turn his fellow angels and archangels away from serving God to serving himself.⁹ In order to make sure that his audience understands the parallel, Ælfric describes Decius as *deoflic* ‘devilish’ and *se deofles biggenga* ‘the devil’s worshiper.’¹⁰ Yet even as the *halgan cyningas* ‘holy kings’ are threatened with the most painful physical tortures (*acerrima tormenta* and *repestan wita*¹¹) because of their refusal to sacrifice to the pagan gods, they respond with fearless defiance:

Latin Life:

Dixit Abdo et Sennes: Quid tardas? Fac quod putas: nos securi sumus de Domino nostro Iesu Christo, qui potens est omnia cogitamenta tua et teipsum destruere.

Ælfric:

Abdon and sennes him andsyrdon ðus .
 Hwæs abitst þa casere cyð hwæt þu wylle .
 þæt þu wite soðlice . þæt we orsorge syndon
 on urum hælende criste . þe hælð þa mihte .
 þæt he ðine geþohtas . and þe sylfne mæg
 mid ealle towurpon . and on ecnysse fordon .¹²

In the opposition of will between any antichrist and Christ, the antichrist always loses. The Latin hagiographer sets Decius up in opposition to Christ and to Christ’s saints and shows that Abdon and Sennes know that the emperor is setting up his own downfall, both in time and in eternity. Neither the Latin nor the Old English versions say anything about physical or political power, but rather point out Christ’s ability to overthrow the plans, the purposes of Decius’ will and so the kings’ comments speak directly to the significance of the soul, especially of the will. Decius

may be ruler of all the known world, but his temporal power cannot avail him in the transcendent realm of the soul and of God.

Unfortunately, neither the Latin Life nor Ælfric's translation gives Decius' response to this dire prediction, accordingly we have no way of knowing whether or not Decius understood what the kings meant. Instead, the Latin narrative abruptly shifts in time to another day in which Decius orders his prefect, Valerian, to hand over the kings to lions and bears to be killed '*mortui fuissent*.' Ælfric makes Decius' threat rather more graphic by changing the verb to *abito* 'tear apart, devour'.¹³ Ælfric's choice of words evokes the biblical passage from I Peter 5:8, in which the devil is described as a lion seeking someone to devour. In the Old English glosses to Aldhelm's *De virginitate*, the Latin term *devorans* 'devouring' (from *devoro*, the same root used in I Peter 5:8, *devoret*, in the Vulgate) is glossed with the Old English *abitende* (from *abitan* 'to bite in pieces, tear to pieces, devour').¹⁴ By using this word, Ælfric may have intended to draw in yet another reference to the parallel between Decius and the devil, a subtlety that might have passed unnoticed by his lay audience, but would have been recognized by monastic readers.

Valerian gives the kings one last opportunity to save themselves from a painful death by worshiping the gods of Rome, but Abdon and Sennes respond:

Latin Life:

Jam diximus tibi: Nos Dominum Jesum Christum adoramus. Nam manufactis simulacris numquam humiliamur.

Ælfric:

We gebiddað us to drihtne gebigdum limum .
and we næfre ne onbugað . þam bysmorfullum anlicnyssum .
manna hand-geweorc . þe ge habbað for godas .¹⁵

Ælfric adds emphasis and insult to the answer the two kings give to Valerian.

Then, in the Latin text, “eadem hora denudavit eos, et furore repletus duxit eos ante simulacrum solis.”¹⁶ Ælfric, however, omits the comment about Valerian’s madness, saying only “Þa het ualerianus . ða halgan unscrydan . / and lædan swa nocode (*sic*) to ðære sunnan anlicnysse.”¹⁷ Ælfric does not give details as to where the kings are at this point, nor where the image of the sun is, but the Latin text explains that the kings have been brought to the amphitheater to face the lions and bears. It also describes how the image of the sun god to which the kings are led is next to the amphitheater. All of these actions, then, take place before an audience and, unlike the case of the female saints, no divine intervention preserves the modesty and dignity of Abdon and Sennes by covering their nudity from the gaze of others. Ælfric does translate how the kings resist Valerian’s attempts to compel them by torture to worship the sun god and also relates how Abdon and Sennes are then beaten with leaded whips before being brought back into the amphitheater. Here again, however, Ælfric omits details from the Latin text:

Latin Life:

Et cum ingressi fuissent, responderunt in conspectu Valeriani, dicentes Abdo et Sennes: In nomine Domini nostri Jesu Christi introimus ad coronam, qui interdicat tibi, immunde spiritus, et facto signo crucis, introierunt in amphitheatrum; qui cum introissent in conspectu Valeriani nudo corpore, tamen induti corpore Christi.

Ælfric:

. and lædde hi syððan
to ðam wæfer-huse . þær ða deor wunodon .
beran . and leon . þe hi abitan sceoldon.¹⁸

The Latin text brings out a number of interesting points: the two naked kings are subjected to the gaze of their persecutor, Valerian, who sees their nakedness, and yet they at the same time are invisibly clothed with the body of Christ, which covers them in a sense, but does not hide their nudity from the hostile gaze of the prefect or, presumably, the spectators at the amphitheater. The very means by which a person might be clothed with Christ's body and what kind of covering the body of Christ might provide remains unexplained and problematic, but probably comes from Paul's comments in Romans 13:14, "sed induite Dominum Iesum Christum et carnis curam ne feceritis in desideriis," and Galatians 3:27, "quicumque enim in Christo baptizati estis Christum induistis."¹⁹ The same verb, *induo* 'put on, clothe,' is used in both the Life and the biblical passages and in the scripture it implies a covering or cleansing from sin. The verse in Galatians comes immediately before the passage in Galatians 3:28, in which Paul tells the Galatians that there is neither male nor female among those who have been clothed with Christ through baptism, for all are made one in Christ. The symbolism involved in two naked kings being clothed with the body of Christ, which is imperceptible to the unbelieving crowd resonates with the early Christian thought that sexually differentiated bodies were the result of the Fall—being clothed in Christ spiritually covers the nakedness, the sexuality of the male bodies and signifies their participation in the transcendent society of God and angels.

The sexually distinct body, and by extension the gendered soul, are covered by the metagendered body of Christ in a kind of spiritual transvestism, signaling the process of transformation taking place in the souls of the two kings. Such a covering, however real it may have been in a spiritual sense, still does little to protect the kings' physical modesty, though, and the covering that preserves the dignity of Abdon and Sennes in the sight of God passes unnoticed by the pagan crowd. Perhaps for this very reason Ælfric omits this scene almost entirely, reporting simply that the kings were led to the amphitheater to be fed to the lions and bears. A miraculous covering that cannot be seen and that produces no awe or conversions amongst the pagan onlookers would be more likely to inspire confusion than devotion in Ælfric's lay audience, and so he sets aside the mention of these saints being clothed with the body of Christ, focusing his readers' attention instead upon the beasts whose behavior will provide a more tangible miracle.

Made bloody by the severe beating, the two kings remain steadfast in their refusal to offer pagan sacrifices, and thus are brought into the arena to face the wild animals. Valerian orders two lions and four bears to be set upon the two men. In both the Latin and Old English accounts, the animals run out with awful roaring *ad pedes sanctorum* 'to the feet of the saints,' where they remain, protecting the saints so that none dare to approach them or, according to Ælfric, dare even to enter the arena.²⁰ Similar episodes of wild beasts protecting rather than devouring the saints occur in Ambrose's *Life of Thecla* and in Aldhelm's *Life of Chrysanthus and Daria* as discussed above. In this instance, as in the *Lives* of the female saints, the positions

of human persecutor and beast are inverted—the beasts acknowledge and honor the saints of God and thus behave as humans ought, while the humans torture and attempt to kill the saints and so behave like beasts.

Frustrated in his desire to see the kings devoured by the uncooperative lions and bears, Valerian *furorē plenus* ‘full of madness’ (or *swyðe gram* ‘exceedingly enraged’ according to Ælfric) orders gladiators into the arena to kill Abdon and Sennes.²¹ These men do what the beasts refused to do, and the kings finally meet their deaths by swordstroke. Valerian then commands that the corpses be dragged before the image of the sun god and left exposed there as a warning to other Christians. In a scene reminiscent of the fate of the two witnesses in Apocalypse 11, the bodies of these men remain the objects of the public gaze for three days before they are taken and given burial.²² Ælfric translates from the Latin that the bodies then remained concealed until the time of Constantine, when Christ himself revealed the location of the two saints, and then concludes with this moral (not found in the Latin):

Ge habbað nu gehyrod hu ða halgan cyningas
heora cynedom for-sawon for cristes geleafan .
and heora agen lif forleton for hine .
Nimað eow bysne be ðam . þæt ge ne bugon fram criste
for ænigre earfoðnyse . þæt ge þæt ece lif habbon.²³

Ælfric returns here to the theme of “proper desire” that he laid out in the sermon in *LS*

I. Desire properly directed leads each person to belief in Christ and thus to eternal life, the greatest goods of both body and soul, as much for kings and rulers as for anyone else.

There are many differences between the female Lives examined in the previous chapter and the Life of these two kings. In the legend of Abdon and Sennes, no one is converted to Christianity, nor do the kings instruct anyone in the tenets of the faith. They taunt Decius and insult the pagan gods, but they do not instruct as the female saints did. Nor are these two saints relieved of the pain of their torments, the humiliation of their nudity, or the public exposure of their naked, dead bodies. The animals recognize their sanctity, but no one else seems to do so, especially not in Ælfric's rendition. The kings remain faithful to Christ even through torture and death and such is their only demonstrated claim to sanctity.²⁴

3. Sebastian: Emissarius Clandestinus Dei

The Life of Abdon and Sennes raises the question of what exactly "male" sanctity might entail. The idea of a saint acting "manfully" as discussed in the previous chapters had to do with demonstrating the mental strength and courage required to maintain one's virginity and devotion to Christ in the face of worldly distractions, temptation, and torture. The Latin Doctors and the early Anglo-Saxon Fathers used the term "manly" to describe men, including eunuchs, and women who set their desire for God as foremost in their lives and resolved never to stray from that devotion. Applying a rather literal signification to this rhetorical convention, Allen J. Frantzen asserts that "for a man to be holy is to act like a man; for a woman to be holy is also to act like a man."²⁵ But what does it mean to "act like a man"? Does it necessarily mean participating in what Clare A. Lees calls "the traditional male

pursuits of warfare, territorial expansion, and aggression”?²⁶ Or does the hagiography of the late antique era and the early Middle Ages redefine masculinity in a way that creates a new kind of man, the saint, just as it redefined femininity and created a new kind of woman, the saint?

The Life of Sebastian, possibly another Pseudo-Ambrosian work like the Lives of Agnes and Eugenia, may provide a template for what it means to “act like a man” in the late antique/early medieval religious cultural milieu in which Pseudo-Ambrose wrote.²⁷ Ælfric drastically edited the same author’s Life of Eugenia when he translated it into Old English, especially with regard to its imagery of Eugenia’s symbolic transformation of gender from female into male—in short, Ælfric wrote the entire issue of shifting gender out of his rendition, leaving simply the story of a woman disguised in man’s clothing. Yet he did describe Eugenia as living with a manly mind, *‘mid werlicum mode.’*²⁸ Both the Latin and the Old English versions, however, define the meaning of manliness so that Eugenia and her two eunuchs, as “manly” soldiers of Christ, are characterized by the rather womanly qualities of gentleness in speech, humility, and single-hearted service and devotion to Christ. Similarly, in Ambrose’s Life of the Virgin of Antioch, the soldier who exchanges clothing with her claims that donning her feminine clothes (symbolically acquiring female attributes) will make him a true soldier. The implication of these Lives and of others is that a fusion of gender characteristics occurs in both men and women when they enter into a believing relationship with Christ—the mixture of masculine and feminine qualities that the Gospels attribute to the Son of God manifests itself in the

lives of the saints as they draw closer to him through prayer, study, and good works. The female saints thus take on “manly” characteristics, and the men acquire the “womanly” qualities found in Christ. The saints of both sexes thus transcend their biology and are freed from the gender roles assigned to their sexes by their secular societies so that they might pursue the metagendered Other and become more like Christ in the process. How, then, does this process manifest itself in the Life of a male saint?

Pseudo-Ambrose first tells his readers that the emperors Diocletian and Maximian made Sebastian their commander of the first cohort of the Roman military. This appointment implies that the emperors considered Sebastian to be a capable and successful warrior, well educated, a leader, and loyal to themselves. They did not know, however, that Sebastian was also a devout Christian:

Pseudo-Ambrose:

Erat enim vir totius prudentiae, in sermone verus, in iudicio iustus, in consilio prouidus, in commisso fidelis, in interuentu strenuus, in bonitate conspicuus, in vniuersa morum honestate praeclarus. Hunc milites ac si patrem venerabantur: hunc vniuersi, qui praeerant palatio, carissimo venerabantur affectu. Erat enim verus Dei cultor, et necesse erat vt, quem Dei perfuderat gratia, ab omnibus amaretur.

Ælfric:

He wæs swiðe snotor wer . and soðfæst on spræce .
 rihtwis on dome . and on ræde fore-gleaw
 getreowe on neode . and strang fore-þingere
 on godnyse scinende . and on eallum þeawum arwurðful .
 Dæghwamllice he gefylde his drihtnes þenunge geornlice.
 ac he bediglode swa þeah . his dæda þam casere
 dioclitianæ se wæs deofles big-gencga .
 He lufode swa þeah ðone halgan wær .

and ealle þa hyred-menn hine hæfdon for fæder .
and mid lufe wurðodon . forðon þe god hine lufode .²⁹

Although Ælfric rearranges the way the information is presented, he does not make any essential changes to the description of Sebastian. This “man’s man” is noted for his wisdom, honor, goodness, and trustworthiness. His cohort loves and honors him as a “father” just as the men and women of Hild’s and Æthelthryth’s double monasteries called them “mother” as a title of respect and honor. All of these attributes and all of this respect accrues to Sebastian for one reason—not because Diocletian loved him, but *forðon þe god hine lufode* ‘because God loved him.’³⁰ Neither Pseudo-Ambrose nor Ælfric mention anything about Sebastian’s physical strength, possible battlefield victories, parentage, or whether he has or had a wife and children. It stands to reason that he has considerable political influence since he is so well loved by the emperor, but neither writer shows Sebastian ever trying to influence the emperor(s) beyond trying to save the lives of Christians. Rather, he acts like a secret agent of God, using his position for the purpose of encouraging other Christians whom Diocletian and Maximian are putting to death because of their faith. For Sebastian, acting like a man means being wise, truthful, trustworthy, honorable, good, and an encouragement to his persecuted fellow Christians—all characteristics that may be found in the female saints, as well.

Both the Latin and Old English Lives first describe how Sebastian *Christianorum animos . . . conforta[bat]* ‘comforted the souls of the Christians’ who were weakening in their resolve because of the cruelty of the persecution.³¹ Sebastian runs considerable personal risks not for the sake of personal advancement or the

gaining of political power, but for the sake of comforting and encouraging persecuted Christians.

Both the Latin and Old English accounts also describe how the devil was trying to seduce the minds of these Christians that Sebastian comforted, a description reminiscent of Augustine's and Cassian's psychology of temptation wherein the serpent represents the devil as the source of temptation. Part of Sebastian's comforting of the minds of the believers, then, includes strengthening them in the maintenance of the divinely restored order of their minds so that the tribulations of the body would not attain such an overwhelming importance that the "male" aspect of the mind would turn from its contemplation of and desire for God and capitulate to the temporal and material desire of the "female" aspect rightly to protect and care for the body. This desire to protect the body, while good in and of itself, applies only in the time-bound, material realm and so holds a lower priority than the eternal, transcendent good of remaining faithful in belief and desire for God, as the words of Christ in Matthew 16:25 make explicit: "qui enim voluerit animam suam salvam facere perdet eam qui autem perdiderit animam suam propter me inveniet eam."³²

Immediately after describing Sebastian's ministry of encouragement, however, the Latin text begins a rather serpentine narrative of Sebastian's works and their subsequent repercussions in the lives of various other people. E. Gordon Whatley describes the Life as "an epic *passio*, which interweaves the story of Sebastian with those of numerous other martyrs whom he supposedly converted or encouraged,"³³ a narrative strategy almost reminiscent of the (in)famous digressions

in *Beowulf* except that these sub-legends are a bit more obviously related to Sebastian's own story. Since almost all of the martyrs involved in these sub-Lives are men, they prove useful in endeavoring to ascertain what it means to act like a man in late antique and early medieval hagiography.

The first of these interwoven sub-Lives is that of Marcus and Marcellianus, who "capitalem iussi sunt subire sententiam," or, as Ælfric more colorfully puts it, "Hi sceoldon þa under-hnigan . nacodum swurde."³⁴ Scholars such as Chance, Lees, and Overing have argued that the various weapons mentioned in both the prose and poetic female saints' Lives (swords, spears, arrows) can be interpreted as phallic symbols because they are designed to penetrate the body.³⁵ The readings based upon this psychoanalytical interpretation of the weapons transform the martyrdoms of the female saints into heteroerotic scenes of symbolic rape that they conclude indicates a subtle misogyny in Ælfric.³⁶ In this same interpretive vein, however, Ælfric's choice of words here, especially given the lack of parallel phrasing in the Latin, can also be interpreted as carrying considerable homoerotic freight, bringing into the sub-legend of Marcus and Marcellianus both an unexpected possibility of symbolic rape of the two brothers and a previously undiscovered streak of misanthropy in Ælfric. Yet since this is the only time in any of his works that Ælfric uses the phrase *nacodum swurde*, and since *nacodum* emphasizes the consonance on *n* found in *under-hnigan* from the first half of the line, Ælfric's choice of words here may have been influenced as much by the stylistic potential of *nacod* as by conscious or subconscious titillation. He uses the word most to describe the bare body, but also uses *nacod* in other

instances not related to the human body to describe plain, bare, unexplained words, an unsaddled donkey, and lip-service to God that is not confirmed by purity of heart or upright deeds.³⁷ In this case, Ælfric adds the term to the idiomatic phrase used to translate ‘capital sentence,’ *under-hnigan swurde* ‘to submit or bow the head to the sword,’ to describe the imminent danger of the situation by pointing out to his readers that nothing separates the brothers from their doom. The edge of the executioner’s sword must, after all, be free of all encumbrances in order to cut effectively.

Ælfric, following the main narrative line of the Pseudo-Ambrosian text, next describes how the friends, parents, wives, and children of the two brothers appeal to their family ties in an attempt to turn the men back to paganism and so save their lives. Ælfric emphasizes the irony of this attempt by pointing out how “mid manegum tihtingum / þæra cnihta mod fram cristes geleafan . / woldon awecgan . swylce hi wislice dydon.”³⁸ In light of the medieval Christian consensus that the worship of man-made pagan idols is foolishness and the worship of the one true God the only real wisdom, Ælfric portrays the foolish friends and family as trying to persuade the brothers away from true wisdom back into their foolishness, highlighting their paradoxical position by commenting that these well-intentioned people thought they were doing wisely. Not that Ælfric makes them the butt of a joke—he simply brings out the tragic ignorance of the pagans as a way of setting up his audience to share the joy of the future conversion of the brothers’ families by making them sympathetic figures even in their state of unbelief. The family members, in fact, are so sympathetic that Marcus and Marcellianus are touched by their pleas and begin to

waver in their determination, to consider recanting their profession for the sake of their families.

This scenario illustrates the point made by the Apostle Paul and the Latin Doctors about the ways in which even good temporal things such as family could distract a man or woman from whole-hearted devotion to Christ. The brothers were not tempted away from their devotion by riches or sex or the threat of death, but when their families pled with them to spare them the torment of losing husbands, fathers, children, the two men began to weaken. Here the difference between the late antique ideal of the man as *pater familias* and the Christian ideal of the *virum perfectum* comes most sharply into conflict. As *patres familiarum*, Marcus and Marcellianus must recant and continue in their roles as heads of the households, providers, and partakers in whatever civic duties are appropriate to their rank; as *viri perfecti*, they must forget their obligations to family and society and remain faithful to God, even if it means death. Both Pseudo-Ambrose and Ælfric make clear the toll this inner conflict takes upon the two brothers:

Pseudo-Ambrose

Interea dum illa dicuntur, et ista referuntur, inter vxorum lacrymas, et suspiria filiorum, coeperunt milites Christi mollescere, et animos suos flectere ad dolorem. . . . At ibi [Sebastianus] vidit athletas Dei immenso certaminis pondere fatigari . . .

Ælfric:

Hwæt ða la ongunnon þa godes cempan hnexian
and heora mod awendon to hyre maga sarnysse .
Ða geseah sona sebastianus þæt .
hu þa godes cempan . ongunnon hnexian .
for þam mycclan gewynne . . .³⁹

Sebastian also recognizes the agonizing decision that the brothers face, and he observes how the love these men possess for their families causes their resolution to waver. He is unable, however, to stand by and allow the men to choose momentary worldly happiness over the ultimate good not only of their own souls but of the souls of their families as well. He enters the pagan household of Nicostratus, into whose care the brothers had been given, to encourage the young men to remain firm in their faith and thus save their families and be with them for eternity rather than satisfying their families now and being separated from them forever in hell. The role of *pater familias* can only provide temporary happiness to each brother and his family; only the role of the *virum perfectum* can provide each brother and his family with eternal happiness. While Sebastian encourages the brothers in faithfulness and instructs the families in the course of greatest wisdom in a speech that includes *oðrum langsumum spræcum* ‘other lengthy discourses,’ which Ælfric compassionately omits, a heavenly light shines upon the saint and an angel appears in front of him.⁴⁰ The immediate effect of this manifestation of transcendence is awe and conversion among the members of Nicostratus’s household, beginning with his wife, Zoe.

Upon seeing the angel, Zoe falls at Sebastian’s feet *cum intellexisset omnia* ‘because she had understood wholly,’ and in Old English, *mid fullum geleafan* ‘with complete belief.’⁴¹ Zoe suffers from an illness that had rendered her mute for six years, but when Sebastian recognizes her faith, he heals Zoe and restores her speech as a sign that he has spoken the truth. The woman immediately testifies that she has seen the angel and that the angel held a book from which Sebastian had instructed

them. These comments are delivered in direct discourse in the Latin text, but Ælfric translates them as indirect discourse so that Zoe's next words, which Ælfric keeps in direct speech, stand out more forcefully:

Pseudo-Ambrose:

Benedicti qui in omnibus quae locutus es credunt, et maledicti qui dubitauerint vel in vno verbo ex his omnibus quae audierunt: quoniam sicut aurora superueniens vniuersas tenebras noctis excludit, et omnium oculis lumen, quod nox caeca negauerat reddit; ita lux sermonum tuorum omnem caliginem omnemque ignorantiae caecitatem extersit, et oculis recte credentium serenum post noctis tenebras diem reddidit: a me autem non solum incredulitatis tenebras exclusit, verum etiam sermonis mei ostium, quod sex annos clausum erat, patefecit.

Ælfric:

Eadige synd þa þe þinum wordum gelyfað .
 and þa beoð awyrigde þe þises twyniað .
 swa swa dægred to-dræfð þa dimlican þystra .
 and manna eagan onlyht þe blinde wæron on niht .
 Swa adræfde þin lar þa geleaf-leaste fram me .
 and minne muð geopenode . and min mod onlihte .⁴²

Understanding and belief now having dawned in Zoe's mind, her restored spiritual and physical health manifest themselves in this testimony. She describes her conversion in terms that specifically address the mental nature of the event, the teaching that dispels the darkness of ignorance, illuminating the mind with spiritual truth that blesses all who recognize and believe it. Others also receive miraculous healing when they are baptized after hearing Sebastian's teaching and Zoe's speech, one of whom, by name of Tranquillianus, becomes the focus of a digression that leads to the conversion of the Roman prefect, Chromatius.

The father of the two brothers, Tranquillianus, is the first to speak to Chromatius about God's power to heal, for Chromatius also suffers from a crippling disease just as Tranquillianus had before he was baptized. After much conversation (most of which Ælfric again omits in his translation), Chromatius tries to buy this healing through baptism. Sebastian is then brought in to instruct the prefect properly about belief in the Christian faith. Sebastian's first words, in Ælfric's translation, entail instruction in what Chromatius must properly desire in turning to God:

Pseudo-Ambrose:

Vide ne sola recuperatione tui corporis ductus te Christianum fieri speres, sed magis spe vitae aeternae facias mentem tuam puram ad videndam rationem veritatis. Nisi agnoueris quis sit Creator tuus, non poteris inuenire salutem quam quaeris.

Ælfric:

ne scealt þu for þinre hælðe anre . to ðam hælende gebugan .
 ne for ðinum lichaman anum þe lætan fullian .
 ac swiðor for hihte þære ecan hælðe .
 and for þam ece life . ðu scealt gelyfan on god .
 Do þin mod hluttur þæt þu leornian mæge
 þurh soð-fæst ge-scead hwa þin scyppend sy .
 ne miht þu elles habban þa hæle þe þu secst .⁴³

Again we see a return to the theme that Ælfric set up in *LS I* when he wrote, "Nis nanum menn on ðisum deadlican life libbendum nanes þinges . swa mycel neod . swa him biþ þæt he cunne þonne ælmihtigan god mid geleafan . and sippan his agene sawle."⁴⁴ The foremost good and the thing most necessary for anyone is to know God and his or her own soul. By instructing Chromatius that he must desire and strive to know God even more than he desires physical health, Sebastian makes this same point, for he knows that by desiring God above all else Chromatius will receive not

only health for his soul but for his body as well. Once the prefect's mind returns to its proper order, it will be moved by the proper desires of love for God and for others. Chromatius and his son, Tiburtius, convinced by Sebastian's teaching, the breaking of their idols, and the appearance of another angel, believe what they have been told and Chromatius receives the healing that he had desired. In the wake of their conversion more than a thousand others in and associated with their household also convert and are baptized.⁴⁵

By this point in the story Sebastian's sanctity is beyond question. He shows compassion, he teaches, he heals, his teaching converts hundreds to Christianity, and he encourages those Christians who are waiting to be martyred. Yet martyrdom awaits Sebastian himself. As a new persecution breaks out against Christians in Rome, Chromatius flees the city with as many of the Christians as will go with him. Sebastian and several others, including Zoe, remain behind, teaching and healing in spite of the oppression. Not long after, however, one by one those who remained in Rome meet with martyrdom. The Latin text describes Zoe's martyrdom first, briefly depicting how the new prefect "iussit eam a collo et capillis in arborem excelsam suspendi et subter fumum ex sterquilinio adhiberi."⁴⁶ Ælfric does not give his readers any of these details. Instead, he simply reports that Zoe was *for crist acweald* 'killed for Christ,' and then moves in short order through the martyrdoms of Tranquillianus, Nicostratus, and Tiburtius until he comes to the torture and execution of Marcus and Marcellianus.

The new prefect, Fabianus, called *insanissimus* in Pseudo-Ambrose's text, orders the brothers placed into a pillory and made to stand upon nails stuck into the soles of their feet. Yet the two stand singing a psalm about the happiness of brothers who dwell together in unity.⁴⁷ Fabianus' unhealthy, insane mind contrasts sharply with all of the conversions and healings that have taken place throughout the legend, yet when he hears the brothers singing about their happiness he responds "Eala ge ungesæligan . and soðlice earmingas . / alecgað eowre ge-wit-leaste . and alysað eow fram witum."⁴⁸ Unable in his madness to see himself or his prisoners from an eternal perspective, Fabianus calls Marcus and Marcellianus "unhappy" and "insane" when all the while they possess the rightly-ordered, believing minds and he possesses the disordered, unhealthy mind. The brothers reply that they are happy to suffer *on cristes lufe* 'in the love of Christ,' and they remain in the pillory singing all night.⁴⁹ Despite their obviously painful position, the love of the two brothers for Christ overwhelms all physical pains and distractions. Neither the Latin text nor Ælfric says that the pain was removed; instead the joy the brothers feel because of Christ's love enables them to take up their pain and transform it into song. Then Fabianus "iussit eos ambos vbi stabant lanceis per latera verberari."⁵⁰ Ælfric adds that Fabianus gives this order *mid fullum graman* 'with utter rage' and the young men are *ofstunge* 'pierced' where they stand.⁵¹ This time the brothers receive not just the threat of penetrative violence against them, but the violence itself. Their bodies are pierced through at the moment of their martyrdom, and they die immediately. The idea of lances piercing the sides of the brothers calls to mind the way in which Christ's side

was pierced while he hung on the cross. In this instance, however, the piercing kills the brothers, while the piercing of Christ's side showed that he was already dead. Nevertheless, the symbolic identification of Marcus and Marcellianus with Christ confirms their sanctity and hallows their martyrdom.

After the deaths of the two brothers, Fabianus accuses Sebastian to the emperor Diocletian. As with Decius in the Life of Abdon and Sennes, Ælfric uses adjectives and adverbs that associate Diocletian with the devil, calling him *deoflice gram* 'devilishly enraged' and *deofollica cwellere* 'devilish murderer.'⁵² Feeling betrayed by the discovery that his beloved servant held secretly to the hated Christian religion, Diocletian furiously orders Sebastian to be tied up and shot with arrows until dead. Pseudo-Ambrose writes that "Tunc posuerunt eum milites in medio campo, et hinc inde eum ita sagittis repleuerunt, ut quasi hericus ita esset hirsutus ictibus sagittarum." Ælfric translates: "Þa læddan þa cempan þone cristes þegn . / and setton hine to myrcelse . swa swa se manfulla het . / and heora flan him afæstnodon . foran . and hindan . / swa þicce on ælce healfe hwylce iles byrsta."⁵³ Sebastian's executioners do a thorough job, for every spare inch of flesh has an arrow stuck in it.

Sebastian, however, does not die from his wounds. A martyr's widow comes to bury Sebastian's body, but she finds that he still lives and so takes him to her home and nurses him back to health in a miraculously short amount of time. The saint through whom God healed so many now himself receives healing from God through this widow. Instead of fleeing from Rome when he had recovered, though, Sebastian goes back to the emperor's palace and confronts Diocletian again about his unjust

persecution of the Christians. The emperor seems unimpressed and orders his soldiers to beat the saint to death with clubs. They do the job completely this time and dump the body in the sewer so that it will not be found and honored by the Christians. As his last miracle in the Life, Sebastian appears to another widow in a dream, telling her where to find his body and where he wishes to be buried.

What, then, does Sebastian's Life teach about what it means to "act like a man"? The lesson is not an affirmation of "traditional" masculine endeavors, such as fighting or striving for political power. Rather, the "manhood" portrayed in the Life of Sebastian is the *virum perfectum* of Ephesians 4:13 and the female saints' Lives. When the female saints move closer to the *virum perfectum*, they acquire masculine attributes because they are becoming more like Christ; the men, as they move closer to the *virum perfectum*, likewise acquire feminine attributes because they become more like Christ, who portrays both masculine and feminine gender qualities in the Gospels and is one of the metagendered Trinity. The men must transform themselves in a way that truly denies their culture's secular and pagan constructions of masculinity—in short, for Sebastian, to "act like a man" in Christ is not to act like a man in the world and in some ways to act like a woman. Yet within the early Christian milieu, such a renunciation of socially approved manhood would have been a reflection of the proper desire for God that would obtain in the mind restored to its right order by belief, the turning from love of self to the love of God and neighbor as described by Augustine in *De Genesi ad litteram*:

Hi duo amores—quorum alter sanctus est, alter inmundus, alter socialis, alter priuatus, alter communi utilitati consulens propter supernam societatem, alter

etiam rem communem in potestatem propriam redigens propter adrogantem dominationem, alter subditus, alter aemulus deo. . . . alter hoc uolens proximo quod sibi, alter subicere proximum sibi, alter propter proximi utilitatem regens proximum, alter propter suam.⁵⁴

These two kinds of love could be contrasted as ‘gendered’ and ‘metagendered,’ for the self-love that seeks to dominate and bring others under its own control, looking out only for its own good, is a result of the Fall, and thus can be associated with gendered beings still caught in the grips of vice and sin. This gendered love generally characterizes the secular authorities in the saints’ Lives. The other, the metagendered love, reflects the love for God and others that acts for the good of others rather than for selfish ends, which is precisely the kind of love and the kind of actions that one finds in the Life of Sebastian. He demonstrates that he has entered through belief into a transcendent society that defines gender roles in a way foreign to the world of the Roman emperors of the third century. Thus, the “male” aspect of the saint’s mind maintains its contemplation of the divine, focuses itself and its will upon that relationship with the transcendent Other. In turn, the “female” aspect of the mind devotes itself to maintaining such control over the body and the senses that even the most excruciating tortures do not turn the “male” aspect from God. More and more, as the two aspects of the restored mind act together in harmony within each saint, it becomes apparent that in order to attain to the *virum perfectum* the saint must act like neither a man nor a woman, but rather as one who is becoming metagendered through union with God.

4. George: Nunquam Deceptus Est

The Life of St. George also brings out this same theme of rejecting cultural definitions of gender roles in favor of the new Christian construction of metagender, a construction based upon the characteristics of the mind as the *imago Dei* rather than on physical and sexual prowess or political power.⁵⁵ The Latin Life begins with a description of the diabolical emperor, Datian, and narrates how he has ordered everyone in his realm to worship his pagan idols. George does not even enter into the story until Section Five. In Ælfric's translation, however, George appears immediately, both in Ælfric's opening remarks about heretical versions of George's Life and in the first line of the Life itself. Ælfric consistently takes care in his translations to foreground the saint, even to the point of rearranging the narrative order of the text he is translating, so that the enemies of the saints will not have pride of first place in his reader's attention. George, a nobleman, possesses great wealth and holds the place of an economically, militarily, and politically powerful figure in Cappadocia.⁵⁶ When he sees the way that Datian intimidates and frightens the people into worshiping the pagan gods, however, George cannot stand quietly by:

Latin Life:

Sanctus vero Georgius aspiciens ex omnium provinciarum populis apud impium Datianum populos multos adesse Christum Dominum blasphemantes et daemones adorantes . . . omnem pecuniam, quam secum attulerat, egenis distribuit, et exuens se chlamidem terreni imperii balteo se induit et lorica fidei crucis vexillo protectus iubareque sancti Spiritus illustratus sic erupit sub conspectu Datiani imperatoris dicens: "Omnes dii gentium daemonia, Dominus autem noster caelos fecit."

Ælfric:

þa geseah se halga wer þæra hæðenra gedwyld
 hu hi ðam deoflum onsægdon and heora drihtn forsawon .
 ða aspende he his feoh unforh (*sic*) on ælmyssum
 hafen-leasum mannum þam hælende to lofe .
 and waerð þurh crist gebyld . and cwæð to ðam casere .
 Omnes dii gentium demonia . dominus autem caelos fecit .
 Ealla þæra hæðenra godas synd gramlice deofla .
 and ure drihten soðlice geworhte heofonas .⁵⁷

Up to this point, George has embodied the late Roman cultural construction of masculinity, but when he witnessed the way that Datian coerced his subjects into renouncing Christ and offering sacrifices to idols, George's masculinity turns in a different direction. Instead of leading a revolt against the emperor and seeking the throne for himself, George unexpectedly liquidates all of his wealth and distributes it to the poor around him, then removes the clothing that symbolizes his rank and power in secular society, the *chlamis* 'cloak, often purple with gold threads, worn mainly by soldiers.' This stripping of himself symbolically represents George making himself a voluntary eunuch by rejecting worldly definitions of manhood and power (in Lacanian terms, he rejects the *phallus*) and enters into the society of belief in which his gender role is redefined. The symbolism of these actions is lost in Ælfric's translation, however, for he omits the removal of the *chlamis*, focusing only on how George distributed his wealth. In fact, even in his earlier description of George Ælfric leaves out any mention of his secular military status. The Latin version shows George donning the armor of a different kind of military, the *milites Christi*, as he goes to confront Datian having donned the belt and bearing the breastplate of faith and illuminated by the radiance of the Holy Spirit. Yet Ælfric also omits this aspect

of George's transformation, noting only that the saint approached the emperor *purh crist gebyld* 'encouraged by Christ.' Ælfric's reluctance here is a mystery, for he did not hesitate to show Sebastian changing from a secular soldier to a soldier of Christ, and there is certainly a wealth of biblical support for the idea, not the least of which comes from Ephesians 6:14, wherein Paul writes, "state ergo succincti lumbos vestros in veritate et induti lorica[m] iustitiae." It is possible that Ælfric noted how the Latin hagiographer mixed up the breastplate of justice with the shield of faith from verse 16, and so omitted the passage for that reason, and yet in other instances of inaccuracies in his sources Ælfric has shown no hesitation to correct quietly the material in his own translation. Whatever his reasons for leaving out George's change of clothing, Ælfric has uncharacteristically detracted from the impact of his story by doing so.

Nevertheless, George acts boldly enough when he marches up to Datian and quotes the same verse from Psalm 95:5 that Eugenia heard the Christians singing as she began her journey of conversion in her Life.⁵⁸ The Latin of the two quotations is essentially the same, although the verse in George's Latin Life adds *noster* to the second phrase, but Ælfric omits the word from the Latin in his translation while at the same time including it in his English translation of the verse. Ælfric changes his translation slightly in another way, also, from "Ealle þære hæðenra godas syndon deofla . / and dryhten soðlice heofonas geworhte" in the Life of Eugenia to "Ealla þære hæðenra godas synd gramlice deofla . / and ure drihten soðlice geworhte heofonas" in George's Life.⁵⁹ By adding *gramlice* 'wrathful, cruel' to his translation,

Ælfric emphasizes the parallel between Datian and the devil in a way that would have been inappropriate to the context of the quotation in Eugenia's Life.

After George's announcement about Datian's pagan gods, the emperor becomes *deofollice geyrsode* 'devilishly angry' and begins to question George about his background, thus giving the saint an opportunity to state his new position in the spiritual realm:

Latin Life:

Sanctus Georgius dixit: "Christianus et Dei servus ego sum; Georgius nuncupor, genere Cappadocous, patriae meae comitatum gerens. Et hoc melius elegi temporalem huius saeculi exui dignitatis honorem immortalis Dei adherere imperio."

Ælfric:

þa andwyrde georius ðam arleasan and cwæð .
 Ic eom soðlice cristen and ic criste þeowige .
 Georius ic eom gehaten . and ic hæbbe ealdor-dom
 on minum earde . ðe is gehaten cappadocia .
 and me bet licað to forlætenne nu
 þisne hwilwendlican wurðmynt . and þæs wuldor-fullan godes
 cyne-dome gehyrsumian on haligre drohtnung .⁶⁰

George's speech, in both the Latin and Old English versions, contrasts worldly power with service to God, and clearly shows that George considers it better to serve in the kingdom of Christ than to hold authority in Datian's earthly empire. This inversion of ambition underscores the restructuring of George's desires away from self-aggrandizing temporal power and domination and toward humility and obedience to Christ. By deliberately turning his back upon temporal power and authority and taking up voluntary servitude, George behaves in a way that a secular

ruler like Datian, who is intent upon those very “traditional male pursuits” identified by Lees, can only perceive as ignorance or insanity.

Datian first gives George the benefit of the doubt, assuming that the saint acts out of ignorance: “Erras, Georgi; accede pronus et immola invictissimo deo Apollini, qui poterit tuae ignorantiae veniam condonare et sibi veridicum exhibere cultorem.”⁶¹ Datian tries to reason with George, to convince him that his loyalties are misguided. In translating Datian’s speech into Old English, Ælfric preserves Datian’s interpretation of George’s behavior: “þu dwelast geori . / genealæc nu ærest and geoffra þine lac / þam unofer-swiðendum (*sic*) apolline . seðe soþlice mæg / þinre nytennyse gemiltsian . and to his manrædene gebigan.”⁶² The Old English verb that Ælfric uses here in Datian’s speech, *dwelian* ‘lead astray, deceive, err’ is the root for the word Ælfric uses in the opening lines of George’s Life when he writes about *gedwolmen* ‘heretics, deceivers’ that have written *gedwyld* ‘heresy, deception’ in their books about George.⁶³ Ælfric promises that he will write *þæt soð is* ‘what is true’ about the saint so that none of his readers will be harmed by the *gedwyld* ‘deception’ of these erroneous legends.⁶⁴ Less than thirty-five lines later, Ælfric places the verbal form of this same word into Datian’s mouth as the emperor tells the saint that he *dwelast* ‘errs’ in his service to Christ, who died an ignominious criminal’s death on a cross, instead of worshiping the victorious Apollo.⁶⁵ Through this choice of words, Ælfric brings out the irony of the scene in which the devil-like pagan calls the saint a deceiver, a heretic, when the emperor himself is the one led astray, deceived by his own temporal, masculine ambitions and disordered desires.

George's reply, in the form of a rhetorical question, reminds Ælfric's readers again of what their greatest love is supposed to be: "Qui melius diligendus est, aut cui debemus exhibere culturam, Domino Jesu Christo Redemptori omnium saeculorum, aut Apollini omnium auctori daemoniorum?" or as Ælfric translates it, "hwæðer is to lufigenne . oððe hwam lac to offrigenne . / ðam hælende criste ealra woruldra alysend? / oppe apolline ealra deofla ealdre."⁶⁶ The readers of the Life could supply the answer from *LS* I, where Ælfric writes, "Þam men is gecyndelic þæt he lufige þæt þæt god is. Hwæt is god butan gode anum se þe is healic godnisse . butan þam ne mæg nan man nan þing godes habban."⁶⁷ Datian apparently understands which answer George expects, for *ira repletus* 'filled with anger,' or *mid deofollicum gramam* 'with devilish rage' as Ælfric puts it, the emperor orders his men to torture the saint.

The tortures that Datian commands involve George being hanged, having his flesh ripped off with iron pincers, and then having torches held to both of his sides until his inner organs could be seen through the burned flesh. Ælfric omits the description of how much George is to be burned, only translating that torches were to burn the saint's sides. Then, if George persists in his loyalty to Christ, he is to be thrown outside the city, beaten with whips, and salt rubbed into the wounds.⁶⁸ Yet after all of the torments, *corpus eius manebat illaesum* 'his body remained unhurt.'⁶⁹ George's body is preserved unharmed, like those of some of the virgin martyrs, as a demonstration of George's holiness and God's power. In this fashion, the body itself serves as the proof of sanctity just as it did in the Lives of the female saints. Datian

attributes this miracle to magic, however, and orders George to be thrown into prison. As word spread of the man who had been tortured and suffered no harm, a magician named Athanasius hears and comes to Datian, promising to do away with George's sorcery. God has other ideas, though, and when Athanasius gives George poisonous drinks the poison does George no harm. Upon seeing George still standing whole and healthy after taking the poison, the magician falls at the saint's feet in belief, asking for baptism. This scene sends Datian into a fit of rage (*deoflice wearð gram* 'became devilishly enraged'⁷⁰), in which he immediately orders the hapless new Christian to be taken outside the city and beheaded.⁷¹

For George, however, the emperor ordered an excruciating punishment: the wheel. Datian orders the saint to be tied to a wheel and to have two swords set so that, as the wheel turned, the swords would cut and rip his flesh. Here the male saint faces the possibility of emasculation in that the swords might make his spiritual status as a eunuch for the kingdom of heaven a reality in the flesh as well. Yet even as God did not require the female saints to reject their female bodies in order to achieve their sanctity, neither does God require George to renounce his male body, but rather breaks the wheel before it can do any harm and so preserves George with his male organs as well as the rest of his body intact. The next punishment, a cauldron of boiling lead, achieves no more success than the wheel did, so Datian returns to trying to persuade George with reason:

Latin Life:

"Georgi, non nescis, quantum venerabiles dii nostri pro te laborant usque nunc, ut, quae per ignorantiam eis geris, mites veniam condonent, quo

duritiam cordis tui mulceant et te sibimet lucrificiant cultorem. Hoc te itaque ut filium meum genetivum exhortor, ut amota christianorum superstitione vanissima mihi praebeas assensum; et accedens sacrificia invictissimis diis et deo magno Apollini.”

Ælfric:

Nast þu la geori þæt ure godas swincað mid þe .
and git hi synd geþyldige þæt hi þe miltsion .
Nu lære ic ðe swa swa leofne sunu .
þæt ðu þæra cristenra lare forlæte mid ealle .
and to minum ræde hraðe gebuge .
swa þæt ðu offrige þam arwurðan appolline .⁷²

Datian alternates torment with temptation, each one serving to exacerbate the effects of the other, except in George’s case there has been no real torment—he has emerged hale and whole from each attempt to inflict pain. Datian’s offer of fatherly advice and comments about the gods showing George mercy so that he might repent of following the “most empty Christian superstition” (Ælfric does not translate this phrase) are so incongruent with the circumstances that even George has to smile (*subridens*, and in Ælfric, *smearcode mid muðe* ‘smiled with his mouth’) as he answers equivocally that it is fitting to sacrifice to God.⁷³ Datian understands George’s words as a capitulation, an admission that he will worship Apollo, and so the emperor orders the idols to be decorated with gold and silver in order to make George’s apparent renunciation of Christ a highly public and festive occasion. George has no such intentions, however, but desires to do what will be most likely to bring people to belief, as his prayer indicates when he asks God to destroy the idols with fire “ut hi, qui in te futuri sunt credere, cognoscant te et credant unum solum verum Deum et quem misisti in saeculum Jesum!”⁷⁴ George prays for the destruction

of the idols not for the sake of obtaining power but for the sake of saving souls by showing them how helpless the idols are and by bringing the people to belief in God. Even in this situation he exhibits a kind of manliness at variance with the traditional concepts of the military man and the authoritative ruler in that he does not do this feat himself, but humbly asks another, God, to do it. In his dependency and his position as a suppliant, George again appears to behave more like a woman than a soldier.

Unable to tolerate defeat through the prayer of the saint, Datian orders that George be dragged through the streets face-down and then beheaded. In his final words, George thanks God, "*qui mihi contra inimici rabidam feritatem victoriam dignatus es condonare.*"⁷⁵ Ælfric expands this thought in his translation of the prayer, saying that George thanked God, "*þæt he hine gescylde wið þone swicolan deofol . / and him sige forgeaf þurh soðne geleafan.*"⁷⁶ Ælfric recapitulates the theme of deception that he set forth at the beginning of the Life, and brings together the role of Datian as a deceiving, devil-like figure and George's example of the triumph of true belief over the deceptive temptations offered literally to the saint by Datian, and figuratively to the readers by the devil himself. The saint's prayer reminds the readers of the Life that true belief will protect them from all manner of deception as long as they remain faithful.

After finishing his prayer (which includes a plea for rain in order to relieve the drought in the land), George receives the deathblow from the sword and the people of Cappadocia bury him with great honor. Datian, however, is suddenly slain by a bolt of heavenly fire as he is heading home with his companions. Ælfric adds a bit to the

final thoughts, drawing out a final contrast between Datian and George: “and he [Datian] becom to helle ærðan þe to his huse . / and se halga georius siðode to crist . / mid ðam he a wunað on wuldre.”⁷⁷ Again, Datian is aligned with the devil, this time in hell, while George attains to his greatest desire, dwelling with Christ through eternity. The contrasting ends illustrate to the readers the vanity of pursuing a secular definition of masculinity by portraying it as a sure pathway to hell, while striving toward the *virum perfectum* leads to the fulfillment of the greatest need and desire of all people (according to Ælfric), God. This metagender defines itself by a different set of relationships in a transcendent social order radically different from that of the late Roman world. Within this otherworldly society, the words of Galatians 3:28 prevail, “non est masculus neque femina omnes enim vos unum estis in Christo Iesu.”⁷⁸

5. Oswald: Rex et Famulus

The first of the royal martyrs of Anglo-Saxon England, Oswald sets an example (according to Bede) of the servant king, a man simultaneously strong and humble, a warrior and a man of prayer, a king and a subject in two different kingdoms that occupy the same time and space yet only become visible concurrently in Oswald himself.⁷⁹ In translating Oswald’s Life, Ælfric follows the same strategy that he used in his version of the Life of Æthelthryth, not only condensing Bede’s account but also rearranging the parts to provide greater narrative coherence and to foreground Oswald’s example of Christian kingship. With its emphasis on humility, the Life of

Oswald portrays a kind of kingship that exercises its secular power only with reluctance in contrast to kingship as “an institution of, by, and about power.”⁸⁰ In the Lives examined here, the men in high positions of power who have wanted to show their sanctity have done so by renouncing their secular authority because, as Clare Stancliffe notes, “In the martyrs’ acts, it is normally the secular powers which *persecute* Christians.”⁸¹ Oswald’s Life redeems the image of the secular ruler, but paradoxically does so by depicting the king as a servant.

Ælfric sets up this paradox in Oswald’s Life early on when he translates Bede’s account of Oswald’s cross and of the battle against Cædwalla. At the end of Chapter One, Bede contrasts both Oswald’s small army with Cædwalla’s very large force and Oswald’s dependence upon Christ as opposed to Cædwalla’s pride and confidence in his own strength.⁸² Ælfric maintains this contrast, but he rearranges it and uses it as a frame around the story of the raising of Oswald’s cross. He sets the scene by describing how cruelly Cædwalla treats the conquered people of Northumbria after defeating and killing Oswald’s predecessors to the throne. Then, Ælfric writes that “Oswold him com to . and him cenlice wiðfeht / mid lytlum werode . ac his geleafa hine getrymde . / and crist him gefylste to his feonda slege.”⁸³ Oswald’s dependence upon Christ for victory offsets the “manliness” of his bravery and leadership against the persecutor of the Northumbrian people and suggests that Oswald’s leadership and masculinity may be of a different kind from what one might expect of an earthly king. Ælfric then describes how Oswald raises a cross the day before the battle and calls for his company to prostrate themselves with him in prayer

to *þone ælmihtigan* ‘the Almighty’ that God in his omnipotence would save (*‘ahredde’*) them from the enemy.⁸⁴ Oswald’s prayer emphasizes the contrast between his own military weakness and the power of God to save him, his men, and his kingdom. Ælfric then reports that Oswald and his little band won the battle the next morning, “*swa swa se wealdend heom uðe . / for oswoldes geleafan . and aldon heora fynd.*”⁸⁵ No doubt remains regarding who won this battle. It is not Oswald, but God who delivers the Northumbrians from the depredations of Cædwalla. Ælfric closes the episode by framing it with Bede’s brief comment about the defeated king, “*þone modigan cedwallan . mid his micelan werode . / þe wende þæt him ne mihte nan werod wiðstandan.*”⁸⁶ The artful contrast that Bede’s narrative implies finds its most telling expression in Ælfric’s rearrangement of Bede’s material so that the humility and weakness of Oswald and his puny army in the opening thought of the episode are neatly balanced at its close against this statement of Cædwalla’s pride and the strength of his army. Ælfric even increases the sense of Cædwalla’s humiliation, making the statement ironic by placing it immediately after the description of how God carried away all of Oswald’s foes and gave the Northumbrian king and his small force the victory.

The David and Goliath parallel implicit in this incident sets the theme of godly kingship in the forefront of Oswald’s Life, in stark contrast to the focus upon renunciation of worldly power and glory in the Lives of the Roman martyrs. Such a departure from hagiographical formula could be justified by an appeal to a more authoritative ideal, none of which could be more compelling than an example from

the Bible, and none of the biblical examples speak with more force and clarity than the example of David, warrior, king, and man after God's own heart because of his humility and piety.⁸⁷ By departing from the themes of renunciation and symbolic emasculation that attempt to describe the process of becoming metagendered in the earlier Latin texts, does the Life of Oswald set up a conflicting standard of Christian manliness?

In the Latin Life, as soon as he has finished narrating some of the miracles of healing attributed to the cross that Oswald had set up before the battle, Bede describes Oswald's concern for the conversion of the people in his kingdom. The new king sends a request to the Irish that they send a bishop who might preach to and convert his people. Oswald's concern parallels the concern shown by various saints for the salvation of others through conversion; it also reflects the prevailing view that such conversions should be accomplished through persuasion rather than force. Oswald, even though he is the king, does not command his people to convert, but brings in an Irish missionary to persuade them to the faith. In translating this passage, Ælfric adds details that again draw out the implicit parallel between David and Oswald: in II Samuel 2:1, as soon as the former king of Israel, Saul, died in battle and the way cleared for David to take the throne as king, David *consuluit Dominum* 'inquired to the Lord.' In like fashion, Ælfric adds to Bede's account by writing "Hwæt ða oswold on gann . embe godes willan to smeagenne . / sona swa he rices geweald."⁸⁸ The addition of this detail moves Oswald closer to David's example and also reminds Ælfric's readers that a king like Oswald remembers that he is subject to God, rather

than trying to be his own independent authority, like God, under nobody.⁸⁹ Oswald's kingship stands in stark contrast to the kinds of rulership demonstrated by the pagan Roman emperors in the other martyrs' Lives, and Ælfric emphasizes the point by enhancing Oswald's similarity to David. This contrast, however, also redefines the kind of royal behavior that a Christian king might portray. In George's Life, the emperor Datian sought to make all of his subjects worship his gods by terrifying them into compliance, forcing them on pain of torture and death to renounce Christianity and sacrifice to idols. This sort of royal conduct, forceful, aggressive, coercing compliance when it was not given voluntarily, is consistently depicted in both the female and the male saints' Lives as an undesirable characteristic of the devil and of men with disordered minds, and is described by Augustine as a fallen, unclean (gendered) love. As such, this "traditional male" behavior uniformly receives the condemnation of the Latin and English hagiographers alike. By contrast, Oswald desires his people to worship God, but approaches the matter of conversion in a different way, wanting his people to come to faith through *gewemunge* 'persuasion,' just as Sebastian, Cecilia, and others brought many to faith by means of instruction.⁹⁰

Unlike these other saints, however, Oswald does not instruct the people in faith by himself. Instead, he acts as a translator for the Irish bishop, Aidan, but never presumes to take upon himself the role of the clergy in instructing others.⁹¹ Ælfric carefully maintains the separation between secular and ecclesiastical powers and responsibilities that Bede illustrates in his account of Oswald's life. Oswald may ask for preachers to be sent to his kingdom, but he does not himself instruct the people in

any way other than by translating Aidan's preaching. This action on Oswald's part shows him as a servant of God, receiving his words from another and passing them on to the people. In this role, Oswald plays a relatively passive part in that the instruction and ideas he translates are not his own. Oswald functions here in a subject position, as a servant of the faith rather than as king and ruler. By acting as translator, however, Oswald participates in the instruction and conversion of his people and so he can in some way receive credit for their conversion as a sign of his sanctity.

Both Bede and Ælfric give considerable space in their narratives to Aidan, the Irish missionary, and his involvement in Oswald's kingdom. Aidan fills the role in Oswald's Life that prophets such as Samuel and Nathan filled in the life of King David. Aidan balances Oswald's representation of secular Christian masculinity by being himself the example of metagender much like that demonstrated by the other male saints after they renounced their earthly dignity and authority. Bede describes Aidan as "*summae mansuetudinis et pietatis ac moderaminis uirum habentemque zelum Dei.*"⁹² Ælfric does not translate this description, but rather lifts a passage from later in Bede's Life and writes that Aidan "*wæs mæres lifes man on munuclicre drohtnunge . / and he ealle woruld-cara awearp fram his heortan / nanes þinges wilnigende butan godes willan.*"⁹³ Expecting his audience to know exactly what the exemplary monastic life entailed, Ælfric apparently felt no need to elaborate the specifics of it, but only notes the way that Aidan completely turned away from worldly concerns and desired only the things of God, thus demonstrating the rightly ordered priorities of a mind restored through belief. The first quality that Ælfric

describes in detail (also taken from a later chapter in Bede's Life) is how Aidan immediately gives away to the poor and needy anything in the way of gifts and wealth that were given to him by the king or other rich people: "Swa hwæt swa him becom of þæs cyninges gifum . / oððe ricra manna þæt he hraðe dælde . / þearfum . and wædlum . mid wellwillendum mode."⁹⁴ Aidan, then, balances the religious expression of proper desire within the same Life that addresses through Oswald the proper expression of desire within a secular context. The chief quality in the life of this Irish bishop, however, is the attention that he gives to instructing the minds of those who accompany him on his preaching journeys. While instructing the Northumbrian folk as he has opportunity, Aidan is much more structured in the way he educates his followers in the faith:

Bede:

In tantum autem uita illius a nostri temporis segnitia distabat, ut omnes qui cum eo incedebant, siue adtonsi seu laici, meditari deberent, id est aut legendis scripturis aut psalmis discendis operam dare. Hoc erat cotidianum opus illius et omnium qui cum eo erant, ubicumque locorum deuenissent.

Ælfric:

He lufode forhæfednysse . and halige rædinge .
and Iunge men teah georne mid lare .
swa þæt ealle his geferan þe him mid eodon
sceoldon sealmas leornian . oððe sume rædinge .
swa hwider swa hi ferdon . þam folce bodigende .⁹⁵

Again, both Bede and Ælfric emphasize the importance of knowing God, for one can neither recognize nor love God's goodness if one remains ignorant of it. As Augustine comments, the first need of the newly restored mind is to be instructed in the faith so that the light of knowledge and recognition of God can continually grow

and strengthen the soul back to the health of a loving relationship with God.⁹⁶ Aidan provides just the kind of instruction needed to strengthen the minds of the new Anglo-Saxon converts and of the king as well.

Both Bede and Ælfric make clear that Oswald occupies a subject position to Aidan when it comes to matters of faith:

Bede:

Huius igitur antistitis doctrina rex Oswald cum ea, cui praeerat, gente Anglorum institutus, non solum / incognita progenitoribus suis regna caelorum sperare didicit. . . . Quo regni culmine sublimatus, nihilominus (quod mirum dictu est) pauperibus et peregrinis semper humilis benignus et largus fuit.

Ælfric:

Pa wearð se cynincg oswold swiðe ælmes-georn .
and eadmod on þeawum . and on eallum þingum cystig .
and man ahrærde cyrcan on his rice geond eall .
and mynsterlice gesetnyssa mid micelre geornfulnysse .⁹⁷

Ælfric combines two different passages in his translation here: the comments on Oswald's growth in virtue under Aidan's instruction and the information about his activity in building churches and monasteries. By putting these two ideas together in this fashion at this point in his rendition of Oswald's Life, Ælfric again parallels events in the life of King David. Immediately after conquering Jerusalem and establishing himself as king, David brings the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem (paralleled by Oswald bringing the Gospel into his kingdom). As soon as the Ark is established in the royal city, David makes sacrifices and distributes gifts of food to all the people that had assembled for the event.⁹⁸ David then desires to build a temple as the resting place for the Ark of the Covenant, for up to this time the Ark has remained

in a tent. God does not actually permit David to build the temple, because the king has shed blood in war, but rather instructs David to gather the building materials so that his son, Solomon, can build the temple.⁹⁹ Similarly, once Oswald has become king and has brought a preacher of the Gospel to his kingdom, he becomes charitable and bountiful to his people, especially in terms of distributing food and alms, and then he sets about building churches and monasteries in a desire parallel to David's desire to build a temple for God. In this last parallel, however, Oswald actually builds as he desires to even though he is a warrior, whereas David was prevented because he had shed blood as a warrior.

Ælfric then expands upon the point he has just made by describing details of Oswald's distribution of food and building of the minster at York, at the same time describing how God then enlarged Oswald's kingdom and united four different peoples under him by way of blessing. The example that Ælfric translates concerning the distribution of food also involves Aidan in his role as prophet. Briefly, as the king and the bishop were observing the Easter feast together, notice came to Oswald that many poor folk from all over his kingdom had gathered in the streets. The king then ordered that the silver dish bearing the royal food be taken and distributed to the gathered people and the dish cut up and distributed likewise. Aidan, rejoicing at the king's generosity, grabbed the king's right hand and said "*Nunquam inueterescat haec manus.*"¹⁰⁰ Both Bede and Ælfric note that, true to the bishop's pronouncement, the right hand of King Oswald continued to exist without the usual process of decay,

remaining uncorrupt all the way to Ælfric's day as a sign of the generosity and benevolence of the king.¹⁰¹

Next Ælfric describes how God unites the peoples of the Picts, the Britons, the Scots, and the Angles under Oswald's rule as a sign of the king's merits in God's eyes.¹⁰² For Ælfric's purposes it does not matter that this "unity" most likely came about by means of conquest (a detail that Bede provides in a brief, passing observation regarding the land of Mercia, but that Ælfric omits), even though it parallels David's subduing of the enemies of Israel. Such unification at any time and place implies peace between the people who are united and in turn reflects upon the king as a peace-maker. By omitting how Oswald expanded his kingdom through warfare, Ælfric depicts the saint as one who fought only to defend his people and deliver them from a cruel tyrant. The omission reveals Ælfric's attitude towards war, inasmuch as it seems justifiable to him in the case of defending one's people and homeland but that he would not find war justifiable in the case of a king simply wanting to gain more territory for his own satisfaction. In this instance Ælfric deals rather disingenuously (as does Bede) with actual history for the sake of constructing an ideal of Christian royalty that excludes the expansionist ambitions that Lees associates with "traditional" masculinity. In both Bede's and Ælfric's versions of secular Christian masculinity, Oswald again plays a passive role: God unifies the four peoples (presumably through their common faith) as a reward for Oswald's merits as a saintly king *þe hine æfre wurðode* 'who always honored him.'¹⁰³

Following immediately after the description of the enlargement and unity of Oswald's kingdom, Ælfric brings to his reader's attention the fact that Oswald completed the *ænlice* 'glorious, noble, splendid' minster at York, the episcopal see of Northumbria.¹⁰⁴ In doing so, Ælfric reminds his audience again of Oswald's similarity to David concerning his desire to construct places for the worship of God.

At this point in the Old English Life, Oswald takes on the qualities more familiar to a saint. Ælfric skips several chapters of Bede's Life and then translates Bede's description of Oswald as a devout man who "*temporalis regni quondam gubernacula tenens magis pro aeterno regno semper laborare ac deprecari solebat,*" or as Ælfric succinctly puts it, "*swanc for heofonan rice mid singalum gebedum.*"¹⁰⁵ The paradoxical image of the king as a laborer, more clearly evoked by Ælfric's frank brevity than by Bede's elegance, receives added emphasis in the Old English Life because it immediately follows the description of Oswald's completion of the minster at York whereas Bede tags the comment on at the end of the story of a miracle at Oswald's tomb. The effect of Bede's use of *laborare* 'to labor' is mitigated by the fact that in the Latin version the mention of the labor follows the statement that Oswald is *cum Domino regnantis* 'reigning with the Lord,' and that his former work (done while he was alive) is never defined—though Oswald worked and prayed, whatever work he did remains undefined and nebulous, an abstract idea rather than a concrete activity.¹⁰⁶ In the Old English translation, however, Oswald *swanc* 'labored, worked' in prayer, a labor that any monastic audience especially would recognize as potentially exhausting, a labor at which even Jesus once sweated.¹⁰⁷ Moreover,

Ælfric joins the idea of Oswald's labor in prayer syntactically to his completion of the construction project at York minster, making the work of construction the first logical point and the work at prayer the second logical point of the same sentence. Again, Ælfric not only draws out and refines the thought that he finds implicit or diffused in Bede's account, he actually changes Bede's focus, creating a sharper, clearer image of Oswald as earthly king and heavenly servant, so that the entire sentence reads like this: "He fulworhte on eferwic þæt ænlice mynster / þe his mæg eadwine ær begunnon hæfde . / and he swanc for heofonan rice mid singalum gebedum . / swiþor þonne he hogode hu he geheolde on worulde / þa hwilwendlican gepincðu . þe he hwonlice lufode."¹⁰⁸ Ælfric makes no mention of Oswald ruling with God in heaven; instead he creates an image of Oswald as a servant motivated to labor for the sake of his desire for the heavenly kingdom and his disdain for temporal honors, a familiar motif from the Lives of the other male saints. Both Bede and Ælfric then proceed to describe Oswald's habit of frequently praying with his palms turned upwards before parting ways again, Bede to describe the tradition of Oswald's dying prayer and Ælfric to narrate the story of the conversion of King Cynegils of Wessex.

The conversion of Cynegils and the West Saxons does not directly add very much to the picture of Oswald. Ælfric's version, however, is more notable for what it leaves out than for what it tells. In Bede's account, a missionary sent by Pope Honorius in Rome comes to Wessex and preaches to the West Saxons. After receiving instruction from this missionary, Bishop Birinus, Cynegils converts and receives baptism. The king's sponsor at his baptism, however, is none other than

Oswald, who has come to Cynegils' kingdom for an unspecified purpose. Bede makes a point of describing the friendly relationship between the two kings in light of the fact that Oswald would later marry Cynegils' daughter.¹⁰⁹ Ælfric, however, omits this detail entirely. In fact, throughout the whole of Oswald's Life he never mentions the fact that Oswald ever married, but then even Bede only mentions it as a sort of side note in this episode of Cynegils' conversion. In all probability Ælfric declines to call attention to the marriage because Bede treats the matter only this once. Yet Bede points out that the relational bond established between the two kings by the marriage is an important element that reinforces the relational bond formed between the two kings by their mutual faith, and so Ælfric's silence with regard to the marriage may have other implications than just his penchant for condensing and abbreviating his sources. By ignoring the sexual aspect of Oswald's life, Ælfric makes the king more like a monk, one who has voluntarily, according to Jerome, become a eunuch for the kingdom of God: "tu autem perfectum te esse pollicitus es. nam cum derelicta militia castrasti te propter regnum caelorum, quid aliud quam perfectam sectatus es uitam?"¹¹⁰ Similarly, in his letter to Eustochium Jerome states, "alium eunuchum necessitas faciat, me uoluntas."¹¹¹ Only Oswald has not become a eunuch willingly—Ælfric has chosen it for him. The juxtaposition of this omission with the description of Oswald's intense life of prayer may also reveal another aspect of Ælfric's thinking, the connection between sexual abstinence and the life of prayer that Jerome makes in *Adversus Jovinianum* and Bede repeats in his commentary on I Peter:

Jubet idem Apostolus in alio loco, ut semper oremus. Si semper orandum est, numquam ergo conjugio serviendum, quoniam quotiescumque uxori debitum

reddo, orare non possum. . . . Ecce eodem sensu . . . impediri dicit orationes officio conjugali. . . . Si abstinemus nos a coitu, honorem tribuimus uxoribus: si non abstinemus, perspicuum est honori contrariam esse contumeliam.¹¹²

The scant attention that Oswald's marriage receives in Bede's work and the way in which Ælfric places the story of Cynegils' baptism next to his description of Oswald in prayer probably both influence Ælfric's decision not to mention the marriage. If so, the omission highlights an interesting aspect of Ælfric's own process of thought in crafting his translations, how ideas that are associated within monastic teachings influence the decisions he makes as translator and redactor of saints' Lives.

Yet if Bede and Ælfric touched only lightly or not at all upon the subject of the king's sexuality, neither one avoided his body altogether. As with his Lives of Hild and Æthelthryth, Bede does not provide a physical description of Oswald, nor does he depict the king engaged in any particularly "masculine endeavor" other than warfare. Instead, Bede shows Oswald building churches and monasteries, just as Hild and Æthelthryth did; devoting himself to prayer, as Hild and Æthelthryth did; participating in the Christian instruction of his people, as Hild and Æthelthryth did; and caring for the people under his rule, as did Hild and Æthelthryth. Yet the king's body also receives attention, especially his hands. In Bede's account, before his battle for the throne this king holds and steadies the cross *utraque manu* 'with each hand' while his men secure it in the ground.¹¹³ Oswald also raises his hands in prayer with Aidan before the Easter feast at which the king provides food and silver for the poor gathered at his gates. In this same scene, Aidan blesses the king's right hand because of his generosity.¹¹⁴ Later, Bede describes how Oswald prays with his hands

on his knees, palms turned upward, and how, after being slain in battle, the king's hands were hung on stakes, along with his head, as trophies of battle before being retrieved by Oswald's brother Oswiu.¹¹⁵ Most importantly, however, Bede narrates how Oswald's right hand, which had been blessed by Aidan, remains undecayed long after his death as a sign of his sanctity.¹¹⁶ The hands actually become the part of the king's body that lives out and undergoes the traditional motifs of the martyr's legend. They perform holy activities, are violently impaled and exposed to the public gaze by the heathen King Penda, and the right hand remains uncorrupt after death, finally becoming the locus of the saint's cult and the site of miraculous cures. Ælfric does not carry all of the references to Oswald's hands through into his translation, but he retains enough of them to convey the same synecdoche of martyrdom that Bede's *Life* portrays.¹¹⁷

Certain aspects of the Roman martyrs' legends do not appear in Oswald's *Life*, however. Like Æthelthryth, Oswald never undergoes any sort of temptation or torture that threatens to undermine his faith or turn him back to the pagan gods. He never debates with anyone concerning Christianity, nor does he act as the effective agent of anyone's conversion. All of Oswald's battles take place in the physical, temporal realm, he faces no demonic foes nor does he receive protection in the form of an angelic being. The unusual light that plays a part in so many saints' *Lives* graces Oswald only after his death, appearing as a sign of the king's sanctity to recalcitrant Mercian monks when Queen Osthryth translates his bones to Bardney

monastery.¹¹⁸ Neither Bede nor Ælfric leave any room to doubt Oswald's sanctity, however, for both describe many of the miracles credited to Oswald's relics.

In the Life of this saintly king, one finds a unique blend of the secular ruler with the strength and authority to defend his people from their enemies and enforce peace in a kingdom of diverse people. Yet this secular ruler is simultaneously a servant to another king in another kingdom, powerless in himself and dependent upon the strength and good will of the King of all creation. Oswald prays, gives generous alms, provides for his people's instruction in the Christian faith, and gives his life for the sake of defending his people. In all aspects pertaining to the faith, his activities resonate with those of the Anglo-Saxon holy women, Hild and Æthelthryth, except that these women instructed their followers in the faith. This aspect of a saint's activities is permitted to Oswald only vicariously as he translates for Aidan. As a man of the world and a man of God, this Northumbrian king opens the door to a new kind of masculinity, one that allows for aggression directed toward limited ends (such as defense of one's people) and allows worldly power for the purpose of establishing peace and aiding the poor.

6. Male Sanctity?

The Lives of the male martyrs studied here reveal two basic concepts of "manliness," the gendered and the metagendered.¹¹⁹ The gendered "manliness" in these accounts defines itself in terms of power, mastery over others, sexual desire,

anger, and arrogance. These characteristics belong to the “unclean” love that

Augustine describes in *De Genesi ad litteram*:

Hi duo amores—quorum alter sanctus est, alter immundus, alter socialis, alter priuatus, alter communi utilitati consulens propter supernam societatem, alter etiam rem communem in potestatem propriam redigens propter adrogantem dominationem, alter subditus, alter aemulus deo. . . . alter hoc uolens proximo quos sibi, alter subicere proximum sibi, alter propter proximi utilitatem regens proximum, alter propter suam.¹²⁰

Within the conventions of Christian hagiography, these characteristics denote the chaos and basic illness of the fallen, disordered mind, the deformed and distorted *imago Dei* in all humans who remain untouched by God’s restorative grace.

Metagender, on the other hand, defines itself in terms of rejection of secular gender roles and the pursuit of the characteristics of humility, submission, resolution, gentleness, chastity, knowledge, single-minded desire for Christ, and service to one’s neighbor. Such characteristics (the “clean” love in Augustine’s comparison) reveal a mind that is becoming metagendered, having been returned to its proper order and functions by an encounter with the transcendent that results in belief in and love for the metagendered Other, God. In each Life belief in or denial of Christianity determines whether each man behaves according to masculine gender roles or according to his reorientation towards metagender.

Given the renunciatory nature of entry into the transcendent society of God and angels, it seems that a religious calling for men requires them to deny their bodies just as much as it appears to require such a denial for women. And yet, just as with the female saints, the bodies of the male saints are often (though not always) preserved from or miraculously healed after horrendous torture and mutilation. The

bodies of the martyred men, like the bodies of the martyred women, are recovered and given honorable burials. The places occupied by their mortal remains become holy places where the saints are venerated and where their bodies, sometimes defying normal corruption, continue to affect the temporal world in otherworldly ways. In light of the care and regard given to the body of the saint in terms of its healing from injury, protection from torture, preservation from decay, and veneration after death, it would be inaccurate to say that sanctity for women or men demanded a denial of the physical body—control of physical desires, yes, but not denial of the body.

Inasmuch as the Latin Doctors and their Anglo-Saxon theological heirs believed that the mind has control over the body, the control of the physical desires belongs to the active “female” function of the mind, in Augustine’s formulation, as it is properly guided by the contemplative “male” function that is itself in submission to God. When the mind of the saint is rightly ordered by its love and desire for God and the good of others, the *imago Dei* manifests itself in holy deeds such as encouraging others, healing the infirm, persuading others into belief, humbly helping others, and maintaining purity in thought and deed. When the mind, however, turns from God to the satisfaction of the animal passions of the body, mental disorder occurs and chaos, fury, lust, and pride rule and determine the actions because the “male” aspect of the mind has lost sight of its creator and “male” and “female” aspects both abdicate their place to the bodily passions. Looking to its own body for purpose, the shattered *imago Dei* finds only the tyranny of its own physical passions run amok.

The overwhelming majority of characters in the Lives of the various saints who portray the aggressive, lustful, cruel tempters are not women, but men. The lustful, aggressive temptress appears only occasionally and momentarily in a couple of Lives; she is by no means the regular hagiographical feature that the male aggressor is. The Lives, however, draw a sharp distinction between believers and unbelievers. The unbelieving emperors, prefects, matrons, and prostitutes are not meant to portray either men as a group or women as a group, but rather fallen humanity as a whole, unhealthy in mind, driven by animal passions, unable and often unwilling to help themselves by turning back to the triune God whose shattered image they bear. The believing saints, on the other hand, also represent neither men as a category nor women as a category, but rather depict humanity restored by grace to relationship with God, reflecting the image of its Creator through love for Christ and for others. Within the transcendent society to which this restored humanity belongs, the divisions of gender characteristics begin to blur and in some ways to oppose the characteristics and roles imposed by the late antique/early medieval societies in which the saints' legends are set. The female saints shun wealth, status, and the security of a husband and substantial household; the men eschew political power, family, and wealth. Both often find themselves turning the secular powers upon their collective ears by doing so, however, and thus come to martyrdom as a result.

The categories constructed in both the Latin Lives and Ælfric's Old English translations are constructed upon the lines of belief and unbelief rather than upon gender, yet gender plays a key role in constructing the believing saint. Its role is

unexpected and oppositional, however, for the metagendered aspect of female sanctity opposes the secular social roles of wife and mother for a kind of mental masculinity that recognizes and believes in God and exercises strength of will in the resistance of temptation and the maintenance of chastity. The metagendered aspect of male sanctity also opposes the secular social expectations placed upon men for political advancement and the exercise of force, replacing them with a sort of mental femininity that submits to others, exercises compassion, and becomes physically passive and vulnerable to domination. The role of belief is crucial to the formation of such restructured gender characteristics in the Lives of both male and female saints, however, because the saints seek to pattern themselves after Christ, the relational object of their desires, and Christ as he is portrayed in the Gospels possesses all of these qualities in his role as the God-man, the incarnate deity seeking to restore a fallen, alienated, gendered humanity to relationship with the transcendent, metagendered Other for which it was created. It is for this reason and in this sense that the Apostle Paul could write:

omnes enim filii Dei estis per fidem
in Christo Iesu
quicumque enim in Christo baptizati
estis Christum induitis
non est Iudaeus neque Graecus
non est servus neque liber
non est masculus neque femina
omnes enim vos unum estis in
Christo Iesu¹²¹

ENDNOTES

Notes to Introduction

¹ For some idea of the breadth of recent research on women in the Middle Ages, see *Feminae: Medieval Women and Gender Index* (formerly *Medieval Feminist Index*) online at www.haverford.edu/library/reference/mschaus/mfi/mfi.html. Though still in a growing stage, *Feminae* brings together information from over three hundred journals in five languages and illustrates the explosion of interest in researching women in the Middle Ages over the past ten years.

¹ Judith M. Bennett, "Medievalism and Feminism," *Speculum* 68 (1993): 309–31.

² Christine Fell, *Women in Anglo-Saxon England and the Impact of 1066* (New York: Blackwell, 1984), 21.

³ Helen Damico, *Beowulf's Wealhtheow and the Valkyrie Tradition* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1984).

⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁵ Roberta Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture: The Archaeology of Religious Women* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 190.

⁶ Carol Neuman de Vegvar, "Saints and Companions to Saints: Anglo-Saxon Royal Women Monastics in Context," in *Holy Men and Holy Women: Old English Prose Saints' Lives and Their Contexts*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach, SUNY Series in Medieval Studies (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996), 51–93, at 68.

⁷ Stephanie Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church: Sharing a Common Fate* (Rochester, NY: Boydell, 1992), 3.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 11–12. See also her comments on Bede's *Life of Cuthbert*, 207.

⁹ Jane Chance, *Woman as Hero in Old English Literature* (Syracuse: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1986), xiv.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, xiv.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, xvii.

¹² *Ibid.*, 58.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁴ Clare A. Lees and Gillian R. Overing, *Double Agents: Women and Clerical Culture in Anglo-Saxon England*, The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 4–5.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

- ¹⁶ Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg, "Saints' Lives as a Source for the History of Women, 500 – 1100," in *Medieval Women and the Sources of Medieval History*, ed. Joel T. Rosenthal (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1990), 285–320, at 285.
- ¹⁷ Ferdinand Lot, *The End of the Ancient World and the Beginnings of the Middle Ages*, trans. Philip Leon and Mariette Leon (1931; repr. New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 162–63, quoted in Schulenburg, "Saints' Lives as a Source," 301.
- ¹⁸ Thomas D. Hill, "Imago Dei: Genre, Symbolism, and Anglo-Saxon Hagiography," in Szarmach, ed., *Holy Men and Holy Women*, 35–50, at 43.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., 36. Primary saints' Lives are those Lives written to prove the sanctity of their candidates; secondary Lives repeat the stories of already established saints.
- ²⁰ Felice Lifshitz, "Beyond Positivism and Genre: 'Hagiographical' Texts as Historical Narrative," *Viator* 25 (1994): 95–113, at 95.
- ²¹ T. D. Hill, "Imago Dei," 36–38.
- ²² Ruth Waterhouse, "Discourse and Hypersignification in Two of Ælfric's Saints' Lives," in Szarmach, ed., *Holy Men and Holy Women*, 333–52.
- ²³ *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, ed. Walter W. Skeat, 4 vols., EETS, o.s., 76, 82, 94 and 114 (1881–1900; reprint, 4 vols. in 2, London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966).
- ²⁴ Joyce Hill, "The Dissemination of Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*: A Preliminary Survey," in Szarmach, ed., *Holy Men and Holy Women*, 235–59, at 236.
- ²⁵ There are four Lives of native English saints in Ælfric's collection, and one of these is a woman, Æthelthryth. (If the Life of Alban, a British saint, is counted, then there are five Lives of saints from the island of Britain, but they are not all English.)
- ²⁶ *Ælfric's Prefaces*, ed. Jonathan Wilcox, Durham Medieval Texts, 9 (Durham: Durham Medieval Texts, 1994), 120. "the monks honor among themselves with their services" Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Old English are mine.
- ²⁷ J. Hill, "Dissemination," 248. See also Jonathan Wilcox's comments about Æthelweard's and Æthelmær's education and many requests that Ælfric translate Latin works into English for them in the introduction to *Ælfric's Prefaces*, 9 and 12–13.
- ²⁸ See Clare A. Lees, *Tradition and Belief: Religious Writing in Late Anglo-Saxon England* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1999); Clare A. Lees, "Engendering Religious Desire: Sex, Knowledge, and Christian Identity in Anglo-Saxon England," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 27.1 (1997): 17–45; Clare A. Lees and Gillian R. Overing, "Before History, Before Difference: Bodies, Metaphor, and the Church in Anglo-Saxon England," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 11.2 (1998): 315–34; Shari Horner, "The Violence of Exegesis: Reading the Bodies of Ælfric's Female Saints," in *Violence Against Women in Medieval Texts*, ed. Anna Roberts (Gainesville: Univ. Press of Florida, 1998), 22–43; Stacy S. Klein, "Ælfric's Sources and His Gendered Audiences," *Essays in Medieval Studies* 13 (1996): 111–19; and Mary Clayton, "Ælfric's Judith: Manipulative or Manipulated?" *Anglo-Saxon England* 23 (1994): 215–27.

²⁹ See, for example, Chance, *Woman as Hero*, 53–58; Paul E. Szarmach, “St. Euphrosyne: Holy Transvestite,” in Szarmach, ed., *Holy Men and Holy Women*, 353–65, at 354–55; and Gopa Roy, “A Virgin Acts Manfully: Ælfric’s *Life of St. Eugenia* and the Latin Versions,” *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s., 23 (1992): 1–27, at 12–13.

³⁰ Klein, “Ælfric’s Sources,” 111, and Clayton, “Ælfric’s Judith,” 217.

³¹ Judith Bennett, “Medievalism and Feminism,” 319. Bennett actually refers to the feminist challenge as a “threat” and an “assault” on traditional scholarship. See also the editors’ Introduction in Helen Damico and Alexandra Hennessey Olsen, ed., *New Readings on Women in Old English* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana Univ. Press, 1990), 6. Damico and Olsen also use the language of “attack.”

³² Clare A. Lees, “Working with Patristic Sources: Language and Context in Old English Homilies,” in *Speaking Two Languages: Traditional Disciplines and Contemporary Theories in Medieval Studies*, ed. Allen J. Frantzen (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991), 157–80, at 161. Yet “traditional” scholars had addressed theoretical matters prior to 1991: see James E. Cross “Identification: Towards Criticism,” in *Modes of Interpretation in Old English Literature: Essays in Honor of Stanley B. Greenfield*, ed. Phyllis Rugg Brown, Georgia Ronan Crampton, and Fred C. Robinson (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1986); J. R. de J. Jackson, *Historical Criticism and the Meaning of Texts* (New York: Routledge, 1989); and Thomas D Hill, introduction to *Sources of Anglo-Saxon Literary Culture: A Trial Version*, ed. Frederick M. Biggs, Thomas D. Hill, and Paul E. Szarmach, *Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies* (Binghamton, NY: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, SUNY at Binghamton, 1990), xv–xxix. More recently, Katherine O’Brien O’Keeffe has addressed theoretical issues in her 1993 Toller Lecture, subsequently published as “Source, Method, Theory, Practice: On Reading Two Old English Verse Texts,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 76.1 (Spring 1994): 51–73, and newly reprinted in *Textual and Material Culture in Anglo-Saxon England: Thomas Northcote Toller and the Toller Memorial Lectures*, ed. Donald G. Scragg, Publications of the Manchester Centre for Anglo-Saxon Studies, 1 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), 161–81. O’Brien O’Keeffe has also edited a volume devoted to theoretical and methodological approaches to Anglo-Saxon texts, *Reading Old English Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997). See also the comments by Damico and Olsen in their introduction, in *New Readings on Women in Old English Literature*, 12–15. Such methodological and theoretical challenges by feminist scholars have not always been given nor received with grace, as some feminist scholars have not just challenged but rejected traditional approaches outright, at times even calling them bad scholarship. See Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture*, 4. “Traditional” scholars have sometimes returned the accusations in kind, though not always in print, as J. Bennett points out in “Medievalism,” 315–16.

³³ Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture*, 4.

³⁴ Lees, “Patristic Sources,” 165.

³⁵ J. Bennett, “Medievalism and Feminism,” 319.

³⁶ Lees, “Patristic Sources,” 161.

³⁷ For example, see Leslie A. Donovan, trans., *Women Saints’ Lives in Old English Prose*, Library of Medieval Women (Rochester, NY: Boydell and Brewer, 1999), especially pp. 121–34; and Anita R. Riedinger, “The Englishing of Arcestrate: Woman in *Apollonius of Tyre*,” in Damico and Olsen, ed., *New Readings on Women in Old English Literature*, 292–306. Gillian Clark addresses this problem also in her introduction to *Women in Late Antiquity: Pagan and Christian Lifestyles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 3–4.

- ³⁸ J. Bennett, "Medievalism and Feminism," 320–21 n. 38.
- ³⁹ Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture*, 5.
- ⁴⁰ Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*, 6.
- ⁴¹ Helen T. Bennett, Clare A. Lees, and Gillian R. Overing. "Gender and Power: Feminism and Old English Studies," *Medieval Feminist Newsletter* 10 (1990): 15–23, at 15.
- ⁴² On the importance of factoring belief into discussions of past cultures, see Lees and Overing, "Before History," 317 and Lees, *Tradition and Belief*, 1–18. While I might not agree with the methodology by which Lees and Overing factor belief into their analyses, their point—that any analysis of Anglo-Saxon religious prose ought to consider the way in which belief influenced both writer and audience—is important and timely.
- ⁴³ Lees and Overing, "Before History," 317.
- ⁴⁴ Lees, *Tradition*, 137.
- ⁴⁵ Lees, "Patristic Sources," 165.
- ⁴⁶ See, for example, Ælfric's comments in "Natiuitas Domini nostri Iesu Christi," in Skeat, *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, I.16.88–96.
- ⁴⁷ Klein, "Ælfric's Sources," 116–17; Lees, *Tradition*, 153; Clayton, "Ælfric's Judith," 225.
- ⁴⁸ Dick Harrison, *Age of Abbesses and Queens: Gender and Political Culture in Early Medieval Europe* (Lund, Sweden: Nordic Academic Press, 1998), 34.
- ⁴⁹ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Women and Redemption: A Theological History* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 8. See also Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (New York: Random House, 1988) and *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Random House, 1979).
- ⁵⁰ John Kitchen, *Saints' Lives and the Rhetoric of Gender: Male and Female in Merovingian Hagiography* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1998), 12.
- ⁵¹ J. R. de J. Jackson, *Historical Criticism and the Meaning of Texts* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 3.
- ⁵² See O'Brien O'Keeffe's introduction to *Reading Old English Texts*, 1–19, at 1–8.
- ⁵³ Paul E. Szarmach, "Ælfric and the Problem of Women," in *Essays on Anglo-Saxon and Related Themes in Memory of Lynne Grundy*, ed. Jane Roberts and Janet Nelson, *King's College London Medieval Studies* 17 (London: Centre for Late Antique & Medieval Studies, 2000), 571–90, at 572.
- ⁵⁴ James Boyd White, *How Should We Talk About Religion? Inwardness, Particularity, and Translation*, Occasional Papers of the Erasmus Institute, 2001 series, 1 (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 7.
- ⁵⁵ Jackson, *Historical Criticism*, 71.
- ⁵⁶ Ruth Waterhouse, "Discourse and Hypersignification," 338.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 340.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 349.

⁵⁹ Peter Clemoes, "Ælfric," in *Continuations and Beginnings: Studies in Old English Literature*, ed. Eric Gerald Stanley (London: Nelson, 1966), 176–209, at 182–83; James Hurt, *Ælfric*, Twayne's English Authors Series, 131 (New York: Twayne, 1972), 92.

⁶⁰ See Ambrose, "Paradise," in *St. Ambrose: Creation, Paradise, Cain and Abel*, trans. John J. Savage, The Fathers of the Church, vol. 42 (New York: The Fathers of the Church, 1961), 287–356, at 2.11, and Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill, OP, The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Part I—Books, vol. 5 (New York: New City Press, 1991), at 12.20.

⁶¹ Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1988), and Dyan Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1993).

⁶² Milton McC. Gatch, *Preaching and Theology in Anglo-Saxon England: Ælfric and Wulfstan* (Buffalo: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1977), 64.

⁶³ Hurt, *Ælfric*, 82.

⁶⁴ Gatch, *Preaching and Theology*, 4.

⁶⁵ Mary Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, 2 (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990), 265.

⁶⁶ Gatch, *Preaching and Theology*, 64.

⁶⁷ Chance, *Woman as Hero*, 57–58; Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*, 156; Thelma S. Fenster and Clare A. Lees, introduction to *Gender in Debate from the Early Middle Ages to the Renaissance*, ed. Thelma S. Fenster and Clare A. Lees, The New Middle Ages Series (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 7.

⁶⁸ Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture*, 15.

⁶⁹ Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*, 1; Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture*, 15; Donovan, *Women Saints' Lives in Old English Prose*, 15. See also E. Ann Matter, "The Undebated Debate: Gender and the Image of God in Medieval Theology," in Fenster and Lees, *Gender in Debate*, 41–55, at 43.

Notes to The Sins of the Fathers

¹ Stephanie Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church: Sharing a Common Fate* (Rochester, NY: Boydell, 1992), 3. See also Alain Renou, "Eve's I.Q. Rating: Two Sexist Views of *Genesis B*," in *New Readings on Women in Old English Literature*, ed. Helen Damico and Alexandra Hennessey Olsen (Bloomington, IN: Indiana Univ. Press, 1990), 262–72, at 262; Clare A. Lees and Gillian R. Overing, "The Clerics and the Critics: Misogyny and the Social Symbolic in Anglo-Saxon England," in *Gender in Debate from the Early Middle Ages to the Renaissance*, ed. Thelma S. Fenster and Clare

A. Lees, *The New Middle Ages Series* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 20–35, at 35; R. Howard Bloch, introduction to *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1991), 1–11; Mary Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex, With the Feminist Postchristian Introduction and New Archaic Afterwords by the Author* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), 84–98; Jane Chance, introduction to *Gender and Text in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Jane Chance (Gainesville, FL: Univ. Press of Florida, 1996), 4; Catherine M. Mooney, “Voice, Gender, and the Portrayal of Sanctity,” in *Gendered Voices: Medieval Saints and Their Interpreters*, ed. Catherine M. Mooney (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 3. See also the comments under “Religion” in *A Glossary of Feminist Theory*, ed. Sonya Andermahr, Terry Lovell, and Carol Wolkowitz (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000), 231–32. Some additional instances will be adduced below.

² See, for example, Stacy S. Klein, “Ælfric’s Sources and His Gendered Audiences,” *Essays in Medieval Studies* 13 (1996): 111–19, at 116; Joyce E. Salisbury, *Church Fathers, Independent Virgins* (London: Verso, 1991), 5; Kim Power, *Veiled Desire: Augustine on Women* (New York: Continuum, 1996), 238–39; Phillip Pulsiano, “Blessed Bodies: The Vitae of Anglo-Saxon Female Saints,” *Parergon* (1999): 1–42, at 14; and Jane Barr, “The Vulgate Genesis and St. Jerome’s Attitudes to Women,” in *Equally in God’s Image: Women in the Middle Ages*, ed. Julia Bolton Holloway, Constance S. Wright, and Joan Bechtold (New York: Peter Lang Publ., 1990), 122–28, at 122.

³ See Bernhard Bischoff, “Die Kölner Nonnenhandschriften und das Skriptorium von Chelles,” *Mittelalterliche Studien* 1 (1965): 17–35; Gillian Cloke, *‘This Female Man of God’: Women and Spiritual Power in the Patristic Age, AD 350–450* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 16; and Rosamond McKitterick, “Nuns’ Scriptoria in England and Francia in the Eighth Century,” in *Books, Scribes and Learning in the Frankish Kingdoms, 6th – 9th Centuries*, Variorum Collected Studies Series, CS452 (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1994), VII.1–35. (This book is a Variorum collection of reprints and therefore does not have consecutive pagination.) McKitterick says of the nuns’ scriptorium at Chelles: “The quality of the texts copied is high; these scribes were competent, and understood what they were copying. The implications of the high quality of the texts, all main-line patristic writings or authoritative texts of the Christian church, are that we are dealing with well-educated scribes, who are as well-equipped intellectually as any other copyists we can identify from the eighth and ninth centuries.” McKitterick, “Women and Literacy in the Early Middle Ages,” in *Books, Scribes and Learning*, XIII.4 – 22, at 4. From Eugippius’ prologue to his voluminous collection of excerpts from the major works of Augustine, we know that the nun, Proba, kept an extensive collection of Augustine’s works, which she allowed Eugippius to use to make his collection. This collection itself became very popular despite that fact that it must have been quite expensive to produce. *Eugippii Excerpta ex operibus sancti Augustini*, ed. Pius Knoell, CSEL, 9 part 1 (1885; reprint, New York: Johnson Reprint, 1967), 1. Also cf. David Hurst, trans., introduction to *Bede the Venerable: Excerpts from the Works of Saint Augustine on the Letters of the Blessed Apostle Paul*, Cistercian Studies Series, 183 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1999), 8; Michael M. Gorman, “The Manuscript Traditions of St. Augustine’s Major Works,” *Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum*, vol. 24 (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1987), 381–412, at 389.

¹ See notes 1 and 2. There are other feminist scholars, such as Kari Børresen and Rosemary Radford Ruether, who, while still seeing Augustine especially as laying the groundwork for medieval “misogyny,” have more nuanced perspectives that acknowledge the diversity of Christian thought on the issue of gender up to the time of Augustine. Even Ruether, however, in her latest book, *Women and Redemption: A Theological History* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1998), leaves blank in her history the entire period of the early Middle Ages, jumping from Augustine to the twelfth-century female mystics.

² Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*, 2 and 8.

³ See notes 1 and 2 above.

⁴ Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture*, 15.

⁵ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Women and Redemption*; Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1988).

⁶ See the works of Ruether and Brown above; see also Joyce E. Salisbury, *Church Fathers, Independent Virgins* (New York: Verso, 1991); Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* (New York: Random House, 1988); Kim Power, *Veiled Desire: Augustine on Women* (New York: Continuum, 1996; and Dyan Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1993).

⁷ Power, *Veiled Women*, 36–38.

⁸ See Ruether's discussion of Origen's theology of the Fall in *Women and Redemption*, 60–62.

⁹ See Ruether, *Women and Redemption*, 2. The teaching that angels have no sex is extrapolated from Matthew 22:29–30, and is specifically mentioned by Jerome in "Contra Rufinum": "Et reuera ubi inter uirum et feminam castitas est, nec uir incipit esse, nec femina, sed adhuc in corpore positi, mutantur in angelos, in quibus non est uir et mulier." Jerome, "Contra Rufinum," in *S. Hieronymi Presbyteri Opera, Pars III, 1* ed. P. Lardet, CCL, 79 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1982), §29. "And as a matter of fact, when chastity is observed between husband and wife, the state is such that there begins to be neither male nor female, but, while still living in the body, they are being changed into angels, among whom there is neither male nor female." Jerome, "Against Rufinus," in *Saint Jerome: Dogmatic and Polemical Works*, trans. John N. Hritz, The Fathers of the Church, 53 (Washington D.C.: Catholic Univ. of America Press, 1965), §29, p. 98.

¹⁰ In "Contra Rufinum" Jerome preserves the only fragment in Latin now remaining of Origen's commentary on Ephesians. In this fragment, Origen explicitly teaches the absence of sex in angels and the nullification of sexes that he believed would come about as bodies were turned into souls through holy and chaste living. Jerome, "Contra Rufinum," §28. (Jerome was attacked by Rufinus for propagating Origen's controversial teachings in his own commentaries. Jerome wrote "Contra Rufinum" in an attempt to prove his own orthodoxy and distance himself from Origen.)

¹¹ Ruether, *Women and Redemption*, 60–62.

¹² Galatians 3:26–28. "You are all truly children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Whoever certainly has been baptized into Christ, you are clothed with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female: you are all truly one in Christ Jesus."

¹³ Based on the "baptismal formula" in St. Paul's epistle to the Galatians 3:28. See Ruether, *Women and Redemption*, 29–31; Power, *Veiled Desire*, 54; and Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Random House, 1979), 61. This idea seems to have been explicitly developed among the Gnostic groups and the idea of women becoming "men" in the sense of becoming spiritual or divine instead of merely human figures prominently in some of the Gnostic writings such as the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Gospel of Mary*. See Pagels, *Gnostic Gospels*, 67.

¹⁴ Alcuin Blamires, ed., *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended: An Anthology of Medieval Texts* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1992), 63–64. Jovinian was later excommunicated for his views.

- ¹⁵ John Oppel, "Saint Jerome and the History of Sex," *Viator* 24 (1993): 1-22, at p. 6.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.
- ¹⁷ Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum* I.48; *PL*, 23.292. "wives stand on the border line of good and ill." Jerome, "Against Jovinian," in *St. Jerome: Letters and Selected Works*, A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series, 6 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), I.48.
- ¹⁸ Brown, *Body and Society*, 377.
- ¹⁹ Jerome's disdain for marriage and exaltation of virginity need not be interpreted as either hatred of women (misogyny) or even hatred of marriage (misogamy). He uses every rhetorical weapon in his arsenal to convince his audience that marriage, while honorable and allowed by God, is an uncertain, enslaving, and spiritually stunting state for both men and women *in comparison to the freedom of virginity*.
- ²⁰ Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, I.29; *PL*, 23.251. "by our own fault we have fallen to a worse condition; and that which in Paradise had been upright, when we left Paradise was corrupt." Jerome, "Against Jovinian," I.29.
- ²¹ Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, II.15. In this section, Jerome is making the case for a parallel between fasting and virginity, noting that while he abstained from the forbidden fruit Adam lived a virgin in Paradise, but after eating the fruit and being exiled from Paradise, Adam married.
- ²² Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, I.27; *PL* 23.248. "and that the lot of a woman might not seem a hard one, reducing her to the condition of a slave to her husband, the Apostle recalls the ancient law" Jerome, "Against Jovinian," I.27.
- ²³ Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, I.27.
- ²⁴ Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, I.49; *PL* 23.282. "The virtue of woman is, in a special sense, purity. It was this that made Lucretia the equal of Brutus, if it did not make her his superior, since Brutus learnt from a woman the impossibility of being a slave." Jerome, "Against Jovinian," I.49.
- ²⁵ Gillian Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity: Pagan and Christian Lifestyles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 28-38. A summary of the double standard for adultery (found on page 29) provides a good example: "A married woman was an adulteress if she had any male sexual partner other than her husband; whereas a man was an adulterer, whether or not he was himself married, only if his partner was a married woman."
- ²⁶ Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, I.35. "In every grade, and in both sexes, chastity has the chief place." Jerome, "Against Jovinian," I.35.
- ²⁷ Jerome, "Epistola LXXVII, Ad Oceanum de morte Fabiolae," in *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Opera (Sect. I Pars II), Epistularum Pars II: Epistulae LXXI-CXX*, ed. Isidore Hilberg, CSEL, 55 (Vienna: Tempusky, 1912), §3. "It is true, the laws of Caesar are different from the laws of Christ: Papinianus commands one thing, our own St. Paul another. Earthly laws give free reign to the promiscuity of men, merely condemning seduction and adultery; lust is allowed to range unrestrained among brothels and slave girls, as if the guilt were constituted by the rank of the person assailed and not by the purpose of the assailant. But with us Christians what is unlawful for women is equally unlawful for men, and as both serve the same God, both are bound by the same obligations." Jerome, "Letter 77, to Oceanus," in

The Principal Works of St. Jerome, trans. W. H. Fremantle, Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, 6 (1893; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 158.

²⁸ Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, I.28; *PL*, 23.262. "See how a wife is classed with the greatest evils. But if you reply that it is an odious wife, I will give you the same answer as before—the mere possibility of such danger is in itself no light matter. For he who marries a wife is uncertain whether he is marrying an odious woman or one worthy of his love. If she be odious, she is intolerable. If worthy of love, her love is compared to the grave, to the parched earth, and to fire." Jerome, "Against Jovinian," I.28.

²⁹ Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, I.23. In this section, Jerome denies that marriage deserves censure, calling such condemnation the error of the Encratites. Nevertheless, he insists that virginity is more virtuous than marriage.

³⁰ Jerome, "On the Perpetual Virginity of the Blessed Mary Against Helvidius," in *Saint Jerome: Dogmatic and Polemical Works*, trans. John N. Hritz, The Fathers of the Church, 53 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Univ. of America Press, 1965), §20; and Jerome, "Epistula XXII, Ad Eustochium," in *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulae, Pars I: Epistulae I–LXX*, ed. Isidore Hilberg, CSEL, 54 (Vienna: Tempsky, 1910), §2.

³¹ Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, I.13.

³² Jerome, *Adversus Helvidium* §20; *PL* 23.204. "'It has ceased to be with Sara,' says Scripture, 'after the manner of women,' [Gen. 18:11] and thereupon it is said to Abraham: 'In all that Sara says to thee, hearken to her voice.' [Gen. 21:12] She who is no longer subject to the anxieties and pain of childbirth, she who has ceased to be a married woman with the cessation of the function of the menstrual blood, is freed from the curse of God. Nor is she placed under the power of her husband, but, on the contrary, her husband is made subject to her, and he is commanded by the word of God: 'In all that Sara says to thee, hearken to her voice.' And then they begin to have time for prayer; for as long as they discharge the obligations of marriage, they pass up the opportunities of prayer." Jerome, "Helvidius," §20.

³³ Jerome, "Ad Eustochium," §18. "You must not be subject to the sentence whereby condemnation was passed upon mankind: 'In pain and in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children.' Say to yourself: 'That is a Law for a married woman, but not for me.' 'And thy desire shall be to thy husband.' Say to yourself: 'Let her desire be to her husband who has not a husband in Christ;' and at the last 'Thou shalt surely die.' Say once more: 'Death is the end of marriage. But my vows are independent of sex. Let married women keep to their own place and title: for me virginity is consecrated in the persons of Mary and of Christ.'" Jerome, "Letter XXII, To Eustochium," in *Select Letters of St. Jerome*, ed. and trans. F. A. Wright, The Loeb Classical Library, 262 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 91.

³⁴ Jerome, *Commentariorum in epistolam ad Ephesios libri tres*, *PL* 26, 533C. "As long as woman devotes herself to birth and children, she is different from man as body is from soul. But when she wishes to devote herself to Christ more than to the world, then she will cease to be a woman and will be called man, because we all desire 'to meet into a perfect man.'" This translation is adapted from Mary Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), p. 43.

³⁵ Joyce E. Salisbury, *Church Fathers, Independent Virgins* (New York: Verso, 1991), 26. Salisbury's interpretation seems to be grounded more in late medieval antifeminist interpretations of Jerome than in what he actually said in his works.

³⁶ Gregory the Great, *S. Gregorii Magni Moralia in Iob, Libri XI – XXII*, ed. Marcus Adriaen, CCSL, 143A (Turnholt: Brepols, 1979), Bk. XI, XLIX.65, p. 623. “In Sacred Writ ‘woman’ is taken either for the sex, or else for ‘frailty’. . . . For ‘a man’ is the term for every stongminded and discreet person, but ‘a woman’ is understood for the weak or indiscreet mind.” *Morals on the Book of Job*, trans. J. Bliss, in *A Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church*, 3 vols. (Oxford: 1844-50), II, 40. For another commentary upon this passage from the *Moralia*, see Gopa Roy, “A Virgin Acts Manfully: Ælfric’s *Life of St Eugenia* and the Latin Versions,” *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s., 23 (1992): 1–27, at 5–6. Regarding the weakness that was associated with women in the late antique era, Gillian Clark observes “Women, it was thought, were physically hampered by lack of strength and especially by child-bearing.” Gillian Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity: Pagan and Christian Lifestyles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 56. Similar thoughts about the female body still find expression in feminist theory, as these remarks concerning the female reproductive body suggest: “These corporealities of women may be seen as making us vulnerable to male domination and control, both directly through the exercise of superior physical power, and indirectly through social compulsions . . .” *A Glossary of Feminist Theory*, ed. Andermahr, Lovell, and Wolkowitz, 25. As Gregory’s use of the idea here suggests, this physical weakness was often used as a metaphor for various other kinds of weakness that did not necessarily have anything to do with being female, weaknesses that could be found in both men and women.

³⁷ Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity*, 56. It is not my purpose here to discuss the competing medical explanations for “femaleness,” including the idea that women were imperfect men because of a lack of warmth while they were growing in the womb, that were circulating in the latter part of the fourth century CE. The medical opinions and their influence on Christian theology, especially in relation to the creation of Eve from Adam and the contrary ideas of God’s perfect creation of woman versus woman as an “imperfect man” need a more nuanced investigation than can be provided here. For basic discussion of the matter that briefly describes the contrast between the views of Aristotle, Soranus, and the Hippocratic writings and the later views of Galen and Nemesius of Emesa, see Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity*, 70–73. For more expansive treatment of late Roman medical ideas about women, see Rebecca Flemming, *Medicine and the Making of Roman Women: Gender, Nature, and Authority from Celsus to Galen* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000).

³⁸ Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, I.36; PL 23.261B. “we rise from the dead in our own sex” Jerome, “Against Jovinian,” I.36. See also *Contra Rufinum* I.29 and *Epistula ad Eustochium*, §27.

³⁹ Augustine, *Confessionum Libri XIII*, ed. Lucas Verheijen, CCSL, 27 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1981), VII.xvii.23. “And then my mind attended to *That Which Is*, in the flash of one tremulous glance. Then indeed did I perceive your invisible reality through created things, but to keep my gaze there was beyond my strength. I was forced back through weakness and returned to my familiar surroundings, bearing with me only a loving memory, one that yearned for something of which I had caught the fragrance, but could not yet feast upon.” Augustine, *The Confessions*, trans. Maria Boulding, OSB (New York: New City Press, 1997), VII.23 [17].

⁴⁰ James Strong, *The New Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publ., 1990), s.v. “man,” and Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, Sir Henry Stuart Jones, and Roderick McKenzie, ed., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, rev. and aug. with rev. suppl. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), s.v. “άνήρ” and “άνθρωπος.”

⁴¹ Jerome, “Ad Heliodorum monachum,” §6. “You promised to be perfect. When you gave up the army and made yourself an eunuch for the kingdom of heaven’s sake, what other purpose had you in view save the perfect life?” Jerome, “Letter XIV, To Heliodorus,” in Wright, *Select Letters of St. Jerome*, p. 41.

⁴² Jerome, "Ad Eustochium," §19. "Some men may be eunuchs of necessity; I am one by choice." Jerome, "Letter XXII," p. 93.

⁴³ Origen's teachings were condemned as heretical during Jerome's lifetime. See note 10 above.

⁴⁴ Jerome, "Contra Rufinum," §29. (See note 9 above for the quotation and translation.)

⁴⁵ Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity*, 50–51. Apparently those who continued to live as *caelibes* 'unmarried' were legally classified as such and because the classification was attended by legal penalties regarding inheritance, it carried a social stigma. When Constantine released men from this form of social and legal pressure, he released women as well.

⁴⁶ Matthew 19:11–12. "to whom he said, 'Not all accept this saying but [those] to whom it has been given: Some certainly are eunuchs who were born thus from the womb of their mother, and some are eunuchs who have been made such by men, and some are eunuchs who have castrated themselves because of the kingdom of heaven. Let him who is able to accept [this] accept [it].'"

⁴⁷ Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, I.36; *PL* 23.260C–D and 261B. "What does our Lord mean when He instructs us in the various kinds of eunuchs? Surely the Apostle who bids us emulate his own chastity, must be asked, if we are to be consistent, Why are you like other men, Paul? [Literally: Why do you have private parts, Paul?] Why are you distinguished from the female sex by a beard, hair, and other peculiarities of person? How is it that you have not swelling bosoms, and are not broad at the hips, narrow at the chest? Your voice is rugged, your speech rough, your eyebrows more shaggy. To no purpose you have all these manly qualities, if you forego the embraces of women. . . . What others will be in heaven, that virgins begin to be on earth. If likeness to the angels is promised us (and there is no difference in sex among the angels), we shall either be of no sex as are the angels, or at all events which is clearly proved, though we rise from the dead in our own sex, we shall not perform the functions of sex." Jerome, "Against Jovinian," I.36.

⁴⁸ Jerome, "Hebraicae Quaestiones in Libro Geneseos," in *S. Hieronymi Presbyteri Opera, Pars I, Opera Exegetica*, CCL, vol. 72 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1959). "In Greek and Latin it does not seem to make sense why she should be called woman because she was taken from man; but in the Hebrew language the *etymology* [derivation of the word] is observed, since man is called *is* and woman *issa*. Therefore woman is rightly called *issa*, as from *is*. . . . In Latin we can express it as: 'This one shall be called *virago*, because she was taken from *vir*.'" Jerome, *St. Jerome's Hebrew Questions on Genesis*, trans. C. T. R. Hayward (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 32. Jerome does not provide the Hebrew characters for his *וְיָצָא* and *הִסָּא וְיָצָא*. Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, ed., *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), s.v. "וְיָצָא" and "וְיָצָא."

⁴⁹ According to *A Latin Dictionary*, s.v. "virago" 'a man-like, vigorous, heroic maiden, a female warrior, heroine.' Lewis and Short demonstrate the term's use in reference to Minerva, Diana, an Amazon, and Eve.

⁵⁰ Brown, *Body and Society*, 366; Gillian Cloke, 'This Female Man of God', 19–20.

⁵¹ For instance, the commentaries on Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Galatians, Ephesians, Philemon, and Titus are dedicated to Paula and Eustochium; the commentaries on Isaiah and Ezekiel are dedicated to Eustochium alone; the commentary on Daniel is dedicated to Pammachius and Marcella. In the preface to the commentary on Zephaniah, Jerome defends writing biblical exegesis for women and puts forth examples from the Bible and from Classical writers that demonstrate the mental capacity of women for such study.

⁵² Brown, *Body and Society*, 385.

⁵³ Ambrose, "De Paradiso," in *Sancti Ambrosii Opera*, ed. Carl Schenkl, CSEL, 32 (Vienna: Tempsky, 1897), at 14.70. "Perhaps you are disturbed by the fact that Adam is the first to be rebuked, although the woman was the first to eat the fruit. But the weaker sex begins by an act of disobedience, whereas the stronger sex is more liable to feelings of shame and forgiveness. The female furnished the occasion for wrongdoing; the male, the opportunity to feel ashamed." Ambrose, "Paradise," in *St. Ambrose: Creation, Paradise, Cain & Abel*, trans. John J. Savage, The Fathers of the Church, 42 (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1961), 14.70.

⁵⁴ Bernice M. Kaczynski, "Bede's Commentaries on Luke and Mark and the Formation of a Patristic Canon," in *Anglo-Latin and its Heritage: Essays in Honour of A. G. Rigg on his 64th Birthday*, ed. Siân Echard and Gernot R. Wieland (Turnholt: Brepols, 2001), 17 – 26, at p. 21.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.11. Ambrose repeats these figural meanings in 15.73. "...the figure of the serpent stands for enjoyment and the figure of the woman for the emotions of the mind and heart." Ambrose, "Paradise," 2.11.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.11. "Eve, that is, the senses of the first woman..." Ambrose, "Paradise," 2.11.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.62. "Omission is made, and rightly so, of the deception of Adam, since he fell by his wife's fault and not because of his own." Ambrose, "Paradise," 13.62.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.72. "Because Eve has admitted her crime, she is given a milder and more salutary sentence, which condemned her wrong-doing and did not refuse pardon. She was to serve under her husband's power, first, that she might not be inclined to do wrong, and, secondly, that, being in a position subject to a stronger vessel, she might not dishonor her husband, but on the contrary, might be governed by his counsel." Ambrose, "Paradise," 14.72.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.24. "No one ought to entrust himself lightly to another unless he has first put that person's virtue to the test. Neither should he claim for himself in the role of protector one whom he believes is subservient to him. Rather, a person should share his grace with another. Especially is this true of one who is in the position of greater strength and one who plays the part of protector. We have the advice of the Apostle Peter, wherein he recommends that husbands pay honor to their wives: 'Husbands, in like manner dwell with your wives considerately, paying honor to the woman as to the weaker vessel and as co-heir of the grace of life that your prayers be not hindered.'" Ambrose, "Paradise," 4.24.

⁶⁰ Ambrose, "De viduis," in *Sancti Ambrosii Episcopi Mediolanensis Opera*, 14/1 ed. and trans. Franco Gori (Rome: Città Nuova Editrice, 1989), 10.69. "Beautiful is the grace of mutual love." Ambrose, "Concerning Widows," in *St. Ambrose: Select Works and Letters*, trans. H. de Romestin, A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series, 10 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, Reprint, 1997), at X.69.

⁶¹ Ambrose, "Paradise," 14.72.

⁶² Ambrose is credited as the author of the *passio* of St. Agnes that Ælfric includes in *Lives of Saints*. The version referred to here, however, is not the version of the Life that Ælfric translates but probably a precursor.

⁶³ Ambrose, "De virginibus," in Gori, *Sancti Ambrosii Episcopi Mediolanensis Opera*, 2.5. Ambrose's estimation that the story could be an example for men as well as women is an early

example of the same attitude that we find in Ælfric 600 years later. "Let men admire, let children take courage, let the married be astounded, let the unmarried take an example." Ambrose, "Three Books of St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, Concerning Virgins, to Marcellina, His Sister," in de Romestin, *St. Ambrose: Selected Works and Letters*, I.2.5.

⁶⁴ Ambrose, "De virginibus," 2.7. "greater in truth was the power of faith which found evidence even in that age." Ambrose, "Virginité," I.2.7.

⁶⁵ Ambrose, "De virginibus," 2.7. "had that wherewith to conquer the steel." Ambrose, "Virginité," I.2.7.

⁶⁶ Ambrose, "De virginibus," 2.9. "What threats the executioner used to make her fear him, what allurements to persuade her [to marry]. . . . She stood, she prayed, she bent down her neck. You could see the executioner tremble, as though he himself had been condemned, and his right hand shake, his face grow pale, as he feared the peril of another, while the maiden feared not for her own." Ambrose, "Virginité," I.2.9.

⁶⁷ Ambrose, "De virginibus," I.2.8. "And she brought it to pass that she should be believed concerning God, whose evidence concerning man would not be accepted." Ambrose, "Virginité," I.2.8.

⁶⁸ Salisbury, *Church Fathers, Independent Virgins*, 5.

⁶⁹ Ambrose, "De virginibus," I.8.48. "you are worthy to be compared not now with men but with heavenly beings, whose life you are living on earth." Ambrose, "Virginité," I.9.48.

⁷⁰ Ambrose, "De virginibus," I.8.52. "ye are of this world, and yet not in this world. This age has held you, but has not been able to retain you." Ambrose, "Virginité," I.9.52.

⁷¹ Ambrose, "De virginibus," I.5.22. "Christ is the spouse of the Virgin, and if one may so say of virginal chastity, for virginity is of Christ, not Christ of virginity. He is, then, the Virgin Who was espoused, [the Virgin who carried us in her womb,] the Virgin Who bare us, Who fed us with her own milk. . . . Who is this virgin that is watered with the streams of the Trinity, from whose rock waters flow, whose teats fail not, and whose honey is poured forth? Now according to the Apostle, the rock is Christ. Therefore from Christ the teats fail not, nor brightness from God, nor the river from the Spirit. This is the Trinity which waters their Church, the Father, Christ, and the Spirit." Ambrose, "Virginité," I.5.22.

⁷² Carolyn Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1992), 93–97.

⁷³ Ambrose, "De virginibus," II.4.24. "It is preferable to have a virgin mind than a virgin body. Each is good if each be possible; if it be not possible, let me be chaste, not to man but to God." Ambrose, "Virginité," II.4.24.

⁷⁴ Ambrose, "De virginibus," II.4.26–27.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, II.4.28.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, II.4.28. "A sheep may be hidden in the shape of this wolf. Christ has His soldiers also, Who is Master of legions." Ambrose, "Virginité," II.4.28.

⁷⁷ Ambrose, "De virginibus," II.4.29. "Let us change our attire, mine will fit you, and yours will fit me, and each for Christ. Your robe will make me a true soldier, mine will make you a virgin." Ambrose, "Virginity," II.4.29.

⁷⁸ See Vern L. Bullough's comments on male transvestism in "Transvestites in the Middle Ages," *American Journal of Sociology* 79.6 (May 1974): 1381–94, at 1382–84. Bullough points out how male transvestism was consistently portrayed as undesirable because of the loss of status implied in the act of a man becoming like a woman. He does not address this passage in Ambrose's *De virginibus*, however.

⁷⁹ Ambrose, "De virginibus," II.4.32.

⁸⁰ Ambrose, "De viduis," 7.37. "This is true bravery, which surpasses the usual nature and weakness of the sex by the devotion of the mind." Ambrose, "Widows," 7.37.

⁸¹ Ambrose, "De viduis," 7.37. "when the armed men were afraid, and were already treating about the final surrender, went forth outside the wall, both excelling that army which she delivered, and braver than that which she put to flight." Ambrose, "Widows," 7.37.

⁸² Ambrose, "De viduis," 8.44. The story of Deborah is found in Judges 4:1–5:31. "For she showed not only that widows have no need of the help of a man, [but also are a help to men,] inasmuch as she, not at all restrained by the weakness of her sex, undertook to perform the duties of a man, and did even more than she had undertaken. . . . And I think that her judgeship has been narrated, and her deeds described, that women should not be restrained from deeds of valour by the weakness of their sex. A widow, she governs the people; a widow, she leads armies; a widow, she chooses generals; a widow, she determines wars and orders triumphs. So, then, it is not nature which is answerable for the fault or which is liable to weakness. It is not sex, but valour which makes strong." Ambrose, "Widows," 8.44.

⁸³ Ambrose, "De viduis," 11.69. "Beautiful is the grace of mutual love, but the bondage is more constant. 'The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband.' And lest this bondage should seem to be rather one of sex than of marriage, there follows: 'Likewise, also, the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife.'" Ambrose, "Widows," 11.69.

⁸⁴ Ruether, *Women and Redemption*, 75.

⁸⁵ Augustine: *De Bono Coniugali and De Sancta Virginitate*, ed. and trans. P. G. Walsh, Oxford Early Christian Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), §1, p. 2. "...for even without such sexual association there could exist a true union of friendship between the two sexes, with the one governing and the other obeying," p. 3.

⁸⁶ Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage*, 43. The "conjugal debt" or the "marriage debt" is an idea based upon the teaching that spouses of both sexes should consent to sexual relations when either spouse desired them.

⁸⁷ Augustine, "De Bono Coniugali," §3, p. 7, in *De Bono Coniugali and De Sancta Virginitate*. "The explanation why marriage is good lies, I think, not merely in the procreation of children, but also in the natural compact itself between the sexes. If this were not the case, we would not now speak of marriage between the elderly, especially if they had lost their children, or had not had any at all. But as things stand, in a good marriage between elderly partners, though the youthful passion between male and female has withered, the ordered love between husband and wife remains strong."

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, §1, p. 2. "the first natural link in human society," p. 3.

⁸⁹ Jacqueline Murray, introduction to *Conflicted Identities and Multiple Masculinities: Men in the Medieval West*, ed. Jacqueline Murray, Garland Medieval Casebooks (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999), ix–xix, at x.

⁹⁰ *S. Aureli Augustini de Genesi ad litteram libri duodecim; Eiusdem libri capitula; De genesi ad litteram imperfectus liber; Locutionum in Heptateuchum libri septem*, ed. Joseph Zycha, CSEL, 28 part 1 (Vienna: Tempsky, 1894), IX.5.9.

⁹¹ Augustine, “De Bono Coniugali,” §[XI], 13 and [XII], 14; “De Sancta Virginitate,” §[XVI], 16, in *De Bono Coniugali and De Sancta Virginitate*.

⁹² *Sancti Aurelii Augustini de civitate Dei libri XI–XXII*, ed. Bernard Dombart and Alphons Kalb, CCSL, 48 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1955), XII.28. “And the fact that a woman was made from the side of the man shows clearly enough how highly we are meant to esteem the relationship between husband and wife.” Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Gerald G. Walsh and Grace Monahan, *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*, 7 (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1952), Book XII.28.

⁹³ *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgata versionem*, 4th ed., Robert Weber, ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), *Prov.* 8:22, 27a, and 30a. “the Lord possessed me at the beginning of his way, Before his works of old. . . . When he established the heavens, I was there . . . Then I was beside him, as a master workman.” *Proverbs* 8:22, 27a, and 30a.

⁹⁴ I Corinthians 1:24.

⁹⁵ *Sancti Aurelii Augustini: De trinitate libri XV*, ed. W. J. Mountain, CCSL, 50 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1968), III.6. “Is there indeed any place where the Wisdom of almighty God does not achieve what she will, Wisdom who deploys her strength from one end of the universe to the other, ordering all things for good?” Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill, OP, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, Part I—Books, 5 (New York: New City Press, 1991), III.6. See also IV.27 and VII.4, and *De doctrina christiana* I.11–14. [Note: It is conventional in the *Corpus Christianorum* and the *Works of Saint Augustine* series to put biblical quotations in italics instead of quotation marks.]

⁹⁶ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XII.5. “But at that supreme level of spirituality there is nothing that can be violated or corrupted, nothing born in time or formed out of formless matter. Furthermore it is to the likeness of things up there that all the different kinds of things in this lower creation were made, even though the likeness is a very remote one. So to talk about them in this kind of way ought not to upset anyone of sober good sense, or he might find that by shrinking from a bogus horror he falls into a disastrous error. He must get accustomed to discovering the traces of spiritual things in bodies in such a way that when he turns upward from here and starts climbing with reason as his guide in order to reach the unchanging truth itself *through* which these *things were made* (Jn 1:3), he does not drag along with him to the top anything that he puts little value on at the bottom. There was, after all, a man who did not blush to choose wisdom as a wife for himself, merely on the grounds that the word “wife” makes one think of the corruption of copulation in the begetting of offspring, and for the matter of that wisdom is not female in sex just because it is called in Greek and Latin by a word of the feminine gender.” Augustine, *Trinity*, XII.2.5.

⁹⁷ Body or Corporeal Feminism: “a refusal of the mind/body dichotomy which has dominated Western thought and [a striving for] its dissolution in a concept of subjectivity which is irreducibly corporeal. . . . It is a project which attempts . . . to dissolve the mind/body distinction in the figure of the sexed

corporeal subject . . ." *A Glossary of Feminist Theory*, ed. Sonya Andermahr, Terry Lovell, and Carol Wolkowitz (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000), 25–26.

⁹⁸ Ruether, *Women and Redemption*, 5.

⁹⁹ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XII.3.12. See also Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, I.20.

¹⁰⁰ Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, VI.12. "Man's body, then is appropriate for his rational soul not because of his facial features and the structure of his limbs, but rather because of the fact that he stands erect, able to look up to heaven and gaze upon the higher regions in the corporeal world." *St. Augustine: The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, 2 vols. trans. John Hammond Taylor, SJ, Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation, 41 (New York: Newman Press, 1982) at VI.12.22. See also Augustine, *Trinity*, XII.1.1.

¹⁰¹ Tarsicius Jan van Bavel, OSA, "Woman as the Image of God in Augustine's *De Trinitate XII*," *Signum Pietatis* 40 (1989): 267–88, at 278–79.

¹⁰² Augustine, *De trinitate*, XII.5. "although they [the likenesses] are made very remote." [my translation]

¹⁰³ Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Towards a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), 4; Carol P. Christ, *Laughter of Aphrodite: Reflections on a Journey to the Goddess* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), 59–60.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, XI.8. "Is there anything, after all, that does not bear a likeness to God after its own kind and fashion, seeing that God made all things very good for no other reason than that he himself is supremely good?" Augustine, *Trinity*, XI.8.

¹⁰⁵ Kari Elisabeth Børresen, *Subordination and Equivalence: The Nature and Role of Woman in Augustine and Aquinas*, trans. Charles H. Talbot (Washington, D.C.: Univ. Press of America, 1981), 29.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 28–30.

¹⁰⁷ Augustine, *De trinitate*, XII.10. "But we must see how what the apostle says about the man and not the woman being the image of God avoids contradicting what is written in Genesis: *God made man to the image of God; he made him male and female; he made them and blessed them*. It says that what was made to the image of God is the human nature that is realized in each sex, and it does not exclude the female from the image of God that is meant. For after saying *God made man to the image of God*, it says *he made him male and female*—or at least with the other punctuation, *male and female he made them*. So how are we to take what we have heard from the apostle, that the man is the image of God, and so he is forbidden to cover his head, but the woman is not and so she is told to do so? In the same way, I believe, as what I said when I was dealing with the nature of the human mind, namely that the woman with her husband is the image of God in such a way that the whole of the substance is one image, but when she is assigned her function of being an assistant, which is her concern alone, she is not the image of God; whereas in what concerns the man alone he is the image of God as fully and completely as when the woman is joined to him in one whole." Augustine, *Trinity*, XII.3.10.

¹⁰⁸ Margaret A. Farley, "Sources of Sexual Inequality in the History of Christian Thought," *The Journal of Religion* 56 (1976): 162–76, at 167–68. Quoted in van Bavel, "Woman as the Image of God," 269.

¹⁰⁹ Augustine, *De trinitate*, XII.10. "We said about the nature of the human mind that if it is all contemplating truth it is the image of God; and when something is drawn off from it and assigned or directed in a certain way to the management of temporal affairs, it is still all the same image of God as regards that part with which it consults the truth it has gazed on; but as regards the part which is directed to managing these lower affairs, it is not the image of God." Augustine, *The Trinity*, XII.3.10.

¹¹⁰ For a more detailed analysis of Augustine's addition of relationship words to the development of the theology of the Trinity, see Edmund Hill's Introduction to *The Trinity*, at pp. 49-52.

¹¹¹ *Sancti Aurelii Augustini de doctrina christiana*, ed. Joseph Martin, CCSL 32 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1962), I.5. "It is not easy, after all, to find any name that will really fit such transcendent majesty." Augustine, *Teaching Christianity: De Doctrina Christiana*, trans. Edmund Hill, OP, The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Part I—Books, 11 (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1996), I.5.

¹¹² Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, XI.10. "Accordingly, whatever is authentically and truly divine is said to be simple because its qualities and its substance are one and the same." Augustine, *City of God*, XI.10.

¹¹³ Augustine, *De trinitate*, V.6.

¹¹⁴ See John 14:28 and I Corinthians 15:28.

¹¹⁵ Philippians 2:7.

¹¹⁶ See Philippians 2:6-8.

¹¹⁷ Augustine, *De trinitate*, I.14. "And so it is not without reason that scripture says both; that the Son is equal to the Father and that the Father is greater than the Son. The one is to be understood in virtue of the form of God, the other in virtue of the form of a servant, without any confusion. . . . So the Son of God is God the Father's equal by nature, by condition his inferior." Augustine, *Trinity*, I.3.14.

¹¹⁸ Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, XI.37. It is clear from Augustine's treatment of this topic in such works as *De bono coniugali* and *De Genesi ad litteram* that he does not immediately associate rule with oppressive domination and subjection with slavery. Within his concept of godly love it is possible to rule over someone without force and with the effect of making the other's life better, just as it is possible to serve another out of love without that service being oppressive or coerced.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, XI.15. "There are, then, two loves, of which one is holy, the other unclean; one turned towards the neighbor, the other centered on self; . . . one looking to the common good, . . . the other bringing the common good under its own power, arrogantly looking to domination; . . . one wishing for its neighbor what it wishes for itself, the other seeking to subject its neighbor to itself, one looking for its neighbor's advantage in ruling its neighbor, the other looking for its own advantage." Augustine, *Literal Meaning of Genesis*, XI.15.

¹²⁰ Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, XI.37. "The sentence pronounced by God gave this power to man; and it is not by her nature but rather by her sin that woman deserved to have her husband for a master." Augustine, *Literal Meaning of Genesis*, XI.37.50.

¹²¹ Børresen, *Subordination and Equivalence*, 62.

¹²² The biblical exegetes of the late patristic era and of the Middle Ages did not always use the four-fold interpretive scheme (historical, tropological, allegorical, and anagogical levels of interpretation). In the case of the *Moralia in Iob*, Gregory only uses a three-fold interpretation, leaving out the anagogical interpretation.

¹²³ Job 1:1–2:10.

¹²⁴ Ann Astell, “Job’s Wife, Walter’s Wife, and the Wife of Bath,” in *Old Testament Women in Western Literature*, ed. Raymond-Jean Frontain and Jan Wojcik (Conway, AK: UCA Press, 1991), 92–107, at 94.

¹²⁵ *S. Gregorii Magni: Moralia in Iob, Libri I–X*, ed. Marcus Adriaen, CCSL, 143 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1979), Praefatio, V.11.

¹²⁶ Ambrose, “De Paradiso,” 2.11.

¹²⁷ Gregory, *Moralia*, Liber III, IX.16. “The holy man therefore, to ease his worried mind in his sufferings, considers the delights of God’s gifts, saying, ‘If we have taken good things from the hand of the Lord, how shall we refuse the bad?’ So it is fitting that he prefaced this by saying, ‘You have spoken like a foolish woman.’ Because it is the woman’s sense, not her sex, that is against her, he does not say, ‘you have spoken like a woman,’ but ‘like a foolish woman,’ to show that her wicked ideas are the result of chance foolishness, not her inborn nature.” Gregory the Great, *Moralia or Commentary on the Book of Blessed Job*, trans. James J. O’Donnell, available on the World Wide Web at *Gregory the Great*, <http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/jod/gregory.html>, at Book III, IX.16.

¹²⁸ Gregory, *Moralia*, Praefatio, VI.14, and Liber III, XXXII.62.

¹²⁹ Ibid., Liber III, XXI.40. “So because holy men know how to endure attacks without and correct errors within, let it rightly be said, ‘You have spoken like a foolish woman.’ Since it is said to the elect, ‘Act manfully and let your heart be comforted,’ so the minds of worldly people who abandon the Lord in their fickleness are not inappropriately called ‘women.’” Gregory, *Commentary*, Book III, XXI.40.

¹³⁰ Gregory, *Moralia*, Liber IV, Praefatio 4.

¹³¹ Ibid., Liber III, XX.36. “those church members who live according to the flesh,” Gregory, *Commentary*, Book III, XX.36.

¹³² Gregory, *Moralia*, Liber III, XX.38. “We must beware that the worldly members of the church sometimes try to urge wickedness upon us by fear, sometimes by bold pride. While they themselves go astray through cravenness or pride, they try to instill the same qualities in us, as if out of love. Peter’s mind was still worldly before the death and resurrection of the Redeemer, while the son of Sarvia clung to David his leader still with a worldly mind, but one sinned out of fear, the other out of pride. . . . These men, when they tried to argue for wickedness, are expressly compared to the apostate angels, using soft words to lead us astray to sin in the guise of loving friends.” Gregory, *Commentary*, at Book III, XX.38.

¹³³ Luke 8:40–48.

¹³⁴ Gregory, *Moralia*, Liber V, XXI.41. “Because the nature of any particular thing is made up of diverse elements, in sacred scripture one thing can legitimately signify various other things.” Gregory, *Commentary*, at Book V, XXI.41.

¹³⁵ Gregory, *Moralia*, Liber V, XXI.41. See translation above in Note 134.

¹³⁶ For a specific challenge to Gregory's authorship of the *Dialogi*, see Francis Clark, *The Pseudo-Gregorian Dialogues*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1987). Clark's argument has generally been considered unconvincing: Paul Meyvaert wrote a particularly strong response, "The Enigma of Gregory the Great's *Dialogues*: A Response to Francis Clark," in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 39: 3 (Jul. 1988): 335-81.

¹³⁷ *Grégoire le Grand, Dialogues*, ed. Adalbert de Vogüé, Sources Chrétiennes, 265 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1980), 54. "by the report of serious-minded and reliable people." [my translation]

¹³⁸ Jo Ann MacNamara interprets the beard as the result of a build up of heat from Galla's unreleased passions in her article, "Chastity as a Third Gender in the History and Hagiography of Gregory of Tours," in *The World of Gregory of Tours*, ed. Kathleen Mitchell and Ian Wood, Cultures, Beliefs, and Traditions: Medieval and Early Modern Peoples, 8 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 199-209, at 204.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 56. "she was struck by an ulcer of cancer in her breast." [my translation]

¹⁴⁰ *Grégoire le Grand, Dialogues*, Ed. Adalbert de Vogüé. Sources Chrétiennes, 260 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1980), 38. "he saw himself made a eunuch while an angel stood by." *Saint Gregory the Great: Dialogues*, trans. Odo John Zimmerman, O.S.B., The Fathers of the Church: a New Translation, 39 (New York: Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1959), 6.

¹⁴¹ The authenticity of the material in Benedict's *Vita* is not at issue here. For further reading on this matter, however, see especially Adalbert de Vogüé's *Grégoire le Grande, Dialogues*, vol. I (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1978) and J. Leclercq's "Monasticism and St. Benedict," *Monastic Studies* 1 (1963): 9-23. The real issue in my discussion is Gregory's willingness to show a woman having greater influence upon God than even so great a saint as Benedict is portrayed to be.

¹⁴² Terrence Kardong, O.S.B., "A New Look at Gregory's *Dialogues*," *American Benedictine Review* 36: 1 (Mar. 1985), 44-63.

¹⁴³ Gregory, *Dialogues*, 232-34. "We can readily see that he wanted the sky to remain as clear as it was when he came down from the monastery. But this wish of his was thwarted by a miracle almighty God performed in answer to a woman's prayer. We need not be surprised that in this instance she proved mightier than her brother; she had been looking forward so long to this visit. Do we not read in St. John that God is love? Surely it is no more than right that her influence was greater than his, since hers was the greater love." Gregory, *Dialogues*, 103-04.

¹⁴⁴ Thomas D. Hill, "Imago Dei: Genre, Symbolism, and Anglo-Saxon Hagiography," in *Holy Men and Holy Women: Old English Prose Saints' Lives and Their Contexts*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1996), 35-50. Hill goes on to build a case for greater significance in the episode than just the lesson on love stated here, but this lesson would have held a prominent part in any meaning taken from the story.

¹⁴⁵ Gregory, *Dialogues*, 6.

¹⁴⁶ Kardong, "A New Look at Gregory's *Dialogues*," 62.

¹⁴⁷ *S. Gregorii Magni: Registrum Epistularum*, CCSL 140 and 140A (Turnholt: Brepols, 1982), XI.26, p. 898. "One thing however I took amiss, namely that in the same epistles to me what might have been

said once was said repeatedly; 'Your handmaiden,' and 'your handmaiden.' For, I having been made servant of all through the burdens of the episcopacy, with what reason does she call herself my handmaid whose own I was before I undertook the episcopate?" "Selected Epistles of Gregory the Great," *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Leo the Great, Gregory the Great*, trans. James Barmby, A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series, 12 and 13 (reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), vol. 13, p. 61.

¹⁴⁸ Gregory, *Registrum*, IX.86, p. 640. "But count on us, dearest daughter, confidently in all things, as indeed you may; and, since we always desire to hear of your prosperity, refresh us often by your letters." Gregory, "Selected Epistles," vol. 13, p. 43.

¹⁴⁹ Gregory, *Registrum*, VII.12 and XIII.10.

¹⁵⁰ Gregory, *Registrum*, VIII.4, p. 520. "In order, then, that the charge you bear may be of fruit to you before the eyes of our Creator, let the solicitude of your Christianity be diligently on the watch, and suffer no one who is under your dominion to attain to holy orders by the giving of money, or the patronage of any persons whatever, or by right of relationship." Gregory, "Selected Epistles," vol. 13, p. 7.

¹⁵¹ *Grégoire le Grand: Règle Pastorale*, ed. Floribert Rommel and trans. Charles Morel, Sources Chrétiennes, 381–82 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1992), III.1. English translation from: Gregory the Great, "The Book of Pastoral Rule," in Barmby, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Leo the Great, Gregory the Great*, vol. 12, p. 24.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, III.2. "Differently, then, to be admonished are men and women; because on the former heavier injunctions, on the latter lighter are to be laid, that those may be exercised by great things, but these winningly converted by light ones." Gregory, "Pastoral Rule," 25.

¹⁵³ Gregory's next comment is upon the different ways that young and old men are to be exhorted. If his advice to men and women was meant to be parallel to his advice about the young and old, then the *men* would be comparable to the youths, and the women comparable to the elders. *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁵⁴ Thomas N. Hall, "The Early English Manuscripts of Gregory the Great's *Homilies on the Gospel* and *Homilies on Ezekiel*: A Preliminary Survey" in *Rome and the North: The Early Reception of Gregory the Great in Germanic Europe*, ed. Rolf H. Bremmer, Jr., Kees Dekker, and David F. Johnson, *Mediaevalia Groningana*, n.s., 4 (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 115–136, at 129. For the purpose of brevity and because the homilies on Ezekiel seem to have been largely unknown in Anglo-Saxon England, I limit my discussion of Gregory's homilies to his homilies on the Gospel.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 118.

¹⁵⁶ Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Euangelia*, ed. Raymond Étaix, CCL, 141 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1999), Homilia III.3–4. "Consider, dearly beloved, the manly heart in the woman's body! . . . Let us consider this woman, dearly beloved. Let us consider ourselves and what in comparison with her will be thought of us, who in body are men. We often propose some good actions to be achieved, but if someone mocks us, uttering trivial remarks against us, we are immediately turned back from our intention to act and retreat in confusion. . . . When our severe Judge comes for the dreadful examination what shall we men say at seeing this woman's glory? What excuse will men have for the weakness of their hearts when we see this woman who overcame her sex as well as the world?" Gregory the Great, *Forty Gospel Homilies*, trans. David Hurst, Cistercian Studies Series, 123 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1990), 6, 8.

¹⁵⁷ Gregory, *Homilia XIV*, p. 101. "There [will be] faithful men whose manly strength was not enfeebled by the pleasures of the world, there holy women who overcame their sex together with the world, there children who surpassed their years by their conduct, there old men whom age weakened but whose capacity for action did not end." Gregory, *Gospel Homilies*, p. 111.

¹⁵⁸ Gillian Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity: Pagan and Christian Lifestyles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 56. Clark goes on to specify social conditions that emphasized the idea of weakness in women and that opened the way for that weakness to be applied in other areas, such as education, but the only bases of weakness that were understood to be inherent in women were the lack of strength and the matter of bearing children.

¹⁵⁹ Acknowledging this fact that men's superior physical strength enabled them to enforce rule, however, does not necessarily mean endorsement of coercive relations.

¹⁶⁰ Gregory, *Moralia in Iob*, XI.49.65.

¹⁶¹ Gregory, *Liber Regulae Pastoralis*, III.27. "Wherefore the mind of married Christians is both weak and steadfast [sic], in that it cannot fully despise all temporal things, and yet can join itself in desire to eternal things. Although it lies low meanwhile in the delights of the flesh, let it grow strong in the refreshment of supernal hope. . . ." Gregory, *Pastoral Care*, 56.

¹⁶² Gregory, *Liber Regulae Pastoralis*, III.27. "bows [the married] down to worldly cares." Gregory, *Pastoral Care*, 57-8.

¹⁶³ Marcia L. Colish, *Medieval Foundation of the Western Intellectual Tradition, 400 – 1400*, Yale Intellectual History of the West, 1 (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, Rpt. 1998), at 20 and 23; Augustine, *The Rule of St. Augustine*, trans. Raymond Canning, Cistercian Studies Series, 138 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1996).

¹⁶⁴ Murray, introduction to *Conflicted Identities and Multiple Masculinities*, xvi.

Notes to The Sins of the Sons

¹ Henry Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd ed. (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1991), 13 and 58–61.

² *Ibid.*, 30–39.

³ Bernhard Bischoff, "Introduction and Catalogue of the Latin-Exegetical Literature, both Hiberno-Latin and that showing Irish Influence, up to the Beginning of the Ninth Century," in *Biblical Studies: The Medieval Irish Contribution*, trans. Colm O'Grady, ed. Martin McNamara, Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association, 1 (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1976), 74–160. Throughout the "Catalogue" Bischoff describes the writers quoted by Irish exegetes.

¹ See Sarah Foot, *Veiled Women: The Disappearance of Nuns from Anglo-Saxon England*, 2 vols., Studies in Early Medieval Britain, 1 (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2000); Joan Ferrante, "The Education of Women in the Middle Ages in Theory, Fact, and Fantasy," in *Beyond Their Sex: Learned Women of the European Past*, ed. Patricia H. Labalme (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1980), 9–42; and Peter Hunter Blair, "Whitby as a Centre of Learning in the Seventh Century, Appendix," in *Learning*

and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England: Studies Presented to Peter Clemoes on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday, ed. Michael Lapidge and Helmut Gneuss (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985), 3–32.

² Carol Neuman de Vegvar, “Saints and Companions to Saints: Anglo-Saxon Royal Women Monastics in Context,” in *Holy Men and Holy Women: Old English Prose Saints’ Lives and Their Contexts*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996), 56. Balthild, although a slave, was so noted for her beauty and character that Clovis II was willing to overlook her status and took her to be his wife. While queen, she not only founded monasteries, but also forbade the sale of Christian slaves and often purchased the freedom of slaves. See Suzanne Fonay Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the Cloister 500–900*, Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 57.

³ Hunter Blair, “Whitby,” 32. See also Ferrante, “Education of Women,” 15.

⁴ Ferrante, “Education of Women,” 10; Neuman de Vegvar, “Saints and Companions,” 56.

⁵ Hunter Blair, “Whitby,” 15–16.

⁶ Foot, *Veiled Women*, I.26.

⁷ Henrietta Leyser, *Medieval Women: A Social History of Women in England, 450–1500* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), 20–21.

⁸ Neuman de Vegvar, “Saints and Companions,” 55.

⁹ Bede, *Homilies on the Gospels, Advent to Lent*, trans. Lawrence T. Martin and David Hurst, Cistercian Studies Series, 110 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1991), I.13, p. 129. See also Bede’s report of Benedict Biscop’s speech to the brothers of his monastery, in which he says “*Ex decem quippe et septem monasteriis quae inter longos meae crebre peregrinationis discursus optima conperi, haec uniuersa didici, et uobis salubriter obseruanda contradi.*” (Italics in original) “*Historia Abbatum auctore Baeda*,” in *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam ecclesiasticam gentis Anglorum, Historiam abbatum, Epistolam ad Ecgbertum, una cum Historia abbatum auctore anonymo*, ed. Charles Plummer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896), 374–75. “Indeed, during the long time of my frequent travels to and fro, I gained the best information from seventeen monasteries (these spread throughout the world) and I have delivered [these ideas] together [in one rule] for you all to keep to your advantage.”

¹⁰ Neuman de Vegvar, “Saints and Companions,” 56.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹² Bede, “Life of St. Hild,” in *Ecclesiastical History*, IV.23, p. 408.

¹³ During the year in which she lived with her companions before taking charge of the foundation at Hartlepool, Hild was instructed by Bishop Aidan and others in a Rule like that which she established. Bede, “Life of St. Hild,” in *Ecclesiastical History*, IV.23, pp. 406–08.

¹⁴ For complete treatment of the demise of the double monasteries in Francia and the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, see Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society*; Stephanie Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church: Sharing a Common Fate* (Rochester: Boydell, 1992); Foot, *Veiled Women*, I.63–64. For a more summary treatment, see Neuman de Vegvar, “Saints and Companions,” 77–79.

¹⁵ See Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society*, 127–48, and Foot, *Veiled Women*, 1.61–69. Foot observes that the Anglo-Saxon emphasis in importing the Carolingian reforms seemed to have a focus on avoiding scandal rather than on the ritual purity of women.

¹⁶ Foot, *Veiled Women*, 1.52; Neuman de Vegvar, “Saints and Companions,” 57.

¹⁷ Hunter Blair, “Whitby,” 30.

¹⁸ Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*, 6.

¹⁹ Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity*, 192; M. L. W. Laistner, *Thought and Letters in Western Europe, A.D. 500 to 900*, rev. ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1957), 153. Michael Lapidge questions the credibility of the tradition of Aldhelm’s Irish education under Mealdubh, however, since the source for this information is William of Malmesbury’s twelfth-century work on the abbots of Malmesbury; see *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, trans. Michael Lapidge and Michael Herren (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield, 1979), 6–7. Andy Orchard, on the other hand, reasserts the reliability of the story of Aldhelm’s Irish education in *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994), 4–5.

²⁰ S. J. Crawford, *Anglo-Saxon Influence on Western Christendom 600–800* (reprint New York: Barnes and Noble, 1966), 95.

²¹ Laistner, *Thought and Letters*, 155. Ambrose is noticeably absent from Laistner’s list.

²² Michael Lapidge and James L. Rosier, trans., *Aldhelm: The Poetic Works* (Dover, NH: D. S. Brewer, 1985), 1. See similar comments in Lapidge and Herren, *Prose Works*, 8. There is a difference between the theological and literary aims of Bede and Aldhelm, however, and thus it might be better simply to grant Aldhelm’s broader knowledge of Classical and Christian Latin poetry, and Bede’s wider knowledge of patristic works.

²³ Orchard, *Poetic Art*, 1.

²⁴ Rudolf Ehwald notes that Aldhelm (in the whole corpus of his works) quotes from the following works of the Latin Doctors: one line of hexameter credited to Ambrose, Pseudo-Ambrose’s *Vita S. Agnetis*; Augustine’s *De civitate Dei*, *De virginitate*, *De bono viduitatis*, *De haeresibus*, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, and *Epistulae* 138 and 196; Gregory’s *Dialogi*, *Liber Sacramentorum*, *Moralia in Iob*, *Homiliae in Evangelia*, and *Regula Pastorum*; and Jerome’s *Chronica Eusebii*, *Ad Eustochium*, *Quaestiones Hebraicae in Genesios*, the commentaries on Daniel, John, and Matthew, *Adversus Jovinianum*, the *Vitae* of Hilarion, Malchus, and Paul the Hermit, and *Liber interpretationis hebraicorum nominum*. See “Index Locorum” in *Aldhelmi Opera*, ed. Rudolf Ehwald, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores Antiquissimi*, 15 (1919; Munich: Monumenta Germaniae Historica, 1984), 544–46. The “Index Auctorum” of Bede’s *Libri Quatuor in Principium Genesis* alone shows Bede’s use of a wider range of works by the Latin Doctors: Ambrose’s *De Abraham*, *De Cain et Abel*, *De Isaac et anima*, *De Noe et arca*, *De paradiso*, *De Spiritu Sancto*, *Explanatio super psalmos xii*, and *Hexameron*; Augustine’s *Confessiones*, *Contra Adimantum*, *Contra adversarium legis et prophetarum*, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum*, *Contra Maximinum*, *De civitate Dei*, *De doctrina christiana*, *De Genesi ad litteram imperfectus liber*, *De Genesi ad litteram libri XII*, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*, *De haeresibus*, *De Trinitate*, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, *Epistola* 164, *Quaestiones et locutiones in Heptateuchum*, and *Sermones* 4, 51, 252, and 292; Gregory’s *Homiliae in Evangelia*, and *Moralia in Iob*; and Jerome’s *Adversus Jovinianum*, *Altercatio Luciferiani et Orthodoxi*, the Commentaries on Galatians, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Matthew, and Zachariah, *De situ et nominibus locorum hebraicorum liber*, *Epistulae* 15, 36, 48, 124, and 125, *Hebraicarum quaestionum in Genesim liber*, and *Interpretationis*

hebraicorum nominum liber. See “Index Auctorum” in *Bedae Venerabilis Opera, Pars II, Opera Exegetica: Libri Quatuor in Principium Genesis usque ad Nativitatem Isaac et Eiectionem Ismahelis Adnotationum*, ed. Charles W. Jones, CCSL, 118A (Turnholt: Brepols, 1967), 253–62.

²⁵ Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity*, 214–16. The vast majority of Aldhelm’s extant writings are either textbooks on how to write good Latin poetry or else are examples of artful writing themselves. The religious content of *De virginitate* seems almost incidental and Aldhelm is rarely concerned with a clear, simple statement of his point, preferring instead to ornament his language in an almost immodest fashion. Bede, on the other hand, most often makes his rhetoric serve the purpose of elegant, direct communication, especially when he is explicating scripture. Bede does not ignore Latin prosody, but his style is always subservient to his message.

²⁶ Ehwald, “Index Locorum,” 544–46, and “Index Auctorum” in *Bedae Venerabilis Opera*, CCSL, vols. 118A–123C (Turnholt: Brepols, 1967–).

²⁷ Rosamond McKitterick, *Books, Scribes and Learning in the Frankish Kingdoms, 6th to 9th Centuries* (Brookfield, VT: Variorum, 1994), II.403–04; Bernice M. Kaczynski, “Bede’s Commentaries on Luke and Mark and the Formation of a Patristic Canon,” in *Anglo-Latin and its Heritage: Essays in Honour of A. G. Rigg on his 64th Birthday*, ed. Siân Echard and Gernot R. Wieland (Turnholt: Brepols, 2001), 17–26, at 25.

²⁸ M. R. James, *Two Ancient English Scholars: St Aldhelm and William of Malmesbury* (Glasgow: Jackson, Wylie & Co., 1931), 11; also Lapidge and Herren, *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, 2.

²⁹ Peter Godman, “The Anglo-Latin *Opus Geminatum*: From Aldhelm to Alcuin,” *Medium Ævum* 50.2 (1981): 215–229, at 217–220.

³⁰ Most of the available commentary on this dual work addresses either the prose version alone or the metrical version alone and so there is little ambiguity as to which version of the work is meant when the authors refer to *De virginitate* or “*De virginitate*.” Since my analysis refers to both versions at the same time and to the twinned work as a whole, for the sake of clarity in the following discussion I will refer to the prose version as “*De virginitate*,” the metrical version as “*Carmen de virginitate*,” and the two works together as *De virginitate*.

³¹ A great service has been done to the field of Anglo-Latin scholarship both by Rudolf Ehwald’s careful edition of Aldhelm’s corpus and by the herculean efforts of Michael Lapidge, Michael Herren, and James Rosier to provide working translations that can be used in conjunction with Ehwald’s edition in order to make Aldhelm more accessible. I, for one, am greatly indebted to their efforts.

³² Aldhelm, “*De virginitate*,” 228.

³³ Clare A. Lees and Gillian R. Overing, “Before History, Before Difference: Bodies, Metaphor, and the Church in Anglo-Saxon England,” *Yale Journal of Criticism* 11.2 (1998): 315–34, at 317.

³⁴ Clare A. Lees and Gillian R. Overing, *Double Agents: Women and Clerical Culture in Anglo-Saxon England*, The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 111. The “commentators” referred to here are Lapidge and Herren, *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, pp. 56–7.

³⁵ Aldhelm promises the nuns that he will turn the prose text into verse on the condition that “*iteratis totidem epistolarum scriptis instigare dignemini, quod praecedentem libelli textum . . . fidenter impetrare merebamini*.” Aldhelm, “*De virginitate*,” §LX; “. . . you consider it worthwhile to stimulate me again by just as many written letters, because you were entitled boldly to bring to pass the

preceding tissue of this little book.” [my translation] Regarding the authenticity of Aldhelm’s claim, Stephanie Hollis notes that “obedience to the behest of a patron as a means of recommending one’s literary productions was a topos familiar to Aldhelm from his much paraded classical studies, and became formulaic in hagiography as a means of protesting the author’s humility in spite of the self-assertion innate in the act of setting pen to parchment; but Aldhelm’s reiterated claim to be responding to requests for a work on virginity is, so far as we can tell, authentic.” Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*, 76.

³⁶ See Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, PL 23.282A–B; Ambrose, “De Viduis,” in *Sancti Ambrosii Episcopi Mediolanensis Opera*, 14/1 ed. and trans. Franco Gori (Rome: Città Nuova Editrice, 1989), 2.5; Augustine, “De sancta virginitate,” in *De Bono Coniugali and De Sancta Virginitate*, ed. and trans. P. G. Walsh, Oxford Early Christian Texts (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2001), §53; and Grégoire le Grand, *Dialogues*, ed. Adalbert de Vogüé, Sources Chrétiennes, 260 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1980), I.6.

³⁷ Aldhelm, “Carmen de virginitate,” 191. “integrity of mind ruling in a chaste body.” [my translation] For examples of saints whose strength of mind Aldhelm notes, see in “De virginitate,” Athanasius, §XXXII; Babilas, §XXXIII; Agatha, §XLI; and Justina, §XLIII, to name just a few.

³⁸ Aldhelm, “De virginitate,” §XXXIX. “in the same way to the celebrated persons of the second sex, who have continually remained in holy virginity by perseverance through inflexible firmness of mind.”

³⁹ Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*, 109.

⁴⁰ In the preface to the prose version, Aldhelm compares the nuns’ intellectual pursuits to bees gathering pollen and making honey, and athletes training for competitions. Aldhelm, “De virginitate,” §I – IV.

⁴¹ Aldhelm, “Carmen de virginitate,” 2767–69.

⁴² Aldhelm refers to “principal vices” rather than to capital or deadly sins and his list of said vices also diverges from the usual language for the capital sins. The following discussion will adhere to Aldhelm’s use of terminology and meaning. The terms given here for the eight principal vices are the actual words used by Aldhelm: “Ingluviam uentris,” line 2484; “stuprum” (in the genitive plural), line 2544; “Philargiria,” line 2571; “Ira,” line 2625; “Tristitia,” line 2643; “Accidia,” line 2666; “Cenodoxia,” line 2679; and “Superbia,” line 2702. Aldhelm’s vices appear in the same order, using (with one exception where Aldhelm replaces ‘fornicatio’ with ‘stuprum’) the same terminology that Cassian uses: “Octo sunt principalia uitia quae humanum infestant genus, id est primum gastrimargia, quod sonat uentris ingluuies, secundum fornicatio, tertium filargyria, id est auaritia siue amor pecuniae, quartum ira, quintum tristitia, sextum acedia, id est anxietas seu taedium cordis, septimum cenodoxia, id est iactantia seu uana gloria, octauum superbia.” Jean Cassien, *Conférences, I – VII*, ed. and trans. E. Pichery, Sources Chrétiennes, 42 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1955), V.2. “Eight are the principal vices which attack the race of humans: that is gastrimargia, which means gluttony of the stomach; second, whoredom [fornication]; third, philargiria, that is avarice or the love of money; fourth, wrath; fifth, sadness; sixth, mental weariness, that is, lasting anxiety or weariness of heart; seventh, cenodoxia, that is boasting or vainglory; eighth, pride.” [my translation] Cassian’s description of the vices derives from his conversations with Abbot Serapion.

⁴³ Aldhelm, “De virginitate,” §XI. “the first-formed, inhabitant of new paradise and possessor of the whole earth, cruelly fell into the pit of gluttony, tasting the prohibited nourishment with greedy cheeks and gluttonous lips.” [my translation]

⁴⁴ Aldhelm, "Carmen de virginitate," 2494–2500. "For the first-formed (whom the king of Olympus created, had fashioned with nourishing hands the unskilled one inhabiting the land, fructifying the mind with the blowing of life from heaven) fell long ago, overthrown by gluttonous deceit while he was plucking greedily the forbidden apple of the tree; from that one grew up a pestiferous seed in the world, whence a thick crop has increased, a filthy harvest." [my translation]

⁴⁵ Ibid., 2681–86, 2693–95. "[Vainglory] enticed the first-formed inhabitant with deceit (the fearful crime being urged by the Promoter of Evils) until such words broke forth from her [Vainglory's] malicious breast: 'On whatever day you desire to pluck off the fruit, then the eyes of your brow will be opened and also the distinctions of divinity will accompany you.' . . . Alas, the crime! Alas! From this villainy is the origin of mortal wretchedness: the first man was by no means afraid, relying especially on Vainglory, defrauded by an empty hope." [my translation]

⁴⁶ Jean Cassien, *Conférences*, V.6.

⁴⁷ *Sancti Aurelii Augustini de Trinitate libri XV*, ed. W. J. Mountain, CCSL, 50 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1968), XII.20. "I wanted [the woman] to stand for something the beasts do not have, and reckoned that the senses of the body should rather be represented by the serpent. . . ." Augustine, *The Trinity*, XII.20.

⁴⁸ Aldhelm's use of allusion (and he uses it a lot throughout *De virginitate*) could be a fertile field of exploration, especially as it mirrors the way the *Beowulf*-poet alludes to events and stories outside of *Beowulf*, fully expecting his audience to understand his allusions and see their application to the story at hand. Aldhelm does the same thing, sometimes building resonance upon resonance as in the way he treats the Fall. See, for instance, Paul F. Baum, "The *Beowulf* Poet," in *An Anthology of Beowulf Criticism*, ed. Lewis E. Nicholson (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1963), 353–65, at 360–62.

⁴⁹ Ehwald was not able to identify the "authentic" Ambrosian quotation, which consists of one line of hexameter in Aldhelm's "De metris et enigmatibus ac pedum regulis," *Aldhelmi Opera*, 153, n. 3.

⁵⁰ Aldhelm, "Carmen de virginitate," 670–74.

⁵¹ Ehwald, "Index Locorum," 544. Aldhelm identifies the line of hexameter that he quotes as having been written by Ambrose of Milan, but Ehwald was unable to find it amongst Ambrose's known works. That Aldhelm knew the Pseudo-Ambrosian *Life of St. Agnes* is more certain since he directly quotes this source. Ambrose and Pseudo-Ambrose differ in regard to Agnes' age (Ambrose writes that she was twelve, Pseudo-Ambrose that she was thirteen) and other aspects of her Life. For a more detailed explanation of the differences between the two accounts and their histories, see Alexander Joseph Denomy, ed., *The Old French Lives of Saint Agnes and Other Vernacular Versions of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1938), 4–32. Aldhelm does not mention Agnes' age at all in the prose "De virginitate," but he does state that she is thirteen years old in the "Carmen de virginitate." Thus, it is likely that he knew the legend only through Pseudo-Ambrose's *Life*, and had never read, although he may have heard about, Ambrose's *Life of St. Agnes* as rendered in that Father's *De virginitate*. Lapidge and Herren suggest that Aldhelm's *De virginitate* is "to some extent . . . modelled on Ambrose's treatise," but the evidence is equivocal. Ambrose does briefly compare a virgin to a bee collecting the dew of God's word, but I find it more likely that Aldhelm took his example from Ambrose's *Hexameron* rather than from *De virginitate*, since Book V.21 of the *Hexameron* is an extended praise of the bee as an example to all in terms of its communal living, loyalty to its king, activity, and virginity. The "Ambrosian" structure pointed out by Lapidge and Herren, theory of virginity followed by exempla, is also found in Jerome's *Adversus Jovinianum*, which Aldhelm certainly knew, thus was not necessarily derived from Ambrose's work. Lapidge and

Herren, *Prose Works*, p. 56. On the absence of any manuscripts of Ambrose known to be in England in Aldhelm's day, see Dabney Anderson Bankert, Jessica Wegmann, and Charles D. Wright, *Ambrose in Anglo-Saxon England with Pseudo-Ambrose and Ambrosiaster*, Old English Newsletter Subsidia, 25 (Kalamazoo, MI: The Medieval Institute, Western Michigan University and the Richard Rawlinson Center for Anglo-Saxon Studies for The Old English Division of the Modern Language Association, 1997), 12–17.

⁵² Ehwald, "Index Locorum," 544. One could argue that Aldhelm's citations from *De virginitate* and *De civitate Dei* come from widely scattered parts of the books, thus indicating knowledge of the whole work, but the quotations are not lengthy and the total number is too small to be persuasive by itself. Much more significant is the familiarity Aldhelm demonstrates with the idea of the overall responsibility of the will in sin, which indicates a broader familiarity with *De civitate Dei* than is evidenced by his quotations from that work alone. It seems unlikely that Aldhelm knew Eugippius' collection of excerpts from Augustine's major works, since it contains significant portions of *De trinitate* and *De Genesi ad litteram* and Aldhelm gives no indication that he is familiar with these two works.

⁵³ Ehwald, "Index Locorum," 544–45. See the manuscripts found in Gneuss's list in Appendix I.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 545. Ehwald identifies 25 quotations from Jerome, while he notes 26 quotations from Ambrose (including Pseudo-Ambrose), Augustine, and Gregory together.

⁵⁵ Aldhelm, "Carmen de virginitate," 1619–20. "Behold, I will reveal the splendid commendations of that holy one while speaking of the saint stirs the inner chambers of my heart." [my translation]

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 874–80.

⁵⁷ Aldhelm, "De virginitate," §XXXI, italics in the original. "One may not die, he says, by one's own hand other than when chastity is endangered." Augustine's comments, in which he specifically states that suicide is not an option, even if one is in imminent danger of dishonor, can be found in *De civitate Dei*, I.17. Aldhelm certainly knew this text, for later in "De virginitate" he quotes from the chapter immediately following when making his point that sanctity of the body is not lost if sanctity of the soul is maintained.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, §XXXI.

⁵⁹ Jerome, "Life of St. Malchus," in *Early Christian Biographies: Lives of: St. Cyprian, by Pontius; St. Ambrose, by Paulinus; St. Augustine, by Possidius; St. Anthony, by St. Athanasius; St. Paul the First Hermit, St. Hilarion, and Malchus, by St. Jerome; St. Epiphanius, by Ennodius; with a Sermon on the Life of St. Honoratus, by St. Hilary*, translated by Roy J. Deferrari et al., *The Fathers of the Church*, 15 (Washington, DC: Catholic Univ. of America, 1964), 287–97.

⁶⁰ Cf. Jerome, "Ad Eustochium," §20.

⁶¹ Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, PL 23.213B.

⁶² Cf. Godman's comments about Aldhelm's *De virginitate*: "The mention of virginity is often made in no more than a perfunctory aside, as an instance of the miraculous virtue distinguishing the *athletae Christi*." *Alcuin: The Bishops, Kings, and Saints of York*, ed. and trans. Peter Godman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), lxxxiii.

⁶³ Aldhelm clearly sets up this opposition early in the prose version when he contrasts married women and virgins, decking the married women out in gold and jewels, with fancy hair-dos and makeup, while the virgins adorn themselves with modesty and virtuous behavior. "De virginitate," §XVII.

⁶⁴ Aldhelm, "De virginitate," §LVI and §LVIII.

⁶⁵ Ibid., §XVII. "The unmarried (whose thoughts are of the Lord) thinks upon how she might please God; thus she who is married (whose thoughts are of the world) thinks upon how she might please her husband." [my translation]

⁶⁶ Aldhelm, "Carmen de virginitate," 87–90. "Finally, the nuptial life receives some who, having yielded to the law of marriage, live rightly and by an effort of the mind strive to keep the precepts of God while remaining under the law of marriage." [my translation] Cf. *Grégoire le Grand: Règle Pastorale*, ed. Floribert Rommel and trans. Charles Morel, Sources Chrétiennes, 381–82 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1992), III.27. (See Chapter One n. 156.)

⁶⁷ Aldhelm, "De virginitate," §XXXIII, 274. "The mind devoted to God neither yields to the arrogance of threats nor is caressed by the softness of allurements." [my translation] This quotation comes from the *Life of Babilas*. Similar statements can be found in the *Lives* of Christina (§XLVII), Thecla (1981–83), the Three Sisters (2268–70), etc.

⁶⁸ Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, §20. "in view of the purity of the body of Christ, all sexual intercourse is unclean." Jerome, *Against Jovinian*, §20.

⁶⁹ Lees and Overing, "Before History, Before Difference," 322.

⁷⁰ While commenting on Aldhelm's style in the prose *Lives* of Thecla and Eulalia, Andy Orchard brings out the point that "amidst this rich display of rhetorical (and largely verse-derived) pyrotechnics, it is perhaps inevitable that the rather thin narrative content of the passage is all but submerged. The stories of Thecla and Eulalia are composed of a number of quite commonplace and scarcely specific details, and by his frequent use of stylistic devices Aldhelm makes it clear that his interest lies in the telling and not in the tale." *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, 11.

⁷¹ Aldhelm, "De virginitate," §XLV, 298–99. The poetic account is found in "Carmen de virginitate," 1925–74.

⁷² Aldhelm, "De virginitate," §XLV. "who, for the sake of preserving her purity, scorns like the pale yellow slough of the stinking sewer every glorious gift of adornments from her suitor, the son of the prefect, so that he might obtain the desired marriage." [my translation] Cf. "Carmen de virginitate," 1929–41.

⁷³ A quick analysis of Aldhelm's use of direct discourse in his prose narration of the saints' *Lives* shows that 9 out of 34 male saints speak in direct discourse (26.5%) and 4 female saints out of 22 speak directly (18.2%), indicating that fewer female saints are given direct discourse. However, the male saints spoke an average of 4.05 lines each, while the female saints spoke an average of 4.1 lines each, making the average number of lines equal between both sexes.

⁷⁴ Pseudo-Ambrose, "Epistola I," *PL*, 17.736A–C. "who has presented sufficiently better ornaments to me . . . [who] has pledged (betrothed) me with the ring of his own faithfulness . . . [who] has supplied me with lively and flashing gems. . . . He has clothed me with a robe of state, woven with gold . . . his blood has decorated my cheeks." [my translation] Cf. Aldhelm, "De virginitate," §XLV, 298, and

Prose Works, 112. The parallel passage in the “Carmen de virginitate” is paraphrased rather than quoted, (lines 1941–45).

⁷⁵ Aldhelm, “Carmen de virginitate,” 1936–41.

⁷⁶ The Latin word *gena*, -ae refers to the part of the face from the cheekbones to the forehead, and so can refer to the cheeks, eyelids, or eye sockets (Lewis and Short). If Agnes’s Lover decorates her *genas* with his blood, then we may certainly understand the idea of makeup, although whether rouge (which is my inclination) or eye shadow is open to debate. (See below, p. 173 and p. 334 note 56, where Ælfric, apparently understanding that Agnes’s eyes were decorated, translates *genae* with *eah-hringas* ‘eyes or eye sockets.’)

⁷⁷ Aldhelm, “De virginitate,” §XXXVII. “by no means will the outwardly unblemished chastity of the body be reckoned to deserve the suitable distinction of vigorous integrity unless the chastity of the soul, by whose mastery the unrestrained impudence of the wantonness of the flesh is reined in, also . . . inwardly clings harmoniously with solidity to its mate.” [my translation]

⁷⁸ Ibid., §LVIII. “For every prerogative of pure virginity is retained solely in the protection of a free mind rather than contained in the narrow confines of the flesh, and more is wholesomely preserved by the inflexible decision of the voluntary will than by being completely brought down to nothing in the confined servitude of the body.” [my translation]

⁷⁹ See, for instance, Aldhelm’s comments upon Julian’s handsome looks (metrical, 1263–64); Basilissa’s beauty (prose §XXXVI); Eugenia’s hair (prose §XLIV, metrical, 1891); Demetria’s physical beauty and adornment (metrical, 2177); and the beauty of Joseph (prose §LIII). As one can see, Aldhelm is not consistent in his treatment of the saints between the prose and metrical versions.

⁸⁰ See Aldhelm, “De virginitate,” §XXXII and “Carmen de virginitate,” 976–78. Using the prose version as a test case, I find that, aside from descriptions of torture, Aldhelm directs the audience’s attention to the beauty or physical characteristics of the saint’s body 4 out of 34 times for the men (12%) and 4 out of 22 times for the women (18%). The percentage for the women, however, is somewhat skewed in that three of the four instances occur in one story about three sisters. If the figures are adjusted to take the unusual instance of this triple-play into account, the numbers change to 2 out of 20 for the women, or 10%. These figures only include the virgin saints, they do not include such examples as Joseph, who later married, or Judith, who was a widow.

⁸¹ See Aldhelm, “De virginitate,” §XXXV, §XXXVII, §XL, §XLIII, §XLV, §XLVI, and §LI.

⁸² Aldhelm also omits details from this story as he has done with others. The fact that Chrysanthus’s father is trying to convince his son to honor the pagan gods and goddesses is clear in the Latin original, but not in Aldhelm’s rendition.

⁸³ Aldhelm, “De virginitate,” §XXXV. “Taking him from his squalid prison, he [the father] dressed him in silken garments and sent him into the dining room where very beautiful girls adorned in sumptuous dresses were preparing the luxurious delights of wine and the sumptuous entertainment of a feast, combining unrestrained shrieks of joy with the light-hearted embraces of sexual play, so that they might soften the iron resolve of the youth with such blandishments.” Aldhelm, *Prose Works*, 97. Cf. Boninus Mombritius, “Passio Sanctorum Martyrum Chrysanthi et Dariae,” in *Sanctuarium seu Vitae Sanctorum*, Vol. I (Paris: Albert Fontemoing, 1910), 271–78, at 272.

⁸⁴ Aldhelm, “Carmen de virginitate,” 1158–69. The image of Christ’s kisses appears also in the metrical Lives of Cecilia (1712 – 15), Eustochium (2136 – 38), and Demetrias (2184 – 86).

⁸⁵ Aldhelm, "De virginitate," §XXXV; "Carmen de virginitate," 1186–1219.

⁸⁶ See Galatians 3:28. See also Jerome's brief explication of this verse in *Contra Rufinum*, §29.

⁸⁷ What we are able to know of Bede's life and education has been well documented in such works as Peter Hunter Blair's *The World of Bede* (Martin Secker and Warburg, 1970; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Benedicta Ward's *The Venerable Bede*, Cistercian Studies Series, 169 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1998); and *Famulus Christi: Essays in Commemoration of the Thirteenth Centenary of the Birth of the Venerable Bede*, ed. Gerald Bonner (London: SPCK, 1976). In the interests of avoiding a lengthy digression, I shall not here duplicate their excellent work.

⁸⁸ Ward, *Venerable Bede*, 8; Kaczynski, "Bede's Commentaries on Luke and Mark and the Formation of a Patristic Canon," in *Anglo-Latin and its Heritage: Essays in Honour of A. G. Rigg on his 64th Birthday*, ed. Siân Echard and Gernot R. Wieland (Turnholt: Brepols, 2001), 17–26, at 19.

⁸⁹ Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women*, 8 and 207, and Foot, *Veiled Women*, 22.

⁹⁰ M. L. W. Laistner, "The Library of the Venerable Bede," in *Bede: His Life, Times, and Writings*, ed. A. Hamilton Thompson (1935; reprint, New York: Russell & Russell, 1966), 237–66, at 247–48 and 263–65; and Joseph F. Kelly, "Bede's Use of Augustine for His *Commentarium in principium Genesis*," in *Augustine: Biblical Exegete*, ed. Frederick Van Fleteren and Joseph C. Schnaubelt (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 189–96, at 189–90.

⁹¹ Laistner, "The Library of the Venerable Bede," 248–51 and 263–64; and Kelly, "Bede's Use of Augustine," 190.

⁹² David Hurst, introduction to *The Commentary on the Seven Catholic Epistles of Bede the Venerable*, Cistercian Studies Series, 82 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1985), xvi. Hurst notes that "Bede's reputation as a scripture scholar, in fact, has generally been that of a clever compiler of the insights of previous exegetes rather than that of a thinker of any originality. To some extent this is true. Bede's commentaries have the appearance of being nothing more than a kind of collage of passages gleaned from preceding writers."

⁹³ Laistner, *Thought and Letters*, 163.

⁹⁴ Hurst, introduction to *Catholic Epistles*, xvii.

⁹⁵ Ward, *Venerable Bede*, 69.

⁹⁶ Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*, 207. (Emphasis mine.) Hollis's argument stems from the fact that, unlike the anonymous *Vita S. Cuthberti*, Bede's *vita* of the same saint does not give prominence to the personal friendship between Cuthbert and Abbess Ælfflæd, the powerful ruler at that time of the double house of Whitby. Hollis's premise is that Bede deliberately ignored the relationship because he disapproved of the exercise of royal female power to sidestep the custom of the church. Ælfflæd had Cuthbert dedicate a new church within her jurisdiction, rather than having the bishop of the diocese do so as was customary. This custom, however, lacked official formulation until after Bede's death (in 735) at the Council of *Clofesho* (which took place in 747). The general statement of the Council was followed later by specific definition at the Synod of Chelsea in 816—well after Bede's death.

⁹⁷ Bede, *In principium Genesis*, 1.

⁹⁸ Kelly, "Bede's Use of Augustine," 190.

⁹⁹ Bede, *In principium Genesis*, 48–50.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 26. The quotation comes from Augustine, *De Genesi contra Manicheos*, I.17.28. "Humankind, therefore, was not created to the image of God according to the body but according to the understanding of the mind. And yet he has in his body a certain property which makes this image known, that he was made with upright stature. . ." [my translation]

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 28. "God, however, created one male and one female at first, not like the other creatures, which he created not one but many in their separate kinds, in order that through this, the fact that the human race would remember itself to have arisen entirely from one parent would draw it together with a tighter bond of mutual love. For this reason, after the holy testimony had said, "And God created man, to the image of God he created him," it was immediately added, "male and female he created them"; it did not wish to add, "to the image of God he created them." The woman truly was created to the image of God in that she too possessed a rational mind." [my translation]

¹⁰² Kelly, "Bede's Use of Augustine," 193.

¹⁰³ Bede, *In principium Genesis*, 61. Augustine's comments come from *De Genesi ad litteram* XI.30.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 64–65. "Pride! Did he never say 'I have sinned'? He has the disgrace of confusion and has not the humility of confession." and "Nor does this one [the woman] confess the sin, but she blames it on another—unequal in sex [to the man, but] equal in arrogance!" Bede took Augustine's comments from *De Genesi ad litteram*, XI.35.

¹⁰⁵ Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, XI.37.

¹⁰⁶ Bede, *In principium Genesis*, 67–68.

¹⁰⁷ *Bede the Venerable: Excerpts from the Works of Saint Augustine on the Letters of the Blessed Apostle Paul*, trans. David Hurst, Cistercian Studies Series, 183 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1999), 145–46. There is no printed edition of Bede's collection of excerpts from the works of Augustine on the Pauline epistles, therefore the Latin text is provided here and in note 110 from *Sancti Aurelii Augustini de trinitate libri XV*, ed. W. J. Mountain, CCSL, 50 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1968), VI.9.10. "Cum filio enim pater deus; solus autem filius Christus est maxime quia iam uerbum caro factum loquitur secundum quam humilitatem eius etiam maior est pater sicut dicit: Quoniam pater maior me est, ut hoc ipsum deum esse quod illi cum patre unum est caput sit hominis mediatoris quod ipse solus est. Si enim mentem recte dicimus principale hominis, id est tamquam caput humanae substantiae, cum ipse homo cum mente sit homo, cur non multo congruentius multoque magis uerbum cum patre quod simul deus est caput est Christi, quamuis Christus homo nisi cum uerbo quod caro factum est intellegi non possit?"

¹⁰⁸ *Bede the Venerable: Excerpts*, 146. "Numquidnam igitur fideles feminae sexum corporis amiserunt? Sed quia ibi renouantur ad imaginem dei ubi sexus nullus est, ibi factus est homo ad imaginem dei ubi sexus nullus est, hoc est in spiritu mentis suae. . . . quasi mulier non renouetur spiritu mentis suae, qui renouatur in agnitionem dei secundum imaginem eius qui creauit eum? Sed quia sexu corporis distat a uiro, rite potuit in eius corporali uelamento figurari pars illa rationis quae ad temporalia gubernanda deflectitur ut non maneat imago dei nisi ex qua parte mens hominis aeternis rationibus conspiciendis uel consulendis adhaerescit, quam non solum masculos sed etiam feminas habere." Augustine, *De trinitate*, XII.7.12–13.

¹⁰⁹ Kaczynski, "Bede's Commentaries on Luke and Mark," 21.

¹¹⁰ Bede, "Expositio Actuum Apostolorum," in *Bedae Venerabilis Opera, Pars II, Opera Exegetica*, CCSL, 121 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1983), 93–94; and *The Venerable Bede: Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, trans. Lawrence T. Martin, Cistercian Studies Series, 117 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1989), 187–88.

¹¹¹ Bede, "Expositio Actuum Apostolorum," 47.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 47. "So it is with the saints. As they dwell on high by the merits of their works, through mental contemplation they simultaneously direct their attention with wisdom toward things above, while always watching out for themselves with prudent discretion." Bede, *Acts of the Apostles*, 91.

¹¹³ Bede, "Expositio Actuum Apostolorum," 48. "The widows are the repentant soul's holy thoughts, which for a time had lost the vigor of their original purpose, as though they had lost for a time the guidance of a husband. They must humbly pray for the soul which has done wrong." Bede, *Acts of the Apostles*, 92.

¹¹⁴ Augustine, *De trinitate*, XII.18.

¹¹⁵ Bede, "In Epistolas VII Catholicas," in *Bedae Venerabilis Opera, Pars II, Opera Exegetica*, CCSL, 121 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1983), 222.

¹¹⁶ *Sancti Gregorii Magni Moralia in Iob, Libri XI–XXII*, ed. Marc Adriaen, CCSL, vol. 143A (Turnholt: Brepols, 1979), XIX.10. Gregory quotes this passage from an anonymous commentary on the books of Kings that was attributed to Eucherius of Lyons: *Commentarii in Libros Regum*, IV.7, PL 50.1174C. Bede is most likely thinking of Gregory's explanation (which is not found in the anonymous commentary) of how Elijah's weakness demonstrates that the power he had shown before came from God, not from himself.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 243.

¹¹⁸ Ward, *Venerable Bede*, 57.

¹¹⁹ Bede, "Epistolas VII Catholicas," 244. "If we abstain from sexual relations, we accord honor; if we do not abstain, it is evident that sleeping together is contrary to honor. . . . He mentions, therefore, that prayers are hindered by the conjugal duty because as often as I perform what is due my wife I am not able to pray. But if according to another statement of the apostle we must pray without ceasing, I must therefore never gratify my conjugal duty lest I be hindered at my hour of prayer in which I am ordered always to persevere." Bede, *Catholic Epistles*, 96.

¹²⁰ Ward, *Venerable Bede*, 57.

¹²¹ Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, PL 23.220B–220C. "The same Apostle in another place commands us to pray always. If we are to pray always, it follows that we must never be in the bondage of wedlock, for as often as I render my wife her due, I cannot pray. . . . so [he] now says that prayers are hindered by the performance of marriage duty. . . . If we abstain from intercourse, we give honour to our wives: if we do not abstain, it is clear that insult is the opposite of honour." Jerome, "Against Jovinian," in *St. Jerome: Letters and Selected Works*, A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series, Vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), I.7. Ward

may be excused for not recognizing the quotation, however, for it is not noted by David Hurst in either the Corpus Christianorum edition or the translation for the Cistercian Studies Series.

¹²² Ibid., 232. "seek first the simple basic elements of faith from the breasts of your mother, the Church, that is, from the teachers of the Old and New Testaments, who have written or also preach to you orally the divine words." Bede, *Catholic Epistles*, 80.

¹²³ Lees and Overing, *Double Agents*, 9–10.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 15–39.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 23.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 23.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 29.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 29.

¹²⁹ For the "Life of Gregory the Great," see Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, II.1, 122–35; the "Life of Hild" is found at IV.23, 404–14; and the "Life of Cædmon" at IV.24, 413–21.

¹³⁰ Bede, "Life of Cædmon," 414. "In the monastery of this abbess. . ." Ibid., 415.

¹³¹ Ibid., 414. "a certain brother, specially marked out by the grace of God." Ibid., 415.

¹³² Ibid., 410. "whom all who knew her agreed to call 'mother' because of the distinguishing mark of her devotion and grace."

¹³³ Lees and Overing, *Double Agents*, 28.

¹³⁴ Bede, "Life of Hild," 412.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 412.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 406–12.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 408. "She established the same rule of life as in the other monastery, teaching them to observe strictly the virtues of justice, devotion, and chastity and other virtues too, but above all things, to continue in peace and charity." Ibid., 409.

¹³⁸ Ward, *Bede the Venerable*, 90.

¹³⁹ See, for example, his comments in James J. M. Curry, "Alcuin, *De ratione animae*: A Text with Introduction, Critical Apparatus, and Translation" (Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1966), §8.

¹⁴⁰ Alcuin: *The Bishops, Kings, and Saints of York*, ed. and trans. Godman, 1454–57. "More than once he took the pilgrim's route to foreign lands / with joy, led by love of holy wisdom and hope / of finding new books and studies there / to bring back with him."

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 1526–30.

¹⁴² L. D. Reynolds and N. G. Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars: A Guide to the Transmission of Greek and Latin Literature*, 3rd ed. (New York: Clarendon Press, 1991), 93. See also Simon Coates's comments in "The Bishop as Benefactor and Civic Patron: Alcuin, York, and Episcopal Authority in Anglo-Saxon England," *Speculum* 71 (1996), 529–58, at 533–34.

¹⁴³ George H. Brown, "The Preservation and Transmission of Northumbrian Culture on the Continent: Alcuin's Debt to Bede," in *The Preservation and Transmission of Anglo-Saxon Culture*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach and Joel T. Rosenthal, *Studies in Medieval Culture*, 40 (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997), 159–75, at 164. See also Lapidge and Rosier, *Aldhelm: the Poetic Works*, 101; Kaczynski, "Bede's Commentaries on Luke and Mark," 25; and Godman, *Alcuin: The Bishops, Kings, and Saints of York*, lxxv–lxxviii.

¹⁴⁴ George K. Anderson, *The Literature of the Anglo-Saxons* (1957; reprint Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997), 235, and Laistner, *Thought and Letters*, 201; see also Levison, *England and the Continent*, 157.

¹⁴⁵ Reynolds and Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars*, 93.

¹⁴⁶ Marcia L. Colish, *Medieval Foundations of the Western Intellectual Tradition 400–1400*, *Yale Intellectual History of the West*, 1 (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 1997), 66–67.

¹⁴⁷ Willemien Otten, "Carolingian Theology," in *The Medieval Theologians*, ed. G. R. Evans (Maldon, MA: Blackwell, 2001), 69.

¹⁴⁸ Wilhelm Levison, *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century: The Ford Lectures Delivered in the University of Oxford in the Hilary Term, 1943* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1946), 151.

¹⁴⁹ Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, "The Use of Bede's Writings on Genesis in Alcuin's *Interrogationes*," *Sacris Erudiri: Jaarboek voor Godsdienstwetenschappen* 23 (1978–79): 463–83, at 465. O'Brien O'Keeffe demonstrates Alcuin's extensive use of Bede's commentary throughout the first part of the *Interrogationes*, indicating the Augustinian works upon which Bede depended as well. E. Ann Matter, however, indicates that Alcuin also borrowed much from the works of Gregory and Jerome, but does not identify which works. See E. Ann Matter, "Exegesis and Christian Education: The Carolingian Model," in *Schools of Thought in the Christian Tradition*, ed. Patrick Henry (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 90–105, at 92; and John William Houghton, "(Re)Sounding Brass: Alcuin's New Castings in the Questions and Answers on Genesis," *Proceedings of the PMR Conference* 16–17 (1992–93): 149–61, at 157.

¹⁵⁰ O'Brien O'Keeffe, "The Use of Bede's Writings," 481–83.

¹⁵¹ William Procter Stoneman, "A Critical Edition of Ælfric's Translation of Alcuin's *Interrogationes Sigwulfi Presbiteri* and of the Related Texts *De creatore et creatura* and *De sex etatibus huius seculi*" (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 1982), 130. Stoneman's dissertation also provides a facing page edition of Alcuin's Latin text from the extant manuscripts, which is what I quote here. "Question 40: Why did it next say 'And God created humankind to his own image' when before it had said 'to our image'? Response: So that both the plurality of persons and the unity of substance might be implied." [my translation]

¹⁵² Cf. Bede, *In Genesim*, I.27, and Augustine, *De trinitate*, XII.6.

¹⁵³ Stoneman, "Critical Edition of Ælfric's Translation of Alcuin's *Interrogationes*," 146. "Why is the woman read to have been made from the side of the sleeping man and not to have been formed from

the earth like the man? Response: Certainly on account of a mystery signifying that, for the sake of the Church, Christ slept upon the cross, from whose side flowed the font of our salvation.” [my translation]

¹⁵⁴ Bede, *In Genesim*, II.20–22. “For it signified that from the side of Christ, slumbering upon the cross by way of death, the sacraments of salvation would go forth, namely the blood and water, from which a bride, the church, would be formed for him.” [my translation]

¹⁵⁵ Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, XI.30.39. “So then, *the serpent said to the woman: You shall not die the death; for God knew that on the day you take a bite of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like gods, gaining knowledge of good and evil* (Gn 3:4–5). When would the woman have believed this assertion, telling them they had been held back by God from something good and beneficial, if there had not already been in her mind that love of her own independent authority and a certain proud over-confidence in herself, of which she had to be convicted and then humbled by that very temptation? Finally, not content with the serpent’s words she inspected the tree herself, and *saw that it was good for eating and fine to look at* (Gn 3:6), and not believing that she could die from it, she assumed, in my opinion, that God’s words, *if you take a bite of it you shall die the death*, were not to be taken literally, but had some other meaning. And that is why she took some of its fruit and had a bite, and also gave it to her husband with her, maybe with a word of encouragement which scripture does not mention, leaving it to be understood; or did the man perhaps not need any encouragement now, when he observed that she had not died of that food?” Augustine, “The Literal Meaning of Genesis,” in *On Genesis*, trans. Edmund Hill, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Part I—Books, Vol. 13* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2002), XI.30.39.

¹⁵⁶ Bede, *In Genesim*, III.4–5.

¹⁵⁷ Alcuin, *Interrogationes Sigwulfi*, PL 100, 523C. “Question 66: How was the woman able to believe the words of the serpent, that she had been divinely held back from any good thing? Response: Because perhaps beforehand there was present in her mind a certain love of her own potential, and a certain lofty confidence in herself, which through that temptation were to be subdued and humbled.” [One’s choice of words here is important. I have chosen to translate *propriae potestatis* as “her own potential” because, in her as yet unfallen state, the woman would not have known the corruption of a love for her own power. The temptation would rather have appealed to her sense of what is good (this understanding of the event is portrayed in the contemporaneous poem, *Genesis B*).] “Question 67: Why did the woman contemplate the tree after the persuading of the serpent? Response: So that she might search out whether anything in it was deadly; when, however, she found no such thing in it, she boldly tasted of it. Question 68: [But] wherefore did the man assent to the woman? Response: Because perchance he perceived that she had not died by the food, and it could be that they thought the creator had said ‘If you eat from it, you will die the death’ for the sake of some [non-literal] meaning.” [my translation]

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 100, 524C–D. “Question 78: One might inquire when it is said, ‘And you will be under the authority of the man,’ if before sinning the woman was also under the authority of the man? Response: She was, certainly, but with that servitude which operates by means of love and casts out fear; but yet afterward, with the conditional fear of servitude, which works by means of discipline.” [my translation] According to J. F. Niermeyer, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), *disciplina* at this time had a variety of meanings ranging from instruction to orderly living to a monastic regimen to punishment or punishment by force, thus the word was open to multivalent interpretation. Since the modern word “discipline” still carries this range of meanings, I have chosen to use it rather than attempt to refine the meaning. I find it doubtful, however, based upon the general tone of Alcuin’s writings, that he meant the word in its harshest senses.

¹⁵⁹ Anonymous, *Commentarii in Genesim in tres libros distributi*, PL 50,914C. "One might inquire when it says this, 'You will be under the authority of the man,' if the woman had not sinned would she be under the authority of the man? She would, certainly, but with that servitude which operates by means of love and casts out fear; but after sinning, with the fear of conditional servitude which works by means of discipline, coming from the punishment of the curse and not rather from an equality of natures." [my translation]

¹⁶⁰ John Cavadini, "The Sources and Theology of Alcuin's *De Fide Sanctae et Individuae Trinitatis*," *Traditio* 46 (1991): 123–46, at 132.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 132.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 142–45, and Donald Bullough, "Alcuin and the Kingdom of Heaven," in *Carolingian Essays: Andrew W. Mellon Lectures in Early Christian Studies*, ed. Ute-Renate Blumenthal (Washington, DC: Catholic Univ. of America, 1983), 1–70, at 63.

¹⁶³ Curry, "Alcuin, *De ratione animae*," 3–4.

¹⁶⁴ E. Ann Matter, "A Carolingian Schoolbook? The Manuscript Tradition of Alcuin's *De fide* and Related Treatises," in *The Whole Book: Cultural Perspectives on the Medieval Miscellany*, ed. Stephen G. Nichols and Siegfried Wenzel (Ann Arbor, MI: Univ. of Michigan Press, 2001), 145–52, at 147.

¹⁶⁵ Otten, "Carolingian Theology," 69. Also see Alcuin's own comments in the preface, PL 101,12B–12C.

¹⁶⁶ John Cavadini, who is editing *De fide sanctae et individuae trinitatis*, observes, "if the *De fide* is similar to anything, it is not to a *florilegium* but rather to a creed. It retains the striving for clarity and brevity which is characteristic of a creed, while it manages to preserve as well, and in the same proportion, the dramatic or narrative-like element which characterizes a creed. . . . What is astonishing is that Alcuin is able to retain this credal flavor in a work that is so much longer than anything which could actually be called a creed. One could loosely think of it as a kind of expansion or exposition of the Creed." Cavadini, "Sources and Theology of Alcuin's *De Fide*," 140.

¹⁶⁷ Alcuin, *Quaestiones XXVIII ad Fredegisum*, PL, 101,62C. Question: "If the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one substance, why is it said that the Son alone has been incarnated?" Response: "Because one is the person of the Son, one [the person] of the Father, one [the person] of the Holy Spirit. And indeed only the person of the Son has been incarnated, yet with the whole holy Trinity, whose works are undivided, effecting the same incarnation." [my translation]

¹⁶⁸ Alcuin, *De fide sanctae et individuae trinitatis*, PL, 101, 41C–42A. "From one sentence of the Apostle the two natures of the Son of God are understood (one in which he is by way of all [things] equal to the Father; the other in which he is inferior to the Father) where he says: 'who, although he was in the form of God, did not think being equal to God robbery, but emptied himself, taking upon himself the form of a servant.' Consequently certain things are said in holy Scripture in order that the Son might be understood [to be] lesser, just as he himself says, 'The Father is greater than I.' But some things are said in order that he may be shown to be equal to the Father, as in that place where he says, 'The Father and I are one.' 'One' because of the oneness of the substance; 'are' because of the property of the persons. The wise reader ought to consider most carefully what is said with respect to each form. Although both in the form of a servant and in the form of God, the Son is the very same, one, only-begotten of God the Father; in the form of God [he is] equal to the Father, in the form of a servant [he is] inferior to the Father." [my translation]

¹⁶⁹ Matter, "A Carolingian Schoolbook?" 150.

¹⁷⁰ A ternary is a three-in-one idea as "a point of comparison to the Trinity." Paul E. Szarmach, "Alfred, Alcuin, and the Soul," in *Manuscript, Narrative, Lexicon: Essays in Honor of Whitney F. Bolton*, ed. Robert Boenig and Kathleen Davis (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell Univ. Press, 2000), 129. On the absence of the 'psychological' analogies, see Cavadini, "Sources and Theology of Alcuin's *De Fide*," 138.

¹⁷¹ Curry, "Alcuin, *De ratione animae*," 3.

¹⁷² Ibid., 1; also Peter Clemons, "Mens absentia cogitans in *The Seafarer* and *The Wanderer*," in *Medieval Literature and Civilization: Studies in Memory of G. N. Garmonsway*, ed. D. A. Pearsall and R. A. Waldron (London: Athelone Press, 1969), 62–77, at 63.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 65.

¹⁷⁴ Curry, "Alcuin, *De ratione animae*," 24.

¹⁷⁵ Alcuin, "Epistola 309," in *Epistolae Karolini Aevi*, ed. Ernest Dümmler, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Epistularum, 4 (1895; Munich: Monumenta Germaniae Historica, 1978), 474. (Dümmler's edition only provides the sections of the letter in which Alcuin addresses Gundrada. Quotations from the body of the treatise will come from Curry's unpublished edition.) "Your reverent concern and zeal, praiseworthy in the sight of God, have prompted you to request of our devotion some account of the nature of the soul, because of certain inquiries which, as you tell me, have been eagerly pursued among you for the past year." Curry, "Alcuin, *De ratione animae*," 74.

¹⁷⁶ *Einhardi Vita Karoli Magni*, 6th ed., ed. G. H. Pertz, Scriptores Rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum ex Monumentis Germaniae Historicis separatim editi, 25 (1911; Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1965), §24. "During his meal he would listen to a public reading or some other entertainment. Stories would be recited for him, or the doings of the ancients told again. He took great pleasure in the books of Saint Augustine and especially in those which are called *The City of God*." Einhard, "The Life of Charlemagne," in *Two Lives of Charlemagne*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (New York: Penguin Books, 1969), 49–90, §24.

¹⁷⁷ Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Growth of Medieval Theology, The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 3 (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1978), 9. Pelikan notes that the allusion is to *De trinitate* I.5.

¹⁷⁸ On the matter of court discussions, see Levison, *England and the Continent*, 155; and regarding access to the court library, see Alcuin's recommendation and request to Gundrada in *Alcuini Epistolae*, 309, ed. Dümmler, §13, 474.

¹⁷⁹ For analyses of the regulations concerning women in the capitularies of 779 and 789, see Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society*, 127–48; and Patricia Ranft, *Women and the Religious Life in Premodern Europe* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 31–38.

¹⁸⁰ Dümmler's edition of Alcuinian letters contains two that are addressed to Gundrada (letters 241 and 309, which is made up of the personal matter from *De ratione animae*) and two more that are believed to have been meant for her but in which she is not specifically named (letters 204 and 279).

¹⁸¹ Curry, "Alcuin, *De ratione animae*," § V, p. 54. "For just as in bodily faculties man excels animals because of the power of speech, so too in the soul he is superior to them only because of reason, which,

like a sovereign queen on the high throne of justice, ought to rule and restrain all fleshly lusts and torments of the spirit." Ibid., §V, p. 83.

¹⁸² Ambrose, *De virginitate*, I.7.37, and Aldhelm, "Carmen de virginitate," 134–37.

¹⁸³ Curry, "Alcuin, *De ratione animae*," §V, p. 54.

¹⁸⁴ Kaczynski, "Bede's Commentaries on Luke and Mark," 21.

¹⁸⁵ Augustine, *De trinitate*, XII.14. "What happens is that the soul, loving its own power, slides away from the whole which is common to all into the part which is its own private property. By following God's directions and being perfectly governed by his laws it could enjoy the whole universe of creation; but by the apostasy of pride which is called the beginning of sin it strives to grab something more than the whole and to govern it by its own laws. . . . In this way it defiles itself foully with a fanciful sort of fornication . . ." Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Part I—Books*, vol. 5 (New York: New City Press, 1991), XII.14.

¹⁸⁶ Curry, "Alcuin, *De ratione animae*," §III, pp. 45–46. "It [the soul] was created noble by its Maker but renders itself ignoble through its own fault when it turns aside from the service of God, preferring to make use of its own power—an act which is the prime evil for every rational creature." Ibid., §III, p. 77.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., §VI, pp. 55–56. "Love is inborn in [the soul], a love which must be guided by the intellect and curbed by the reason from illicit pleasures, so that it may love the things which ought to be loved. According to its functions it receives various names: soul, as giving life; spirit, when contemplating; sensation, when perceiving; intellect, as knowing; mind, as comprehending; reason, when examining; will, when determining; and memory, when recalling. Yet these are not discrete in substance as they are in name, for they all are but one soul." Ibid., §VI, pp. 84–85.

¹⁸⁸ Cavadini, "Sources and Theology of Alcuin's *De Fide*," 142.

Notes to The Daughters of Eve

¹ Bishop Æthelwold, one of the most avid advocates of the Benedictine Reform in late Anglo-Saxon England, earned himself a reputation as a learned scholar and demanding teacher who expected high quality work from his students. He also translated at least one Latin work, the *Regula S. Benedicti*, into Old English, and is reputed to have often translated Latin passages into English in order to teach his pupils. Under Æthelwold's leadership, Winchester produced enough translations of Latin works into Old English that reflected Æthelwold's own approach to translation in the *Regula S. Benedicti* for modern scholars to speak of Winchester as the source of "Standard Old English." See Michael Lapidge, "Æthelwold as Scholar and Teacher," in *Bishop Æthelwold: His Career and Influence*, ed. Barbara Yorke (1988; reprint, Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1997), 89–117, at 103–09.

¹ Ælfric, "Old English Preface to the Translation of *Genesis*," in *Ælfric's Prefaces*, ed. Jonathan Wilcox, *Durham Medieval Texts*, 9 (Durham: Durham Medieval Texts, 1994), 116–19, at 117. "We also say beforehand that the book is exceedingly profound to understand in the spiritual sense. We will not be writing any more than the bare history, yet it seems to the unlearned that all the meaning is contained in that single-faceted history. Nevertheless the spiritual sense is very far from that history."

See also "Ælfric's Preface to Genesis," in *The Old English Version of the Heptateuch, Ælfric's Treatise on the Old and New Testament, and his Preface to Genesis*, ed. S. J. Crawford, EETS, o.s., 160 (1922; reprint, London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969), 76–80, at 77. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Old English are my own.

² See Milton McC. Gatch, *Preaching and Theology in Anglo-Saxon England: Ælfric and Wulfstan* (Buffalo, NY: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1977), 14; James Hurt, *Ælfric*, Twayne's English Authors Series, 131 (New York: Twayne, 1972), 82; Theodore H. Leinbaugh, "Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* I and the Boulogne Sermon: Editorial, Authorial and Textual Problems," in *The Editing of Old English: Papers from the 1990 Manchester Conference*, ed. D. G. Scragg and Paul E. Szarmach (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1994), 191–211, at 209.

³ Mary Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990), 263.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 23–24, and Mary Clayton, *The Apocryphal Gospels of Mary in Anglo-Saxon England*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, 26 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998), 116.

⁵ Clayton, *Cult of the Virgin Mary*, 15–19. See also Lynne Grundy's comments in *Books and Grace: Ælfric's Theology*, King's College London Medieval Studies, 6 (London: King's College London Centre for Late Antique and Medieval Studies, 1991), 95–7.

⁶ Clayton, *The Apocryphal Gospels of Mary*, 111.

⁷ Clayton, *Cult of the Virgin Mary*, 42–47.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 265.

⁹ Christopher A. Jones, *Ælfric's Letter to the Monks of Eynsham*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, 24 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998), 3 and 10.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹² *Ibid.*, 44.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 46–51.

¹⁴ Lapidge, "Æthelwold as Scholar and Teacher," 110.

¹⁵ Gatch, *Preaching and Theology*, 120–21.

¹⁶ Grundy, *Books and Grace*, 267.

¹⁷ Hurt, *Ælfric*, 47.

¹⁸ William Procter Stoneman, "A Critical Edition of Ælfric's Translation of Alcuin's *Interrogationes Sigwulfi Presbyteri* and of the Related Texts *De Creatore et Creatura* and *De Sex Etatibus Huius Seculi*" (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 1982), 128–29. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Latin are my own. Alcuin: "Question 37: Why did it say 'Let us make' in the plural number?"

Response: In order that three persons in one work might be shown. Question 40: Why did it next say 'And God created humankind to his own image' when before it had said 'to our image'? Response: So that both the plurality of persons and the unity of substance might be implied."

Ælfric: "Why is it said that God said, 'Let us make humankind according to our uniqueness'? 'Let us make' is said, therefore, so that the work of the Holy Trinity in unity might be revealed. The Holy Trinity is perceived in the words 'Let us make,' and the true unity is understood in the words 'to our uniqueness.'"

Cf. Wilcox, ed., "Old English Preface to the translation of *Genesis*," 118: "Oft is seo halige þrinnys geswutelod on þisre bec, swa swa ys on þam worde, þe God cwæp: 'Uton wyrcean mannan to ure anlicnisse'. Mid þam þe he cwæð 'Uton wyrcean' ys seo þrinnis gebicnod; mid þam þe he cwæð 'to ure anlicnisse' ys seo soðe annis geswutelod: he ne cwæð na menigfealdlice, 'to urum anlicnissum', ac anfealdlice, 'to ure anlicnisse'." "Likewise is the holy Trinity revealed in this book, just as is in these words that God said: 'Let us make humankind to our uniqueness.' By those [words] that he said, 'Let us make,' the Trinity is betokened; by those [words] that he said, 'to our uniqueness,' is the true unity revealed. He did not say 'to our uniquenesses,' [meaning] many, but 'to our uniqueness,' [meaning] one."

¹⁹ Stoneman, "Ælfric's Translation of Alcuin's *Interrogationes Sigwulfi Presbyteri*," 146–47. Alcuin: "Question 57: Why is the woman read to have been made from the side of the sleeping man and not to have been formed from the earth like the man? Response: Certainly on account of a mystery signifying that, for the sake of the Church, Christ slept upon the cross, from whose side flowed the font of our salvation."

Ælfric: "Why did God desire to make Eve from the side of Adam when he slept, and not from earth just as he [God] had made him [Adam]? Because of the signification that Christ himself was asleep in death on the cross, and was wounded in the side from whence flowed water and blood to redeem his Church, who is called the pure maiden and bride of Christ." The references to the blood and water and to the bride of Christ are found in the passage in Bede on which Alcuin probably based his question and response. Since Ælfric does not reflect Bede's precise wording, however, it is difficult to tell whether he had Bede, Augustine, or simply the biblical references in mind when he expanded Alcuin's answer.

²⁰ Stoneman, "Ælfric's Translation of Alcuin's *Interrogationes Sigwulfi Presbyteri*," 148–49. Alcuin: "Question 62: Whether the serpent was able to understand the sound of the words of him who spoke through it? Response: It is not believable that it [the serpent] was able to understand what the devil did through it, but just as the demoniac and the insane one speaks what he does not know, so the serpent proclaimed words which it did not understand."

Ælfric: "Whether the serpent spoke to Eve by means of its own understanding? It is not believable that the worm deceived Eve by means of his own understanding, but the devil spoke through the serpent, just as he does through the insane one, and it could not understand the words any more than the insane one does."

²¹ Stoneman, "Ælfric's Translation of Alcuin's *Interrogationes Sigwulfi Presbyteri*," 263. According to Stoneman, the reference may be found in *Bedae Venerabilis Opera, Pars II, Opera Exegetica: Libri Quatuor in Principium Genesis usque ad Nativitatem Isaac et Electionem Ismahelis Adnotationum*, ed. Charles W. Jones, CCSL 118A (Turnholt: Brepols, 1967), I.iii.1 and in Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, XI.28.

²² Alcuin, *Interrogationes Sigwulfi*, PL 100, 523C, *Interrogationes* 66–8.

²³ Ælfric, *Exameron Anglice or The Old English Hexameron*, ed. and trans. S. J. Crawford (Hamburg, 1921; reprint Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968), 397–99. "Our Creator knew fully

when he made Adam, the first-formed human, that he [Adam] would desire to sin by means of the devil's teaching, just as he [Adam] later did."

²⁴ Cf. *Sancti Aurelii Augustini de trinitate libri XV*, ed. W. J. Mountain, CCL, 50 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1968), XII.20 and Jean Cassian, *Conférences, I-VII*, ed. and trans. E. Pichery, Sources Chrétiennes, 42 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1955), V.6.

²⁵ Ælfric, *Hexameron*, 449–55. "Then the devil was grieved in his wicked mind that the human should attain to that joy from which he had fallen because of his pride, and with great envy he then deceived the humans so that they both ate of the forbidden tree and then became mortal and guilty toward their Lord, and then they knew both evil and good."

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 465–66. "Moreover, their nature then became entirely in accordance with temptations and unsubmitive to them for right direction."

²⁷ M. R. Godden, "Anglo-Saxons on the Mind," in *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England: Studies Presented to Peter Clemoes on the Occasion of His Sixty-fifth Birthday*, ed. Michael Lapidge and Helmut Gneuss (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985), 271–98, at 278. The opening sermon is titled "Natiuitas Domini nostri Iesu Christi," and there has been some disagreement among scholars as to whether or not Ælfric originally intended for this particular sermon to introduce his *Lives*. Peter Clemoes opines that *LS XVI*, "De memoria sanctorum" was originally intended to open the collection, but Leinbaugh argues that *LS I* was designed for that purpose. See Peter Clemoes, "Ælfric," in *Continuations and Beginnings: Studies in Old English Literature*, ed. Eric Gerald Stanley (London: Nelson, 1966), 176–209, at 205; Theodore H. Leinbaugh, "Ælfric's *Lives of Saints I* and the Boulogne Sermon: Editorial, Authorial and Textual Problems," in *The Editing of Old English: Papers from the 1990 Manchester Conference*, ed. D. G. Scragg and Paul E. Szarmach (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1994), 191–211, at 192.

²⁸ "Natiuitas Domini nostri Iesu Christi," in *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, ed. Walter W. Skeat. 4 vols., EETS, o.s., 76, 82, 94 and 114 (1881–1900; reprint, 4 vols. in 2, London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966), I, 10–25. For the sake of brevity, each *Life*, after being introduced, will be referred to by its number in Skeat's edition. Citations will be given by volume, page, and line numbers: e.g.: I.10.1–3.

²⁹ For the identification and analysis of Boethius's *De consolazione Philosophiae* and Alcuin's *De ratione animae* as sources for this material, see W. F. Bolton, "The Alfredian Boethius in Ælfric's *Lives of Saints I*," *Notes and Queries* 19 (1972): 406–07; Peter Clemoes, "Mens absentia cogitans in *The Seafarer* and *The Wanderer*," in *Medieval Literature and Civilization: Studies in Memory of G. N. Garmonsway*, ed. D. A. Pearsall and R. A. Waldron (London: Athlone Press, 1969), 62–77; Godden, "Anglo-Saxons on the Mind," 278–85; Leinbaugh, "Ælfric's *Lives of Saints I*," 191–211; and Theodore H. Leinbaugh, "Liturgical Homilies in Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1980).

³⁰ Godden, "Anglo-Saxons on the Mind," 285.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 279.

³² Barbara C. Raw, *Trinity and Incarnation in Anglo-Saxon Art and Thought*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England, 21 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997), 35. "Ælfric's favourite Trinitarian image . . . is that of Augustine: the image in the human soul."

³³ Joyce Hill, "The Preservation and Transmission of Ælfric's *Saints' Lives*: Reader-Reception and Reader-Response in the Early Middle Ages," in *The Preservation and Transmission of Anglo-Saxon*

Culture: Selected Papers from the 1991 Meeting of the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists, ed. Paul E. Szarmach and Joel T. Rosenthal, *Studies in Medieval Culture*, 40 (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997), 405–30, at 422.

³⁴ Skeat, “Preface,” I.4.44–45. “whom the men and women of the monastery honor among themselves with their services.”

³⁵ *Ibid.*, I.4.48.

³⁶ Christopher A. Jones, *Ælfric’s Letter to the Monks of Eynsham*, *Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England*, 24 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998), 2.

³⁷ Malcolm Godden, “Experiments in Genre: The Saints’ Lives in Ælfric’s *Catholic Homilies*,” in *Holy Men and Holy Women: Old English Prose Saints’ Lives and Their Contexts*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1996), 261–87, at 281–82.

³⁸ See Shari Horner, *The Discourse of Enclosure: Representing Women in Old English Literature*, *SUNY Series in Medieval Studies* (Albany, NY: State Univ. of New York Press, 2001), 142–43 and Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*, *The Haskell Lectures on History of Religions*, n.s., 2 (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1981), 81–83.

³⁹ Augustine, *De trinitate*, IX.11, 12. “From where, after all, is the fire of brotherly love kindled in me when I hear about some man who has endured severe tortures in the fine constancy of faith? And if this man is pointed out to me, I am dead set at once on getting in touch with him, on getting to know him, on binding him to myself in friendship. So when I get the chance I approach him, speak to him, engage him in conversation, express my regard for him with whatever words I can, and in turn I hope he will develop and express a regard for me; and I try to achieve spiritual rapport with him by believing his inner disposition because I am quite unable in so short a time to judge it on the basis of thorough observation. And so I love a faithful and brave man with a chaste and brotherly love. . . . Thus it is that in that eternal truth according to which all temporal things were made we observe with the eye of the mind the form according to which we are and according to which we do anything with true and right reason, either in ourselves or in bodies.” Augustine, *The Trinity*, trans. Edmund Hill, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, Part I—Books, 5 (New York: New City Press, 1991), IX.11, 12.

⁴⁰ Grégoire le Grand, *Dialogues*, ed. Adalbert de Vogüé, *Sources Chrétiennes*, 260 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1980), 16. “And there are some who are kindled to love of the heavenly homeland more by examples than by preaching.”

⁴¹ See Augustine, *De trinitate*, XV.40, wherein he uses *amor* and *dilectio* as synonyms for *uoluntas*, and then comments that such love is will at its most effective. See also *De trinitate* XV.42, wherein Augustine speaks of the memory, understanding, and will ternary synonymously as memory, understanding, and love.

⁴² Skeat, *LSI*, I.14.79–81. “There is nothing that any among humans living in this mortal life need so greatly as that he or she might know the almighty God through belief, and after that, his or her own soul.”

⁴³ *Ibid.*, I.16.88–96, 100–01. “It is natural to humankind that one should love that which is good. What is good except God alone, he who is sublime goodness, but for whom no one is able to have any good thing? We ought always to love this goodness, from whom all good things come to us, but love for this goodness is not able to exist except in the soul—and only that soul is nobly-born, therefore,

that loves him from whom it comes, who created it such that in its understanding it is able to have the uniqueness and image of God, and might be worthy of this: that God might dwell in it. . . . Desire is given to humans to long for those things that benefit them, for useful things and for their eternal salvation.”

⁴⁴ Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 1–2.

⁴⁵ Skeat, *LS VII*, I.170.7b. “believed in the Savior.” This phrase does not appear in the Latin editions (Pseudo-Ambrose, *Epistola I*, *PL* 17.813–21, and “*Passio gloriosae virginis Agnetis a sancto Ambrosio edita*,” in *Sanctuarium seu Vitae Sanctorum*, 2 vols., ed. Boninus Mombricitus (Paris: Albert Fontemoing, 1910), I.40–44), nor is it found in the text of what is considered to be the closest manuscript version found in the Cotton-Corpus Legendary, BL Cotton Nero E.i, 114r–116v. According to Helmut Gneuss, *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: A List of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England up to 1100*, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 241 (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2001), the manuscripts that compose the Cotton-Corpus Legendary (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 9 [Gneuss #36] and BL, Cotton Nero E.1, vols. 1 and 2 [Gneuss #344]) date from the second half of the eleventh century, well after Ælfric translated his collection of Lives. For further analysis of the relationship between Ælfric’s *Lives of Saints* and the Cotton-Corpus Legendary, see Patrick H. Zettel, “Saints’ Lives in Old English: Latin Manuscripts and Vernacular Accounts: Ælfric,” *Peritia* 1 (1982): 17–37. For a brief history and list of the contents of the Legendary, see Peter Jackson and Michael Lapidge, “The Contents of the Cotton-Corpus Legendary,” in Szarmach, ed., *Holy Men and Holy Women*, 131–46. E. Gordon Whatley’s monumental “*Acta Sanctorum*,” in *Abbo of Fleury, Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, and Acta Sanctorum*, *Sources of Anglo-Saxon Literary Culture*, 1 (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001) outlines the most up-to-date information available on the sources for Ælfric’s saints’ lives. The earlier groundbreaking studies of Ælfric’s sources relied upon printed collections of hagiography rather than on unpublished manuscripts or manuscripts closer in date and location to Ælfric but not collated into the published editions. Nevertheless, these earlier studies have provided later scholars with a foundation upon which to build more manuscript-based work: Max Förster, “Über die Quellen von Ælfrics *Homilae Catholicae*: I, *Legenden*” (Inaugural diss., Berlin, 1892); J. Heinrich Ott, “Über die Quellen der Heiligenleben in Ælfrics *Lives of Saints I*” (Inaugural diss., Halle, 1892); Grant Loomis, “Further Sources of Ælfric’s Saints’ Lives,” *Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature* 13 (1931): 1–8. For an eloquent statement of the frustrations inherent in doing source study from the printed hagiographical collections and the need for studies of the complete manuscript traditions of individual saints’ lives, see James E. Cross, “Saints’ Lives in Old English: Latin Manuscripts and Vernacular Accounts: The *Old English Martyrology*,” *Peritia* 1 (1982): 38–62, especially 38–40.

⁴⁶ Augustine, *De trinitate*, XII.12. “There can be no doubt that man was not made to the image of him who created him as regards his body or any old part of his consciousness, but as regards the rational mind, which is capable of recognizing God. . . . Is there anyone then who would exclude females from this association, seeing that together with us men they are fellow heirs of grace, and the same apostle says elsewhere, *You are all sons of God through faith in Christ*.” Augustine, *The Trinity*, XII.12.

⁴⁷ Skeat, *LS VII*, I.170.8b and 9b.

⁴⁸ Augustine, *De trinitate*, XII.12. “Surely this does not mean, does it, that female believers have lost their bodily sex? But because they are being renewed to the image of God where there is no sex, it is there where there is no sex that man was made to the image of God, that is in the spirit of his mind.” Augustine, *The Trinity*, XII.12. This same thought is found in *De Genesi ad litteram*, III.22, which is

quoted in Bede's *In principium Genesis*, 28, and then radically abbreviated in Alcuin's *Interrogationes Sigwulfi*, Inter. 38, PL 100.520B.

⁴⁹ Mombricitus, ed., "Passio Agnetis," I.40.42. "beautiful of face and more beautiful of faith."

⁵⁰ Skeat, *LS VII*, I.170.13. "she was beautiful in countenance, and more beautiful in faith."

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, I.170.12b. "she loved Christ." Mombricitus, ed., "Passio Agnetis," I.40.41. "loved the creator."

⁵² Augustine, *De trinitate*, XII.12; Skeat, *LS VII*, I.170.12b. "she loved Christ."

⁵³ Dabney Anderson Bankert, "Reconciling Family and Faith: Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* and Domestic Dramas of Conversion," in *Via Crucis: Essays on Early Medieval Sources and Ideas in Memory of J. E. Cross*, ed. Thomas N. Hall, Medieval European Studies, 1 (Morgantown, WV: West Virginia Univ. Press, 2002), 138–57, at 143.

⁵⁴ Skeat, *LS VII*, I.170.25b–26. "incitement of sin, nourishment of vice, and support of death." Cf. Mombricitus, ed., "Passio Agnetis," 40.51: "fomes peccati nutrimentum facinoris pabulum mortis." The idea of the serpent as tempter rather than of the woman as tempter occurs in Augustine, *De trinitate*, XII.20 and in Cassian, *Conférences*, V.6.

⁵⁵ Skeat, *LS VII*, I.170–72.27b–28. "I have another lover unlike you in nobility."

⁵⁶ Mombricitus, ed., "Passio Agnetis," I.41.9–11. The last two words of Mombricitus's edition of Pseudo-Ambrose's text differ from the text of the Cotton-Corpus Legendary found in BL, Cotton Nero E.i, which has "genas meas" rather than the scribal error, "genus meum." My translation follows the text of the Cotton manuscript. "Now I have received honey and milk from his mouth; already I am drawn close in his chaste embrace; now his body is joined to my body and his blood decorates my cheeks." Skeat, *LS VII*, I.172.45–48. "From his mouth I receive milk and honey; now already I am embraced by his pure arms, his fair body is united to mine and his blood decorates my eyes." See above p. 319, note 76.

⁵⁷ Mombricitus, ed., "Passio Agnetis," I.41.15–17. "when I love him, I am chaste; when I touch him, I am clean; when I receive him, I am a virgin, nor will children be lacking after the marriage, where birth follows without sorrow and fruitfulness is increased daily." Skeat, *LS VII*, I.172.57–62. "When I love him, I am altogether pure; when I touch him, I am unstained; when I receive him, I am a virgin still. And issue ceases not in that wedded state; there is increase without pain and incessant fruitfulness."

⁵⁸ Mombricitus, ed., "Passio Agnetis," I.40.45; Skeat, *LS VII*, I.170.20.

⁵⁹ Skeat, *LS I*, 96–109. "Philosophers say that the nature of the soul is threefold: one part in it is capable of desire, another is wrathful, the third is reasonable. The wild animals and cattle possess two of these parts together with us, that is, desire and wrath. Only a human being has reason and wisdom and understanding. Desire is given to humans to long for those things that benefit them, for useful things and for their eternal salvation. Yet if the desire goes astray, then it brings forth gluttony and fornication and avarice. Wrath is given to the soul in order that it might be angry against vices, and not be subjected to any sins. . . . If wrath is turned aside to evil, then sadness and sloth come from it. Reason is given to the soul to guide and to govern its own life and all its deeds. If it goes astray from that reason, pride and vainglory come."

- ⁶⁰ For an alternative reading of Sempronius, see Bankert, "Reconciling Family and Faith," 143–46.
- ⁶¹ Augustine, *De trinitate*, XII.16. "And then, while he wants to be like God under nobody, he is thrust down as a punishment from his own half-way level ["female" function] to the bottom, to the things in which the beasts find their pleasure." Augustine, *The Trinity*, XII.16.
- ⁶² Mombricitus, ed., "Passio Agnetis," I.41.17; Skeat, *LS VII*, 63, 68.
- ⁶³ Augustine, *De trinitate*, XII.16. "... nec redire potest effusis ac perditis uiribus nisi gratia conditoris sui ad poenitentiam uocantis et peccata donantis. *Quis enim infelicem animam liberabit a corpore mortis huius nisi gratia dei per Iesum Christum dominum nostrum?*" "... nor can [the soul] go back up again, having squandered and lost its strength, except by the grace of its maker calling it to repentance and forgiving its sins. For *who will ever free the hapless soul from the body of this death except by the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord?*"
- ⁶⁴ Mombricitus, ed., "Passio Agnetis," I.41.27–30; Skeat, *LS VII*, I.174.83–4, 96–7.
- ⁶⁵ Mombricitus, ed., "Passio Agnetis," I.41.43; Skeat, *LS VII*, I.174.73, 86, and I.176.105.
- ⁶⁶ Mombricitus, ed., "Passio Agnetis," I.41.49–50. "Faith, however, is not found in years but in understanding, and God omnipotent approves minds more than years." Skeat, *LS VII*, I.176.109b–112. "The Almighty commends / the minds of men more than their great age; / and belief is not in years, but is in wise understandings."
- ⁶⁷ Mombricitus, ed., "Passio Agnetis," I.42.12; Skeat, *LS VII*, I.178.137–41.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid., I.178.145–47. "the virgin's hair en clothed her all around as soon as the executioners wrenched off her clothes, and the hair covered her over on each side alike." Cf.: Mombricitus, ed., "Passio Agnetis," 42.14–15: "Statim autem ut spoliata est: crine soluto tantam densitatem capillis eius diuina gratia concessit: ut melius eorum fimbriis uideretur quam uestibus tecta." "Immediately, however, when she was stripped, her hair loosened and divine grace granted her so great a density of hair that she seemed to be better covered by its ends than by her clothing."
- ⁶⁹ I Cor. 11: 15b. "for her hair is given to her for a covering."
- ⁷⁰ Mombricitus, ed., "Passio Agnetis," 16–21; Skeat, *LS VII*, I.178.148–59.
- ⁷¹ Skeat, *LS VII*, I.180.170b.
- ⁷² Mombricitus, ed., "Passio Agnetis," 43.1–3; Skeat, *LS VII*, I.182.201–06.
- ⁷³ Mombricitus, ed., "Passio Agnetis," 43.7.
- ⁷⁴ Skeat, *LS VII*, I.182.210.
- ⁷⁵ Mombricitus, ed., "Passio Agnetis," 43.23–27. "Behold! Now I see what I have believed, what I have hoped for I now possess, what I have desired I embrace. I confess you with my lips and heart, with all my innermost parts I long for you. Behold! I come to you, the living and true God, who, with our Lord Jesus Christ, your son, and with the Holy Spirit lives and reigns always and for ever! Amen." Skeat, *LS VII*, I.182–84.234–39. "That which I have believed, that I see; that which I desired, that I now

have. I confess you with my mouth and with my soul and with all my heart I long for you, the one true God, who reigns with your Son and with the Holy Ghost, one almighty God forever!"

⁷⁶ "Eodem die natale sancte Eugenie virginis," in Skeat, ed., *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, I.24–51.

⁷⁷ Michael Lapidge, "Ælfric's *Sanctorale*," in Szarmach, *Holy Men and Holy Women*, 115–29, at 123.

⁷⁸ Skeat, *LS I*, I.16.92–93. "only the soul that loves him from who it came is nobly-born."

⁷⁹ Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces*, 9.

⁸⁰ For a close analysis of the complex interplay of ideas about sex and gender that obtain in Ælfric's translation and even more so in the Latin sources, see Paul E. Szarmach, "Ælfric's Women Saints: Eugenia," in *New Readings on Women in Old English Literature*, ed. Helen Damico and Alexandra Hennessey Olsen (Bloomington, IN: Indiana Univ. Press, 1990), 146–57 and Gopa Roy, "A Virgin Acts Manfully: Ælfric's *Life of St. Eugenia* and the Latin Versions," *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s., 23 (1992): 1–27. Shari Horner examines the implication of enclosure that may be found in Eugenia's transvestism in *The Discourse of Enclosure*, 156–64. For a more general study of transvestism and transvestite saints, see Vern L. Bullough, "Transvestites in the Middle Ages," *American Journal of Sociology* 79 (1974): 1381–94; John Anson, "The Female Transvestite in Early Monasticism: The Origin and Development of a Motif," *Viator* 5 (1974): 1–32. The published Latin edition of the *Life of St. Eugenia* that is closest to Ælfric's version is the "Vitae Eugeniae et comitum," in *Pasionario Hispánico*, 2 vols., ed. Ángel Fábrega Grau, *Monumenta Hispaniae Sacra, Serie Litúrgica*, 6 (Madrid: Instituto P. Enrique Flórez, 1953–55), I.83–98. The text may also be found in *PL* 21.1105–22 and as part of the *Vitae Patrum* in *PL* 73.605–20.

⁸¹ Skeat, *LS II*, I.24.3–4. "nevertheless by means of her glorious virginity and through her martyrdom overcame this world." Both the Latin and the Old English *Lives* form a textual diptych, the first "panel" depicting Eugenia's virginity, the second her martyrdom. For a closer examination of the "systematic contraries" in the *Life*, see Szarmach, "Ælfric's Women Saints: Eugenia," 154–55.

⁸² Grau, ed., "Vitae eugeniae et comitum," §3. "he even permitted her to teach philosophy."

⁸³ Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 9, p. 411. "he even allowed her to learn [lit., 'to be taught'] philosophical doctrine." In this instance, the reading found in *PL* 21.1107A is closer to Ælfric than the version found in *PH*. This example of textual variation (and others that will be noted below) illustrates a point made by E. Gordon Whatley: "We need to find out as much as possible about the Anglo-Saxons' own Latin recensions of the legends before we can approach the vernacular versions with critical confidence." E. Gordon Whatley, "An Introduction to the Study of Old English Prose Hagiography: Sources and Resources," in Szarmach, ed., *Holy Men and Holy Women*, 14. The foremost work in the Anglo-Saxons' Latin hagiographical manuscripts has been done by Patrick Zettel, "Ælfric's Hagiographic Sources and the Legendary Preserved in B.L. MS Cotton Nero E.i + CCCC MS 9 and Other Manuscripts" (Ph.D. diss., Oxford University, 1979).

⁸⁴ Skeat, *LS II*, I.26.20–21. "so that she might be established through Greek philosophy and Latin rhetoric."

⁸⁵ Grau, ed., "Vita Eugeniae et comitum," §3. "she was lovely in countenance and beautiful in body, but more lovely in mind and more beautiful in chastity."

⁸⁶ Cambridge, CCC 9, p. 411. "Therefore Eugenia was lovely in mind and more beautiful in chastity." In all quotations from the manuscript, abbreviations have been silently expanded.

⁸⁷ Skeat, *LS II*, I.26.23. “excelled very much in wisdom and in philosophy.”

⁸⁸ Grau, “*Vitae Eugeniae et comitum*,” §3. The Cotton-Corpus Legendary makes Aquilinus a consul instead of a proconsul. Cambridge, CCC 9, p. 411.

⁸⁹ Skeat, *LS II*, I.26.26–27a. “Thereupon her mind became greatly excited by means of the holy teachings.”

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, I.26.28–32. “She . . . desired to seek the teachings of the Christians.”

⁹¹ Grau, ed., “*Vitae Eugeniae et comitum*,” §3. “All the gods of the peoples are demons, but the Lord made the heavens.” This text comes from Psalm 95:5 as found in the Gallican Psalter based on the Septuagint rather than on Jerome’s Psalter that was translated from the Hebrew. This text does not reflect the alternative wording found in some manuscripts with Hibernian connections. See the apparatus criticus for Ps. 95:5 in *Biblia Sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*, 4th ed., ed. Robert Weber (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994). In order to remain as close to Ælfric’s text as possible, I have not used the Douay-Rheims translation for the biblical passages, but rather have provided my own translations.

⁹² Skeat, *LS II*, I.28.46. Werferth uses *belisnian* in the Old English translation of Equitius’ dream about being made a eunuch in Gregory’s *Dialogues*. *Bischof Wærferths von Worcester Übersetzung der Dialoge Gregors des Grossen über das Leben und die Wundertaten italienischer Väter und über die Unsterblichkeit der Seelen*, ed. Hans Hecht (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1965), 26. The Anglo-Saxons wrestled with the translation of *eunuchus*, however, as Patrizia Lendinara’s survey of Old English words coined and used to translate the word demonstrates. Since the patristic authors used the idea of the eunuch as a figural concept as well as to refer to actual *castrati*, the problem of translation into a culture that had no comparable social role was problematic. Patrizia Lendinara, *Anglo-Saxon Glosses and Glossaries*, Variorum Collected Studies Series (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum Press, 1999), 45–46 and 66.

⁹³ Skeat, *LS II*, I.28.50. “in the manner of men.”

⁹⁴ Grau, ed., “*Vitae Eugeniae et comitum*,” §6. “The path of the just has been made straight; the way of the holy ones has been prepared.” This quotation can be found with slightly changed word order and the addition at the end of “in aeternum” in the *Liber responsalis sive antiphonarius* of Gregory the Great (*PL* 78.823C); this edition, however, is taken from “one of the most corrupt manuscripts of the Gregorian family” according to Cyrille Vogel, *Medieval Liturgy: An Introduction to the Sources*, trans. William Storey and Niels Rasmussen (Washington, D.C.: Pastoral Press, 1986), 122, n. 211. It appears also (without the addition but with the same word order as the Life and with appropriate alleluias) in the *Breviarium* of the *Liturgica Mozarabica secundum regulam S. Isidori* (*PL* 86.131D). In the Mozarabic Liturgy, the wording used in the Life of Eugenia is used only in *Laudibus*. Much later, Goscelin uses this same wording in his *Vita S. Augustini* (*PL* 80.59C) and Eckbert of Schonau follows suit in his *Sanctae Elisabeth Vita* (*PL* 195.165D).

⁹⁵ Grau, ed., “*Vitae Eugeniae et comitum*,” §9. “We have received, O God, your mercy in the middle of your temple.” Psalm 47:10.

⁹⁶ Grau, ed., “*Vitae Eugeniae et comitum*,” §10. “in which he was led to an image of a woman, in order that he might offer a sacrifice to her.”

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, §10.

⁹⁸ "Incipit praefatio huius libri," in Skeat, ed., *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, I.2. "We keep silent concerning the book *Lives of the Fathers*, in which many matters that require discernment are contained [and] which are not fitting to be disclosed to the laity, nor are we able to fully treat them ourselves." Cf. Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces*, 119.

⁹⁹ Skeat, *LS II*, I.28.64. "it was revealed to him about this matter."

¹⁰⁰ Grau, ed., "Vitae Eugeniae et comitum," §11. "Rightly . . . do you call yourself Eugenius, because by behaving courageously you have presented yourself a perfect man for suffering with the Lord." The text of the Cotton-Corpus Legendary essentially agrees with Grau's edition here: "Recteque inquit uocaris eugenius quia enim viriliter agendo uirum perfectum te in agone dominico obtulisti." Cambridge, CCC 9, p. 414.

¹⁰¹ Skeat, *LS II*, I.28.77–78a. "He took her apart [from her companions] and said to her truly that indeed she was no man."

¹⁰² Grau, ed., "Vitae Eugeniae et comitum," §11. "ordered her to continue thus in the condition of a man."

¹⁰³ Skeat, *LS II*, I.30.89–90. "the bishop ordered the converted maiden that she thus continue in that manly appearance."

¹⁰⁴ Grau, ed., "Vitae Eugeniae et comitum," §13. "She, in fact, in the manner and mind of a man remained as a man in the aforesaid monastery [or in CCC 9: in the monastery of men]: in this fashion she progressed in divine teachings to such an extent that within two years she retained almost the entire scriptures of the Lord in memory. So great was her calmness of mind that they called her one of the number of angels. Who might detect that she was a woman when the manliness of Christ and spotless virginity covered her to such a degree that she was truly imitable of men? Her conversation, nevertheless, was humble in charity, distinguished in moderation, without fault, and avoiding excessive eloquence she surpassed all in humility. None was found superior to her in prayer: she consoled the sad, rejoiced with the joyful, soothed the wrathful with one word. She instructed the proud by her own example so that, having been suddenly made a sheep from a wolf, he delighted to believe."

¹⁰⁵ Skeat, *LS II*, I.30.92–93. "Eugenia then remained in that minster with a manly (or heroic) mind, although she was a young woman."

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, I.30.95–100. "... maintained in her conduct a holy way of life through gentleness of mind and great humility, and by means of holy might she served the Savior. She flourished in the teachings of true belief and in spiritual writings with great determination, and became changed from a wolf into a sheep."

¹⁰⁷ Szarmach, "Ælfric's Women Saints," 149.

¹⁰⁸ Roy, "A Virgin Acts Manfully," 17.

¹⁰⁹ Thomas F. X. Noble and Thomas Head, introduction to *Soldiers of Christ: Saints and Saints' Lives from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), xiv–xv.

¹¹⁰ The Life of the Virgin of Antioch may be found in Ambrose, *De virginitate*, II.22–33.

¹¹¹ Skeat, *LS II*, I.30.98.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, I.30.104–7. “Then the father, Philip, sickened in mind and the mother, Claudia, was consumed with sorrow; and all the household became anxious in their minds and searched for the young woman with great distress.”

¹¹³ Grau, ed., “*Vitae Eugeniae et comitum*,” §12. “Therefore the lamentation was incalculable, the weeping immeasurable: the whole household mourned unashamedly; the parents for their daughter, the brothers for their sister, the servants for their mistress; and grief possessed them all, and boundless distress of mind.”

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, §21.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, §25. “exceedingly or violently wrathful”; Cambridge, CCC 9, p. 419. “exceedingly or violently moved or excited.”

¹¹⁶ Grau, “*Vitae Eugeniae et comitum*,” §22. “The rack, scourge, wild animals, fires, and tortures are made ready; and other things that customarily force out the secrets of the heart are prepared.”

¹¹⁷ This aspect of concrete illustration is especially true of *bestia*, which literally indicates an ‘animal without reason.’

¹¹⁸ Augustine, *De trinitate*, XII.16. “beginning from a distorted appetite for being like God they end up by becoming like beasts.” Augustine, *The Trinity*, XII.16.

¹¹⁹ Augustine, *De trinitate*, XII.16. “since his honor consists in being like God and his disgrace in being like an animal, *man established in honor did not understand; he was matched with senseless cattle and became like them.*” Augustine, *The Trinity*, XII.16. [The italics of both the Latin and the English are in the originals.]

¹²⁰ Ambrose, *De virginitate*, II.iii.20.

¹²¹ Skeat, *LS II*, I.36.199.

¹²² *Ibid.*, I.38.223. “Then the prefect became violently angry.”

¹²³ Grau, ed., “*Vitae Eugeniae et comitum*,” §25. [Grau indicates that “norman” is the form in his base manuscript, but that the grammatically correct form, “normae,” is found in other manuscripts.] “So great, indeed, is the power of his [Christ’s] name that even women standing in awe of him may obtain manly esteem. For in the faith no difference of sex is able to be found, since the blessed Paul, teacher of all Christians, says that with God there is no distinction of masculine and feminine, for all are one in Christ. Therefore, fervently receiving in my mind the confidence of this standard, which I possess in Christ, I did not desire to be a woman. I truly considered that pretence through which a woman plays the part of a man not to be adverse to virtue, although this is more rightly to be punished if a man feigns a woman through a disposition for vices. And this is rightly to be praised if, for the love of virtue, the weaker sex imitates manly honor. For that reason, kindled by the divine love of religion, I now have chosen a manly condition, and I have displayed perfect manliness by courageously maintaining my virginity for Christ.” Gopa Roy has extensively analyzed the assumptions of masculine superiority and feminine inferiority in this passage in “A Virgin Acts Manfully,” 8–13.

¹²⁴ Grau, ed., “*Vitae Eugeniae et comitum*,” §26.

¹²⁵ Ibid., §13. "imitated her and were conforming [or submitting] to her in all matters."

¹²⁶ Ibid., §26.

¹²⁷ Skeat, *LS II*, I.38.233–35. "After these words she tore her clothing and showed her breast to the raging Philip, and said to him, 'You are my father!'"

¹²⁸ Grau, ed., "Vitae Eugeniae et comitum," §26. "'Surely, you are my father according to the flesh.'"

¹²⁹ Lees and Overing, *Double Agents*, 131.

¹³⁰ Grau, "Vita Eugeniae," §26. "vestments woven with gold were brought, and although unwilling, she was clothed and placed upon the highest tribunal, raised up on high, and all the populace shouted: 'There is one God, Christ, the one and true God of the Christians.'"

¹³¹ Skeat, *LS II*, I.40.253–54. "Then they adorned the virgin with gold—she, unwilling—and placed [her] up with them."

¹³² Campbell Bonner, "The Trial of Saint Eugenia," *The American Journal of Philology* 41.3 (1920): 253–64.

¹³³ Grau, ed., "Vitae Eugeniae et comitum," §41; Skeat, *LS II*, I.46–48.383–405.

¹³⁴ Grau, ed., "Vitae Eugeniae et comitum," §41. "Do not fear, Eugenia, I am your Savior, whom you have always served by entire and whole devotion of mind. I will receive you into heaven on the same day that I descended to earth."

¹³⁵ Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, I.18; Ambrose, *De virginitate*, II.24.

¹³⁶ Skeat, *LS II*, I.48.407–08. "I am your Savior, whom you worship profoundly and love with all your mind and might. On the day that I came to men and women, you will come to me, and on the feast day of my birth you shall be brought to heaven."

¹³⁷ Weber, ed., *Biblia Sacra Vulgata*. "You will love the Lord your God with your entire heart, with your entire soul, with your entire mind, and with your entire strength. This is the first commandment."

¹³⁸ For observations on Bede's and Ælfric's treatment of Æthelthryth, see Paul E. Szarmach, "Ælfric and the Problem of Women," in *Essays on Anglo-Saxon and Related Themes in Memory of Lynne Grundy*, ed. Jane Roberts and Janet Nelson, King's College London Medieval Studies (London: King's College London Centre for Late Antique and Medieval Studies, 2000), 571–90; Susan Ridyard, *The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988), pp. 176–210; Peter Jackson, "Ælfric and the Purpose of Christian Marriage: A Reconsideration of the *Life of Æthelthryth*, Lines 120–30," *Anglo-Saxon England* 29 (2001), 235–60.

¹³⁹ Gwen Griffiths also notes the lack of hagiographical drama in her article, "Reading Ælfric's Saint Æthelthryth as a Woman," *Parergon* 10.2 (Dec. 1992): 35–49, at 36.

¹⁴⁰ Bede, "Life of St. Æthelthryth," in *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), IV.19, p. 390. "King Ecgrith received a wife named Æthelthryth, . . . whom another man [Tondberht] before him had had as wife. . . . But he [Tondberht] having died after a limited amount of time from when he married her, she was given to the king mentioned before."

¹⁴¹ Skeat, *LS XX*, I.432.8, 14. “Æthelthryth was given as a wife to a certain alderman. . . . and she was given to king Ecgrith.”

¹⁴² Bede, “Life of St. Æthelthryth,” IV.19, p. 390. “however, she remained glorious with the lasting integrity of virginity.” Skeat, *LS XX*, I.432.15. “She remained for twelve years an undefiled virgin.”

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, I.432.18. “She loved the Savior who kept her undefiled.”

¹⁴⁴ Bede, “Life of St. Æthelthryth,” IV.19, p. 392. “Who, petitioning the king for a long time in order that she might be permitted to leave behind the concerns of the world and to serve only the true king, Christ, in a monastery, where she at last, with effort, obtained her desire.”

Skeat, *LS XX*, I.434.31–35a. “Æthelthryth then wanted to leave behind all worldly things and she earnestly asked the king that she be allowed to serve Christ in the monastic way of life, just as her mind drew her. Then the king lived with her, although that which she had desired came about after a long time.”

¹⁴⁵ Griffiths, “Reading Ælfric’s Saint Æthelthryth,” 39.

¹⁴⁶ Dyan Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1993), 55–63.

¹⁴⁷ Griffiths, “Reading Ælfric’s Saint Æthelthryth,” 42.

¹⁴⁸ Bede, “Life of St. Æthelthryth,” IV.19, p. 392. “where, having constructed a monastery, she began to be the virgin mother, both by her examples of heavenly life and by her admonitions, of many virgins devoted to God.”

¹⁴⁹ Skeat, *LS XX*, I.434.36b–49. “and afterward she was consecrated again as abbess over many nuns at Ely Minster, and she ruled them maternally by means of setting a good example for the spiritual life.”

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, I.436.61–62a, 75. “At that time there was a certain leech in that faithful company, named Cynefrith.” “sent the brothers.”

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, I.434.41–48.

¹⁵² Skeat, *LS I*, I.22.200–205. “The soul directs these five senses in accordance to its will and it befits the soul that, just as a noblewoman, it diligently give forethought to what it commands each limb to do or what it consents to for each limb in the desire of its nature, so that in that respect nothing unbecoming may happen in any limb’s service.”

¹⁵³ Skeat, *LS XX*, I.436.54–60. “She said, ‘I know well that I am indeed worthy that my neck be afflicted by such an infirmity because in youth I adorned my neck with many necklaces, and it seems to me now that the grace of God cleanses that offense, wherefore now this swelling shines for me in place of gold, and the burning of this heat in place of noble gemstones.’”

¹⁵⁴ Bede, “Life of St. Æthelthryth,” IV.19, p. 394. Cynefrith’s speech takes up twenty lines in the Latin text, compared to the five lines of Æthelthryth’s speech.

¹⁵⁵ There are also several other factors that may have influenced Ælfric’s decision. Bishop Æthelwold, Ælfric’s teacher, refounded the monastery at Ely, though this time as a monastery of men, and revived

the cult of Æthelthryth. Æthelthryth also had a place of prominence in Æthelwold's Benedictional, wherein she is depicted in a full page painting (the oldest extant representation of Æthelthryth, according to Virginia Blanton-Whetsell, "Imagines Ætheldredae: Mapping Hagiographic Representations of Abbatial Power and Religious Patronage," *Studies in Iconography* 23 (2002): 55–107, at 59) and the blessing for her feast "is in three lengthy sections written in extremely high-flown language." Andrew Prescott, "The Text of the Benedictional of St. Æthelwold," in Yorke, *Bishop Æthelwold*, 119–47, at 133.

¹⁵⁶ Noble and Head, introduction to *Soldiers of Christ*, xxiv.

¹⁵⁷ Skeat, *LS XX*, I.440.120–22. "Frequently the laity also, just as the books tell us, preserved their purity within marriage out of love for Christ, as we were able tell if you desired to hear it." There has been some debate about Ælfric's purpose in adding this tag to Bede's Life of Æthelthryth. While the issues of spiritual marriage and chaste marriage and the interaction of these ideas in Ælfric's writings impact any understanding of his attitudes about gender and women, these matters are tangential to the current focus of this study and thus will not be pursued here at this time. For more, however, see Jackson, "Ælfric and the Purpose of Christian Marriage," 235–60, and Paul E. Szarmach, "Ælfric and the Problem of Women," 571–90.

¹⁵⁸ Shari Horner, *The Discourse of Enclosure*, 136.

¹⁵⁹ For the iconographical nature of saints' Lives, see Thomas D. Hill, "Imago Dei: Genre, Symbolism, and Anglo-Saxon Hagiography," in Szarmach, ed., *Holy Men and Holy Women*, 35–50, especially pp. 41–43.

¹⁶⁰ "Natale Sancte Agathe Uirginis," in Skeat, *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, I.194–209, line 2.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, I.196.5–6. "He was a greedy miser and subjected to his lusts, a slave of the devil and hated the Lord."

¹⁶² Allen J. Frantzen, "When Women Aren't Enough," in *Studying Medieval Women: Sex, Gender, Feminism*, ed. Nancy F. Partner (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1993), 143–69, at 160; Horner, *The Discourse of Enclosure*, 145–50.

¹⁶³ Horner, *The Discourse of Enclosure*, 149.

¹⁶⁴ "Passio Sancte Agathae," in *Sanctuarium seu Vitae Sanctorum*, ed. Boninus Mombritius, 2 vols. (Paris: Albert Fontemoing, 1910), I.37; Skeat, *LS VIII*, I.196.9–12, I.198.32–34.

¹⁶⁵ Ambrose, *De virginibus*, II.iv.24; Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, I.18; Aldhelm, "De virginitate," §XXVII and §LVIII.

¹⁶⁶ Frantzen, "When Women Aren't Enough," 164.

¹⁶⁷ Mombritius, "Passio Sancte Agathae," I.38. "Nevertheless Agatha responded, 'Impious and most cruel! Are you not disordered to cut off that part on a woman which you yourself sucked on your mother? Yet I possess whole breasts inwardly, in my soul, from which I suckle all my thinking, which from infancy I consecrated to the Lord.'"

Skeat, *LS VIII*, I.202.124–27. "Agatha said to him, 'Alas, you most impious man! Are you not ashamed to cut out that which you yourself have sucked! But I possess my breast whole within my soul by means of which I entirely feed my intellect.'"

¹⁶⁸ Horner, *The Discourse of Enclosure*, 149; Ambrose, *De virginibus*, I.v.22. Horner disagrees with Frantzen's insistence that Agatha's loss of her breast symbolizes her transcendence of her body (by becoming man-like), positing instead that the insistence upon the bodily loss of her breast maintains her womanhood even while her mention of her inner breast identifies her with Mary and Christ. She makes the association of Christ with Agatha's inner breast by referring to Carolyn Walker Bynum's analysis of the parallel between the wound in Christ's side and Mary's breast in *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley, CA: Univ. of California Press, 1987), 270–75. Bynum pursues the same thought in *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1992), 79–117.

¹⁶⁹ Ambrose, *De benedictionibus patriarcharum*, XI.51; "He said 'the breasts' or the two testaments, in one of which he is announced, in the other he is shown forth. And well did he say breasts because the Son has raised us by nourishing us as it were with a certain spiritual milk, and has presented us to God." See also Augustine, *In epistolam Joannis ad Parthos tractatus decem*, III.1, and Bede, "Epistolas VII Catholicas," in *Beda Venerabilis Opera, Pars II, Opera Exegetica*, CCSL, 121 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1979), 232.

¹⁷⁰ Mombritius, ed., "Passio Sancte Agathae," I.39. "Agatha replied, "Because I have a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who cures all things with a word, and his word alone restores all things. If he wishes, he is able to make me well."

Skeat, *LS VIII*, I.202.135–37. "Never in my life have I cared anything for physician's remedies. I have my savior who heals by means of his word; he is able to heal me mightily, if he wishes."

¹⁷¹ Mombritius, ed., "Passio Sancte Agathae," I.39; Skeat, *LS VIII*, I.204.138–40.

¹⁷² Mombritius, ed., "Passio Sancte Agathae," I.39. "And when she had finished her prayer, looking at all the injuries of her body she perceived all of her parts to be whole."

Skeat, *LS VIII*, I.204.144–46. "After that prayer she looked upon her breast, and that breast that was cut off became restored by Christ and all her wounds became whole."

¹⁷³ Mombritius, ed., "Passio Sancte Agathae," I.39. "Agatha replied, 'All of your words are foolish and empty and your perverse precepts pollute the very air. Whence, wretch, you are both without feeling and without reason who wants to call upon a stone for his help and not the highest and true God, who has deigned to cure me from every blow with which you thus harassed me, in order that he might restore to me my breast quite whole.'"

Skeat, *LS VIII*, I.204.157–61. "Then Agatha said, 'You wretched, foolish man! Why do you want to call out to a stone and not to the true God, who for the sake of his Name protected me from all the injuries that you cruelly committed upon my body and restored my breast that you basely cut off.'"

¹⁷⁴ Mombritius, ed., "Passio Sancte Agathae," I.39; Skeat, *LS VIII*, I.204–06.167–82.

¹⁷⁵ Mombritius, ed., "Passio Sancte Agathae," I.39. "Lord, you who made me and cared for me from my infancy, and made me behave manfully (courageously) in my youth, who led me from the love of this world, who separated my body from defilement, who made me to overcome the torture of the executioner: iron, fire, and chains, who conferred upon me the virtue of patience amidst the torments, I entreat you to receive my spirit now, because it is time for you to command me to abandon this world and to attain to your mercy."

Skeat, *LS VIII*, I.206.185–94. "Oh, my Lord, you who created me as a human and ever from childhood protected me from this, you who turn me aside from worldly love, you who caused that I should overcome the tortures of the executioner: sharp iron, and fire, and the biting of pincers, you who gave me patience during the tortures, I entreat you, Lord, that you take my spirit to you now, because now is the time, that I may leave this world and may come into your gentle mercy, my beloved

Lord.” The Old English term *clawu* bears here more the idea of crab or lobster claws, pincers—the instrument used to remove Agatha’s breast as often depicted in the illustrations of her life and given as one of her symbols in W. Ellington Post, *Saints, Signs, and Symbols*, 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 1974), 24.

¹⁷⁶ Mombricitus, ed., “*Passio Sancte Agathae*,” I.40. “A holy mind, by her free will honorable to God, and liberation to the homeland.”

Skeat, *LS VIII*, I.206.199–202. Ælfric gives the Latin of the inscription, then translates it into English for his readers: “halig mod . sylfwille wurðmynt . þam / wel-wyllendan gode . and eardes alysednyse.” “A holy mind, glory through free-will to the benevolent God, and the redemption of the earth.”

¹⁷⁷ Mombricitus, ed., “*Passio Sancte Agathae*,” I.40; Skeat, *LS VIII*, I.208.207–14.

¹⁷⁸ The association of the horse with the passions is based upon Psalm 31:9, “*nolite fieri sicut equus et mulus quibus non est intellegentia*.” “Do not become like the horse and the mule, which have no understanding.” Ambrose states the association in his *Exhortatio virginitatis*, VII.48: “*Ille sicut equus adhiñiens in libidinem . . .*” “That one is like a horse neighing in lust . . .” Haymo of Halberstadt, among others, repeats the association, saying: “*Passio desiderii est quando homo velut equus et mulus, qui sunt sine intellectu, praeceptis fertur ad libidinem, nec frenat ardorem libidinis, respectu et timore omnipotentis Dei*.” In *epistolam I ad Thessalonicenses*, IV. “It is the passion of desire when a person just like a horse or mule, which are without intelligence, is carried headlong into lust, nor bridles the heat of lust with respect and fear of God omnipotent.”

¹⁷⁹ “*De Sancta Lucia Uirgo*,” in *Ælfric’s Lives of Saints*, ed. W. W. Skeat, Vol. I.210–19.

¹⁸⁰ Ælfric’s translation differs in this aspect from the text of the Cotton-Corpus Legendary found in Cambridge, CCC 9, p. 437, in which Lucy is identified as a virgin as soon as she enters the legend.

¹⁸¹ Skeat, *LS IX*, I.210.26–27. “Lucy, my sister, true virgin of God, why do you pray to me for that which you yourself are able to give?” Cf. Cambridge, CCC 9: “*Soror mea lucia uirgo domino deuota . quid a me petis quod ipsa poteris prestare continuo*.” “Lucy, my sister, virgin devoted to God, why do you ask from me what you yourself will be able to fulfill at once?” All Latin quotations for the Life of Lucy have been transcribed from Cambridge, CCC 9. I have silently expanded all abbreviations found in the passages from the manuscript and have retained the punctuation marks found in the manuscript. The *punctus elevatus* is indicated by a semicolon, and single *punctus* by periods.

¹⁸² Skeat, *LS IX*, I.212.29.

¹⁸³ Skeat, *LS IX*, I.212.32–33a. “because by your pure virginity you have prepared yourself [to be] a pleasant dwelling for Christ.”

¹⁸⁴ I Cor. 6:19.

¹⁸⁵ Cambridge, CCC 9, p. 438. “By the same one who healed you through her prayers, I pray you that you neither name anyone to me as a husband at any time, nor that you desire to look for the fruit of mortality in offspring from my body.”

Skeat, *LS IX*, I.212.36–38. “Now I ask you, by that one that healed you through prayers, that you never name for me a bride-groom, nor ask for mortal fruit from my body.”

¹⁸⁶ Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, §27.

¹⁸⁷ Whatley, "Acta Sanctorum," 290.

¹⁸⁸ Skeat, *LS IX*, I.214.68. "and they spoke much."

¹⁸⁹ Cambridge, CCC 9, "Passio Sancte Lucie," p. 439. "Paschasius said, 'Are you God, then?' Lucy replied, 'I am the handmaid of God Most High, the same who said, "When you stand before kings and rulers because of my Name, do not think about whether you should say this or that. For it is not you who speaks, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you."' Paschasius said, 'Then the Holy Spirit is in you?' Lucy responded, 'The Apostle says that the chaste and upright are the temple of God and the Holy Spirit dwells in them.' Paschasius said, 'I will make you be led to a whorehouse, and when you become a whore the Holy Spirit will flee from you.' Lucy replied, 'Never may the body be polluted unless by agreement of the mind.'"

Skeat, *LS IX*, I.214.72–85. "Then he asked with scorn, 'Oh, are you God?' Lucy answered him, 'I am the servant of the Almighty, therefore I speak the words of God because in his Gospel he says, "You are not wherefrom you speak, but the Holy Spirit speaks in you."' Then Paschasius arrogantly asked a second time, 'Does the Holy Spirit really live in you?' Lucy answered that impious man and said, 'The Apostle promised those who preserved chastity that they are the temple of God and the dwelling of the Holy Spirit.' Then the wicked man said, 'I will command [the executioner] to lead you quickly to the house of prostitutes so that you may lose your virginity and so that the Holy Spirit will flee from you when you are foully disgraced.' Lucy answered in this fashion: 'The body is not at all dangerously defiled if it does not please the mind.'"

¹⁹⁰ Cambridge, CCC 9, "Passio Sancte Lucie," p. 439; Skeat, *LS IX*, I.214.72.

¹⁹¹ Cambridge, CCC 9, "Passio Sancte Lucie," p. 439; Skeat, *LS IX*, I.214.76.

¹⁹² I Cor. 6:19.

¹⁹³ Cambridge, CCC 9, "Passio Sancte Lucie," p. 439. Cf. Skeat, *LS IX*, I.214.84b–85: "ne bið ænig gewemmed . / lichama to plihte . gif hit ne licað þam mode." "The body is not at all dangerously defiled if it does not please the mind."

¹⁹⁴ Cambridge, CCC 9, "Passio Sancte Lucie," p. 439. Cf. Skeat, *LS IX*, I.214.89a: "seþe demð be þam willan." "who judges according to the will." For the earlier Fathers on the primacy of the will in virginity, see Ambrose, *De virginitate*, II.24; Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, I.18; and Aldhelm, "De virginitate," §LVIII.

¹⁹⁵ Cambridge, CCC 9, "Passio Sancte Lucie," p. 440; Skeat, *LS IX*, I.216.116.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, I.216.124, 125.

¹⁹⁷ Cambridge, CCC 9, "Passio Sancte Lucie," p. 440. "his friends ordered a sword to be plunged into her throat."

Skeat, *LS IX*, I.216.126–27. "but they commanded [one] to kill that pure virgin with a sword. Then she was wounded so that the womb twisted out from her." The phrase *wand se innoð ut*, which I have translated here as 'the womb twisted out,' is open to several possible interpretations ('viscera, intestines, womb, inward parts'), none of which can be brought into agreement with the Latin text in Cambridge, CCC 9. Nor would the translation be any more certain if Ælfric had used *wamb* 'stomach, belly, womb' instead of *innoð* because the same ambiguity about whether he meant the general inner parts of the torso or a specific part, such as the womb, stomach, or intestines, would remain. As a result, I have rendered the phrase in keeping with the emphasis upon the womb for which I have argued in this analysis.

¹⁹⁸ Cambridge, CCC 9, "Passio Sancte Lucie," p. 440; Skeat, *LS IX*, I.218.139–45.

¹⁹⁹ Sherry L. Reames, "The Cecilia Legend as Chaucer Inherited It and Retold It: The Disappearance of an Augustinian Ideal," *Speculum* 55 (1980): 38–57, at 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." "Passio Sanctae Cecilie Virginis," in *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, ed. W. W. Skeat, Vol. II.356–77, at lines 49, 126, and 214. Other such signals of abbreviation may be found at lines 182, 300, and 310.

²⁰⁰ Mombritius, ed., "Passio Sanctae Ceciliae," I.341.9–13; Skeat, *LS XXXIV*, II.376.353–58.

²⁰¹ Mombritius, ed., "Passio Sanctae Ceciliae," I.332.50–52. "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."

Skeat, *LS XXXIV*, II.356.5–9. "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."

²⁰² The longing for the heavenly or eternal life is taught by Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, 16.

²⁰³ Skeat, *LS XXXIV*, II.356.16. "any defilement or company of a man."

²⁰⁴ *Sancti Aurelii Augustini de civitate Dei, libri XI–XXII*, ed. Bernard Dombart and Alphons Kalb, CCSL, 48 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1955), XII.8. "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." Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Gerald G. Walsh and Grace Monahan, *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*, 7 (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1952), Book XII.8.

²⁰⁵ Skeat, *LS I*, I.20.171–75. "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."

²⁰⁶ Skeat, *LS XXXIV*, II.356.19. "that she be allowed to serve Christ in virginity."

²⁰⁷ Mombritius, ed., "Passio Sanctae Ceciliae," I.333.1–3. "Indeed, the force of her parents and of her suitor was seething around her so that she could not display the love of her own heart, and reveal by clear tokens that she loved Christ alone."

²⁰⁸ Mombritius, ed., "Passio Sanctae Ceciliae," I.333.13–17. "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 heart, 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."

Skeat, *LS XXXIV*, I.358.32–36. "Oh, you my beloved man! I say to you with love that I have the angel of God who holds me in love, 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.”

²⁰⁹ Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, PL 23.220B–C; Bede, “Epistolas VII Catholicas,” 244.

²¹⁰ Mombritius, ed., “Passio Sanctae Ceciliae,” I.333.21–22; Skeat, *LS XXXIV*, II.358.43–45.

²¹¹ Skeat, *LS XXXIV*, II.360.65. “Do you believe this, or does anything else seem likely to you?” 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. Mombritius, ed., “Passio Sanctae Ceciliae,” I.333.51–52.

²¹² Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, XI.15.

²¹³ Mombritius, ed., “Passio Sanctae Ceciliae,” I.334.10–14 “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.’” 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.

Skeat, *LS XXXIV*, II.360–62.94–98. “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 won through you into the eternal life, just as you believed in God through Cecilia’s teaching, and you two (you and your brother) shall be martyred together.’” While the Old English term *strynan*, *gestrynan* often does denote begetting, according to Bosworth and Toller it also bears the meaning of ‘gain by effort, acquire, get, obtain.’ Considering that something won is also something gained by effort, I have used ‘won’ for *gestryned*.

²¹⁴ Mombritius, ed., “Passio Sanctae Ceciliae,” I.335.14–19. “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, creeping things, 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.’” Cf. “. . . et protulit ex virtute sua Spiritum sanctum. Filium videlicet, per quem crearet omnia. Spiritum, per quem vivificaret universa; omnia autem quae facta sunt, Filius ex Patre genitus condidit. Universa vero quae condita sunt, ex Patre Filioque procedens Spiritus sanctus animavit.” Alcuin [?], *Albini Confessio Fidei*, PL 101.1061A. It should be noted that neither Mombritius’ edition of the *passio* of Cecilia nor the version found in Cambridge, CCC 9, p. 328, of the Cotton-Corpus Legendary has the *Filioque* found here in the *Confessio*.

Skeat, *LS XXXIV*, II.364.156–60. “Then Cecilia arose and with firmness said, “The Creator begot the Son alone of every creature, and brought forth by himself the Holy Ghost. Through the Son he made all of the creatures that exist, and he enlivened all [creatures] by means of the living Spirit.”

²¹⁵ See Marcia L. Colish, *Medieval Foundations of the Western Intellectual Tradition 400–1400*, Yale Intellectual History of the West (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 1997), 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.

²¹⁶ Skeat, *LSI*, I.14.73–77. “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.”

²¹⁷ Mombritius, ed., “*Passio Sanctae Ceciliae*,” I.335.22–23. “just as we say that in one human there is one wisdom, which wisdom we say to possess mental power, memory, and understanding.” The phraseology of the Latin ternary used here is unusual. The first evidence of *ingenium*, *memoria*, and *intellectus* being used together as a ternary for the Trinity is found in the *Confessio* mentioned in Note 170 above and doubtfully ascribed to Alcuin: “. . . quem ita in sancta Trinitate dividimus, ut in homine uno dicimus haberi ingenium, memoriam et intellectum. Nam ingenio invenimus quod didicimus, memoria retinemus quod docemur, intellectu advertimus quidquid nobis vel videre contigerit vel audire. Quid modo faciemus? Nunquid non tria ista una sapientia in homine possidet? Si ergo homo in una sapientia trinum possidet nomen, quomodo non Deus omnipotens in una divinitate sua Trinitatis obtinet majestatem?” Alcuin [?], *Albini Confessio Fidei*, *PL* 101.1061B. This entire passage appears in both Mombritius’ edition and in Cambridge, CCC 9, p. 328.

Skeat, *LS XXXIV*, II.366.168–70. “just as three things are truly in each human, understanding, will, and conscious memory, which ever serve each human together.”

²¹⁸ Skeat, *LSI*, I.16.114.

²¹⁹ Mombritius, ed., “*Passio Sanctae Ceciliae*,” I.339.32–33; Skeat, *LS XXXIV*, II.372.290–92.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, II.372.294–99. “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 poor stone and receive a glorious gem.” Cf. Mombritius, ed., “*Passio Sanctae Ceciliae*,” I.339.35–41.

²²¹ Mombritius, ed., “*Passio Sanctae Ceciliae*,” I.339.56–57.

Notes to The Sons of Adam

¹ Leslie A. Donovan, trans., *Women Saints’ Lives in Old English Prose*, The Library of Medieval Women (Rochester, NY: D. S. Brewer, 1999), 13.

¹ *Sancti Aurelii Augustini de civitate Dei libri XI–XXII*, ed. Bernard Dombart and Alphons Kalb, CCSL, 48 (1928–29; Turnholt: Brepols, 1955), XII.6. “The physical beauty of the person could not have been the cause, since that was seen by both in exactly the same way and yet both wills did not become evil.” Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Gerald G. Walsh and Grace Monahan, The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation, vol. 7 (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1952), XII.6, 255–56.

² Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, XII.8. “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.” Augustine, *The City of God*, Book XII.8, 259.

³ Grégoire le Grand, *Dialogues*, ed. Adalbert de Vogüé, Sources Chrétiennes, 260 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1980), 38. “Relying on this virtue, which God had helped him acquire, he took upon himself the guidance of communities of women just as he had done of monks. Yet he warned his disciples to be distrustful of themselves and not to be too eager to follow his example, for they would be the cause

of their own downfall in trying to do what God had not given them the power to do.” St. Gregory the Great, *Dialogues*, trans. Odo John Zimmerman, O.S.B., *The Fathers of the Church*, 39 (New York: The Fathers of the Church, Inc., 1959), 16.

⁴ E. Gordon Whatley, “Acta Sanctorum,” in *Abbo of Fleury, Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, and Acta Sanctorum*, *Sources of Anglo-Saxon Literary Culture*, 1 (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001), 21; “Natalis Sanctorum Abdon et Sennes,” in Skeat, ed., *Ælfric’s Lives of Saints*, II, 54–59. The closest Latin source may be found in the Cotton-Corpus Legendary manuscript BL, Cotton Nero E.i (Gneuss #344), even though this manuscript postdates Ælfric. See the complete notice in Whatley, “Acta Sanctorum,” 20–21.

⁵ Ælfric, *LS XXIV*, II.54.2. “believed in Christ.”

⁶ “De SS. Abdon et Sennen martyres Romae,” in *AASS*, July VII, §1.

⁷ Skeat, *LS XXIV*, II.54.4. “Then the news of them spread to that savage emperor.”

⁸ *Sancti Aurelii Augustini de trinitate libri XV*, ed. W. J. Mountain, CCSL, 50 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1968), XII.16.

⁹ *Ibid.*, II.54.10. “desired to turn them back from the worship of God.”

¹⁰ Skeat, *LS XXIV*, II.54.1 and 20. These descriptors do not appear in the Latin.

¹¹ “SS. Abdon et Sennen,” §4 and Skeat, *LS XXIV*, II.54.21.

¹² “SS. Abdon et Sennen,” §4. “Abdon and Sennes said, ‘Why do you wait? Do what you are thinking. We are safe on account of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is able to destroy all your intentions and you yourself.’”

Skeat, *LS XXIV*, II.54.22–27. “Abdon and Sennes answered him thus: ‘Why do you wait, emperor? Say what you will. Then you might truly understand that we are safe in Christ our Savior, who possesses the strength that he is able entirely to cast down your purposes and your own self and to destroy you for eternity.’”

¹³ “SS. Abdon et Sennen,” §5; Skeat *LS XXIV*, II.56.30.

¹⁴ Arthur S. Napier, ed., *Old English Glosses, Chiefly Unpublished* (1900; reprint, Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1969).

¹⁵ “SS. Abdon et Sennen,” §5. “Now we have said to you, we worship the Lord Jesus Christ. For this reason we will never grovel to hand-made images.”

Skeat, *LS XXIV*, II.56.37–39. “We pray to the Lord with limbs bowed, and we will never bow down to those disgraceful images, the handiwork of a human, that you have for gods.”

¹⁶ “SS. Abdon et Sennen,” §5. “in that same hour he stripped them bare and, filled with madness, he led them before the image of the sun.”

¹⁷ Skeat, *LS XXIV*, II.56.40–41. “Then Valerian ordered the holy ones stripped and led them thus naked to the image of the sun.”

¹⁸ “SS. Abdon et Sennen,” §6. “And when they had entered, Abdon and Sennes replied in the sight of Valerian, saying, ‘In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ we enter to the crown, which he will forbid to

you, unclean spirit!’ And having made the sign of the cross they entered into the amphitheater who, while they entered into the sight of Valerian with nude body, were nevertheless clothed with the body of Christ.”

Skeat, *LS XXIV*, II.56.48b–50. “and afterwards he led them to the amphitheater where the beasts dwelt, the bears and the lions, so that they might be able to devour them.”

¹⁹ Romans 13:14: “but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will not regard the care of the flesh in its desires.”

Galatians 3:27: “whoever truly has been baptized in Christ, you all have put on Christ.”

²⁰ “SS. Abdon et Sennen,” §6; Skeat, *LS XXIV*, II.56.51–57.

²¹ “SS. Abdon et Sennen,” §7; Skeat, *LS XXIV*, II.58.60.

²² In Apocalypse 11:3–13, especially vv. 7–9, two witnesses (who remain unnamed) testify publicly against the beast from the pit. Finally they are slain and their bodies left exposed for all the people to see. After three and a half days, however, the witnesses in scripture are raised to life again, whereas Abdon’s and Sennes’ corpses are secretly removed for burial.

²³ Skeat, *LS XXIV*, II.58.76–80. “Now you have heard how these holy kings renounced their kingdom for the sake of belief in Christ and lost their own lives for him. Take an example through them so that you do not turn aside from Christ for the sake of any affliction, so that you may have eternal life.”

²⁴ See Peter Brown’s comments about the “non-gendered” nature of male saints in “The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity, 1971–1997,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6.3 (1998): 353–76, at 376.

²⁵ Allen J. Frantzen, “When Women Aren’t Enough,” in *Studying Medieval Women: Sex, Gender, Feminism*, ed. Nancy F. Partner (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1993), 143–69, at 165.

²⁶ Clare A. Lees, Introduction to *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages*, ed. Clare A. Lees, *Medieval Cultures*, 7 (Minneapolis, MN: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1994), xv.

²⁷ E. Gordon Whatley, “Acta Sanctorum,” 408. The *passio* of Sebastian (*BHL* 7543) may be found in the *Acta Sanctorum* for 20 Ianuarii (13 calendas Februarii), 265–78. The Cotton-Corpus Legendary version used for this analysis is from BL, Cotton Nero E.i (Gneuss #344).

²⁸ Skeat, *LS II*, I.30.93.

²⁹ “S. Sebastianus,” §1. “He was truly a wholly discrete man, truthful in speech, just in judgment, prudent in counsel, faithful in [any] undertaking, vigorous in action, remarkable for goodness, distinguished for general probity of character. The soldiers even honored him as a father; all the people who presided over the palace honored him with the most loving affection. For he was a true worshiper of God, and it was inevitable that he whom the grace of God had filled would be loved by all people.”

Skeat, *LS V*, I.116.4–10. “He was an exceedingly wise man and honest in speech, just in judgment and prudent in counsel, faithful in duty and a resolute intercessor, resplendent in goodness and honorable in all habits. He diligently fulfilled the service of his Lord daily, but nevertheless he kept his actions secret from the emperor Diocletian, who was a worshiper of the devil. Nevertheless, he loved the holy man . . . and all of the retainers esteemed him as a father, and honored him with love because God loved him.”

³⁰ Ælfric only mentions one of the co-emperors, Diocletian, because he thinks it better not to confuse his audience (or give them unwanted ideas) with the suggestion that more than one person might be the king or highest ruler at the same time. See his Preface in Skeat, *LS V*, I.4.19–21.

³¹ “S. Sebastianus,” §2. Cf. Skeat, *LS V*, I.116.23: *gehyrte heora mod* ‘encouraged their minds.’

³² Matthew 16:25 “Whosoever will have desired to make safe his own life shall lose it, however, whosoever will have lost his own life because of me shall find it.”

³³ Whatley, “Acta Sanctorum,” 408.

³⁴ “S. Sebastianus,” §4. “were ordered to undergo the capital sentence.”

Skeat, *LS V*, I.118.28. “They then must bow their heads for the naked sword.” Skeat has translated *under-hnigan* as ‘undergo,’ which is one possible meaning of the word. *Hnigian*, however, means ‘to bow down (the head),’ and given the sentence of beheading by means of a sword, I have chosen to retain the more specific meaning of the root verb, since it also carries the implication of submission that is given as the primary meaning of *under-hnigan* in Hall & Meritt.

³⁵ Jane Chance, *Woman as Hero in Old English Literature* (Syracuse: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1986), 218; Clare A. Lees and Gillian R. Overing, *Double Agents: Women and Clerical Culture in Anglo-Saxon England*, The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 119–21.

³⁶ Shari Horner, *The Discourse of Enclosure: Representing Women in Old English Literature*, SUNY Series in Medieval Studies (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2001), 114–15.

³⁷ Wilcox, “Old English Preface to the Translation of *Genesis*,” 117.42; “Palm Sunday,” in *Ælfric’s Catholic Homilies: The First Text*, ed. Peter Clemoes, EETS, s.s. 17 (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997), 290–98, at 293.101; and “Dominica Pentecosten,” in *Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection*, ed. John C. Pope, 2 vols., EETS, 259, 260 (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), I.396–405, at 397.34.

³⁸ Skeat, *LS V*, I.118.40b–42. “with many accusations desired to shake the minds of the young men away from belief in Christ, as if they did so wisely.” Since Marcus and Marcellianus are married and have children, Skeat’s translation of *cnihta* as ‘of the youths’ seems inaccurate here. Since we do not really know whether they are retainers, disciples, or warriors, it seemed best to me to translate the terms simply as ‘of the young men.’

³⁹ “S. Sebastianus,” §9. “In the meantime, while those things were being spoken and these were being related, between the tears of their wives and the sighs of their children, the soldiers of Christ began to soften and to turn their minds toward their [the wives’ and children’s] sorrow. . . . And then [Sebastian] perceived the athletes of God to be tired by the immense weight of the struggle . . .”

Skeat, *LS V*, I.118.48–49. “See, then! The warriors of God began to waver and their minds to turn aside toward the distress of their wives. Then Sebastian soon perceived how the warriors of God began to waver because of their great conflict.” Although *mag* may also mean male relatives and kinsmen, the context of the lines leading up to this statement encourages the more specific translation of *maga* as ‘of their wives,’ a usage that is attested in Hall & Meritt.

⁴⁰ Skeat, *LS V*, I.120.86. These lengthy discourses are found in §§13–22 of Pseudo-Ambrose’s text.

⁴¹ “S. Sebastianus,” §24; Skeat, *LS V*, I.122.93.

⁴² “S. Sebastianus,” §24. “Blessed are those who believe in all that you have spoken and cursed are those who doubt even one word of all these things that they have heard. For just as the rising dawn shuts out the whole darkness of night and restores to the eyes of all the light which blind night had denied, so has the light of your discourse wiped clean all of the fog and all of the blindness of ignorance, and after the darkness of night has restored bright day to the eyes of those believing rightly; from me, however, it has not only shut out the darkness of unbelief, but has opened the gateway of speech for me, which was closed for six years.”

Skeat, *LS V*, I.122.106–11. “Blessed are those that believe your words and be those accursed that are uncertain of them. Just as the dawn disperses the dim gloom and gives light to the eyes of men and women that were blind in the night, so your teaching dispersed that unbelief from me and opened my mouth and enlightened my mind.”

Zoe’s affirmation of the efficacy of Sebastian’s teaching uses the metaphor of the dawning light of instruction chasing away the gloom of ignorance—a metaphor that can be found also in Augustine’s *De civitate Dei* where he writes: “Sed quia ipsa mens, cui ratio et intellegentia naturaliter inest, uitiis quibusdam tenebrosis et ueteribus inualida est, non solum ad inhaerendum fruendo, uerum etiam ad perferendum incommutabile lumen, donec de die in diem renouata atque sanata fiat tantae felicitatis capax, fide primum fuerat inbuenda atque purganda.” Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, XI.2. “But since the mind, which was meant to be reasonable and intelligent, has, by dark and inveterate vices, become too weak to adhere joyously to His unchangeable light (or even to bear it) until, by gradual renewal and healing, it is made fit for such happiness, its first need was to be instructed by faith and purified.” Augustine, *The City of God*, Book XI.2

⁴³ “S. Sebastianus,” §51. “See to it that you look to be made a Christian not only for the recovery of the shape of your body, but for the greater hope of eternal life make your mind pure for perceiving the knowledge of truth. Unless you recognize who your Creator is, you will not be able to find the health that you seek.”

Skeat, *LS V*, I.130.212–18. “You must not bow to the Savior for the sake of your own health, nor finish baptism for your body alone, but rather you must believe in God for desire of the eternal healing and for the eternal life. Make your mind pure so that you may be able to learn by means of true understanding who your creator is. Nor will you else be able to have the health that you seek.”

⁴⁴ Skeat, *LS I*, I.14.79–81. “There is nothing that any among humans living in this mortal life need so greatly as that he or she might know the almighty God through belief, and after that, his or her own soul.”

⁴⁵ “S. Sebastianus,” §59 and §63; Skeat, *LS V*, I.136.296–309.

⁴⁶ “S. Sebastianus,” §74. “commanded her to be hung by the neck and hair in a high tree and smoke from a dung-heap to be applied beneath her.”

⁴⁷ Psalm 132:1.

⁴⁸ Skeat, *LS V*, I.142.396–97. “O you unhappy and truly wretched men! Give up your madness and free yourselves from punishment.”

⁴⁹ Skeat, *LS V*, I.142.398.

⁵⁰ “S. Sebastianus,” §84. “commanded that they both be struck with lances through their sides where they stood.”

⁵¹ Skeat, *LS V*, I.142.404–05.

⁵² Skeat, *LS V*, I.144.421 and 447.

⁵³ "S. Sebastianus," §85. "Then the soldiers placed him in the middle of a field and they filled him with arrows on this side and that to such an extent that, like a hedgehog, he was very prickly with the strikes (shafts) of arrows."

Skeat, *LS V*, I.144.425–28. "Then the warriors led the thane of Christ thence and set him up as a target, just as the wicked man ordered. And their arrows fastened into him, before and behind, so thick on each side they were like the bristles of a hedgehog."

⁵⁴ Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, XI.15. "There are, then, two loves, of which one is holy, the other unclean; one turned towards the neighbor, the other centered on self; . . . one looking to the common good, keeping in view the society of saints in heaven, the other bringing the common good under its own power, arrogantly looking to domination; one subject to God, the other rivaling Him . . . one wishing for its neighbor what it wishes for itself, the other seeking to subject its neighbor to itself; one looking for its neighbor's advantage in ruling its neighbor, the other looking for its own advantage." Augustine, *Literal Meaning of Genesis*, XI.15.

⁵⁵ The legend of St. George (*BHL* 3373/74) has been dated to the early fifth century and apparently enjoyed great popularity throughout the early Middle Ages. The published edition closest to Ælfric's own Latin source and used here is by P. Michael Huber, "Zur Georgslegende," in *Festschrift z. XII. allgemeinen deutschen Neuphilologentage in München, Pfingsten 1906*, ed. E. Stollreither (Erlangen, 1906), 194–203. The closest manuscript version may be found in the Cotton-Corpus Legendary, BL Cotton Nero E.i. See also the entry on Georgius provided by Joyce Hill in Whatley, "Acta Sanctorum," 215–17.

⁵⁶ Huber, "Zur Georgslegende," §V and Skeat, *LS XIV*, I.308.5–6 and 28–30.

⁵⁷ Huber, "Zur Georgslegende," §VI. The ellipses indicate missing text. "Nevertheless, holy George, seeing that among the people of all provinces gathered before the impious Datian, there were many present who blasphemed Christ and worshiped demons. . . . all the money, which he had brought with him, he distributed to the needy. And taking off the cloak of the earthly empire, he put on the girdle and breastplate of the faith; protected by the sign of the cross and illuminated by the radiance of the Holy Spirit, thus he rushed up under the gaze of the emperor Datian, saying, "All the gods of the gentiles are demons, but our Lord made the heavens."

Skeat, *LS XIV*, I.308.12–19. "Then the holy man saw the error of the heathen people, how they sacrificed to the devil and despised their Lord. Then he fearlessly distributed his property in alms to needy men and women, to the praise of the savior, and became bold through Christ and said to the emperor, "Omnes dii gentium demonia, dominus autem caelos fecit," "All the gods of the heathens are cruel devils, and our Lord truly made the heavens."

⁵⁸ Skeat, *LS II*, I.26.38.

⁵⁹ Skeat, *LS II*, I.26.39–40: "All the gods of the heathens are devils, and the Lord truly made the heavens."

Skeat, *LS XIV*, I.308.18–19: "All the gods of the heathens are cruel devils, and our Lord truly made the heavens."

⁶⁰ Huber, "Zur Georgslegende," §VIII. "Holy George said, "I am a Christian and a servant of God. I am named George, Cappadocian by race, holding the rank of count in my homeland. And I have chosen this better thing, to be divested of the temporal honor of the dignity of this world to cleave to the empire of the immortal God."

Skeat, *LS XIV*, I.308.26–32. “Then George answered that wicked one and said, “I am truly a Christian and I serve Christ. I am named George and I have authority in my land, which is called Cappadocia. It pleases me better to set aside now this temporal dignity and to serve in the kingdom of the glorious God in holy service.”

⁶¹ Huber, “Zur Georgslegende,” §IX. “You err, George. Come near—bow to and sacrifice to the invincible god Apollo, who will be able to give pardon for your ignorance, and show yourself as a true worshiper of him.”

⁶² Skeat, *LS XIV*, I.308–310.33–36. “You err, George. Approach first now and offer your sacrifice to the invincible Apollo, he who truly is able to show mercy to your ignorance, and turn back to his service.”

⁶³ Skeat, *LS XIV*, I.306.1.

⁶⁴ Skeat, *LS XIV*, I.308.4.

⁶⁵ The entry in Hall-Meritt defines *dwelian* as ‘to go astray; lead astray, deceive.’ The implication is that one might also go astray by being deceived, which may be the sense in which Ælfric uses the word here.

⁶⁶ Huber, “Zur Georgslegende,” §IX. “Whom is it better to love, or to whom ought we to offer worship, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of all the worlds, or Apollo, originator of all demons?”

Skeat, *LS XIV*, I.310.38–40. “Which is to be loved, or to whom to offer sacrifice: to the Savior Christ, redeemer of all the worlds, or to Apollo, leader of all the devils?”

⁶⁷ Skeat, *LS I*, I.16.88–90. “It is natural to humankind that one should love that which is good. What is good except God alone, he who is sublime goodness, but for whom no one is able to have any good thing?”

⁶⁸ Huber, “Zur Georgslegende,” §X and Skeat, *LS XIV*, I.310.41–46.

⁶⁹ Huber, “Zur Georgslegende,” §XI.

⁷⁰ Skeat, *LS XIV*, I.312.82.

⁷¹ Huber, “Zur Georgslegende,” §XII–XIII and Skeat, *LS XIV*, I.310–312.48–84.

⁷² Huber, “Zur Georgslegende,” §XVI. “George, you do not realize to what extent our venerable gods labor on your behalf up until now, in order that they may gently grant mercy for the things which, through ignorance, you do against them, and thereby may soften the hardness of your heart and gain for themselves a worshiper in you. This therefore I urge you, like my own begotten son: that, putting aside the most vain superstition of the Christians, you consent to my wish and come forward and make sacrifice to the invincible gods and the great god Apollo.”

Skeat, *LS XIV*, I.314.118–23. “Do you not know, George, that our gods labor for you and they are still patient so that they may be able to show mercy to you. Now I urge you as a beloved son that you abandon that Christian teaching entirely and submit quickly to my counsel so that you sacrifice to the honorable Apollo.”

⁷³ Huber, “Zur Georgslegende,” §XVI and Skeat, *LS XIV*, I.314.126.

⁷⁴ Huber, "Zur Georgslegende," §XVIII. "So that those who are to believe in you might recognize you and both believe in the one and only true God and in him whom you sent into the world, Jesus!" See also Ælfric's translation of this prayer, Skeat, *LS XIV*, I.316.137–40.

⁷⁵ Huber, "Zur Georgslegende," §XX. "who has deigned to award to me the victory against the raging savageness of my enemy."

⁷⁶ Skeat, *LS XIV*, I.318.164–65. "that he protected him against the deceitful devil and gave him victory through true belief."

⁷⁷ Skeat, *LS XIV*, I.318.182–83. "and he went to hell before getting to his house, and the holy George departed to Christ, with whom he dwells ever in glory."

⁷⁸ "There is neither male nor female, all of you truly are one in Christ Jesus."

⁷⁹ The most detailed account of Oswald's Life appears in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, III.1–13 and Whatley notes that all of the hagiographical tradition of Oswald is based upon Bede's account (see "Acta Sanctorum," 356). In the analysis that follows I am not so much interested in determining how much of Bede's and Ælfric's portrayals of Oswald might be true to the actual historical Oswald, but rather I am interested in the kind of masculinity that these writers give Oswald and the implications of the mixture of secular and religious ideals in those depictions.

⁸⁰ Joel T. Rosenthal, "A Historiographical Survey: Anglo-Saxon Kings and Kingship since World War II," *The Journal of British Studies* 24.1 (Jan. 1985): 72–93, at 83.

⁸¹ Clare Stancliffe, "Oswald, 'Most Holy and Most Victorious King of the Northumbrians,'" in *Oswald: Northumbrian King to European Saint*, ed. Clare Stancliffe and Eric Cambridge, Paul Watkins Medieval Studies, 14 (Stamford, Lincolnshire: Paul Watkins, 1995), 33–83, at 42.

⁸² Bede, *HE* III.1, 214.

⁸³ Skeat, *LS XXVI*, II.126.14–16. "Oswald came to him and bravely fought against him with a little company. But his belief strengthened him, and Christ helped him for the destruction of his foes."

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, II.126.20.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, II.126.26b–27. "just as the ruler granted to them because of the belief of Oswald, and [God] carried off their foes."

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, II.126.28–29. "that arrogant Cædwalla with his great army, who thought that no host would be able to stand against him."

⁸⁷ The references to David as a man after God's own heart may be found in I Samuel 13:14 and Acts 13:22.

⁸⁸ Skeat, *LS XXVI*, II.128.45–46a. "Listen! Then Oswald began to seek after the will of God as soon as he had rulership of the kingdom."

⁸⁹ Augustine, *De trinitate*, XII.16.

⁹⁰ Skeat, *LS XXVI*, II.128.51.

⁹¹ Bede, *HE* III.3, 220; Skeat, *LS XXVI*, II.128–130, 64–69.

⁹² Bede, *HE* III.3, 218. “a man of the greatest gentleness, devotion, moderation, and possessing zeal for God.”

⁹³ Skeat, *LS XXVI*, II.128.54–56. “was a man of excellent life in monkish conduct and he cast aside all worldly concerns from his heart, desiring nothing except the will of God.”

⁹⁴ Skeat, *LS XXVI*, II.128.57–59. “Whatever came to him of the gifts of the king or high ranking people he quickly distributed with a kindly disposition to the poor and the destitute.” Cf. Bede, *HE* III.5, 226.

⁹⁵ Bede, *HE* III.5, 226. “He differed so much, however, in his life from the slothfulness of our time that all who proceeded with him, whether tonsured or of the laity, had to meditate, that is to work either by reading holy writings or by learning the psalms. This was the daily work of him and of all who were with him, whatever place they went.”

Skeat, *LS XXVI*, II.130. 75–79. “He loved self-restraint and holy reading and taught the young men gladly with exhortation so that all his disciples that journeyed with him must study the psalms or some reading wherever they traveled to preach to the people.”

⁹⁶ Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, XI.2.

⁹⁷ Bede, *HE* III.6, 230. “Then king Oswald, who had been established as ruler over the race of the Angles, together with them learned to hope for the kingdom of heaven unknown by their own predecessors from the teaching of this bishop. . . . Having been elevated to the highest office of the kingdom, he nevertheless was always humble, kind, and bountiful to the lowly and to strangers (which is wonderful to relate).

Skeat, *LS XXVI*, II.130.83–84. “Then king Oswald became very charitable and humble in disposition, and generous in all matters. The man built churches and monastic foundations throughout all of his kingdom with great zeal.”

⁹⁸ II Samuel 6:1–19.

⁹⁹ II Samuel 7:1–17.

¹⁰⁰ Bede, *HE* III.6, 230. “May this hand never decay.”

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 230 and Skeat, *LS XXVI*, II.132.102–03.

¹⁰² Skeat, *LS XXVI*, II.132.104–08. Cf. Bede, *HE* III.6, 230.

¹⁰³ Skeat, *LS XXVI*, II.132.108. Cf. Bede, *HE* III.6, 230.

¹⁰⁴ Skeat, *LS XXVI*, II.132.109–10. York was the official archepiscopal see established by Gregory the Great during the conversion period, but during the time of Oswald Lindisfarne held the episcopal authority in Northumbria. Stancliffe, “Oswald,” 76.

¹⁰⁵ Bede, *HE* III.12, 250. “formerly possessing the government of a temporal kingdom, was always more accustomed to work and to pray for the eternal kingdom.”

Skeat, *LS XXVI*, II.132.111. “labored for the heavenly kingdom with continual prayers.”

¹⁰⁶ Bede, *HE* III.12, 250.

¹⁰⁷ Luke 22:44.

¹⁰⁸ Skeat, *LS XXVI*, II.132.109–13. “He completed the splendid minster in York that his kinsman Edwin had begun earlier, and he labored for the heavenly kingdom with continual prayers more than he cared for how he possessed temporal dignities in the world, which he loved little.”

¹⁰⁹ Bede, *HE* III.7, 232.

¹¹⁰ Jerome, “Epistula XIV, Ad Heliodorum Monachum,” in *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulae, Pars I: Epistulae I–LXX*, ed. Isidore Hilberg, CSEL, 54 (Vienna: Tempsky, 1910), at §6. “You promised to be perfect. When you gave up the army and made yourself an eunuch for the kingdom of heaven’s sake, what other purpose had you in view save the perfect life?” Jerome, “Letter XIV, To Heliodorus,” in Wright, *Select Letters of St. Jerome*, p. 41.

¹¹¹ Jerome, “Ad Eustochium,” §19. “Some men may be eunuchs of necessity; I am one by choice.” Jerome, “Letter XXII,” p. 93.

¹¹² Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, PL 23.220B–220C. “The same Apostle in another place commands us to pray always. If we are to pray always, it follows that we must never be in the bondage of wedlock, for as often as I render my wife her due, I cannot pray. . . . so [he] now says that prayers are hindered by the performance of marriage duty. . . . If we abstain from intercourse, we give honour to our wives: if we do not abstain, it is clear that insult is the opposite of honour.” Jerome, “Against Jovinian,” in *St. Jerome: Letters and Selected Works*, A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series, Vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), I.7. Cf. Bede, “In Epistolas VII Catholicas,” in *Beda Venerabilis Opera, Pars II, Opera Exegetica*, CCSL, 121 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1983), 244. See above p. 321 n. 121.

¹¹³ Bede, *HE* III.2, 214.

¹¹⁴ Bede, *HE* III.6, 230.

¹¹⁵ Bede, *HE* III.12, 250–52.

¹¹⁶ Bede, *HE* III.6, 230.

¹¹⁷ Skeat, *LS XXVI*, II.132.99–103 and II.136.162–68.

¹¹⁸ Bede, *HE* III.11, 246.

¹¹⁹ Oswald’s Life is an odd sort of hybrid, but the kind of masculinity depicted in it is fundamentally religious rather than secular. The contexts in which he engages in forceful action are strictly confined and not presented as characteristic but rather occasions of necessity.

¹²⁰ Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, XI.15. “There are, then, two loves, of which one is holy, the other unclean; one turned towards the neighbor, the other centered on self; . . . one looking to the common good, . . . the other bringing the common good under its own power, arrogantly looking to domination; . . . one wishing for its neighbor what it wishes for itself, the other seeking to subject its neighbor to itself; one looking for its neighbor’s advantage in ruling its neighbor, the other looking for its own advantage.” Augustine, *Literal Meaning of Genesis*, XI.15.

¹²¹ Galatians 3:26–28. “You are all truly children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Whoever certainly has been baptized into Christ, you are clothed with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female: you are all truly one in Christ Jesus.”

Appendix

THE EVIDENCE FOR PATRISTIC WORKS KNOWN IN EARLY ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

APPENDIX: THE EVIDENCE FOR PATRISTIC WORKS KNOWN IN EARLY ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

According to Bede, Latin literacy followed on the heels of Christian conversion in the kingdoms of the Anglo-Saxons and, with the establishment of monasteries, conscientious abbots like Benedict Biscop and Ceolfrith at Wearmouth-Jarrow in Northumbria invested much time and effort in collecting classical, patristic, and liturgical books for their new libraries.¹ Yet these industrious abbots were not the only book collectors in seventh-century England, for Aldhelm's reading list was impressive and Abbess Hild must have had a well-stocked library at Whitby in order for her double house to become a "nursery of bishops."² By the early 670s Archbishop Theodore and Abbot Hadrian had established a school at Canterbury that drew aspiring and established scholars from every part of England.³ The testimony, both explicit and implicit, to the presence of many works of classical and patristic authors in English monastic centers less than one hundred years following the arrival of the Augustinian mission leads us to expect that at least some of the manuscripts of these works might have survived the vicissitudes of Viking raids, fires, and the Henrician dissolution of the monasteries to provide indisputable evidence for the knowledge of particular works of the Latin Doctors among the Anglo-Saxons.

The foremost research done on manuscripts known to have been in England during the Anglo-Saxon period has been done by Helmut Gneuss.⁴ According to Gneuss, the following works of the Latin Doctors that were discussed in Chapter Two

exist in manuscripts from seventh- and eighth-century England (numbered according to Gneuss's system):

Jerome: *Epistolae*

- #832: (*Epistola* 57) Kassel, Gesamthochschulbibliothek 2°Ms.theol.21 (s. viii) Northumbria
- #845: (*Epistola* 53) St. Petersburg (Leningrad), Russian National Library Q.v.I.15 (s. viii²) Southwest England⁵

Ambrose: Gneuss lists no remaining seventh- or eighth-century manuscripts of Ambrose's works that were discussed in Chapter Two.

Augustine: *De civitate Dei*

- #53: (excerpts from Book 18) Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 173 (s. viii²) probably Kent

De trinitate

- #255: (palimpsest, lower script fragments) Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Advocates 18.7.8 (s. viii) Thorney

Gregory: *Dialogi*

- #856.1: Münster in Westfalen, Universitätsbibliothek Fragmentenkapsel 1 no.2 (s. viii²)
- #937.3: Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek Theol. et Philos. Qu 628 (s. vii/viii) Northumbria or Continent⁶
- #943.8: Wrocław (Breslau), Biblioteka Uniwersytecka Akc. 1955/2 and 1969/430 (s. viii¹ or viii^{med}) Northumbria

Homiliae in Euangelia

- #42: (Book 2) Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 69 (s. viii^{ex}/ixⁱⁿ or ix¹) South England
- #255: (palimpsest, lower script fragments) Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Advocates 18.7.8 (s. viii) Thorney
- #804.5: Boulogne-sur-Mer, Bibliothèque Municipale 106 (127) (s. viii/ix) probably England

Moralia in Iob

- #840.5: St. Petersburg (Leningrad), Russian National Library F.v.I.3 (s. viii²) probably Northumbria⁷

#858: New Haven, Yale University, Beinecke Library
516 (s. viii¹) Northumbria

#865.5: New York, Pierpont Morgan Library G 30 (s.
vii^{ex}) probably Northumbria

#946.5: Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek
M.p.th.f.149a (s. viii²) South Mercia or Germany⁸

Libri Regulae Pastoralis

#346: (abridged) London, BM Cotton Otho A.i (s.
viii²) Mercia or Canterbury

#771: Worcester, Cathedral Library, Add. 3 (s. viii)

#833: Kassel, Gesamthochschulbibliothek 2°

Ms.theol.32 (s. viii) South England

#894: Paris, BN lat. 9561 (s. viii¹ or viii^{med}) South
England

#898.5: Paris, BN lat. 13089 (s. viii^{med} or viii²)
Northumbria (Wearmouth-Jarrow?)

From this list we can see that the works of Gregory are well represented in surviving manuscripts from both southern and northern Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, while the works of the other Latin Doctors remain in few extant manuscripts of English origin or provenance in the seventh and eighth centuries. Such a list, however, cannot claim to represent the actual distribution of patristic works in England during the first two centuries after the arrival of the Roman and Irish missionaries because of the wholesale destruction of monastic libraries by the Vikings in the ninth century and by other catastrophes of later date. In order to piece together a more complete picture of the patristic works known to the early Anglo-Saxons, scholars must rely upon other, less direct, manuscript evidence.

The manuscripts from the Continent that paleographers categorize as “deutsch-insular” in origin or as coming from “Anglo-Saxon England or [an] Anglo-Saxon centre on Continent” suggest (though they cannot prove) a wider knowledge among Anglo-Saxons of the works examined in Chapter Two.⁹ The “deutsch-insular”

manuscripts are “manuscripts in Anglo-Saxon scripts written by English or by continental scribes, (trained and) working at Anglo-Saxon centres on the Continent.”¹⁰ The difficulty involved in using these manuscripts as evidence for the knowledge of particular books in England itself lies in the fact that the Anglo-Saxon foundations on the Continent may have obtained their exemplars from libraries on the Continent rather than from centers in England. While the surviving letters of Anglo-Saxons abroad such as Boniface or Alcuin suggest by their frequent requests for copies of books that the Anglo-Saxon monasteries established on the Continent may very well have obtained many works from insular libraries, books from Continental centers (such as Chelles) are also known to have traveled to the new Anglo-Saxon foundations on the continent from an early date.¹¹ According to J. D. A. Ogilvy, the evidence for a brisk flow of communication between the Anglo-Saxon missionaries on the Continent and various monasteries and scriptoria in England suggests that the flow of books went from the continent to England as well as vice versa, therefore the presence of a book in Anglo-Saxon foundations such as Fulda or Würzburg could be taken as evidence for knowledge of the book in insular monasteries as well.¹²

Though the logic of the assertion is shaky, the genealogy of close relationships between monastic houses in England, Frankish houses in the Paris basin (especially Jouarre, Chelles, Faramoutiers, and Andelys-sur-Seine, as well as Corbie), and Anglo-Saxon foundations on the Continent as outlined by Rosamond McKitterick strongly supports Ogilvy’s idea, for the more certainly such relationships are established, the more likely it seems that books known and produced in these

Continental houses were also known to the English monasteries with whom they maintained correspondence:

The implications of the manuscript evidence are of great importance. They witness to a far more extensive network of communication, exchange and friendship, and, above all, a unity of purpose, from either side of the Channel and the North Sea than has hitherto been imagined, and add a new dimension to our knowledge of the history of Neustria and England.¹³

Adding to the strength of the testimony of Continental manuscripts are the indications in some that they may have been copied from either Anglo-Saxon or Irish exemplars.¹⁴ Many manuscripts show signs of having had an insular exemplar or else were written in Continental houses known to have close ties with Anglo-Saxon monasteries and/or Anglo-Saxon foundations on the Continent, as the following partial list of manuscripts of works discussed in Chapter Two demonstrates:

- Jerome: *Epistola XIV*, "Ad Heliodorum"
Cheltenham, Phillips Collection 36185 [olim 30499] (s. viii²) German center with South English connections, written in Anglo-Saxon miniscule¹⁵
- Augustine: *De civitate Dei*
Trier, Stadtbibliothek-Stadtarchiv Ms. 137/50 (s. viii²) in Irish half-uncial.¹⁶
Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale MS 9641 (s. viii/ix) uses insular abbreviations.¹⁷
- De doctrina christiana*
Vatican, Pal. lat. 188 (s. viii/ix) Lorsch.¹⁸
Vatican, Pal. lat. 189 (s. viii/ix) Northeast Francia, reached Lorsch during the reign of Louis the Pious.¹⁹
- De Genesi ad litteram*
Oxford, Bodleian Library Laud misc. 141 (s. viii/ix or ix¹) Lorsch²⁰
- De trinitate*
Oxford, Bodleian Library Laud misc. 126 (s. viii^{med}) from the nuns' scriptorium at Chelles.²¹

Cambrai, Bibliothèque Municipale 300 (s. viii) from the
nuns' scriptorium at Jouarre or Faramoutiers.²²
Vatican, Pal. lat. 202 (s. viii/ix) deutsch-insular²³
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 9538 (s. viii)
Echternach?²⁴

Gregory: *Dialogi*

Düsseldorf, Landes- und Stadtbibliothek B213 (s.
viii/ix) Anglo-Saxon England or Anglo-Saxon
centre on Continent, written in Anglo-Saxon
minuscule.
Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek Theol. et
philos. qu. 628 (s. vii/viii) uses insular
abbreviations and insular "ss" orthography.
Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek M.p.th.f.19 (s. viii/ix)
written in Rhineland minuscule and Anglo-Saxon
minuscule.

Moralia in Iob

Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek M.p.th.f.149a (s.
viii²) insular parchment preparation and probable
Northumbrian-trained scribe.
Durham, Cathedral Library C.IV.8 (s. viii/ix) Anglo-
Saxon minuscule with insular abbreviations; early
product of Hersfeld (est. by Lull)
Kassel, Manuskripten Anhang 29 + Hersfeld,
Städtisches Archiv lat. IV (s. viii/ix) early product
of Hersfeld (est. by Lull)
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 10399 (s. viii/ix)

Homeliae in Euangelia

Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek M.p.th.q.3 (s. v/vi)
Italy; contains notes in Continental Anglo-Saxon
minuscule (s. viii).
Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek M.p.th.f.45 (s. viii²)
convent with connections to Würzburg.
Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek M.p.th.f.47 (s.
viii^{med?}) scribe named Ercanfrid; from Kent or
German scribe taught English script.
Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Clm 29050 (s.
viii/ix) believed to have had an insular exemplar
and possibly was written at the nun's scriptorium at
Chelles.

Libri regulae pastoralis

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 13089 (s. viii/ix)
probably written by Englishmen/women on
Continent.²⁵

This manuscript evidence, especially those manuscripts that paleographers believe had insular exemplars, implies a high degree of probability that all of these works were known in Anglo-Saxon England, though we cannot determine which centers on the island may have provided the original exemplar. In order to establish greater certainty we must turn to the internal evidence within the works of Aldhelm, Bede, and Alcuin themselves. The works of these early Anglo-Saxon authors contain significant quotations that indicate knowledge of a far greater selection of patristic works than can be inferred from Gneuss's careful scholarship or even the inclusion of works known to be in several continental houses with close Anglo-Saxon ties.

Notes to Appendix

¹ Bede, "Historia Abbatum," in *Venerabilis Bedae Opera Historica*, 2 vols., ed. C. Plummer (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1896), §6.

² Frank M. Stenton, "The Historical Bearing of Place-Name Studies: The Place of Women in Anglo-Saxon Society," in *New Readings on Women in Old English Literature*, ed. Helen Damico and Alexandra Hennessey Olsen (Bloomington, IN: Indiana Univ. Press, 1990), 79–88, at 88. On the status of Whitby as a center of learning, see Hunter Blair, "Whitby as a Centre of Learning," 3–32.

³ Michael Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature 600–899* (London: Hambledon Press, 1996), 141–42.

⁴ Helmut Gneuss, *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: A List of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England up to 1100*, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 241 (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2001).

⁵ Rosamond McKitterick comments that Boniface was one of the main scribes for this manuscript in *Books, Scribes and Learning in the Frankish Kingdoms, 6th – 9th Centuries* (Brookfield, VT: Variorum, 1994) at III.413. [Note: Variorum reprint editions do not number their pages consecutively, but retain the original page numeration of the earlier articles. Thus, all of the works from this book are identified by the chapter number in Roman numerals and the page(s) in Arabic numerals.]

⁶ McKitterick notes that the script is North Frankish uncial and so concludes that this manuscript is most likely to be from a Continental center, although she declines to make an absolute assertion. *Books, Scribes and Learning*, IV.322, n. 34.

⁷ This manuscript also contains an abridged version of Jerome's commentary on Isaiah and Philippus' commentary on Job. McKitterick, *Books, Scribes and Learning*, III.401.

⁸ The script of this manuscript is English, but the membrane has been prepared in the Continental fashion. McKitterick, *Books, Scribes and Learning*, IV.300.

⁹ *Ibid.*, IV.319.

¹⁰ Gneuss, *Handlist*, 6.

¹¹ One example of such a work is Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 126, a copy of Augustine's *De trinitate* that was probably in the hands of the Anglo-Saxon bishop, Burchard of Würzburg, by the mid-700s. For other examples and extensive evidence of the connections between Anglo-Saxon foundations such as Fulda and Würzburg and scriptoria in northern Francia, see McKitterick, *Books, Scribes and Learning*, Chapters III and IV.

¹² J. D. A. Ogilvy, *Books Known to the English, 597–1066*, Medieval Academy of America, 76 (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1967). Ogilvy's work has been praised by Morton Bloomfield for the extensive and valuable information it contains, but criticized as well for shortcomings in organization and the tentative presentation of some of Ogilvy's rationale and findings. See Bloomfield's review in *Speculum* 43 (1968): 529–30.

¹³ McKitterick, *Books, Scribes and Learning*, III.431. Ado established the Frankish monastery at Jouarre under the Rule of Columbanus, and put his cousin, Theudlechdis, in charge as abbess. Her brother, Agilbert, became bishop of the West Saxons (r. 649/50 – 664), during which time he argued

the Roman case at the Council of Whitby. He became bishop of Paris in 668. During these times, Agilbert maintained his relationship with Jouarre and was ultimately buried there. Agilbert's nephew, Leuthere, succeeded Wine, who had replaced Agilbert, as bishop of the West Saxons. In the meanwhile, Chelles was established as a daughter house of Jouarre. The Anglo-Saxon wife of Clovis II, Balthild, refounded Chelles and Bertila, formerly of Jouarre, was made its abbess. (Balthild herself retired to Chelles in 677.) In Bertila's *Life*, we are told that she sent men, women, and books to England to assist in establishing a monastery (thought to be Bath). Chelles also possessed relics of both St. Boniface and St. Oswald, and was noted by Bede to have been a popular destination for Anglo-Saxon noblewomen seeking an education or pursuing a religious life.

¹⁴ See examples above. Also, McKitterick notes that Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, MS 9641 (Augustine's *De civitate Dei*), while written in caroline minuscule, uses insular abbreviations. From this evidence she postulates an insular exemplar. *Books, Scribes and Learning*, III.400, 417.

¹⁵ Ogilvy, *Books Known to the English*, 174.

¹⁶ McKitterick, *Books, Scribes and Learning*, II.116, n. 94.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, III.400, 417.

¹⁸ Bernhard Bischoff, *Die Abtei Lorsch im Spiegel ihrer Handschriften* (Lorsch: Verl. Laurissa, 1989), p. 31, and *Manuscripts and Libraries in the Age of Charlemagne*, trans. Michael Gorman, Cambridge Studies in Palaeography and Codicology, 1 (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994), 23, n. 11.

¹⁹ Bischoff, *Lorsch*, 118.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.

²¹ Bischoff, *Manuscripts and Libraries*, 68, n. 56 and McKitterick, *Books, Scribes and Learning*, III.406, 408.

²² McKitterick, *Books, Scribes and Learning*, III.411, n. 101.

²³ Bischoff, *Lorsch*, 118.

²⁴ The manuscript is written in insular script. The evidence for an early Echternach provenance, however, is tenuous. McKitterick, *Books, Scribes and Learning*, III.428. Michael Gorman suggests that this manuscript came from Northumbria rather than from Echternach in "The Manuscript Traditions of St. Augustine's Major Works," *Studia ephemeridis Augustinianum* 24 (1987): 381–412, at 388.

²⁵ The information on the manuscripts of Gregory's works comes from McKitterick, *Books, Scribes and Learning*, IV.296–318.

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