

WOMEN AND SANCTITY:
LIVES OF THE FEMALE SAINTS WRITTEN IN ENGLISH
FROM CYNEWULF TO THE KATHERINE GROUP

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ABSTRACT

An important concern in these Lives is the conflict between the flesh and the spirit. Virginity in particular plays a central part. The first part of this study examines the background to these concerns. The discussion is based on works by the Fathers, particularly St Augustine, and by English writers (Bede, Aldhelm and Ælfric). Illustrations are taken from the Old English Lives. The following areas are covered: the disobedience of the flesh, of which sexual lust was one symptom; the Christian view of virginity as a means of recovering the obedience of the flesh and restoring the harmonious relationship between man and God lost by the fall; the qualities, physical and spiritual, required of a virgin; the powers attributed to virginity in the Lives of virgin saints. The last part of the section discusses the reasons for the greater emphasis given to virginity in women than in men, and examines the degree to which such reasons influenced the Lives produced in England before the Conquest.

The second part consists of studies, in the light of the foregoing, of the following Old English Lives: Cynewulf's *Juliana*; Eugenia; Euphrosyne; Margaret; Mary of Egypt.

Part three traces developments in spirituality and changes in attitudes towards women which influenced the Lives of the Katherine Group. The following are amongst the works discussed: the *Liber Confortorius* of Goscelin; works by Anselm and the Cistercians; *Halī Meīðhad* and the *Ancrene Wisse*. This is followed in part four by studies of the three Lives of the Katherine Group.

The Appendix provides textual and bibliographical information about the Lives which are the subject of the study.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	5
Prefatory note	5
Abbreviations	6
Introduction	9
PART I: VIRGINITY	
Chapter 1: Flesh and spirit	13
2: Virginity and marriage	27
3: On being a virgin	35
4: Virginity and power	63
5: Virginity and women	122
PART II: OLD ENGLISH LIVES	
Chapter 6: Cynewulf's <i>Juliana</i>	162
7: Ælfric's 'Life of St Eugenia'	188
8: The 'Life of St Euphrosyne'	217
9: The 'Life of St Margaret'	230
10: The 'Life of St Mary of Egypt'	250
PART III: FROM THE CONQUEST TO THE KATHERINE GROUP	
Chapter 11: Goscelin of St Bertin and Anselm of Canterbury	297
12: The Continent in the twelfth century	323
13: England in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries	340
14: Developments in spirituality	369
15: Developments in feminine imagery	391

PART IV: THE LIVES OF THE KATHERINE GROUP

Chapter 16:	St Iulienne	409
17:	St Marherete	426
18:	St Katerine	440
Appendix: texts, manuscripts, studies		475
Bibliography and references		496

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PREFATORY NOTE

Unless otherwise stated, Latin texts are quoted as printed by the editors.

Where available, printed translations of Latin texts are also quoted. Where no translations are available, I have provided translations or paraphrases.

Biblical references are to the Vulgate, and quotations are from the Douay-Rheims translation.

Unless otherwise stated, Old and early Middle English texts are quoted as printed by the editors, except that the letter 'wynn' has been normalised to 'w'; and Skeat's hyphens in *Ælfric's Lives of Saints* have been omitted.

In quotations from early Middle English texts, 3 represents lower case 'yogh'.

ABBREVIATIONS

- AASS: *Acta Sanctorum*, ed. J. Bollandus et al. (Antwerp, Brussels, Paris, 1643-1894)
- Assmann: *Angelsächsische Homilien und Heiligenleben* ed. Bruno Assmann, Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Prosa 3 (Kassel, 1889; repr. with a supplementary introduction by Peter Clemoes, Darmstadt, 1964). References are to homily and line numbers
- AW: *Ancrene Wisse: Edited from MS Corpus Christi College, Cambridge*, J. R. R. Tolkien, EETS 249 (London, 1961). References are to folio and line numbers
- BHL: *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina* (Brussels, 1898-1901). Supplement, *Subsidia Hagiographica* 12 (Brussels, 1911)
- BT: *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* ed. Joseph Bosworth & T. Northcote Toller (Oxford, 1898). With a supplement by Toller (Oxford, 1921). *Enlarged Addenda and Corrigenda to the Supplement* by Alistair Campbell (Oxford, 1972)
- Butler: Alban Butler, *Butler's Lives of the Saints*, 2nd edition, supplemented by H. Thurston & D. Attwater, 4 vols (London, 1956)
- CCCM: *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievalis* (Turnhout, 1966-)
- CCSL: *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* (Turnhout, 1953-)
- CH: *Homilies of Ælfric* ed. Benjamin Thorpe, 2 vols (London, 1844-46)
- CSEL: *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (Vienna, 1866-)
- DNB: *Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 1917-)
- EETS: Early English Text Society
- Ehwald: *Aldelmi Opera Omnia*, ed. R. Ehwald, MGH Auctores Antiquissimi 15 (Berlin, 1919)
- EME: Early Middle English
- HE: *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People* ed. & trans. Bertram Colgrave & R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969)

- HM: *Hali Meibhad* ed. Bella Millett, EETS 284 (London, 1982).
References are to page and line numbers
- Ker: Neil R. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon*
(Oxford, 1957). References are to catalogue and article numbers
- LC: 'The Liber Confortatorius of Goscelin of Saint Bertin', ed.
C. H. Talbot, *Analecta Monastica* 3, *Studia Anselmiana* 37 (1955),
1-117, Rome.
- Leclerq & Rochais: J. Leclerq, C. H. Talbot, H. M Rochais, *S. Bernardi*
Opera, 8 vols (Rome, 1957-1977)
- Lewis & Short: *A Latin Dictionary*, Charlton T. Lewis & Charles Short
(Oxford, 1879)
- LS: *Ælfric's Lives of Saints* ed. Walter W. Skeat, EETS 76, 82, 94,
114 (London 1881-1900; repr. in 2 vols 1966). References are to
homily and line numbers
- MGH: Monumenta Germaniae Historica
- Mombritius: *Sanctuarium seu Vitae Sanctorum*, ed. B. Mombritius (2nd
ed., 2 vols, Paris, 1910)
- NCE: New Catholic Encyclopaedia (New York, London, etc., 1967)
- ODCC: *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. F. L. Cross &
E. A. Livingstone, 2nd edition (Oxford, 1974)
- OE: Old English
- OEM: Old English Martyrology
- Ott: J. H. Ott, *Über die Quellen der Heiligenleben in Ælfrics Lives*
of Saints I (Halle, 1892)
- PL: *Patrologia Latina* ed. J. P. Migne (Paris, 1844-64)
- PM: *Anselm's Prayers and Meditations* ed. Benedicta Ward
(Harmondsworth, 1973)
- SC: *Sources Chrétiennes* (Paris, 1940-)
- Schmitt: F.S. Schmitt, *Sancti Anselmi Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi*
Opera Omnia, 6 vols (London 1938-1961)

Skeat: W. W. Skeat, ed., *Ælfric's Lives of Saints* (See LS above).

References are to volume and page numbers

Sources: *Sources of Anglo-Saxon Literary Culture: A Trial Version*,
ed. Frederick M. Biggs, Thomas D. Hill, Paul E. Szarmach, with
the assistance of Karen Hammond (New York, 1990)

Wace & Schaff: Henry Wace & Philip Schaff, editors, *A Select Library
of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Oxford & New York, 1890-1902).

References are to volume and page numbers

For further abbreviations used in the Appendix, see below, p. 495,
note 3.

INTRODUCTION

Saints have always been portrayed as ideal models of Christian conduct and belief,¹ and their Lives reflect, as one would expect, the ideals and values of the period and milieu in which they were produced. The models of sanctity presented in the Lives of women saints no doubt express much that was regarded as worthy of commemoration and emulation in any holy person, whether a man or a woman; but they often also reveal particular emphases and interests which can be connected with the fact that the saints presented are female rather than male. The purpose of this study is to identify what characterised the sanctity of the female saints whose lives are extant in Old and in early Middle English, and to attempt to understand what lay behind the particular images of sanctity presented in them.²

Such an investigation requires attention not only to the spiritual background of the Lives, but also to changing attitudes towards women, and to literary matters; for the way in which a female saint is presented may be affected by prevailing attitudes towards women; and influenced by 'literary' images of the feminine as expressed, for example in exegetical writings, such as in allegorical interpretations of the Song of Songs. Factors such as these can help us to understand the nature of female sanctity as it was conceived at various times, and the differences we find in the presentation of the same or similar saints in versions of their Lives produced at different times.

In the case of the Lives with which this study is concerned, comparisons with their sources (where this is possible) show that

whereas some of the Old English Lives are fairly straightforward literal translations of earlier Latin versions, significant modifications have been made to others.³ When we look at the period following the Conquest, we find that major changes in attitude and interest take place, which affect the presentation of the saints in the Katherine Group Lives.

One of the most important features of these Lives (and indeed of Lives of women saints as a whole) is the emphasis on virginity found in them. The study therefore begins with an investigation of the background to, and possible reasons for, this emphasis, and discusses expressions of the theme in the Old English Lives. Those Lives which require separate treatment are then discussed individually: Cynewulf's *Juliana*, a poetic life, the earliest of the group, and a Life which can be read in terms of the conflict between the flesh and the spirit; Ælfric's 'Life of Eugenia', which reveals interesting differences in its presentation of Eugenia's sanctity when compared with the Latin versions; Euphrosyne, a virgin saint, but not a martyr, and one who, like Eugenia, disguises herself as a man; Margaret, a virgin martyr who defeats a dragon; and Mary of Egypt, the only one of the group who is not a virgin, and who, as a repentant sinner, presents a model very different from that provided by virgin saints.

We turn next to the period following the Norman Conquest, and certain texts, such as the *Liber Confortatorius* of Goscelin, which have not so far received much attention in connection with attitudes towards women and holiness, are examined in some detail. Other more familiar texts, such as the *Ancrene Wisse* and other works related to

the Katherine Group of lives, are discussed from the point of view of what they reveal about new devotional interests and changes in attitudes towards women. This account of developments in the post-Conquest period prepares us for the discussion of the three Lives of the Katherine Group. While virginity remains important, two of the Lives, those of Margaret and Juliana, reveal a greater interest in emotion and in suffering than do the Old English versions, and encourage the audience to identify closely with the saints and their experiences. Katherine, on the other hand, seems to be an almost purely symbolic figure, requiring an intellectual engagement rather than a personal or emotional one. She is a saint whose principal activity is to preach, and so she provides an interesting model for an audience of women accustomed to being told women should not teach.

Previous studies have not examined all these Lives together, or compared the Old English with the early Middle English Lives in much detail from the point of view of how they reflect changes and developments in spirituality, and in attitudes towards women.

NOTES

1. On the function of saints' lives, and on saints as models, see, for example, Gerould 1916, ch. 1; Wolpers 1964; Greenfield & Calder 1986, ch. 7. Willibald (d. 786) stated in his Life of Boniface: 'Having now touched briefly on the virtues of the saint, we shall make known the subsequent events of his life ... that his life and character may be made more clearly manifest to those who wish to model themselves on the example of his holy manner of life' (ch. 5, Talbot 1954, 36).

2. The Appendix lists the Lives to be studied, and provides information about previous studies.
3. See especially chs 6-10 below.

PART I: VIRGINITY

CHAPTER ONE: FLESH AND SPIRIT

The Christian view of virginity is closely related to its understanding of the nature and consequences of the fall of man, and in particular the alteration it wrought in the relationship between the body and the spirit. St Paul expressed this changed relationship resulting from the fall thus: 'the flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh' (Galatians 5.17).¹ Augustine examined the subject in detail in *De Civitate Dei*, basing much of his discussion on St Paul.² Gregory, in his examinations of the original and fallen states of man in the *Moralia* and elsewhere, followed Augustine's arguments closely (see Dudden 1905, II.376-79).

Augustine described how in paradise before the fall man's body and soul were in harmony with one another, with paradise and with God. He suffered no bodily or spiritual distress. He was free from death and disease:

Vivebat fruens Deo, ex quo bono erat bonus. Vivebat sine ulla egestate, ita semper vivere habens in potestate. Cibus aderat ne esuriret, potus ne sitiret, lignum vitae ne illum senecta dissolveret. Nihil corruptionis in corpore vel ex corpore ullas molestias ullis eius sensibus ingerebat. Nullus intrinsecus morbus, nullus ictus metuebatur extrinsecus. Summa in carne sanitas, in animo tota tranquillitas.

He lived in the enjoyment of God, whose goodness ensured his goodness. He lived without any want and had it in his power always to live such a life. He had food at hand against hunger, drink against thirst and the tree of life against the decay of old age. There was no deterioration in the body or arising from it to cause any discomfort to any of his senses. There was no fear of disease from within or of

injury from without. He had perfect health in his flesh and complete tranquillity in his soul. (14.26, Levine 1966, 394-97)³

But this state of health and tranquillity and freedom from death and disease was conditional upon obedience to God:

Vivebat itaque homo in paradiso sicut volebat quamdiu hoc volebat quod Deus iusserat.

Man lived in paradise just as he chose for as long a time as his choice coincided with God's command. (14.26, Levine, pp. 394-95).

Man's will was free to obey or disobey; he 'had it in his power always to live such a life'. If he used his choice to obey God, he could join the angels in fellowship; otherwise he would become beastlike, lose control over his desires, and face death:

Hominem vero, cuius naturam quodam modo mediam inter angelos bestiasque condebat, ut, si Creatori suo tamquam vero domino subditus praeceptum eius pia oboedientia custodiret, in consortium transiret angelicum, sine morte media beatam immortalitatem absque ullo termino consecutus; si autem Dominum Deum suum libera voluntate superbe atque inoboedienter usus offenderet, morti addictus bestialiter viveret, libidinis servus aeternoque post mortem supplicio destinatus.

[God] created man's nature to be midway, so to speak, between angels and beasts in such a way that, if he should remain in subjection to his creator as his true lord and with dutiful obedience keep his commandment, he was to pass into the company of the angels, obtaining with no intervening death a blissful immortality that has no limit; but if he should make proud and disobedient use of his free will and go counter to the Lord his God, he was to live like a beast, at the mercy of death, enthralled by lust [or 'a slave of his desires': Knowles 1972, 502] and doomed to eternal punishment after death. (12.22, Levine, pp. 110-11)

The fall occurred because in the event man did 'make proud and disobedient use of his free will', and there followed the consequences about which Adam and Eve had been warned:

Tunc ergo coepit caro concupiscere adversus spiritum (Galatians 5.17), cum qua controversia nati sumus, trahentes originem mortis et in membris nostris vitiataque natura contentionem eius sive victoriam de prima praevaricatione gestantes.

Thus it was that the flesh then began to 'lust against the spirit'. This is our congenital conflict. From the first transgression came the beginning of death in us and the carnal rebellion or even victory that we sustain in our limbs and blighted being. (13.13, Levine, pp. 178-79)

The first sin, which led to that disobedience, was pride, a turning away from God to oneself:

'Initium' enim 'omnis peccati superbia est' (Ecclesiasticus 10.13). Quid est autem superbia nisi perversae celsitudinis appetitus? Perversa enim est celsitudo, deserto eo cui debet animus inhaerere principio, sibi quodam modo fieri atque esse principium ... Illud itaque malum quo, cum sibi homo placet, tamquam sit et ipse lumen, avertitur ab eo lumine, quod ei si placeat et ipse fit lumen.

For 'pride is the start of all sin'. Moreover, what is pride but a craving for perverse elevation? For it is perverse elevation to forsake the ground in which the mind ought to be rooted, and to become and be, in a sense, grounded in onself ... The initial wrong therefore was that whereby, when a man is pleased with himself, as if he were in himself a light, he is diverted from that light through which, if he would but choose it, he himself also becomes a light. (14.13, Levine, 1966, 334-41)

Gregory's account of the cause of the fall echoes Augustine: the cause of the fall was pride, which led to disobedience (Mor. 8.52; 14.19;

Exp. in Prim. Reg. 5.2.14.). 'Adam desired to become like God, not by righteousness, but by power, and therefore disdained to obey God's commandments' (Dudden 1905, II.379; see *Mor.* 29.18).

It was pride, then, which Augustine described as a 'diversion (or turning away) from the light', which led to the fall and so to a change in man's very nature; his body became a battleground, and he became 'a slave of his desires' (see above, p. 14), mental and physical:

Ipso namque invito, et animus plerumque turbatur et caro dolet et veterescit et moritur, et quidquid aliud patimur, quod non pateremur invitī, si voluntati nostrae nostra natura omni modo atque ex omnibus partibus oboediret.

For even against his will his mind is very often agitated and his flesh feels pain, grows old, dies and suffers whatever else we suffer; but we should not suffer all this against our will if our being in every way and in every part gave obedience to our will. (14.15, Levine, pp. 348-49)

Again Gregory repeated these points: without the fall, man would have suffered none of the vicissitudes of age, of disease, or of heat and cold; nor experienced the torments of fear and hope, or fits of passion and desire. The faculties of mind and body would have been in harmony (Dudden 1905, II.376; *Mor.* 9.50, 25.4, 11.68, 8.53, 13.36, 8.19, 54, 11.68). Before the fall, the body and spirit had been fully integrated; the flesh was obedient to the spirit. When the soul disobeyed God, Augustine argued, it lost the obedience of the body and the two were at odds:

et quia superiorem dominum suo arbitrio deseruerat, inferiorem famulum ad suum arbitrium non tenebat, nec omni modo habebat subditam carnem,

sicut semper habere potuisset si Deo subdita ipsa mansisset. Tunc ergo coepit caro concupiscere adversus spiritum (Galatians 1. 17).

and because [the soul] had wilfully deserted its own higher master, [it] no longer kept its lower servant responsive to its will. It did not maintain its own flesh subject to it in all respects, as it could have done for ever if it had itself remained subject to God. Thus it was that the flesh began then to 'lust against the spirit'. (13.13, Levine, pp. 178-79)⁴

Gregory wrote similarly of the consequence of man's disobedience to God, the disobedience to him of his flesh:

Ante peccatum primi hominis nulla membris libido inerat. Erat quippe sensus carnis, sed turpis ac libidinosus non erat; sed statim ut ad culpam cecidit, pruritum membrorum sensit; quia obedientem motum carnis habere non potuit, quando ipse Deo inobediens fuit. (*Exp. in Prim Reg.* 6.2.38, quoted by Dudden 1905, II.377)

Before the sin of the first man no violent desire had entered his limbs. Certainly there was bodily sensation, but it was not shameful and lustful; but as soon as he fell into sin, he felt the itching of his members; because he could not have the obedient motion of the flesh, since he was himself disobedient to God.

The harmony of paradise gave way to the discord of the fallen condition. With that disobedience to God came the disobedience of the flesh. With sin came death and the punishment of men and women's corrupted sexual nature. This was why, Augustine explained, the immediate result of Adam and Eve's disobedience was their shame about their nakedness:

confestim ... de corporum suorum nuditate confusi sunt. Unde etiam foliis ficulneis, quae forte a perturbatis prima comperta sunt, pudenda texerunt (cf. Genesis 3.7-10); quae prius eadem membra erant,

sed pudenda non erant. Senserunt ergo novum motum inoboedientis carnis suae, tamquam reciprocam poenam inoboedientiae suae.

straightaway (they) became ashamed of the nakedness of their bodies. Hence too they used fig leaves, which perhaps were the first things they hit upon in their embarrassment to cover their pudenda, that is their shameful members. These had been the same organs before, but had not then been shameful. Thus they experienced an unprecedented movement of their own disobedient flesh as punishment in kind, as it were, for their own disobedience. (13.13, Levine, pp. 178-79)

Augustine described the sexual aspect of the flesh's disobedience to the spirit in some detail - apologising as he wrote, for, he said, he could neither write, nor his readers read, about the subject, without feeling some sense of shame. If Adam and Eve had not fallen, 'though I am now hampered by modesty when I wish to treat this subject in greater detail, and am compelled to apologize to chaste ears and to ask their pardon, there would then have been no reason for this to happen'. He added a warning to some of his fallen readership:

if anyone approaches in a wanton spirit what I have written here, let him shun any guilt on his own part, not the natural facts. Let him censure the deeds of his own depravity, not the words of my necessity.

et quod modo de hac re nobis volentibus diligentius disputare verecundia resistit et compellit veniam, honore praefato, a pudicis auribus poscere, cur id fieret nulla causa esset, ... Quisquis ergo ad has litteras inpudicus accedit, culpam refugiat, non naturam. Facta denotet suae turpitudinis, non verba nostrae necessitatis. (14.23, Levine, pp. 382-85; see also 14.26, pp. 398-99)

Augustine argued that in paradise procreation would have been an act of will; and not, as in the fallen condition, a consequence of

physical passion, when one's will lost control over one's own body.

In fallen man

haec [libido] autem sibi non solum totum corpus nec solum extrinsecus, verum etiam intrinsecus vindicat totumque commovet hominem, animi simul affectu cum carnis appetitu coniuncto atque permixto, ut ea voluptas sequatur qua maior in corporis voluptatibus nulla est, ita ut momento ipso temporis, quo ad eius pervenitur extremum paene omnis acies et quasi vigilia cogitationis obruatur.

this lust asserts its power not only over the entire body, nor only externally, but also from within. It convulses all of a man when the emotion in his mind combines and mingles with the carnal drive to produce a pleasure unsurpassed among those of the body. The effect of this is that at the very moment of its climax there is an almost total eclipse of acumen and, as it were, sentinel alertness. (14.16, Levine, pp. 352-53)

This slavery to his desires is such that while

aliquando inportunus est ille motus poscente nullo, aliquando autem destituit inhiantem, et cum in animo concupiscentia ferveat, friget in corpore. Atque ita mirum in modum non solum generandi voluntati verum etiam lasciviendi libidini libido non servit; et cum tota plerumque menti cohibenti adversetur, nonnumquam et adversus se ipsa dividitur, commotoque animo, in commovendo corpore se ipsa non sequitur.

at times the urge intrudes uninvited, at other times it deserts the panting lover, and although desire is ablaze in the mind, the body is frigid. In this strange fashion lust refuses service not only to the will to procreate but also to the lust for wantonness; and though for the most part it solidly opposes the mind's restraint, there are times when it is divided even against itself and, having aroused the mind, inconsistently fails to arouse the body. (14.16, Levine, pp. 354-55)

Thus it was right that Adam and Eve should have been ashamed. Before their sin

sicut scriptum est: 'Nudi erant, et non confundebantur' (Genesis 2.25), non quod eis sua nuditas esset incognita, sed turpis nuditas nondum erat quia nondum libido membra illa praeter arbitrium commovebat, nondum ad hominis inoboedientiam redarguendam sua inoboedientia caro quodam modo testimonium perhibebat.

we read in Scripture: 'They were naked, and not embarrassed'. And the reason for this is not that they were unaware of their nakedness, but that their nakedness was not yet base because lust did not yet arouse those members apart from their will, and the flesh did not yet bear witness, so to speak, through its own disobedience against the disobedience of man. (14.17, Levine, pp. 356-57)

Had they not sinned, their bodies would have remained under the control of their will, even in the act of procreation; but this possibility was never experienced by them

quoniam, praeoccupante peccato, exilium de paradiso ante meruerunt quam sibi in opere serendae propaginis tranquillo arbitrio convenirent.

since their sin came first and thus they incurred exile from paradise before they could unite with one another dispassionately and deliberately in the work of propagating their kind. (14.26, Levine, pp. 398-99)

As an act of will, free of lust, there would have been no loss of integrity:

sine ardoris inlecebroso stimulo cum tranquillitate animi et corporis nulla corruptione integritatis infunderetur gremio maritus uxoris. Neque enim quia experientia probari non potest ... ita tunc potuisse utero coniugis salva integritate feminei genitalis virile semen inmitti.

The husband, exempt from all seductive goading of passion, could have come to rest on his wife's bosom with peace of mind undisturbed and pristine state of body intact. Granted that we cannot prove this by

actual experiment ... (yet) the male seed could then (have been) introduced into the wife's uterus without damage to her maidenhead. (14.26, Levine, pp. 396-99)

Thus the corruption of man's sexual nature, like death, was one of the major consequences - punishments, indeed, - of the sin of Adam and Eve. Sexual lust was symptomatic of man's vitiated, fallen nature.⁵ As a result of that offence

ut tantae corruptioni quantam videmus atque sentimus et per hanc subiaceret et morti ac tot et tantis tamque inter se contrariis perturbaretur et fluctuaret affectibus, qualis in paradiso ante peccatum, licet in corpore animali esset, utique non fuit.

[human nature] was subjected to all the decay that we see and feel and consequently to death as well. Moreover, man became a prey to agitation and buffeting by many powerful and conflicting emotions and thus developed into something quite different from what he certainly was in paradise before sin in spite of his animal body. (14.12, Levine, pp. 332-33)

Sexual lust was not merely an isolated physical consequence of the fall, but a symptom of the change for the worse in man's whole nature: 'homo, qui custodiendo mandatum futurus fuerat etiam carne spiritalis, fieret etiam mente carnalis': 'man, who would have been spiritual even in his flesh if he had observed the order, became carnal in mind as well' (14.15, Levine, pp. 346-47. cf. Romans 8.6).⁶ The spirit was involved not only in the consequence of the fall, but Augustine stressed its involvement also as a cause of the first sin. He made it plain that it was the soul's sin which led to fleshly corruption (in both meanings of the phrase) as its punishment:

Nam corruptio corporis, quae adgravat animam (Wisdom 9.15), non peccati primi est causa, sed poena; nec caro corruptibilis animam peccatricem, sed anima peccatrix fecit esse corruptibilem carnem.

For the body's corruption,⁷ which weighs down the soul, is not the cause of the first sin but the punishment for it, nor is it the flesh, which is subject to corruption, that makes the soul sinful; it is the sinful soul that makes the flesh subject to corruption. (14.3, Levine, pp. 270-71)

In Lives of the women saints, the guiding principle in those who persecute the saints is often shown to be sexual desire; other powerful emotions which accompany or follow the initial sexual impulse then reinforce the sense that these are people who are in all ways subject to their desires.⁸ Thus the persecutors of saints are shown to be very prone to pride and anger as well as lust. These characteristics will be discussed further in the studies of individual saints below, but some examples may be given here. In Ælfric's 'Life of St Agatha' (LS 8) the words which describe the persecutor Quintianus express the greed which characterises him throughout the story and point out his subjection to his lusts, together with the heathenism which renders him also subject to the devil:

Se wæs grædig gitsera . and his galnysse underþeod .
deofles þeowet-lincg

(5-6)

His greed is directed towards Agatha, whom he wants to possess - sexually, it is understood: 'smeade hu he mihte þæt mæden him begitan' (8). He cannot obtain her, so, - since it is his sexual desire that is thwarted - the torments he orders for her are strongly sexual: her

breast is cut off (122-23), and she is to be rolled naked on burning coals (168-70).² In Ælfric's 'Life of Agnes' (LS 7) the youth who woos Agnes has no control over his own reactions to his rejection by her; his emotional affliction causes immediate psychosomatic illness:

Se cniht wearð geancsumod . and wiðinnan ablend
æfter þæs mædenes spræce . þe hine spearn mid wordum .
He wearð þa gesicelod . and siccetunga teah .
of niwel-licum breoste . on bedde licgende . (63-66)

When he later attempts to approach Agnes in the brothel 'mid sceand-licum willan' (170), it is fitting that he should be struck down dead, since death, like sexual lust, was also a consequence of the fall: 'ac he feol astreht ætforan þam mædene adyd' (171). The situation is, indeed, slightly comic,³ as his companions outside imagine he is achieving his wicked end:

He læg þær swa dæd lange on þære flora .
ða wendon his gegadan þæt he wære gebysgod
embe his fracedan dæda . þa fandode heora an .
and ge-mette hine deadne ... (173-76)

His overpowering desire has led to bodily illness and ultimately to death. With his revival at Agnes' prayer comes his conversion; the physical restoration to life becomes an image of his spiritual revival (199-206).

Almost all the persecutors of saints can be said to exhibit pride in their behaviour; it is at the root of their particular sinful behaviour, as it is of the primary sin of Adam and Eve. Sometimes it is mentioned by name, as it is in an exchange between Cecilia and the

prefect Almachius in Ælfric's 'Life of Cecilia' (LS 34). She is scornful about his might, because all he really has is pride:

Ic secge gif þu hætst hwilce mihte þu hæfst .
Ælces mannes miht þe on modignysse færð .
is soðlice þam gelic swilce man siwige
ane bytte . and blawe hi fulle windes .
and wyrce siððan an þyrl þonne heo toþunden bið
on hire greatnysse þonne togæð seo miht . (314-19)

He accuses her of pride, but she says that what she has is constancy, not pride:

Þæt mæden him cwæð to . Oþer is modignyss.
oþer is anrædnyss . and ic anrædlice spræc .
na modelice . forþan-þe we modignysse
eallunga onscuniað . (324-27)

The confrontations between saints and their persecutors reveal vividly the nature of the fallen condition. Subject as they are to 'the flesh', the persecutors display in a variety of ways the corruption which was a consequence of the fall. The conflicts between the saints and their enemies exemplify the war between the spirit and the flesh, spoken of by St Paul and analysed by Augustine.''

NOTES

1. See note 6 below.
2. Augustine's writings had a profound influence on Anglo-Saxon theology - as on the Latin West as a whole:

It was principally Augustine, either directly or indirectly, upon whom the seventh and eighth centuries - as well as the ninth and those that followed - drew for their understanding of church doctrine, 'very

often without mentioning his name' (Bede, 'Commentary on Genesis' 1, CCSL 118A.53) ... In the exegesis of scripture it was no less necessary [to cite Augustine] ... for example, one entire book of Bede's 'Allegorical Exposition of the Song of Songs' was compiled from the writings of Gregory the Great, who had, in turn, depended on the writings of Augustine (Bede, 'Allegorical Exposition of the Song of Songs' 7, PL 91.1223-36). (Pelikan 1978, 16-17)

Dudden quotes Gregory on Augustine:

'If you desire to take your fill of delicious food', he wrote to one who asked for a copy of his own commentary on Job, 'read the works of the blessed Augustine, and seek not our chaff in comparison with his fine wheat' (Ep. 10.16). (1905, II.293)

Pope writes: 'Among authors to whom Ælfric turned most frequently (Bede, Gregory, Augustine, Jerome, Haymo), Augustine exerted, directly or indirectly, much the greatest influence' (1967, I.156). *De Civitate Dei* was Augustine's most popular work throughout the Middle Ages, not least in England. It was 'one of the most popular, if not the most popular, of Augustine's works among the English. It is continually cited and quoted without citation' (Ogilvy 1967, 82).

3. All references to the *City of God* in this chapter are to this edition and its accompanying translation. The translation edited by Knowles (1972) will be referred to where appropriate.

4. For the continuation of this quotation, see above, p. 15.

5. Bugge⁽¹⁹⁷⁵⁾ argues that English writings were influenced by Gnostic ideas that the fall itself was a sexual one - for example, that there was adultery between the virgin Eve and the fallen angels. According to this view the archetypal sin was not one of pride but of a sexual nature. However, the orthodox view, that the sin was pride, and that sexual desire was not a cause but a consequence of the fall, seems to have prevailed, at least in the Lives under discussion. See Wittig's review of Bugge (1977, 938-41). On Gnosticism see Pelikan 1971, ch. 2.

6. On the antithesis between spirit and flesh in St Paul (e.g. Romans 7.18, 23-4, 8.5 ff; Galatians 5.17-21), Peter Brown writes:

Paul crammed into the notion of the flesh a superabundance of overlapping notions ... it is possible to measure, in the repeated exegesis of a mere hundred words of Paul's letters, the future course of Christian thought on the human person ... The war of the spirit against the flesh and of the flesh against the spirit was a desperate image of human resistance to the will of God ... the body's physical frailty, its liability to death and the undeniable penchant of its instincts toward sin served Paul as a synecdoche for the state of humankind pitted against the spirit of God ... In all later Christian writing, the notion of 'the flesh' suffused the body with disturbing associations: somehow, as 'flesh', the body's weaknesses and temptations echoed a state of helplessness, even of rebellion against God, that was larger than the body itself. (1989, 48).

7. I have replaced 'decay' in Levine's translation by 'corruption'.

8. See above, p. 14.

9. See also below, pp. 126-27.

10. It is reminiscent of the situation in *Judith*: see lines 34-73, (Timmer 1978).

11. For a detailed discussion of the use of the idea of the conflict between flesh and spirit in an Old English saint's life, see Chapter 6 below, on Cynewulf's *Juliana*.

CHAPTER TWO: VIRGINITY AND MARRIAGE

If sexual passion was the sign of a fallen nature, then virginity indicated a recovery from this condition and a return to paradise.

Jerome wrote to Eustochium:

Eva in paradiso virgo fuit: post pelliceas tunicas, initium sumpsit nuptiarum. Tua regio paradisus est ... Et ut scias virginitatem esse naturae, nuptias post delictum: virgo nascitur caro de nuptiis, et in fructu reddens, quod in radice perdiderat.

In paradise Eve was a virgin, and it was only after the coats of skins that she began her married life. Now paradise is your home too ... To show that virginity is natural while wedlock only follows guilt, what is born of wedlock is virgin flesh, and it gives back in fruit what in root it has lost. (Letter 22.19, PL 22.406; Wace & Schaff VI.29)'

Virginity provided a foretaste of the heavenly life, the angelic life.

Jerome wrote:

'In resurrectione mortuorum, non nubent neque nubentur, sed similes erunt Angelis' (Matthew 22.30). Quod alii postea in coelis futuri sunt, hoc virgines in terra esse coeperunt.

'In the resurrection of the dead they will neither marry nor be given in marriage, but will be like the angels.' What others will hereafter be in heaven, that virgins begin to be on earth. (*Adversus Jovianum* 1.36, PL 23.261; Wace & Schaff VI.374).

Augustine added his voice to that of Jerome:

virginalis autem integritas, et per piam continentiam ab omni concubitu immunitas angelica portio est, et in carne corruptibili incorruptionis perpetuae meditatio ... Profecto habebunt magnum aliquid praeter caeteros in illa communi immortalitate, qui habent aliquid jam non carnis in carne.

virginal integrity and freedom from all carnal relations through holy chastity is an angelic lot, and a foretaste in the corruptible flesh

of perpetual incorruption ... Certainly they shall possess something greater than others in that common immortality who in the flesh already possess something not of the flesh. (*De sancta virginitate* 12, PL 40.401-2; Deferrari 1969, 155).²

Marriage was contrasted with virginity in discussions of virginity. The authority on the subject was St Paul. His First Letter to the Corinthians, Chapter 7, was a much quoted text in patristic discussions of virginity. Paul taught that virginity was desirable, although marriage was not a sin. However, by the fourth century, virginity had very clearly become the ideal state for Christians who undertook the ascetic life either as solitaries or in communities. It headed the hierarchy of virginity, widowhood and the married state implicit in I Corinthians 7.8 ff., and elaborated upon by later writers on virginity. The three-fold distinction became traditional: Ambrose, Jerome and Augustine each compared the three states to the hundred-fold, sixty-fold and thirty-fold fruit of the parable in Matthew 13.8 and Mark. 4.8.³

Marriage may not have been a sin, but, because of its sexual dimension, it came to be seen as incompatible with a life dedicated to God. Complete concentration on the spiritual life, the life of prayer, was not possible if a person was involved in sexual activity. Jerome wrote, of both men and women, in his letter to Eustochium:

Apostolus sine intermissione orare nos jubeat (I Corinthians 7.3), et qui in conjugio debitum solvit, orare non possit: aut oramus semper, et virgines sumus: aut orare desinimus, ut conjugio serviamus.

the apostle bids us pray without ceasing, and he who in the married state renders his wife her due cannot so pray. Either we pray always

and are virgins, or we cease to pray that we may fulfil the claims of marriage. (Letter 22.22, PL 22.409; Wace & Schaff VI.31).

Jerome accepted St Paul's teaching on marriage with some reluctance. His preference for virginity led to a denigration of marriage, and, of the Fathers read most by the English, Jerome had scarcely a good word to say for marriage - except insofar as it produced more virgins:

Laudo nuptias, laudo conjugium, sed quia mihi virgines generant: lego de spinis rosam, de terra aurum, de concha margaritam.

I praise wedlock, I praise marriage, but it is because they give me virgins. I gather the rose from the thorns, the gold from the earth, the pearl from the shell. (Letter 22.20, PL 22.406-07; Wace & Schaff VI.30).

Ambrose had sounded as unconvinced as Jerome. He composed a letter to his sister, *De Virginibus ad Marcellinam*, in about 377 at her request after she had taken the veil. The letter drew together his arguments concerning virginity. In this letter (which Jerome in turn quoted to Eustochium, Letter 22.22) Ambrose says he does not reprove marriage, but then elaborates to such a degree on the troubles of marriage connected with childbearing and the rearing of children that it is clear that he can see little good in it (ch. 6, PL 16.206; Wace & Schaff X.367).

Augustine, however, was able to keep closer to the spirit of St Paul than Jerome and Ambrose, and to praise virginity without vilifying marriage:

ex hoc gloriam majoris illius boni esse maiorem, quod ejus adipiscendae causa bonum conjugale transcenditur, non peccatum conjugii devitatur

the glory of that greater blessing is greater from this, that to obtain it the blessing of marriage is foregone, not the sin of marriage shunned. (*De Sancta Virginitate* 21, PL 40.406; Deferrari 1969, 164)⁴

So, according to Augustine, marriage was good but virginity was better. In his treatise on the good of marriage he quoted St Paul extensively:

'Qui sine uxore est, cogitat ea quae sunt Domini, quomodo placeat Domino. Qui autem matrimonio conjunctus est, cogitat quae sunt mundi, quomodo placeat uxori. Et divisa est mulier innupta et virgo:⁵ quae innupta est, sollicita est ea quae sunt Domini, ut sit sancta et corpore et spiritu; quae autem nupta est, sollicita est quae sunt mundi, quomodo placeat viro' (I Corinthians 7.32-34). Unde mihi videtur hoc tempore solos eos qui se non continent, conjugari oportere, secundum illam ejusdem apostoli sententiam: 'Quod si se non continent, nubant; melius est enim nubere quam uri' (I Corinthians 7.9).

'He who is unmarried thinks about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord. Whereas he who is married thinks about the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. And the unmarried woman, or the virgin, is set apart; she who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy in body and in spirit. Whereas she who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband'. And so it seems to me that at this time only those who do not restrain themselves ought to be married in accord with the saying of the same Apostle: 'But if they cannot restrain themselves, let them marry, for it is better to marry than to burn'. (*De Bono Conjugali* 10, PL 40.381; see Deferrari 1969, 23)

Paul was emphatic that once married, husbands and wives could not abandon each other. But the claims of the two inevitably came into conflict, and marriages were frequently unable to resist the pressure

of the superior claims of a celibate life. A story told by Cassian reflects the rather ambivalent view of the goodness and sacredness of marriage held by Christian ascetics.⁶ A certain holy man, Theonas, deserted his wife to enter a monastery after she rejected his suggestion that they should separate and devote themselves to a holy life. The father who relates the story says he does not necessarily approve this behaviour:

Nemo autem existimet nos haec ad prouocanda coniugiorum diuortia texuisse, qui non solum nuptias minime condemnamus

let no one imagine that we have invented this for the sake of encouraging divorce, as we ... in no way condemn marriage

Nevertheless, the man concerned was renowned as a holy man, and the story was told

ut lectori initium conuersionis, quo tantus ille uir deo dicatus est, fideliter panderemus.

in order faithfully to show the reader the origin of the conversion by which the great man was dedicated to God. (*Conf.* 21.10, SC 64.85; Wace & Schaff XI.507)

Bede gives several examples of men and women in England in the seventh century who abandoned their marriages for a religious life (see Lapidge & Herren 1979, 54). Like Theonas, they were acting contrary to the Church's official teaching, but Bede does not speak disapprovingly of such persons - Drythelm for example (Lapidge & Herren 1979, 54; HE 5.12, Colgrave 1969, 489). As for Æthelthryth, Bede could hardly have been more full of praise. Æthelthryth married twice and remained a virgin before she finally left, with the reluctant permission of her second husband, to enter a religious house

(HE 4.19-20, Colgrave, pp. 390 ff.). In his hymn to virginity in honour of Æthelthryth, Bede praises first the Virgin Mary, and then the virgin saints Agatha, Eulalia, Thecla, Euphemia, Agnes and Cecilia, who have variously and gloriously faced fire, lions and the sword. Then, he writes,;

Nor lacks our age its Æthelthryth as well;
Its virgin wonderful nor lacks our age.
Nostra quoque egregia iam tempora uirgo beaut;
Aedilthryda nitet nostra quoque egregia.

(HE 4.20; Colgrave 1969, 398-9)

Bede's account of Æthelthryth provided Ælfric with the basis for his Life, and for him too Æthelthryth's virginity in spite of two marriages was praiseworthy and remarkable:

We wyllað nu awritan þeah ðe hit wundorlic sy
be ðære halgan sancte æðeldryðe þam engliscan mædene .
þe wæs mid twam werum and swaðeah wunode mæden . (LS 20.1-4)

Similarly, Cecilia, one of those whom Bede praised, married yet remained a virgin. In Ælfric's 'Life of Cecilia' (LS 34), Cecilia is married, and prays that she might continue to serve Christ as a virgin. Her devotion to the spiritual life has been described, so that we can understand her sense of its incompatibility with married life:

Þeos halige fæmne hæfde on hire breoste
swa micele lufe to þam ecan life .
þæt heo dæges and nihtes embe drihtnes godspel .
and embe godes lare mid geleafan smeade .
and on singalum gebedum hi sylfe gebysgode . (5-9)

On their wedding night Cecilia persuades her husband, with the help of - or rather with the help of a threat from - an angel, not to touch her. Her husband, a heathen on their marriage, is converted. There is no suggestion that Cecilia's marriage need have meant her giving up her faith; but her virginity is clearly too important a part of her faith and devotion for her to marry.

While some virgin saints married yet retained their virginity, others resisted marriage, preferring rather to die than to marry. Some of these saints, Juliana, for example, will be discussed in greater detail below.⁷

NOTES

1. Eustochium was one of a group of Roman women who had decided to adopt an ascetic way of life, one of abstinence, prayer and study. Jerome's letters gave these women advice and encouragement. Letter 22, written in 384, forms Jerome's principal treatise on virginity. See Unrue 1970, 51, and Kelly 1975, ch. 10. On Jerome's *Adversus Jovinianum*, in which he also discussed virginity, see note 2 below.

2. Augustine wrote this work and another, *De bono conjugali*, in 401 in response to the *Commentarioli* by Jovinian. Jovinian considered the married state equal to that of virginity. Pope Siricius and St Ambrose had condemned this heresy before him, but it still was so rampant that many consecrated virgins were leaving their convents to marry. St Jerome also had written his *Adversus Jovinianum* exalting virginity but in doing so he seemed to have sacrificed the dignity and honor of married life. Therefore St Augustine felt that before he treated of virginity he should write on the good of marriage. (Deferrari 1969, 3)

Aldhelm and Bede both used Jerome's *Adversus Jovinianum*, and it was 'apparently the most popular of Jerome's controversial tracts' in

England (Ogilvy 1967, 178). Ælfric made extensive use of the two works by Augustine in his homily 'Nativitas Sanctae Mariae Virginis' (Assmann 3, 1964). See Clayton 1986, especially pp. 299 & 309-14).

3. See Lapidge & Herren 1979, 55. English writers from Aldhelm to the author of *Hall Meiohad* and beyond continued to make use of the parable in this way to express their relative status and the rewards earned by the three conditions.

4. It is perhaps significant to note that Augustine says *bonum conjugale* but *peccatum conjugii*; *conjugium* is the noun, 'marriage', which refers particularly to marriage 'considered in a physical point of view' (according to Lewis & Short); while *conjugalis* is an adjective, 'relating to marriage', for which Lewis & Short note no special reference to a particular aspect as in the case of *conjugium*.

5. This reading, which differs from the standard Vulgate text, is also that found in *De Sancta Virginitate* 22. Deferrari's translation of the passage there (1969, 167) has been adopted here. See the notes on the passages in PL 40.381 & 407. For Augustine's attitude to marriage and virginity, see further below, pp. 56-57

6. Much of the wisdom from the deserts was brought to the West by Cassian. Cassian was born c. 360, probably in the Balkan region, where Latin and Greek were both spoken, so he was well suited to act as mediator between Eastern and Western monasticism. With his friend Germanus he travelled widely the deserts of Syria and Egypt, visiting and learning from the monks and anchorites. Cassian's 'monastic writings became universally known in the West and have been more influential in the spirituality of Western monasticism than any other except the Benedictine Rule ... The number of extant manuscripts testifies to the popularity of Cassian in the Middle Ages, and his effect upon Western spirituality is incalculable' (Fry 1981, 57 & 59). Cassian's influence pervades the *Rule of Benedict* (see Fry, *passim*), and Chapters 42 & 73 of the *Rule* encouraged the reading and study of his writings. This would have favoured thier circulation; his work was well known in England. See also Ogilvy 1967, 105-06.

7. See chs 6-9 below.

CHAPTER THREE: ON BEING A VIRGIN

More was required of a virgin than mere preservation of physical integrity. Physical integrity was certainly necessary, but it was only of value as a symbol of an inner state. Writers on virginity stressed this repeatedly.¹ The state they urged and praised was also a spiritual condition, for virginity should be a sign of restored spiritual purity. Since the sinful soul had made the flesh corruptible, the soul as well as the flesh must strive to be sinless (see pp. 21-22 above).

Jerome acknowledged that the obedience of the flesh was itself hard to exact, for Paul himself had found it so:

Quamdiu hoc fragilli corpore detinemur, quamdiu habemus thesaurum in vasis fictilibus (II Corinthians 4.7), et concupiscit spiritus adversus carnem, et caro adversus spiritum (Galatians 5.17), nulla est certa victoria.

So long as we are held down by this frail body, so long as we have our treasure in earthen vessels, so long as the flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh there can be no sure victory. (Letter 22.4, PL 22.396; Wace & Schaff VI.23).

Slightly further on in the same letter, Jerome quoted several other passages which Augustine also discussed:

Si Apostolus vas electionis (Acts 9.15), et separatus in Evangelium Christi (Galatians 1.15; Romans 1.1), ob carnis aculeos et incentiva vitiorum reprimat corpus suum, et servituti subjicit, ne aliis praedicans ipse reprobis inveniatur (I Corinthians 9.27); et tamen videt aliam legem in membris suis repugnantem legi mentis suae, et captivum se in legem duci peccati (Romans 7.23), si post nuditatem, jejunia, famem, carcerem, flagella, supplicia, in semetipsum reversus

exclamat: 'Infelix ego homo, quis me liberabit de corpore mortis hujus' (Romans 7.24), tu te putas securam esse debere?

If, then, the apostle, who was a chosen vessel separated unto the gospel of Christ, by reason of the pricks of the flesh and the allurements of vice keeps under his body and brings it into subjection, lest when he has preached to others he may himself be a castaway; and yet, for all that, sees another law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin; if after nakedness, fasting, hunger, imprisonment, scourging and other torments, he turns back to himself and cries: 'Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?', do you fancy that you ought to lay aside apprehension? (Letter 22.5, PL 22.397; Wace & Schaff VI.24)

Physical virginity had to be guarded, and the mutinous flesh may have been hard to subdue, but still the preservation of physical virginity was not enough on its own. Spiritual as well as bodily purity had to be watched over. Jerome warned that there also existed 'evil virgins, virgins in the flesh, not in the spirit':

Timeamus illam prophetiam, ne in nobis etiam compleatur: 'Virgines bonae deficient' (Amos 8.13). Observa quid dicat, 'et virgines bonae deficient'; quia sunt et virgines malae. 'Qui viderit,' inquit, 'mulierem ad concupiscendum eam, jam moechatus est eam in corde suo' (Matthew 5.28). Perit ergo et mente virginitas. Istae sunt virgines malae, virgines carne, non spiritu.

Let us fear lest in us also the prophecy be fulfilled, 'Good virgins shall faint'. Notice that it is good virgins who are spoken of, for there are bad ones as well. 'Whosoever looketh on a woman,' the Lord says, 'to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.' So that virginity may be lost even by a thought. Such are evil virgins, virgins in the flesh, not in the spirit. (Letter 22.5, PL 22.397; Wace & Schaff VI.24)

Thus virginity could be 'lost by a thought'. However, it was not only sexual thoughts which could lose one one's virginity. Jerome declared later in the same letter that a woman who but 'cared for the flesh' - that is, worldly matters - was no fit example for virgins, and that it was doubtful if she was truly a virgin:

Nec illarum tibi exempla proponas, quae carnis curam facientes, possessioneum reditus, et quotidianas domus impensas supputant ... Nec dicas, illa et illa suis rebus fruitur; honoratur ab hominibus; fratres ad eam conveniunt et sorores. Nunquid ideo virgo esse desiit? Primo dubium est, an virgo sit talis. 'Non enim quomodo videt homo, videt Deus. Homo videt in facie, Deus autem videt in corde' (I Kings 16). Dehinc etiam si corpore virgo est, spiritu virgo sit, nescio. Apostolus autem ita virginem definivit: 'Ut sit sancta corpore et spiritu' (I Corinthians 7.34).

Some women care for the flesh and reckon up their income and daily expenditure: such are no fit models for you ... Say not: 'So-and-so enjoys her own property, she is honoured of men, her brothers and sisters come to see her. Has she then ceased to be a virgin?' In the first place, it is doubtful if she is a virgin. For 'the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh upon the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.' Again, she may be a virgin in body and not in spirit. According to the apostle, a true virgin is 'holy both in body and spirit.' (Letter 22.38, PL 22.422; Wace & Schaff VI.39)

In the Lives of virgin saints, worldly temptations and the loss of virginity were often shown to be closely connected, - even causally linked, since the temptations of wealth and worldly status were offered as inducements to marriage. Juliana, for example, in Cynewulf's poem (Woolf 1966), is courted by the wealthy Eleusius, who, her father says to her,

is betra þonne þu,
æþelra for eorþan, æhtspedigra
feohgestreona; he is to freonde god. (lines 100-02)

Juliana, however, has rejected him

þeah þe feohgestreon
under hordlocan, hyrsta unrim,
æhte ofer eorþan. (42-44)

In Ælfric's 'Life of Agatha' (LS 8), Affrodosia attempts to corrupt Agatha for Quintianus with offers of treasures and honours. But Agatha is unmoved by worldly temptation. Riddling impossibilities express her incorruptibility (29-31); Agatha despises such inducements as dung:

þa geseah affrodosia . þæt heo þære femnan mod
gebigan ne mihte . mid hyre bismorfullum tihtincgum .
and ferde to quintiane and cwæð him þus to .
Stanas magon hnexian . and þæt starce isen
on leades gelicnysse . ærðan þe se geleafa mæge (30)
of agathes breoste . beon æfre adwæsced .

Ic and mine dohtra . dægges . and nihtes .
naht elles ne drugon . buton hi æfre tihton .
to þinre geþafunga . þeah ðe us hwonlice speowe .
Ic hire bead gymmas . and gyrilan of golde . (35)
and oðre mærdæda . and mære gebytlū .

hamas . and hyred . and heo þæt eall forseah
on meoxes gelicnysse . þe lið under fotum . (38)

Agnes similarly rejects the treasures offered to her by her suitor:
'þæra maðma ne rohte . þe ma þe reocendes meoxes' (LS 7.20). Other virgin saints are said to have treated the worldly attractions of people and property as dung;² Eugenia says: 'ic for cristes lufe .

forlæt eow ealle . and middan-eardlice lustas swa swa meox forseah'
(LS 2.240-41).³

The necessity for holiness in both body and spirit meant that pagan and heretical cults of virginity were of no value. Such cults honoured virginity of the flesh, but without the corresponding inner purity. This seemed to concern Ambrose in particular:

At certe ipsis gentilibus inter aras et focos venerabilis solet esse
virginitas: et in quibus nulla meritorum est pietas, nulla mentis
integritas; in iis tamen carnis virginitas praedicatur.

Even among heathens virginity was respected: though no religious merit was possible for them, or interior purity, yet the virginity of the flesh was had in honour. (*De Virginitate* 3.13, PL 16.269; Christie 1843, 6)

Ambrose therefore felt able to write scornfully of, for example, vestal virgins:

Qualis autem est illa religio, ubi pudicae adolescentes jubentur esse,
impudicae anus?

What sort of religion is that in which modest maidens are bidden to be immodest old women? (*De Virg. ad Marc.* 4.15, PL 16.193; Wace & Schaff X.365-66)⁴

In Ælfric's 'Life of Agnes' (which was based on a sermon held to be by Ambrose: see Appendix), when Agnes refuses to marry the prefect's son, the prefect suggests that if she loves virginity she should worship the goddess Vesta:

Hlyst minum ræde . gif ðu lufast megð-had.
þæt ðu gebuge mid biggengum . hraðe .
to ðære gydenan uesta . þe galyssse onscunað . (LS 7.99-101)

When he says she must choose between remaining a virgin in honour of Vesta, or entering a brothel, it is clear that to Agnes, the virgin for Christ, the two must be equally antipathetic:

Geceos þe nu agnes an þæra twegra .
oððe þu mid mædenum þæra mæran uestan .
þinne lac geoffrige . oððe þu laðum myltestrum
scealt beon geferlæht . and fullice gebysmrod ...
Hwæt þa agnes andwyrde . mid mycelre anrædnysse .
gif ðu cuðest minne god . ne cwæde þu ðas word . (117-23)

The idea that the body and spirit must both be holy was warmly urged by Aldhelm in his prose *De Virginitate*. His treatise was a celebration of virginity, rather than a work of instruction, such as Jerome's had been.⁵ He was less concerned, therefore, about the difficulty of maintaining bodily purity; nevertheless he was in agreement with his predecessors that spiritual purity was both difficult, and vital to true virginity:

Ergo nequaquam carnalis integritas comprobatur, nisi consors spiritalis castimonia comitetur. Unde vas electionis (Acts 9.16) 'Ut sit', inquit, 'sancta et corpore et spiritu' (I Corinthians 7.34). En, apostolocis manifestatur vocibus, quod sola carnalis pudicitiae immunitas caelestis regni claustra reserare nequeat et solitaria nequaquam paradisi valvam recludere valeat, quem cherubin rumphea versatili et flammifera conclusisse recapitulatio geneseos (Genesis 3.24) originaliter declarat, nisi utrimque duplex sanctimonia concorditer candescat. Unde idem 'Macero', inquit, 'corpus meum et servituti redigo' (I Corinthians 9.27), videlicet ne caro contra spiritum tyrannica potestate contumaciter insolescat et protervo libertatis fastu intumescens legitimæ servitutis iugo subdere colla contemnat.

Carnal integrity is in no way approved of, unless spiritual purity is associated with it as companion. Whence the 'vessel of election' (i.e. St Paul) says ... 'that she may be holy both in body and in spirit'. Clearly, it is shown by the apostle's statements that the stainlessness of bodily purity by itself cannot unlock the gates of the heavenly kingdom and on its own can in no way serve to reopen the door of Paradise - which the summary verse of *Genesis* declared the Cherubim to have closed originally with a fiery weapon that turned every way - unless a dual sanctity on each side glistens in harmony. Whence the same writer says, 'I chastise my body and bring it into subjection', which is to say, so that the flesh does not contumaciously grow insolent with tyrannical power against the spirit and, swelling with the impudent arrogance of liberty, scorn to subject its neck to the yoke of legitimate servitude. (*De Virg.* 16, Ehwald, pp. 245-46; Lapidge & Herren 1979, 72-73)

The opening sentence of Aldhelm's work illustrates how fundamental this idea of 'dual sanctity' was to the Christian concept of virginity. He praised the recipients of his book for their achievement of both:

Reverentissimis Christi virginibus omnique devotae germanitatis affectu venerandis et non solum corporalis pudicitiae praeconio celebrandis quod plurimorum est, verum etiam spiritalis castimoniae gratia glorificandis quod paucorum est.

To the most reverend virgins of Christ, (who are) to be venerated with every affection of devoted brotherhood, and to be celebrated not only for the distinction of (their) corporeal chastity, which is (the achievement) of many, but also to be glorified on account of (their) spiritual purity, which is (the achievement) of few. (Ehwald, p. 228; Lapidge & Herren, p. 59)

And it was only if a virgin achieved holiness of both body and spirit, as the previous passage makes clear, that he or she had attained the state of true virginity which would lead to re-entry into paradise.

The absolute prerequisite for this condition was that virginity should be freely chosen. This must be stressed, for writers on virginity stressed it. Compelled, enforced, virginity would have undermined the very concept of virginity as a condition of spiritual as well as physical purity; for if evil was a product of the will, so too was good. Moreover, without the freedom to choose, obedience once more to God's will would have been of no value (see above, pp. 14-15, 21-22): compulsion in the fallen condition would have been as meaningless as in the unfallen. Indeed, obedience in a fallen creature was all the more precious because it was now so much harder than it had been before the fall. Thus, since the will remained free, the very decision to undertake the virgin life was a sign of spiritual purity. Virginity was therefore not commanded, nor was it easy to achieve:

'De virginibus', inquit apostolus, 'praeceptum domini non habeo' (I Corinthians 7.25), ut potioris sit meriti munus, quod libero spontaneae voluntatis arbitrio offertur, quam quod violenti rigido praecepti imperio complendum iubetur.

'Now, concerning virgins,' says the apostle, 'I have no commandment of the Lord' - so that the gift may be of greater merit, because it is offered with the free will of spontaneous choice, than what is ordered to be fulfilled by the rigid command of a forcible precept. (Aldhelm, *De Virg.* 18, Ehwald, p. 247; Lapidge & Herren 1979, 74.⁶)

In contrast to this divinely granted freedom of will, the effort on the part of persecutors - whether emperor, parent, or prospective

husband - to compel obedience with regard to marriage or faith or both was an indication of devilish temperament. The resistance shown by saints to such pressure was a virtue - submission would have been so much easier.

Ælfric wrote how virginity as a voluntary offering was dearer to Christ:

Nu is Criste leofre þæt se man be his agenre gecorennysse þa clænnysse geceose þe he sylf astealde, þonne he ealle menn bebunde mid þam anum bebode. And seo clæne lac, þæt is mægðhad, sceal beon Gode mid glædnysse geoffrod, na mid neadunge ænigre hæse. ('De Doctrina Apostolica', Pope 1967, II.19.47-52).

To offer one's self, as virgins and monks do, was the greatest offering, and equivalent to martyrdom:

Micel geoffrað gode, þe hine sylfne geoffrað.
þæt synd ða mæstan lac, þe man mæg geoffrian,
þæt he holocaustum beo, þæt is eall godes lac,
swa swa þa clænan doð, þe dægwhamlice campiað
wið ða ungesewenlican and ða swicolan fynd
and wið unlustas, gelærede ðurh Crist.
Hi beoð Cristes martyras þurh ða munuclican drohtnunge,
na æne gemartirode, ac oft digollice,
swa swa Hieronimus, se wisa trahtnere,
be swylcum mannum awrat on sumum sealmtrahte.

(Assmann 3.288-97)⁷

There seem to have been three qualities which can be identified as having special relevance to this freely chosen virginity of body and spirit: chastity of spirit, purity of faith, and humility.

A chaste spirit was the most obvious spiritual counterpart to bodily chastity or virginity; a chaste will, a freedom from commission

even of 'adultery in the heart' (Matthew 5.28; see also Jerome, above, pp. 36-37). An unchaste thought was enough to destroy a person's claim to chastity. On the other hand, in Augustine's view at least, physical violation could not destroy one's holiness if the will remained chaste:

proposito animi permanente, per quod etiam corpus sanctificari meruit, nec ipsi corpori aufert sanctitatem violentia libidinis alienae, quam servat perseuerantia continentiae suae.

as long as the mind's resolve remains constant, whereby the body too made good its claim to be holy, the violence of another's lust does not deprive the body of its holiness, which is preserved by the steadfastness of one's own control. (*De Civ. Dei* 1.18, McCracken 1957, 80-81)

Augustine therefore could not condone suicide to preserve physical chastity (see also *De Civ. Dei* 1.16, 17, 19 & 20). Aldhelm quoted from this chapter towards the end of *De Virginitate* (ch. 58); but although Augustine's condemnation of suicide under these or indeed any circumstances was no doubt the orthodox position, - and persuasively consistent with the idea of the strength and primacy of a pure, chaste, spirit, - it seems not to have been as attractive as the image of those who preferred to die, even at their own hands, rather than suffer sexual violation. Aldhelm marvelled at the power of the chaste spirit which made people kill themselves rather than lose their physical chastity through force. Far from condemning such an action, Aldhelm believed that it would bring glory:

Magna est igitur puritatis praerogativa, quam qui amittere per vim compellatur, si ob hoc humanum exosus consortium communi vita sponte

caruerit, apud CXLIIII milia virginale carmen canentia in caelesti contubernio gratulabitur gloriosus.

Great, therefore, is the privilege of purity; and if anyone who is compelled by force to relinquish it, shall for that reason, contemptuous of human society, voluntarily separate himself from this life shared by all, he shall rejoice triumphantly in the celestial society among the 144.000 singing the virginal song (cf. Apocalypse 14.21). (ch. 31, Ehwald, p. 269; Lapidge & Herren 1979, 90)

Aldhelm, citing examples from Eusebius, quoted Jerome in support:

Quod Eusebius, Graecorum historiografus, virgines Deo devotas fecisse testatur, quae se pro integritatis pudicitia conservanda rapaci gurgitis alveo per praeceptum immerserunt; unde quidam patrum 'propria', inquit, 'manu perire non licet absque eo, ubi castitas periclitatur' (Jerome, *In Jonam* 1.12)

As Eusebius, the historian of the Greeks, records some virgins devoted to God to have done, who, in order to preserve the purity of their integrity, immersed themselves headlong in the swift channel of the cataract, - whence one of the Church Fathers says, 'It is not allowable to die by one's own hand except in cases where chastity is endangered'. (ibid.)

Aldhelm gave the further example of Malchus who

maluit mucrone transfossus crudeliter occumbere quam pudicitiae iura profanando vitam defendere, nequaquam animae periculum pertimescens, si integer virginitatis status servaretur.

preferred to die transfixed cruelly by the sword rather than to defend his life by profaning the laws of chastity, fearing in no way the danger to his soul if the status of his virginity were preserved intact. (ch. 31, Ehwald, p. 270; Lapidge & Herren, p. 91)

He omits to mention, with the selectiveness of a propagandist, that according to the story, Malchus was dissuaded from committing suicide

by the woman he was being forced to marry; the two agreed to marry, but to remain virgins - thus he did indeed preserve his chastity, and his life. However, whether suicide to preserve virginity was approved of or not, there is no doubt that a chaste will was regarded as essential to a virgin condition.

Chastity of will for the Christian virgin was inseparable from purity of faith, and during the persecutions, Christian virgins often found they had to defend both their virginity and their faith. Virgin martyrs revealed in their willing acceptance of death rather than marriage with their suitors or sexual violation at the hands of their persecutors, a chastity of will which preserved their physical virginity and their faith. Spiritual virginity was in fact sometimes equated with inviolate faith. Aldhelm in *De Virginitate*. quotes St Augustine and Prosper of Aquitaine to this effect:

Denique praefatus Punicorum praesul (i.e. Augustine) 'Virginitas', inquit, 'carnis corpus intactum, virginitas animae fides incorrupta' ('Enarr. in Ps.' 147.19); item Prosper:

Carnis, inquit, virginitas intacto corpore habetur,
Virginitas animi est intemerata fides,
Qua sine corporei nil prodest cura pudoris;
Sed mentis pietas auget utrumque bonum ('Epigr.' 75).

The aforesaid bishop of the Africans states, 'Virginity of the flesh is an intact body; virginity of the mind is an uncorrupted faith'. Likewise Prosper (of Aquitaine):

'Virginity of the flesh exists when the body is intact,
Virginity of the soul is inviolate faith.

Without this, no concern for corporeal purity is of avail.

But devoutness of mind increases either boon'.

(*De Virg.* 58, Ehwald, p. 319; Lapidge & Herren 1979, 129)

Ambrose had made a similar link between unwavering faith and integrity of soul:

Hoc loco non mediocrem advertite quaestionem, ne dubitare de resurrectione Domini, virgines, debeatis. Videte quod meritum non sola carnis virginitas facit, sed etiam mentis integritas. Denique Maria Magdalena Dominum prohibetur tangere quia nutabat de resurrectionis fide. Illa igitur tangit Christum, quae fide tangit.

And take heed, ye virgins, lest ye [too, like Mary Magdalene] doubt of the resurrection of the Lord. Virginity of the flesh is no merit, without integrity of the soul. St Mary Magdalene was forbid to touch the Lord, for her faith still wavered; she toucheth Christ, who toucheth Him by faith. (*De Virg.* 4.14, PL 16.270; Christie 1843, 7)

Virgin saints revealed in their incorruptibility their inviolate faith. In Ælfric's 'Life of St Agatha' (LS 8), Affrodosia has been commissioned by Quintianus to try and corrupt Agatha. Affrodosia 'wende þæt heo mihte hire mod awendan' (17); but Agatha says to Affrodosia:

Eower word syndon winde gelice .

ac hi ne magon afyllan min fæstræde gepanc .

þe is gegrund-stapelod .

(19-21)

Affrodosia can only report her failure to Quintianus (29-31)⁹

The notion that in symbolic terms the Church was the virgin bride of Christ supports the idea of a connection between integrity of faith and virginity.⁹ In the case of the Church, the worship of heathen gods, heresy and witchcraft, were represented as a kind of adultery.¹⁰

Ælfric expressed this idea:

Ðurh þone halgan geleafan heo [seo cyrcel] is him beweddod
ure ealra modor, and heo is mæden swa þeah,
æfre ungewemmed, þonne heo æfre þurhwunað
on godes geleafan and nele abugan
to nanum hæðenscipe fram þæs hælandes geleafan,
fram hyre brydguman to bysmorfullum deofolgylde,
ne to wiccecræfte, ne to wiglunum,
mid nanum gedwylde fram hyre drihtne ahwar.

(Assmann 3.93-100; see also Godden 1979, no. 39)

For an individual virgin even to marry, similarly could be seen as adultery. For this reason Basil of Caesaria, in the fourth century, 'decided that, while virgins of the church who had "fallen" (and this fall often consisted of nothing more lurid than marriage) had formerly been subjected to the penance only of fornicators, they should now undergo the heavier penance associated with adulterers' (Brown 1989, 274). Thus the virginity of the church and that of the individual virgin were analogous in that in both virginity was an expression of inviolate faith. In the Lives of saints the connection becomes very plain: virgin saints stand firm in their faith and their virginity against marriage and idolatry (see, for example Saints Juliana, Margaret and Katherine, chs 6, 9, & 16-18 below).

However, perhaps the quality which was most often singled out in discussions of virginity was humility. The fact that the whole of the longest chapter in the *Rule of Benedict*, Chapter 7, is devoted to humility, is a measure of the importance of its place in ascetic Christian thought. There are two factors to be taken into consideration here: firstly, pride was regarded as the most dangerous

and insidious of sins, and the precursor to all others; so that any discussion of the way an individual could lead a holy life would be likely to give humility, its opposite, a prominent place. Cassian described pride as 'an evil beast that is more savage and more dreadful than all other [sins]': 'saevissima et superioribus cunctis immanior bestia' (*Inst.* 12.1, SC 109.450; Wace & Schaff XI.280);

Nullum est igitur aliud vitium, quod ita omnes uirtutes exhauriat cunctaque iustitia et sanctitate hominem spoliet ac denudet ut superbiae malum, tamquam generalis quidam ac pestifer morbus non unum membrum partemue eius debilitare contentus, sed solidum corpus letali corrumpit exitio.

there is no other fault which is so destructive of all virtues, and robs and despoils a man of all righteousness and holiness as this evil of pride, which like some pestilential disease attacks the whole man, and, not content to damage one part or one limb only, injures the entire body by its deadly influence. (*Inst.* 12.3, SC 109.452; Wace & Schaff XI.280)

Gregory called it the 'queen of sins':

Ipsa namque vitiorum regina superbia cum devictum plene cor ceperit, mox illud septem principalibus vitiis, quasi quibusdam suis ducibus devastandum tradit.

For when pride, the queen of sins, has fully possessed a conquered heart, she surrenders it immediately to the seven principal sins, as if to some of her generals, to lay it waste. (*Moralia* 31, §87, PL 76.620; Bliss 1844, III.2, 489)

It was, he reminded his readers, the root of all evil:

Radix quippe cuncti mali superbia est, de qua, Scriptura attestante, dicitur: 'Initium omnis peccati est superbia (Ecclesiasticus 10.15)'.

For pride is the root of all evil, of which it is said as Scripture bears witness, 'Pride is the beginning of all sin'. (*Moralia* 31, §87, PL 76.621; Bliss 1844 III.2, 489-90)

The devil himself had fallen through pride; Christ had achieved his victory through its opposite. Gregory wrote:

Quia enim originem perditioni nostrae superbia praebuit diaboli, instrumentum redemptionis nostrae inventa est humilitas Dei. Hostis quippe noster magnus inter omnia conditus, videri super omnia voluit elatus. Redemptor autem noster magnus manens super omnia, fieri inter omnia dignatus est parvus.

For since the pride of the devil caused the origin of our fall, the humility of God was found out as the instrument of our redemption. For our enemy who was created great among all things, wished to appear exalted above all things. But our Redeemer remaining great above all things, deigned to become little among all things. (*Moralia* 34, §54, PL 76.748; Bliss 1844, III.2, 658-59)

Christ was frequently spoken of as the representative of humility and the devil of pride:

Quapropter quod nunc in ciuitate Dei et ciuitati Dei in hoc peregrinanti saeculo maxime commendatur humilitas (cf. Matthew 11.29) et in eius rege, qui est Christus (cf. Philippians 2.8-11), maxime praedicatur contrariumque huic uirtuti elationis uitium in eius aduersario, qui est diabolus, maxime dominari sacris litteris edocetur.

At this time, as we know, in the City of God and for the City of God during its pilgrimage in this world humility is most highly recommended and is also most emphasized in the case of Christ, its king. From the sacred Scriptures we learn also that the fault of exaltation, which is the antithesis of this virtue, reigns supreme in his adversary, the devil. (*De Civ. Dei* 14.13, Levine 1966, 338-41)

And Gregory again wrote:

Quia igitur Redemptor noster corda regit humilium, et Leviathan iste rex dicitur superborum, aperte cognoscimus quod evidentissimum reproborum signum superbia est, at contra humilitas electorum.

Because then our Redeemer rules the hearts of the humble, and this Leviathan is called the king of the proud, we know plainly, that pride is a most evident token of the reprobate, but humility, on the contrary, of the Elect. (*Moralia* 34, 856, PL 76.750; Bliss 1844, III.2.660)

This further enhanced the importance of the opposition between pride and humility, and humility was therefore a powerful weapon in the Christian scheme. In *De Civitate Dei* Augustine referred to Matthew 23.12 ('And whosoever shall exalt himself, shall be humbled; and he that shall humble himself, shall be exalted'):

Bonum est enim sursum habere cor; non tamen ad se ipsum, quod est superbiae, sed ad Dominum, quod est oboedientiae, quae nisi humilium non potest esse. Est igitur aliquid humilitatis miro modo quod sursum faciat cor, et est aliquid elationis quod deorsum faciat cor.

It is indeed a good thing to have an aspiring mind; yet aspiring not to oneself, which belongs to pride, but to God, which belongs to obedience, and obedience can belong only to the humble. Accordingly, strange as it may seem, there is something in humility to uplift the mind, and there is something in exaltation to abase the mind. (14.13, Levine 1966, 338-39)

Thus humility becomes the essential weapon in the fight against pride, and it is consequently a quality frequently remarked upon in the Lives of saints, particularly ascetic saints. Æthelthryth combined humility with other forms of asceticism: she bathed rarely,

only on holy days, and on these occasions she washed others first, and herself last:

[heo] wolde seld-hwænne
hire lic baðian butan to heahtidum.
and ðonne heo wolde ærest ealle ða baðian
þe on ðam mynstre wæron . and wolde him ðenian
mid hire þinenum . and þonne hi sylfe baðian . (LS 20.44-8)

Her wish to be buried in a wooden coffin (68-69) also expressed her humility (see Plummer 1896, 239).

The paradox that humility is nobility can be seen in Ælfric's 'Life of St Agatha'. During an interchange between Agatha and Quintianus, the true nobility of the saint and the true servitude of her adversary are expressed. Agatha says 'mycel æðelborennys . bið þæt man be cristes ðeow' (46). To Quintianus this seems perverse, but Agatha tells him his real condition:

Quintianus cwæð to þam cristes mædene .
Hwæt la næbbe we nane æþelborennys
forðan þe we forseoð þines cristes ðeow-dom .
Agathes andwyrde þam arleasan and cwæð .
Eower æðelborennys becymð to swa bysmorfullum hæftneðe .
þæt ge beoð þeowan synne and stanum . (LS 8.47-52)

In Ælfric's 'Life of St Eugenia' (LS 2) it is significant that after Eugenia's conversion she no longer regards Protus and Jacinthus as her servants, but as her brothers: 'het hi gebroðra' (49). This is reinforced by what the bishop, Helenus, (whom we know to be a holy man, with divinely conferred powers) says to them:

To hire twam cnihtum . he cwæð þæt hi heoldan
æðelborennys on mode . þeah þe hi mannum þeowdon .

and cwæð þæt hi crist gespræce þysum godspellicum wordum.

Ne hate ic eow na þeowan . ac ge synd mine freond. (84-87)

Thus in her humility Eugenia is linked with Christ, and her servants have attained 'nobility in their minds', and are no longer servants but brothers of Eugenia and friends of Christ.

The second reason for the particular emphasis on humility in connection with virginity was that pride and lust were organically related: pride and disobedience had led to the fall, with lust as a consequence (as we have seen from Augustine's account of the fall and its consequences summarised above, ch. 1). Gregory's account is similar:

Per humilitatis custodiam servanda est munditia castitatis. Si enim pie spiritus sub Deo premitur, caro illicite super spiritum non levatur. Habet quippe spiritus commissum sibi dominium carnis, si tamen sub Domino recognoscit jura legitimæ servitutis. Nam si auctorem suum superbiendo contemnit, jure et a subjecta carne praelium suscipit. Unde et ille primus inobediens mox ut superbiendo peccavit, pudenda contextit (Genesis 3.7). Quia enim contumeliam spiritus Deo intulit, mox contumeliam carnis invenit. Et quia auctori suo esse subditus noluit, jus carnis subditæ quam regebat amisit.

The cleanness of chastity is to be preserved by guarding humility. For, if the spirit is piously humbled before God, the flesh is not raised unlawfully above the spirit. For, the spirit holds the dominion over the flesh, committed to it, if it acknowledges the claims of lawful servitude to the Lord. For, if through pride it despises its Author, it justly takes on itself a contest with its subject flesh. Whence also that first disobedient one, as soon as he had sinned through pride, covered his shameful parts. For, because his spirit had put an insult on God, it soon experienced the insult of the flesh. And, because it refused to submit to its Creator, it lost

its right over the subject flesh, which it used to rule. (*Moralia* 26, §28, PL 76.364-65; Bliss 1844, III.1.153)

Writers on virginity therefore stressed that virginity had to be offered with humility, for the preservation of physical integrity was of no value if it was accompanied by pride in any of its forms. For this reason Augustine had felt justified in discussing humility at length in his *De Sancta Virginitate*, although he anticipated objections to his doing so:

Hic dicet aliquis: Non est hoc jam de virginitate, sed de humilitate scribere. Quasi vero quaecumque virginitas, ac non illa quae secundum Deum est, a nobis praedicanda suscepta est. Quod bonum quanto magnum video, tanto ei, ne pereat, futuram superbiam pertimesco.

At this point someone will say: 'But this is not to write on virginity, but on humility.' As if, indeed, we had undertaken the praise of any kind of virginity whatsoever, and not of that which is according to God. The greater I see this blessing to be, the more do I fear pride in it, lest it perish in the hereafter. (*De Sancta Virginitate* 52, PL 40.426; Deferrari 1969, 206)

Aldhelm wrote sadly in *De Virginitate* of those who took pride in physical virginity alone:

quod illis dumtaxat in utroque sexu lacrimosis luctuum singultibus lugubriter lamentandum et cum profundo praecordiorum suspirio querulosis questibus flebiliter ingemescendum autumo, qui tumido elationis supercilio inflati de sola carnis integritate gloriantur.

what is, I think, to be lamented mournfully with tearful outbursts of sorrow and to be bewailed dolefully in querulous complaints with profound sighing of breasts, are those of either sex who, inflated with the puffed-up arrogance of pride, exult in the integrity of the flesh alone. (ch. 10, Ehwald, p. 238; Lapidge & Herren 1979, 67)

He pointed out the consequences of this self-satisfaction:

isti vero, quod se caelibes castos et ab omni spurcitiae sentina funditus immunes arbitrentur, fiducia virginitatis inflati arroganter intumescunt et nequaquam crudelissimam superbiae balenam, ceterarum virtutum devoratricem, humilitatis cercilo declinant.

But the former ones, because they judge themselves to be chastely celibate and to be thoroughly free from all the dregs of filth, inflated with (over-)confidence in their virginity they arrogantly swell up and in no way do they turn away the most cruel monster Pride, devourer of the other virtues, with the nose-ring of humility. (ibid.)

He cited Lucifer and the fallen angels as a warning:

Lucifer parasitorum sodalibus vallatus et apostatarum satellitibus glomeratus in profundum superbiae barathrum et tetrum elationis tumidae tartarum cassabundus corruisset ... Quodsi angelica supernorum civium celsitudo elationis tantum supercilio turgescens beato ceterorum contubernio et deificae contemplationis participio privabatur, quanto magis gracillima mortalium fragilitas, si de propriis meritorum emolumentis ut inflata vesica intumuerit et de virginali castimonia quasi speciali sanctimonia rumusculos cenodoxiae ceperit, a caelestis sponsi triclinio infeliciter fraudabitur? Idcirco virginibus Christi et tirunculis ecclesiae contra horrendam superbiae bestiam ... lacertosis viribus dimicandum est.

Lucifer, surrounded by parasitic accomplices and hemmed in by apostate followers, fell reeling into the profound abyss of pride and the foul pits of swollen arrogance ... Now if the angelic loftiness of heavenly citizens, swelling so greatly with the arrogance of pride, was deprived of the blessed companionship of the other angels and its share in contemplating the godhead, how much the more will the frail weakness of mortals be unhappily defrauded of the wedding-feast of the celestial bridegroom, if it has swelled up like an inflated bladder with the merit of its own attainment, and has taken on the notoriety of vainglory because of its virginal chastity - as if it were some

special sanctity? Virgins of Christ and raw recruits of the Church must therefore fight with muscular energy against the horrendous monster of Pride. (ch. 11, Ehwald, pp. 239-40; Lapidge & Herren pp. 67-8)

The pride of Adam and Eve had taken the form of disobedience. Obedience conversely was an essential aspect of humility, and so Augustine wrote in *De Bono Conjugali*¹¹ not merely that the virgin had to be humble, but even that obedience was a greater good than virginity:

Majus enim bonum est obedientiae quam continentiae. Nam connubium nusquam nostrarum Scripturarum auctoritate damnatur, inobedientia vero nusquam absolvitur. Si ergo proponatur virgo permansura, sed tamen inobediens, et maritata quae virgo permanere non posset, sed tamen obediens, quam meliorem dicamus? Minus laudabilem quam si virgo esset, an damnabilem sicut virgo est? Ita si conferas ebriosam virginem sobriae conjugatae, quis dubitet eandem ferre sententiam? Nuptiae quippe et virginitas duo bona sunt, quorum alterum majus ... Virginitas autem propterea potest esse sine obedientia ... sicut multas sacras virgines novimus verbosas, curiosas, ebrias, litigiosas, avaras, superbas; quae omnia contra praecepta sunt, et sicut ipsam Evam inobedientiae crimine occidunt. Quapropter non solum obediens inobedienti, sed obedientior conjugata minus obedienti virgini praeponenda est.

Greater, indeed, is the good of obedience than the good of continence. Marriage is nowhere condemned by the authority of our scriptures; disobedience, however, is nowhere condoned. If, then, we have to choose between one who remains a virgin who is at the same time disobedient and a married woman who could not remain a virgin but who is nevertheless obedient - which of the two shall we say is the better? Is it the one who is less laudable than she would be if she were a virgin, or the one worthy of reproach although she is a virgin? So, if you compare a drunken virgin with a chaste [sober] spouse, who would hesitate to pass the same judgement? Marriage and virginity

are, it is true, two goods, the second of them is the greater ... Virginity can exist by itself without obedience ... just as we know many sacred virgins who are garrulous, inquisitive, addicted to drink, contentious, greedy, proud. All these vices are against the precepts and destroy them [i.e. the disobedient virgins] through their sin of disobedience, like Eve herself. Therefore, not only is the obedient person to be preferred to the disobedient one, but the more obedient wife is to be preferred to the less obedient virgin. (29-30, PL 40.393; Deferrari 1969, 45-46)

Ælfric too, in stressing the need of virgins for humility and warning of the dangers to them of pride wrote (following Augustine)¹² that a humble and obedient wife was better than a proud virgin, since (as Cassian and Gregory insisted) pride led to all evil:

Betere bið þæt wif, þe wunað on sinscipe,
gode a gehyrsum to his halgum bebodum
and eadmod on heortan, þonne heo hæfð
twa ðing untæle for gode,
sinscipe and eadmodnysse on æpelum þeawum,
þonne þæt mæden beo, þe modig bið on heortan
and gode ungehyrsum, þonne heo hæfð twa ðing,
clænnysse and modignysse, micel god and micel yfel,
þe ne magon beon geþwære on nanre þeawfæstnysse,
forðan ðe ælc yfel cymð of modignysse. (Assmann 3.396-405)

Thus it was essential that virgins freely make the choice to be a virgin, and remain chaste of spirit, pure in faith and humble. But more was required of a virgin than this. The ideal types of male and female virginity were Christ and the Virgin Mary, and in them alone were all the qualities of that holiness of spirit which should accompany physical virginity perfectly realised.¹³ Jerome wrote that

St Paul desired his hearers to be imitators of him, as he was of Christ:

'Volo autem omnes homines esse sicut meipsum (I Corinthians 7.7).'
Beatus qui Pauli similis erit. Felix qui audit Apostolum
praecipientem, non ignoscentem. Hoc, inquit, volo, hoc desidero, ut
imitatores mei sitis, sicut et ego Christi. Ille virgo de Virgine, de
incompacta incompactus. Nos quia homines sumus, et nativitatem
Salvatoris non possumus imitari, imitemur saltem conversationem.
Illud divinitatis est et beatitudinis, hoc humanae conditionis est et
laboris ... 'Qui enim in Christum credit, debet sicut ille ambulat et
ipse ambulare (I John 2.6)'.
'

(The Apostle wrote) 'but I would that all men were as I am'. Happy is
the man who is like St Paul! Fortunate is he who attends to the
Apostle's command, not to his concession. This, says he, I wish, this
I desire, that ye be imitators of me, as I also am of Christ, who was
a Virgin born of a Virgin, incompact of her who was incompact. We,
because we are men, cannot imitate our Lord's nativity; but we may at
least imitate His life. The former was the blessed prerogative of
divinity, the latter belongs to our human condition and is part of
human effort ... For 'he that believeth in Christ ought himself also
to walk even as He walked'. (Adv. Jov. 1.8, PL 23.221; Wace & Schaff
VI.352)

When the ideals of virginity were Christ and Mary, it was
inevitable that the virtues encompassed by virginity should come to
include all goodness, virtue and purity. Ambrose gave Mary as his
first example in *De Virginibus ad Marcellinam* (as did Aldhelm in his
catalogues of female virgins in the *De Virginitate* and the *Carmen de
Virginitate*). 'She was', Ambrose wrote, 'a virgin not only in body,
but also in mind'. Then follows, by way of explanation, an account of
her virtues; she was, amongst other things, sincere, humble, prudent,

studious, devoted to good works, prayers, and simple habits. Virginity, therefore, included all these things:

Virgo erat non solum corpore, sed etiam mente, quae nullo doli ambitu sincerum adulteraret affectum; corde humilis, verbis gravis, animi prudens, loquendi parcior, legendi studiosior: non in incerto divitiarum, sed in prece pauperum spem reponens: intenta operi, verecunda sermone, arbitrum mentis solita non hominem, sed Deum quaerere: nullum laedere, bene velle omnibus, assurgere majoribus natu, aequalibus non invidere, fugere jactantiam, rationem sequi, amare virtutem. Quando ista vel vultu laesit parentes? quando dissensit a propinquis? Quando fastidivit humilem? quando derisit debilem? quando vitavit inopem; eos solos solita coetus virorum invisere, quos misericordia non erubesceret, neque praeteriret verecundia? Nihil torvum in oculis, nihil in verbis procax, nihil in actu inverecundum: non gestus fractior, non incessus solutior, non vox petulantior; ut ipsa corporis species simulacrum fuerit mentis, figura probitatis.

She was a virgin not only in body, but also in mind, who stained the sincerity of its disposition by no guile, who was humble in heart, grave in speech, prudent in mind, sparing of words, studious in reading, resting her hope not on uncertain riches, but on the prayer of the poor, intent on work, modest in discourse; wont to seek not man but God as the judge of her thoughts, to injure no one, to have goodwill towards all, to rise up before her elders, not to envy her equals, to avoid boastfulness, to follow reason, to love virtue. When did she pain her parents even by a look? When did she disagree with her neighbours? When did she despise the lowly? [When did she mock the weak?]¹⁴ When did she avoid the needy? Being wont only to go to such gatherings of men as mercy would not blush at, nor modesty pass by. There was nothing gloomy in her eyes, nothing forward in her words, nothing unseemly in her acts, there was not a silly movement, nor unrestrained step, nor was her voice petulant, that the very appearance of her outward being might be the image of her soul, the

representation of what is approved.¹⁵ (*De Virg. ad Marc.* 2.2, §7, PL 16.209; Wace & Schaff X.374-5)

The words and deeds of virgin saints often recall Mary. Agatha, for instance, is like Mary in her humility, and in her reference to herself as God's handmaid:

Ða cwæð se dema . Hwi dest þu ðe sylfe .
ðurh wace þeawas . swilce þu wynn sy .
Agathes andwyrde . Ic eom godes þinen . (LS 8.43-6)

The *Acta* has 'ancilla Christi sum' (§4), recalling Mary's 'ecce ancilla dei' (Luke 1.38).

Thus 'virginity' came to encompass purity or sinlessness of all kinds: all the qualities required of one who wished to lead a holy life. A virgin had not only to control the flesh, be chaste of will, pure of faith, humble and obedient, but to live a life of complete Christian virtue and holiness. This holy life was what virginity came to represent - the fight against sin in all its aspects, not just the fight against sexual temptations and pleasures.

NOTES

1. Tertullian, Cyprian, Jerome, Ambrose and Augustine each wrote a treatise on virginity. Jerome recommended Tertullian, Cyprian and Ambrose in his Letter 22.22. Aldhelm cited Cyprian, Jerome, Ambrose and Augustine in the prose *De Virginitate*, often at length (see Lapidge & Herren 1979, 52). See Unrue 1970 for an outline of some of the principal arguments of these fathers on virginity.
2. The expression almost certainly derives ultimately from St Paul: see Philipians 3.8.

3. Compare Aldhelm's accounts of Saints Cecilia, Eugenia and Agnes in his prose *De Virginitate* (Lapidge & Herren 1979, 107, 110, 112); his account of Eulalia in the *Carmen de Virginitate* (Lapidge & Rosier 1985, 147); and his comments in the latter work (ibid., 105, 108).

4. Roman 'temple virgins like the vestals were forbidden intercourse during their period of office largely because their exalted position gave them political power that might be abused by a lover' (Warner 1976, 48). When they had completed their period in office they were free to marry. Peter Brown comments on vestal virgins at Rome and the virgin priestesses and prophetesses of the classical Greek world:

Though eminent and admired, they were not thought to stand for human nature at its peak. Their virginity did not speak to the community as a whole of a long-lost perfection. It did not represent the primal state of humankind, that could, and should, be recaptured by men quite as much as by women ... The chastity of many virgin priestesses was not a matter of free choice for them. No heroic freedom of the individual will was made plain by their decision not to marry. (1989, 8)

On freely chosen virginity, see pp. 42-43. Ambrose's comments on the vestal virgins may be compared with those of Jerome on the Manichees (Letter 22.38).

5. Jerome wrote: 'Our purpose is not the praise of virginity but its preservation': 'virginitatem non tantum efferimus, sed servamus' (Letter 22.23, Wace & Schaff VI.31, PL 22.409).

6. Compare also ch. 6 (Ehwald, p. 235, Lapidge & Herren, p. 64)

7. On the source of lines 288-97, Clayton writes 'Ælfric now draws on two widely separated passages from Jerome's *Tractatus in Psalmos*, acknowledging the source himself' (1986, 307). On the freely chosen virginity of the Virgin Mary, see Assmann 3.189-204; and on the idea that willing virginity was an offering more pleasing to God, see further Assmann 3.232-37. Dubois cites examples of the idea of voluntary virginity from other works by Ælfric (1943, 176).

8. See above, p. 38; and see further below, pp. 76, 106-07.

9. On this symbolism see further below, pp. 125-32.

10. This probably takes its origin from the use of sexual imagery with reference to faith in the Old Testament, for example 'Committing fornication with strange gods and adoring them' (Judges 2.17). See also Deuteronomy 31.16; Leviticus 17.7; Ezekiel 23.30, and elsewhere. Rowley comments on this imagery (1937, 344-45).

11. cf. above, pp. 29-30.

12. See above, pp. 33-34, note 2.

13. Schillebeeckx 1968, 50-51. Schillebeeckx also points out that it was only in the second half of the fourth century that Mary's virginity came to be recognised almost universally in the Church.

14. Omitted by the translator.

15. Lit: 'virtue, goodness, uprightness'.

CHAPTER FOUR: VIRGINITY AND POWER

Accounts of virgin saints show that the powers these saints revealed were often felt to be connected in some way with their virginity, although it is not always easy to distinguish those powers particularly attributable to their virginity. The various powers associated with saints - healing, prophecy, and all the other miraculous powers which were regarded as evidence of sanctity, and which consequently featured so largely in hagiography - could be ascribed, where the writer felt it appropriate, to the virginity of a virgin. An attempt will be made in this chapter to examine the relationship between virginity and the powers demonstrated by virgin saints: the reasons which enabled Aldhelm to claim:

Virginitas, quae sanctos inclita comit,
Omnia sanctorum transcendens praemia supplet ...
Haec, inquam, virtus caelesti munere pollens.

Virginity, which adorns the saints, excels in providing all the rewards of saints - this virtue (is) rendered powerful by divine favour. (*Carmen de Virginitate*, lines 183-86, Ehwald, p. 369; Lapidge & Rosier 1985, 107)

Some aspects of the relationship between virginity and power require fuller treatment than others. The first two points to be made in this discussion can be treated fairly briefly: virginity could be seen as powerful in itself; and powers could be conferred on the virgin as a reward for effort. However, accounts of virgin saints also illustrate more complex relationships between virginity and power, because they express in various ways what it was to be a virgin. Virginity was a symbol of purity of faith, and many of the

miracles associated with virgin saints depend on their faith. Furthermore, certain phenomena, when associated with virgin saints - their relationship with angels, their powers of prophecy, and miracles surrounding the body of the virgin - reveal the special sanctity of the virgin. These will be the subject of the remainder of the chapter.

First, the virtue of virginity appeared sometimes to be powerful in itself. Aldhelm described how it might be apparent to an eyewitness that the power of virginity was at work: he included in his catalogue of virgins in the prose *De Virginitate* two sisters, Rufina and Secunda, who emerged unscathed from flogging, burning and the torrents of the Tiber:

Unde satrapa tanta rerum prodigia obstupescens scribitur dixisse:
Istae aut magica arte nos superant aut virginitatis in eis sanctitas
regnat.

Whence the governor, astounded at such mighty marvels, is reported to have said: 'Either these (two virgins) conquer us by magic powers, or else the sanctity of virginity reigns in them'. (ch. 51, Ehwald, p. 308; Lapidge & Herren 1979, 119).

In his *Carmen de Virginitate* Aldhelm attributed Daniel's miraculous survival of the various perils to which he was subjected (Daniel 14) to his virginity. The virtue is here personified, as it often is in this work:¹

Virginitas castum sic servat semper amicum
Tetrica contemnens millenis damna periclis.

Thus Virginity always preserves a chaste friend, scorning foul dangers with their thousands of perils. (lines 365-6, Ehwald, p. 368; Lapidge & Rosier 1985, 111)

The power of Æthelthryth's virginity is suggested in a more oblique way in Ælfric's Life of the saint (LS 20). Ælfric wrote that Æthelthryth's miracles reveal ('geswutelīað') her virginity, and make it known ('cyðap'):

[heo] wæs mid twam werum and swaðeah wunode mæden,
swa swa þa wundra geswutelīað þe heo wyrð gelome ...
and twelf gear wunode ungewemmed mæden
on þæs cynincges synscype . swa swa swutele wundra
hyre mæra cyðap . and hire mægðhad gelome. (3-4, 15-17)

Among the miracles associated with Æthelthryth were prophecy: 'heo wearð geuntrumod swa swa heo ær witegode' (50); the miraculous discovery of a stone coffin to replace the wooden one in which she had been buried (73-83); the fact that the wound on her neck from her lanced tumour was found to be healed when her coffin was opened, sixteen years after her death (93); her incorrupt body (107-08); the healing powers of her shroud and first coffin (113-17). The connection between virginity and some of these miracles will be discussed further below. For the moment, it is sufficient to point out that Ælfric's statement that the saint's miracles reveal her virginity implies that Ælfric regarded her virginity as the source of the miracles.

If virginity was a source of power, conversely, the loss of virginity could lead to the loss of powers, as Aldhelm argued happened in the cases of David and Samson:

David quoque opinatissimus regum sub ipso pubertatis tirocinio illibata virginitate praeditus antequam copula matrimonii et conubii nexu nodaretur, nonne argutis fibrarum fidibus limphaticum mitigabat et impensa sospitatis gratia freneticum curavit dira procul tetrorum explosa spirituum vesania? ... Tamen relicto virginitatis statu Urias insons interimitur, Bersabee illegitimo iugalitatis vinculo foederatur et pro hac temeritate expianda caelestis irae mucrone proles primogenita percellitur.

Samson ille Nazareus ab ipsa gracillima cunabulorum aetatula Domino septenis crinibus sacer, antequam fraudulentis Dalilae complexibus caperetur et perfidi pelicatus stupro enerviter deceptus illecebrosis lenocinii nexibus nodaretur, nondum ferro dempta cincinnorum caesarie quantis miraculorum signis et virtutum rumoribus omni saeculo usque ad id tempus inexpertis effulsisse divulgatur!

Licet, inquam, uterque patriarcha, quamdiu aura aetherea et vitali flamine vesceretur, supernae maiestati gratissimus extiterat, ast tamen post carnalis consortii copulam de utroque minora virtutum praeconia crebrescunt.

As for DAVID also, the most illustrious of kings, endowed with a stainless virginity in the boyhood of his youth before he was tied by the bond of matrimony and the shackle of marriage, did he not soothe the frenzied (Saul) with his clear musical strings and cure the (same) madman by bestowing the gift of health, driving far off the dread fury of black spirits? [David fought and killed lions, bears, and the giant Goliath] ... Nonetheless, after he had abandoned the state of virginity, the guiltless Uriah was killed, and David was joined with an illegitimate bond of marriage to Bathsheba; and in order to expiate this rashness, their first offspring was struck down by the sword of heavenly anger.

SAMSON the Nazarene, who from the very tender age of the cradle was sacred to the Lord because of his seven hairs - before he was caught in the fraudulent embraces of Dalila and, weakly deceived by the debauchery of this treacherous concubinage, was entangled in the seductive chains of her allurements - while the mane of his tresses

had not yet been shorn by the knife, with what great miraculous signs never experienced in any age up to that time is he said to have shone forth!

Although, I say, each of these patriarchs was most pleasing to the heavenly majesty for as long as he consumed the air of the atmosphere and the breath of life, nonetheless, after their joining in carnal union, the glory of their virtues slackened and became less. (*De Virginitate* ch. 53, Ehwald, pp. 311-12; Lapidge & Herren 1979, 122-23)

What Aldhelm says illustrates one aspect of the relationship between virginity and power: with the loss of virginity, powers conferred upon the virgin can be lost, as in the case of Samson, or some other punishment can ensue, as happened to David.²

According to Aldhelm, patient perseverance in virginity would earn the virgin God's favour; he wrote: 'cum divina indulgentia concordet humana diligentia': 'let human diligence work together with divine indulgence' (*De Virginitate* ch. 18, Ehwald, p. 247; Lapidge & Herren 1979, 75). Accounts of virgin saints provide examples of the cooperation of 'human diligence and divine indulgence'. Paul the Hermit was sustained in the Egyptian desert by food brought by a bird:

Nonne propter florentis pudicitiae castimoniam finetenus inextricabili repagulo conservatam bis senis temporum lustris id est vicies terna annorum inter capidine bucellam crustulae semiplenam, quam penniger praepes ... ferre promeruit.

Was he not found worthy, because of the stainlessness of his flowering chastity, preserved to the very end with an indissoluble restraint for twice six *lustra* - that is, for an interval of sixty years - to receive a half-mouthful of bread which a feathered bird brought in its

open beak? (*De Virginitate* ch. 28, Ehwald, p. 265; Lapidge & Herren 1979, 87-88)

Agatha's 'character' (her virginity, perhaps), triumphant over the torments inflicted on her, earned her divine protection:

Tum pater omnipotens, devotae virginis altor,
Arcibus aethereis defixit lumina terris
Femineum indolis gaudens spectare triumphum;
Mox dedit auxilium clemens defensor egentum,
Fortior ut fieret truciter torquentibus illam.

The Almighty Father, the Sustainer of the devout [virgin],³ cast down His eyes on earth from celestial regions, rejoicing to behold the triumph of the maiden's character. At once the merciful Protector of the needy gave help to the girl so that she might become stronger than those who were viciously torturing her. (*Carmen de Virginitate* 1761-65, Ehwald, p. 426; Lapidge & Rosier 1985, 142)

Of Thecla Aldhelm wrote:

Virginitatis amor flagrans in corde puellae
Dulcia mundanae spreuit consortia vitae;
In qua fundavit caelestis gratia mentem,
Saecula quam penitus numquam mollire valebant,
Durior ut ferro foret ad tormenta cruenta ...
Tali femineam sontes molimine spinam
Excruciare student, membratim quatenus ossa,
Si fieri posset, vacuarent cruda medullis;
Sed Deus aeterna defendit ab arce puellam,
Ut voti compos flammis evaderet ignis.
Truditur ad rictus virgo laceranda leonum,
Diris ut rodant muliebres morsibus artus;
Bestia sed sacrum non audet carpere corpus
Defensante Deo devotae membra puellae,
Dum tenerae carni non usquam sponte pepercit.

Sic sator electis, cum mundi scammate certant,
Aurea caelestis largitur praemia regni.

The love of virginity which glowed in her heart rejected the sweet unions of worldly life; in this pursuit the favour of heaven strengthened her mind, which the things of the world could not soften at all, so that she was harder than iron when it came to bloody tortures ... Evil men sought to mutilate her female frame on the rack so that, limb by limb, her bloody bones would be emptied of marrow, if that were possible, but God from His eternal citadel protected the virgin so that she, having her prayers answered, would escape the flames of the fire. Then the virgin was thrust towards the jaws of lions to be torn asunder, so that they would gnaw her feminine limbs with ferocious bites. But the beasts did not dare to mangle her holy body, since God was protecting her devout limbs, although they would never spare her tender flesh of their own accord. Thus the Creator bestows the golden rewards of the heavenly kingdom upon the elect when they struggle in the arena of this world. (*Carmen de Virginitate* 1979-2005, Ehwald, p. 435; Lapidge & Rosier 1985, 146-47)

Thecla's diligence in that struggle earns her both God's support and protection on earth, and rewards in heaven.

Ælfric's 'Life of St Cecilia' (LS 34) demonstrates (on a more extensive scale than Aldhelm's accounts in his catalogues of virgins) some of the rewards conferred upon virgins. Cecilia has dedicated her virginity to Christ, and on her wedding night she persuades her husband Valerian to do the same. After Valerian's conversion and baptism an angel appears to them, bearing two crowns from paradise. The crowns are red like roses and white like lilies, and have the miraculous property of smelling like these flowers. The angel tells the pair to keep (or guard, preserve, cherish: 'healdað') them: the

crowns are from paradise, they will not fade, and only those who love chastity can see them:

Healdað þas cynehelmas mid clænre heortan
for þam þe ic hi genam on neorxnewange .
ne hi næfre ne forseariað ne heora swetnysse ne forleosað .
ne heora wlita ne awent to wyrsan hiwe .
ne hi nan man ne gesihð butan se þe clænnysse lufað . (80-84)

Red roses and white lilies are a familiar symbol of the blood of martyrdom and the purity of virginity (see Ambrose's commentary on the Song of Songs, PL 15.1966-67; and Aldhelm, *Carmen de Virginitate* lines 190-200).⁴ In the form of crowns they also symbolise the victory earned by Cecilia and Valerian as virgins and martyrs. They are to be associated also with the everlasting life, for they come from paradise and will never wither. The gift of crowns therefore indicates the special virtue of virgin martyrs and the rewards to be accorded them, who cherish what these flowers represent.

But the crowns have a further function in the story, which depends on Valerian's virginity. Like virginity itself, the crowns are symbols; and like virginity they are symbols which also have powers. Just as the virgin Cecilia has been able to convert her husband, so the crowns have power, too, to convert. The angel tells Valerian that because he loves chastity,⁵ he may ask whatever he wishes of the Saviour:

and þu ualeriane for-ðan-þe ðu lufast clænnysse .
se hælend þe het biddan swa hwilce bene swa þu wille . (85-86)

Valerian asks that his brother Tiburtius may also be saved, and the angel tells him this will be granted. In the morning Tiburtius enters

and is astonished at the fragrance of roses and lilies in winter. He cannot see them, but says it is as if he is renewed by their perfume:

Ic wundrige pearle hu nu on wintres dæge
her lillian blostm oppe rosan bræð .
swa wynsumlice and swa werodlice stincað .
Ðeah þe ic hæfde me on handa þa blostman .
ne mihton hi swa wynsumne wrytbræð macian .
and ic secge to soþan þæt ic swa eom afylled
mid þam swetan bræða . swylce ic sy geedniwod . (103-09)

Valerian explains the significance of this experience for his brother: it is so that he may know whose blood is red in likeness to a rose, and whose body is white with the beauty of a lily (Ælfric does not need to make explicit that the reference is to Christ):

þe com
þæs wynsum bræð to þæt þu wite heonanforð
hwæs blod readaþ on rosan gelicnysse .
and hwæs lichama hwitað on lillian fægernysse . (110-13)

Conversion is often spoken of as a renewal in the New Testament, as in Ephesians 4.22-24 (and compare also Colossians 3.10 and II Corinthians 5.17). One is reminded also of the representation of the Christian life as a new life (Romans 6.4), and the metaphor of conversion as a being born again or anew (for example in John 3.3). Tiburtius's perception of the miraculous scent of roses and lilies emitted by the crowns leads to his spiritual renewal, his conversion; and that in turn leads to the conversion of others through him. The movement of the whole life of Cecilia, and the miracles which take place during its course, tend towards conversion. It is from Cecilia's dedication of her virginity to Christ that the events of the Life receive their

initial impetus. Her virginity is therefore powerful, and its effects far-reaching.

The examples so far have illustrated two aspects of the relationship between virginity and power: virginity could be seen as powerful in itself; and the powers and gifts and miracles of virgins could be regarded as rewards for virginity. On the function of miracles in general, Gregory wrote:

fiunt exteriora miracula ut mentes hominum ad interiora perducatur.

outward miracles are wrought, in order that the minds of men may be brought to inward truths. (*Moralia* 27, §37, PL 76.420; Bliss 1844, III.1.226)

As has already been pointed out, many of the miracles associated with virgin saints were shared by other saints too. However, virginity was regarded as a pinnacle of Christian virtue, and many of the miracles of virgins reveal 'inward truths'⁶ concerning the special virtue of virginity. We can now turn to examples of powers associated with virginity which reveal a more complex relationship between virginity and certain kinds of miracles: those which depend on the virgin's faith; miracles associated with angels; prophecy; and miracles surrounding the body of the virgin.

Faith

Virginity, as we have seen, was a spiritual as well as a physical condition. Among the more important of the things it symbolised was purity of faith (see above, pp. 46-48). Thus in many miracles connected with virgin saints, it is the faith of the virgin which receives particular emphasis: the Christian faith of the virgin, in

conflict with the heathen faith of the persecutor; the virgin's faith in God's power and protection; the faith through which miracles of healing can take place, and through which the virgin earns the power of intercession.⁷

In Aldhelm's account in his *Carmen de Virginitate* of the youths thrown into the furnace because they would not worship the golden image set up by Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 3), virginity preserves the young men from the fiery furnace, while their hearts burn with faith:

Verum virginitas spreuit tormenta rogorum,
Scintillante fide dum fervent corda virorum

[Virginity]⁸ rejected the torments of the furnace while the hearts of these youths burned with glowing faith. (386-88, Ehwald, p. 369; Lapidge & Rosier 1985, 111)

In his prose version, Aldhelm wrote:

Pro inflexibili rigidae mentis constantia angelico fulti suffragio
ambustas malleoli machinas crepitantesque clibanii globos fide invicta
vicerunt.

Supported by angelic assistance because of the inflexible constancy of their fixed resolve, they conquered with their unconquerable faith the scorching engines of incineration and the crackling flames of the furnace. (*De Virginitate* ch. 21, Ehwald, p. 252; Lapidge & Herren 1979, 78)

During Ælfric's 'Life of St Eugenia', the focus alters, without comment, from the saint's virginity to her faith. The bishop Helenus has told Eugenia 'that she had greatly pleased the heavenly king through the virginity which she had chosen, and that she would suffer

severe persecutions for her virginity, and yet be protected by the true lord, who defends his chosen ones':

[He sæde hyre] þæt heo þurh mægðhad mycclum gelicode .
þam heofonlican cyninge . þe heo gecoren hæfde .
and cwæð þæt heo sceolde swiðlice æhtnyssa .
for mægðhade ðrowian . and þeah beon gescyld
þurh þone soðan drihten . þe gescyldt his gecorenan. (LS 2.79-83)

The use of 'gecoren' (80) for the choice of virginity which Eugenia had made, and 'gecorenan' (83), the chosen ones of God, reinforces the sense of a link between her choice of virginity and the fact that she is chosen by God.⁹ This, then, at first, would seem to be another example of perseverance in virginity being rewarded by God's protection. When the time comes, however, for Eugenia to be threatened with torments and death by the emperor, the primary reason for such persecution is her faith:

And eugenian he het his godum geoffrian .
oppe hi man mid wytum welreowlice acwealde. (361-62)

As Helenus had foretold, Eugenia is protected by God. When she is dragged to the temple of Diana, it falls after her prayer (386-88); when she is thrown into the river, weighted with a stone, she sits upon the water - proof that Christ is with her, as he had been with St Peter when he walked upon the sea:

heo sæt up on þam wætere .
þæt ða cristenan toceowan þæt crist wæs mid hyre .
seðe hwilon ær þone halgan petrum .
be ðære handa gelædde . upp on þam heagan brymme .
þæt þæt ða sælican yða hine forswelgan ne mihton. (389-95)

In regard to this miracle of Eugenia's, and the allusion to St Peter (Matthew 14.28-31) in Ælfric's account of it, there is an interesting passage in a letter from Jerome to Eustochium, in which Jerome explains that the gospel miracle revealed the power of God - in which one must have faith:

Cum potentia magis et virtus ostendatur Dei, quando fit aliquid contra naturam. Et ut scias in signorum magnitudine, non naturae mutationem, sed Dei omnipotentiam demonstrari: Qui ambulabat fide, coepit infidelitate mergi, nisi eum manus Domini sublevasset, dicentis: 'Modicae fidei, quare dubitasti?' (Matthew 14.31).

When anything is done against nature, it is a manifestation of God's might and power ... Plainly ... in these great signs our attention is asked not to a change in nature but to the almighty power of God, he who by faith had walked on water began to sink for the want of it and would have done so, had not the Lord lifted him up with the reproving words, 'O thou of little faith wherefore didst thou doubt?' (Letter 108.23 [§24 in Wace & Schaff], PL 22.901; Wace & Schaff VI.209)

The miracles continue: when the emperor orders her to be cast into a burning oven, with hot baths, the fires are quenched and the baths cooled (396-99); when she is led into a dark prison, without food for 20 days, Christ comes, with a heavenly light which illuminates the prison, bringing her a snow-white loaf (400-05). Thus Eugenia has indeed been both persecuted and protected. The difference between Helenus's prediction (she would suffer and be protected because of her virginity) and the events themselves (she suffers and is protected because of her faith) is less a difference, perhaps, than an indication of the identity of virginity and faith.¹⁰

The power of faith in its aspect referred to by Jerome, faith in God's power and protection, is demonstrated in miracles connected with the virgin martyrs Agnes and Agatha. In Ælfric's 'Life of St Agnes' (LS 7), the saint's response to the threats of Sempronius, the judge, who says that, if she wishes to remain a virgin, she must sacrifice with the Vestal virgins to their goddess Vesta,¹¹ or she must become a prostitute, expresses her complete faith in God's power and protection:

Orsorhlīce ic forseo þīne þeowracan .
forþan þe ic geare cann mīnes drihtnes mihte .
Ic truwiġe on him forþan ðe he
Is me trumweall . and unateorigendlic bewerigend .
þæt ic ðinum awyrġedum godum ne ðurfe
geoffrian . ne þurh ælfremede horwan .
æfre beon gefyled . mid þam fulum myltestrum .
Ic hæbbe godes encgel haligne mid me . (124-31)

The miracles which follow, and which preserve her in her nakedness from the very gaze of her tormentors, answer her faith in God's protection: her hair covers her when she is stripped (144-47); in the brothel those who attempt to look at her are dazzled by an angelic light (148-53); God provides her with a shining tunic (154-59).¹² She is unharmed in the midst of the flames prepared for her (221-23). Similarly, when Agatha (LS 8) is threatened by Quintianus, she speaks with a certainty of God's protection; if she is thrown to the beasts they will be tamed; if a fire is prepared for her angels will come with a healing dew, and if she is to be whipped, she says, she has the holy spirit with her:

Gif ðu mid wilddeorum me nu bætān wylt .
hi beoð sona handtame . þurh þæs hælendes naman.
Gif þu me fyr gearcost . me cymð færlīce of heofonum .
halwendlic deaw . þurh drihtnes ænglas.
Gif ðu me swingla behætst . ic hæbbe þone halgan gast .
þurh ðone ic forseo ealle þine swingla . (85-90)

She is justified when her wounds are healed and her breast is restored in prison by St Peter (131-46).

The healing miracle which takes place at the opening of Ælfric's 'Life of St Lucy' (LS 9) exemplifies another aspect of the primacy and power of a virgin's faith. Lucy's story begins at the tomb of St Agatha, in the city of Catania, where the miracle will take place. Lucy is visiting the tomb of the saint with her mother, Eutychia, who has for four years been suffering from an issue of blood which no physician has been able to cure (5-9). It happens that the gospel reading during mass tells the story of the woman suffering from an issue of blood who was healed when she touched the robe of Christ (lines 10-13; see Matthew 9.20-22; Mark 5.25-34; Luke 8.43-48). Ælfric does not continue the story as far as Christ's words to the woman, 'thy faith hath made thee whole', but the parallel with the story he is telling is plain, for Lucy expresses her faith that her mother will be healed if she touches Agatha's tomb (as the woman of the Gospel story believed that she would be healed if she touched Christ's robe):

Gif þu gelyfst modor . þysum mæran godspelle.
gelyf þæt agathes geearnode æt criste .
gehrepa hire byrigene . and þu bist sona hal. (15-19)

But the miracle does not simply occur when Eutychia touches the tomb. Instead, while the two prolong their prayers, Lucy falls asleep. Agatha appears to her in a dream, and addresses her as 'my sister Lucy, true virgin of God' (26). She tells Lucy that she does not need Agatha's help: Lucy herself can grant what she asks from Agatha; Lucy's own faith has helped her mother (28), who has been healed by Christ:

Min swustor lucia . soð godes mæden
hwi bitst þu æt me þæs þe ðu miht sylf getiðian
þinre meder geheolp þin halga geleafa .
and efne heo is gehæled . halwendlice ðurh crist. (26-29)

Agatha also predicts how, as this city has been honoured through her, 'by Christ's favour' (as Skeat translates 'fram criste', 30), Syracuse will be adorned through Lucy because she has prepared a pleasant dwelling for Christ in her pure virginity:

and swa swa þeos burh is gemærsod þurh me . fram criste .
swa bið siracusa burh . þurh þe gewlitegod .
forðan þe þu gearcodeð criste . on þinum clænan mægðhade.
wynsume wununge. and ða awoc lucia. (30-33)¹³

The power and the consequences, both for her mother and for the city, of Lucy's faith and her virginity are clear from Agatha's speech; and at the end of the Life, in her address to the people of Syracuse before she is martyred, Lucy is able to say, echoing Agatha's words (lines 30 ff), that she, like Agatha, has been granted the power to intercede on behalf of those who accept the faith:

Swa swa seo catanenscisce burh binnan hire weallum
hæfð minre swyster agathen . miccle foreþingunga .
swa ic eom forgifen . fram þam ælmihtigan gode

nu pyssere byrig . siracusanan .
eow to geþingienne . gif ge foð to geleafan. (134-38)

Angels

Some of the examples discussed so far reflect the prominence with which angels figure in these Lives. Angelic protection is often seen to be afforded to virgins.¹⁴ Agnes is fearless when she is threatened with torments, saying 'ic hæbbe godes encgel haligne mid me' (LS 7.131: see p. 76 above). In the brothel, an angel does indeed dazzle those who attempt to look on her or touch her (148-52: see p. 76). Agnes says later that God 'asende me his encgel. þe minne lichaman geheold . seþe wæs fram cyld-cradole criste gehalgod' (187-88). Angels are instrumental throughout the 'Life of St Cecilia', beginning with Cecilia's warning to her husband on their wedding night:

Ic hæbbe godes encgel þe gehylt me on lufe¹⁵
and gif þu wylt me gewemman . he went sona to ðe .
and mid gramum þe slihð þæt þu sona ne leofast. (LS 34.32-4)

There were, as we shall see, felt to be particular reasons for the existence of a special relationship between virgin saints and angels. However, before these are discussed, it may be useful to state briefly the basis for them in some of the prevailing beliefs concerning the relationship between men and angels in general.

Augustine had discussed angels at length in the *City of God* and elsewhere. Peter Brown summarises:

Since the Fall of Adam, the human race had always been divided into two great 'cities', *civitates*; that is, into two great pyramids of loyalty. The one 'city' served God along with His loyal angels; the

other served the rebel angels, the Devil and his demons. (Brown 1967, 314)¹⁶

Augustine placed great emphasis on the idea of the righteous man's fellowship with God's loyal angels. He wrote

Sic sunt ergo angeli nostri, qui sunt angeli Dei, quem ad modum Christus Dei Christus est noster. Dei sunt, quia Deum non reliquerunt; nostri sunt, quia suos cives nos habere coeperunt. Dixit autem Dominus Iesus: 'Videte ne contemnatis unum de pusillis istis. Dico enim vobis quia angeli eorum in caelis semper vident faciem patris mei, qui in caelis est' (Matthew 18.10).

Those angels of God are *our* angels in the same way as the Christ of God is *our* Christ. They are God's angels because they have not abandoned God; they are our angels because they have begun to have us as their fellow citizens. And the Lord Jesus said, 'Take care not to despise any of these little ones; for I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father who is in heaven'. (*De Civ. Dei* 22.29, Green 1972, 356-8; Knowles 1972, 1082)

Those who loved and obeyed God could look forward to citizenship in God's city:

Angeli sancti ... nos ad eius societatem invitaverunt civesque suos in illa esse voluerunt.

Holy angels ... have invited us into the society of that City, and have desired us to become their fellow-citizens in it. (10.25, Wiesen 1968, 364; Knowles 1972, 408)

The attainment of such fellowship, however, required the rejection of 'a taste for earthly things', and efforts of will and faith. This would lead also to likeness to the angels:

per bonae voluntatis similitudinem, qua cum illis sumus et cum illis vivimus et cum illis Deum quem colunt colimus ... Non enim quia in terra condicione carnis habitamus, sed si inmunditia cordis terrena

sapimus, non eis iungimur. Cum vero sanamur, ut quales ipsi sunt simus, fide illis interim propinquamus.

for it is by such goodness that we share with them our being, our life and our worship of the God whom they worship ... If we are not united with them, it is not because we dwell on earth under the conditions of fleshly existence; it is because in the impurity of our heart we have a taste for earthly things. When we are restored to health and so become like the angels, we come near to them even now by faith. (8.25, Wiesen 1968, 128; Knowles 1972, 337-38)

Ælfric followed a rather different route from Augustine's, to reach the same conclusion, that men and angels were fellow citizens. Basing himself here on Gregory,¹⁷ Ælfric wrote that before the birth of Christ, mankind had had discord, 'ungeþwærnyss', with the angels; estranged from God through sins, man had also been estranged from his angels. It was Christ's incarnation which altered the relationship, so that angels now honoured men as their companions. Men were now accounted citizens of God, and like to angels:

Eornostlice mancynn hæfde ungeþwærnysse to englum ær Drihtnes acennednyss; forðan ðe we wæron þurh synna ælfremede fram Gode; þa wurde we eac ælfremede fram his englum getealde: ac siððan se heofenlica Cyning urne eorðlican lichaman underfeng, siððan gecyrdon his englas to ure sibbe; and ða ðe hi ærðan untrume¹⁸ forsawon, þa hi wurðiað nu him to geferum. Nu we sind getealde Godes ceaster-gewaran, and englum gelice. ('Sermo de Natale Domini', Thorpe no. 2, CH I.36-38)

In a homily for Easter Sunday Ælfric commented on the angel which appeared to the women at Christ's tomb (Mark 16.5-6). Again, Ælfric was following Gregory's exposition of the gospel text: 'nu wylle we eow gereccan þæs dægþerlican godspelles traht, æfter ðæs

halgan papan Gregories trahtnunge'.¹⁹ This passage expresses several important beliefs concerning angels: Ælfric refers to the belief that men would make up the numbers in heaven lost by the fall of the angels;²⁰ he also speaks of those who should fear angels - those who are beset with fleshly lusts - and those who need not fear, because they see their companions:

[Þæs Hælendes] ærist wæs þæra engla bliss, forðon ðe God gefylð heora getel, þonne he us to heofonum gebrincð. Se engel gehyrte ða wif, þus cweðende, 'Ne beo ge afyrhte:' swilce he swa cwæde, Forhtian ða ðe ne lufiað engla tocyme; beon ða ofdrædde þa þe sint ofsette mid flæsclicum lustum, and nabbað nænne hiht to engla werode. Hwi forhtige ge, ge ðe geseoð eowre geferan? ('Dominica S. Pascae', Thorpe no. 15, CH I.222)

In Ælfric's 'Life of St Cecilia', Valerian is afraid when an angel first appears to him, before he has been baptised (LS 34.58). After his baptism he sees Cecilia's angel, and is no longer afraid (72 ff.)

Companionship with the good angels was to be shared by all who lived in righteousness and faith; but it was in the ascetic life, in which the individual strove for Christian perfection, that such fellowship was thought to be most often seen. We see the influence of the idea in English ascetic life and thought. When Bede had recounted, for example, how St Cuthbert had been brought food by an angel, he commented:

Crescentibus autem uirtutibus, creuit et gratia coelestis. Denique sepius ex eo tempore angelos uidere et alloqui, sed et esuriens cibis speciali sibi munere a Domino praeparatis meruit refici.

As his virtues grew so also grew the heavenly grace. For from that time he was very often held worthy to see and talk with angels, and

when hungry, to be refreshed by food prepared for him by the Lord as a special gift. (ch. 7, Colgrave 1940, 178-79)²¹

The monastic life was often regarded as a *vita angelica*, an anticipation of the angelic life in heaven (Bugge 1976, 338; Leclercq 1978, 71; for a more detailed study, with bibliography, see Frank, 1964). Peter Brown writes of the early Christian ascetic:

The holy man lived a life that was an imitation of the angels. He gained his powers from retiring to the desert, that is, to the antithesis of human life, where Christ had been served by the angels, and where the angels had invested John the Baptist with the first monk's cloak. (1982, 181)

When Euphrosyne, in the Old English version of her 'Life', observed the way of life of the monks of the monastery near her home, she thought:

Eadige synd þas weras þe on þisse worulde syndon englum gelice . and purh þæt begitað þæt ece lif. (LS 33, 45-47)²²

The single condition which could, through effort, obedience and sacrifice, lead most directly to this angelic state they found expressed in some words spoken by Christ:

For in the resurrection they shall neither marry, nor be given in marriage; but shall be as the angels of God in heaven.
(Matthew 22.30)

But they that shall be accounted worthy of that world, and of the resurrection from the dead, shall neither be married, nor take wives. Neither can they die any more, for they are equal to angels, and are the children of God, since they are the children of the resurrection.
(Luke 20.35-36)

It was in the virgin above all that the angelic life was manifested, even on earth: 'Chastity has made even angels. He who has preserved it is an angel' ('Castitas etiam angelos fecit. Qui eam servit, angelus est'; Ambrose, *De Virg. ad Marc.* 1.8.52, Wace & Schaff X.371; PL 16.209).²³ It was also through virginity that the angelic life could be recovered, even on earth. Ambrose wrote:

In virginibus sacris angelorum vitam videmus in terris, quam in paradiso quondam amisseramus.

In holy virgins we see on earth the life of the angels we lost in paradise. (*De Institutione Virginis*, 17.104, PL 16.345 (331 in 1880 edition); see Bugge 1976, 338)

Aldhelm wrote how the 'violence' of thwarting nature led to the 'seizing' during this life of the angelic life of the kingdom of heaven:

Futura angelicae vitae celsitudo ab illaesae virginitatis sectatoribus ac sectatricibus ... iam quodammodo violenter anticipatur ... Liqueat nempe, quod artissima sit violentia et difficillima rerum condicio, ut homo ... spretis naturae legibus individuus angelicae castitatis comes existere cogatur et, antequam suprema resurrectionis gloria horrendae mortis imperium in tetra tartara trudatur et 'corruptibile hoc induat incorruptionem' (I Corinthians 15.53), mirum in modum terreni caelibes superni caelites fieri compellantur. Unde dominus noster ... : 'In resurrectione', inquit, 'non nubent neque nubentur, sed erunt sicut angeli in caelo' (Matthew 22.30).

The future eminence of the angelic life is now in a certain sense seized by violence beforehand²⁴ by the male and female followers of intact virginity ... for it is assuredly clear - because the violence is of the strictest and the way of life most difficult - the man ... if he spurns the laws of nature, is bound to exist as an inseparable fellow of angelic chastity, and, before the dominion of horrendous death is driven into black hell by the supreme glory of the

resurrection and 'this corruptible (body) puts on incorruptibility', earthly celibates are compelled in a wonderful manner to become heavenly citizens. Whence our Lord ...: 'In the resurrection they shall neither marry nor be married, but shall be as the angels of God in heaven'. (*De Virginitate* ch. 18, Ehwald, pp. 246-47; Lapidge & Herren 1979, 74)

The identification of the virgin life with the angelic life seems to have been well-established, for Jerome mentioned it in passing when he wrote to Eustochium that virginity was not a commandment:

Durissimum erat contra naturam cogere, Angelorumque vitam ab hominibus extorquere.

It would have been a hard enactment to compel opposition to nature and to extort from men the angelic life. (Letter 22.20, PL 22.407; Wace & Schaff VI.30)²⁵

He also wrote to Laeta, advising her on how to raise her daughter as a virgin for Christ:

Nutriatur in monasterio, sit inter Virginum choros ... nesciat saeculum, vivat Angelice, sit in carne sine carne.

Let her be brought up in a monastery, let her be one amid companies of virgins ... let her be ignorant of the world, let her live the angelic life, while in the flesh let her be without the flesh. (Letter 107.13, PL 22.877; Wace & Schaff VI.194)

Jerome explained in another letter to Eustochium the meaning of the 'likeness to angels' which was promised. He quoted Matthew 22.29-30, and wrote:

Ubi dicitur, non nubent, neque nubentur, sexuum diversitas demonstratur ... Quod si opposueris, quomodo ergo erimus similes Angelorum, cum inter Angelos, non sit masculus et femina? Breviter ausculta; Non substantiam nobis Angelorum, sed conversationem et

beatitudinem Dominus repromittit. Quomodo et Joannes Baptista antequam decollaretur, Angelus appellatus est (Luke 7.27); et omnes Sancti ac Virgines Dei, etiam in isto saeculo vitam in se exprimunt Angelorum. Quando enim dicitur: 'Eritis similes Angelorum', similitudo promittitur, non natura mutatur.

When it is said that they neither marry nor are given in marriage, the distinction of sex is shown to persist ... But if you cavil at this and say, how shall we in that case be like the angels with whom there is neither male nor female, hear my answer in brief as follows: What the Lord promises to us is not the nature of angels but their mode of life and their bliss. And therefore John the Baptist is called an angel even before he is beheaded, and all God's holy men and virgins manifest in themselves even in this world the life of angels. When it is said 'ye shall be like the angels', likeness only is promised and not a change of nature. (Letter 108.23, PL 22.900; Wace & Schaff VI.208)

A passage from St Augustine which has been quoted in Chapter 1, in connection with the fall of man (above, p. 14), is also relevant in this context:

Hominem vero, cuius naturam quodam modo mediam inter angelos bestiasque condebat ut, si Creatori suo tamquam vero domino subditus praeceptum eius pia oboedientia custodiret, in consortium transiret angelicum, sine morte media beatam immortalitatem absque ullo termino consecutus.

[God] created man's nature to be midway, so to speak, between angels and beasts in such a way that, if he should remain in subjection to his creator as his true lord and with dutiful obedience keep his commandment, he was to pass into the company of the angels, obtaining with no intervening death a blissful immortality that has no limit. (*De Civ. Dei* 12.22, Levine 1966, 110-11)

It was, as we have seen, through virginity that the relationship with God which had been damaged by the fall could be restored.

The presence and intervention of angels during the lives of virgin saints, to provide comfort, sustenance and protection, bore witness to the angelic likeness which virgins had attained. The companionship of angels was manifested also at and after their deaths. Angels attend Agatha's burial and provide an epitaph for her (LS 8.109-206). The miracles in which angels descended to take the bodies of saints at death to their reward also confirmed the promise of the angelic life to come; for example, Rufina and Secunda (see above, p. 64) were executed:

angelicis evectae catervis cum vexillo virginitatis ad caeli sidera scandunt.

borne aloft by angelic hosts, they ascended (to) the stars of heaven with the banner of their virginity. (Aldhelm, *De Virginitate* ch. 51, Ehwald, p. 308; Lapidge & Herren 1979, 119)

After the execution of St Margaret, another virgin martyr, angels came and blessed her body and took her head, and singing praises to God they placed it in paradise:

ƿider coman ƿa ƿusend engla ofer ƿære halgan margaretan lichaman 7 gebletsodon hine. Ða coman twelf englas 7 genaman hire heafod on hira fædmum 7 hi sungon. 7 cwædon. Ðu halga ƿu halga ƿu halga. drihten god weoroda wuldor kynincg. fulle syndon heofonas 7 eorƿan ƿines wuldres. 7 ƿus singende hi hit gesætton on neorxna wonge. (Cockayne 1861, 48)²⁶

Ælfric's 'Life of St Cecilia' shows, however, that the miracle was not confined to virgins, and that angelic intervention could occur at the

death of other saints: The heathen Maximus tells the Christians who are about to die that he would believe what they say about their faith 'gif ic wiste to gewissan þæt eowre word wæron soþe' (LS 34.237). He is converted when he sees the miracle which takes place on the death of the martyrs; and as he recounts, weeping, what he has seen, many of the heathen are also converted:

Ic geseah soðlice mid þam þe hi ofslagene wurdon .
godes englas scinende on sunnan gelicnysse
fleogende him to . and underfengon heora sawla .
and þa sawla ic geseah swiðe wlitig faran
forð mid þam englum on heora fliðerum to heofonum.
þa þa maximus sæde swa soðlice ðas word
weopendum eagum . þe gewendon þa hæþenan
manega to geleafan fram heora leasum godum. (LS 34.269-76)

Prophecy

The power of prophecy is conferred on virgins as it is on other saints. 'Prophecy is so called, not because it predicts the future, but because it reveals what is hidden', ('recte prophetia dicitur, non quia praedicat ventura, sed quia prodit occulta').²⁷ Saints are often shown to know and reveal what was hidden from others, as well as to have been able to predict future events (such as their own deaths). In the same way as virgins were regarded as especially worthy of companionship with and likeness to angels, it appears that they were often thought to merit above others the gift of prophecy. Again, it will be useful to look briefly at ideas concerning prophecy in general before the special situation of virgins is examined.

The power of prophecy bestowed upon saints is often mediated through angels. Angels have knowledge far beyond man, because they contemplate God, the source of knowledge:

Nos et loco circumscribimur et caecitatis ignorantia coartamur; angelorum uero spiritus loco quidem circumscripti sunt sed tamen eorum scientiae longe super nos incomparabiliter dilatantur. Interius quippe exteriusque sciendo distenti sunt quia ipsum fontem scientiae contemplantur.

We are both circumscribed by space, and straitened by the blindness of ignorance; but the spirits of Angels are indeed bounded by space, yet their knowledge extends far above us beyond comparison; for they expand by external and internal knowing, since they contemplate the very source of knowledge itself. (Gregory, *Moralia* 2, 93, CCSL 143.61; Bliss 1844, I.70)

Angels communicate their knowledge to prophets:

Voluntatem Dei prophetarum sensibus innotescunt, atque eos ad sublimia sublevant, et quaeque in rebus futura sint in causis originalibus praesentia demonstrant.

They make known the will of God to the senses of the Prophets, and raise them up to sublime thoughts, and whatever events are still future they set forth as present in their original cause. (*Moralia* 28, 99, PL 76. 451; Bliss 1844, III.266)

Loquuntur eis [= animis sanctis] quoque angeli Dei, qui semper vident faciem Patris (Matthew 18.10) voluntatemque eius quibus oportet adnuntiant.

The angels of God also speak to them [holy souls], the angels who 'always see the face of the Father', and announce his will to those who are fit to know it. (Augustine, *De Civ. Dei* 11.4, Wiesen 1968, 434; Knowles 1972, 432)

The power of prophecy could also be conferred upon those who were 'fit to know', directly, without the mediation of angels:

Sapientia . . . in animas sanctas etiam se transfert, amicos Dei et prophetas constituit eisque opera sua sine strepitu intus enarrat.

Wisdom passes also into holy souls and makes them friends of God and prophets, and tells them, inwardly and soundlessly, the story of God's work. (Augustine, *De Civ. Dei* 11.4, Wiesen 1968, 434; Knowles 1972, 432)

Wisdom was one of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit (see Isaiah 11.2), and where Augustine speaks of Wisdom, Gregory speaks of the Holy Spirit: 'Non propheta, sed Spiritus Sanctus loquitur per prophetam': 'It is not the prophet who speaks, but the Holy Spirit speaks through the prophet' (*Hom. in Ez.* 1.2.8, PL 76.799; Dudden 1905, II.355).

Gregory points out that the true prophet, however, understands what the Spirit shows or tells him:

Cum enim aliquid ostenditur uel auditur, si intellectus non tribuitur, prophetia minime est.

For when anything is shown or heard, if the understanding of it be not bestowed, it is little of prophecy. (*Moralia* 11.31, CCSL 143A.604; Bliss 1844, II.22)

With a slightly different emphasis, one which indicated the closeness to God of the holy person, Gregory cited St Paul as the authority as to why a holy man knows the secrets of God:

Gregorius: Quare diuinitatis secreta non nosset, qui diuinitatis praecepta seruaret, cum scriptum sit: 'Qui adhaeret Domino, unus spiritus est' (I Corinthians 6.17)?

Gregory: Why should he not know the secrets of God, who kept the commandments of God: when as the scripture saith: 'He that cleaveth

unto our Lord, is one spirit with him'? (*Dialogues* 2.16.3, SC 260.186; Gardner 1911, 76-77).

As with other gifts and powers, it was most often those who led an ascetic life, who were 'fit to know'. Peter Brown writes of desert ascetics, whose power depended on a freedom to speak to God:

[The power of the holy men, the ascetics] was gained in the desert, beyond human sight, and depended upon a freedom to speak to God, the exact extent of which lay beyond human power to gauge. (1982, 184)

Gregory wrote of the effects of ascetic practices:

Sancti enim viri quanto magis se exterius despiciendo deficiunt, tanto amplius interius revelationum contemplatione pascuntur.

The more holy men abase themselves outwardly with contempt, the more abundantly are they supported within with the contemplation of revelations. (*Moralia* 30, §64. PL 76.559; Bliss 1844, III.408)

Bede described the ascetic saint Cuthbert's skills (prophetic, in that they revealed what was hidden: see above, p. 88), which were evident to those whom Cuthbert taught:

Porro Cuthberto tanta erat docendi peritia, tantus amor persuadendi quae coeperat, tale uultus angelici lumen, ut nullus praesentium, latebras ei sui cordis celare praesumeret, omnes palam quae gesserant confitendo proferrent, quia nimirum haec eadem illum latere nullomodo putabant.

So great was Cuthbert's skill in teaching, so great his love of driving home what he had begun to teach, so bright the light of his angelic countenance, that none of those present would presume to hide from him the secrets of his heart, but they all made open confession of what they had done, because they thought that these things could certainly never be hidden from him. (ch. 9, Colgrave 1940, 186-87)

Colgrave comments that in Cuthbert's case, as with those of Antony and Benedict and others (Macarius of Egypt, Martin and Columba), 'the gift of prophecy was a sign of increasing spiritual power' (1940, 321).

What made the virgin especially worthy of these gifts? On the simplest level, prophecy could be seen as a straightforward reward for virginity, as were other gifts and powers. Aldhelm commented on Daniel's prophetic powers:

Cui pro vicissitudine castitatis repensanda prae ceteris mortalibus
abditā pateſcunt et miſticis ſacramentorum operculis clauſa caelitus
reſerantur.

To him above other mortals, as a reward in exchange for chastity, hidden things lie open and things closed in the mystical coverings of the sacrament are divinely unlocked. (Aldhelm, *De Virginitate* ch. 21, Ehwald, p. 251; Lapidge & Herren 1979, 77)

A second reason - which has partly already been anticipated - may be found in the companionship with, and likeness to angels, which virgins were shown to have attained already in this life. In Ælfric's 'Life of St Cecilia', Cecilia expounds Christian doctrine to Tiburtius (LS 34.157-70). Tiburtius falls at her knees, frightened (171) - rather as Valerian had done before the angel which appeared to him before his baptism (58) - and says:

Ne þincð me þæt þu ſpræce mid menniſcre ſpræce .

ac ſwilce godes engel ſylf ſpræce þurh þe .

(173-74)

According to Aldhelm, the gift of prophecy was bestowed upon John, a hermit of the Egyptian desert, because of his devotion to the ascetic - and hence angelic - life, and continued preservation of his virginity during his last 50 years, till the age of 90:

Idcirco pro adeptae integritatis clamide, qua angelicae puritatis lineamento velut domestica soliditate adsciscebatur, futura profetiae divinationis oracula, quae reliquos latuerunt mortales, praesago afflatus spiritu expertus est.

Therefore, because of the cloak of his acquired integrity, whereby he was assimilated to the form of angelic purity as if by the family solidarity of a household, he experienced the prophetic spirit of inspiration, the future declarations of presentient divination which were hidden from other mortals. (*De Virginitate* ch. 29, Ehwald, p. 268, Lapidge & Herren 1979, 89)²⁸

Finally, there seems to have been a quality of holiness and blessedness in the virgin which allowed a special closeness to God. This may be compared with Gregory above, and his use of I Corinthians 6.17 (above, p. 90). In the Acts of Paul and Thecla, Paul preaches a sermon in the form of blessings, through which Thecla is converted.²⁹ One of these states: 'Blessed are the continent, for to them will God speak' (ch. 5, Hennecke 1963, II.354; cf. James 1953, 273). There is, indeed, throughout these Acts, a special emphasis on 'continence' (virginity or chastity) and wisdom (Hennecke II.326 & 330). Virginity of the flesh, we have seen, represented spiritual purity, and in the virgin was manifested the supremacy of the spirit over the flesh. A virgin was not weighed down by the flesh, and this seems to have made him or her especially receptive to spiritual gifts.³⁰

The body of the virgin

Some of the common manifestations of the power of saints suggest a preoccupation, even obsession, with the body. In the stories of martyrs, for example, miracles frequently take place after an ingenious variety of tortures, often sadistic, have been inflicted on

their bodies. This preoccupation might appear to run counter to the spiritual intent of hagiography, and, in the case of virgin saints, to contradict the emphasis on the spiritual aspects of virginity which has been discussed in the previous chapter. It may be argued that saints' lives were popular literature, and were meant to entertain as well as instruct; and that although the purpose of hagiography was ultimately instructive, such episodes may reflect a popular taste for violence. However, although such an argument could be applied to some of the more extravagant Latin Lives, it does not apply to the Lives which are the subject of this study. In these, there are sounder reasons for the preoccupation with the body, and the miracles related to it. Such miracles reveal, in Gregory's phrase, some 'inward truths' (see above, p. 72) about virginity. The discussion here of miracles associated with the bodies of virgins will begin with i) a type of miracle which was seen as being directly correlated with virginity; this will be followed by an examination of ii) the idea of the holiness of the virgin's body; and iii) the significance of the miraculous restoration during life, and incorruption after death, of the bodies of virgins.

i) The most obvious characteristic of virginity was the overcoming of the temptation of lust. There is one common hagiographic miracle which was sometimes thought to represent the virgin's inner resistance to the fires of lust, kindled by the devil. Gregory makes clear, the one becomes a symbol of the other. Gregory wrote of the youths in the fiery furnace:

cum carnem restringimus, ipsis abstinentiae nostrae ictibus non aërem,
sed immundos spiritus verberamus; et cum hoc quod est intra nos

subjicimus; extra positis adversariis pugnos damus. Hinc est quod cum rex Babylonis succendi fornacem jubet, naphthae, stuppae, picis et malleoli ministrari congeriem praecepit; sed tamen abstinentes pueros hoc igne minime consumit, quia antiquus hostis licet innumeras ciborum concupiscentias nostris obtutibus opponat, quibus libidinis ignis crescat, bonis tamen mentibus superni Spiritus gratia insibilat, ut a carnalis concupiscentiae aestibus illaesae perdurent, ut etsi usque ad tentationem cordis flamma ardeat, usque ad consensum tamen tentatio non exurat.

When we restrain the flesh, we beat with these blows of our abstinence not the air, but unclean spirits; and when we subject that which is within us, we inflict blows on adversaries set without. Hence is it that when the king of Babylon orders the furnace to be kindled, he commands a heap of bitumen, tow, pitch, and firebrands to be furnished. But yet he consumes not in the fire the abstinent youths; because, though the ancient enemy presents to our view innumerable desires of dainties, to increase the fire of lust, yet the grace of the Holy Spirit breathes into holy minds, in order that they may remain uninjured by the heats of carnal concupiscence: so that though the flame may burn so far as to tempt the heart, yet the temptation may not blaze forth as far as to consent. (*Moralia* 30, §59, PL 76.556; Bliss 1844, III.405)

In his Prose *Life of St Cuthbert*, Bede cited two miracles involving the quenching of flames by the saint: one was a 'phantom fire', which Cuthbert (as Benedict had before him in a similar miracle) recognised as the devil's work; the other was a real fire, which Cuthbert extinguished with the help of prayer. Bede commented:

Nec mirandum perfectos et fideliter Deo seruientes uiros tantam contra uim flammaram accipere potestatem, qui cotidiana uirtutum industria et incentiua suae carnis edomare, et 'omnia tela nequissimi ignea' norunt 'extinguere' (Ephesians 6.16). Quibus aptissime congruit illud

propheticum, 'Cum transieris per ignem non combureris, et flamma non ardebit in te' (Isaiah 43.2).

Nor is it to be wondered at that such perfect men who served God faithfully, received great power against the strength of flames, when, by daily practice of virtue, they learned both to overcome the lusts of the flesh and to 'quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one'. Then indeed the prophecy most aptly fits: 'When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned neither shall the flame kindle upon thee'. (ch. 14, Colgrave 1940, 202-03).

The power over external fires here seems to be a consequence of the saints' ability to quench the inner fires of lust.

Anson compares St Eugenia's endurance of a 'trial by fire' with the destruction of the house of Melanthia (an unchaste woman) by a fire from heaven, and comments: 'Clearly, the tolerance of fire signals sexual chastity, nor is this uncommon in legends' (1974, 28). The motif is indeed a common one: Juliana is preserved from flames by an angel (see Woolf 1966, 47-48). Lucy is unafraid and unharmed in the midst of flames (LS 9.119-21). The fire kindled for Agnes is parted, leaving the saint untouched, and destroying those who had kindled it (LS 7.221-23).³¹ Agatha is confident that any fire prepared for her will be quenched by a healing dew brought by God's angel (LS 8.87-88); Agatha is not subjected to flames herself, but on the anniversary of her martyrdom, her intercession causes her veil to quench the fires of Etna and save the city (220-36). In all these cases, the saints concerned have chosen virginity and rejected their suitors; but although the quenching of the flames of lust (by which they appear never to have been touched) is necessarily a part of their sanctity, and the idea may well have lain behind the miracle in these

cases, it should be observed that the connection between the resistance to the flames of lust and to real flames is not made explicitly as it is in Gregory and Bede. Furthermore, the miracle in which the virgin is protected from flames generally forms part of a series in which the saint is preserved from a variety of torments and assaults. Thus, although the metaphor adopted by Gregory and Bede should be borne in mind, the impression which predominates in these miracles is that the pure and consecrated body of the virgin is preserved unharmed, while those who attempt to violate it are destroyed. Thus it is to the idea of the holiness of the virgin's body that we must now turn.

11) St Paul wrote: 'Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you?³² But if any man violate the temple of God: him shall God destroy. For the temple of God is holy, which you are' (I Corinthians 3.16-17). In his homily for Palm Sunday Ælfric wrote, expanding these words of St Paul,³³ 'we are a temple and vessel of the Holy Spirit, if we guard ourselves against foul sins', and he went on to quote from the next verse Paul's terrible warning to those who violated this temple. Ælfric added that those who are not the temple of God are the temple of the devil:

we beoð tempel and fætels þæs Halgan Gastes, gif we us wið fule leahtras gescyldað: be ðam cwæð se ylca apostol swiðe egeslice, 'Se ðe gewemð Godes tempel, God hine forðeð.' Se ðe ne bið Godes tempel, he bið deofles tempel. ('In Dominica Palmarum', Thorpe no. 14, CH I.210-212)

Ælfric, like St Paul, was speaking of all men.³⁴ But a special application of the idea of the body as temple of the Holy Spirit was

made in the case of virgins. This may be compared with one of the list of blessings spoken by St Paul in the Acts of Paul and Thecla: 'Blessed are they who have kept the flesh pure [that keep the flesh chaste: James], for they shall become the temple of God' (ch. 5, Hennecke 1963, II.354; James 1953, 273).³⁵ Aldhelm, writing in this tradition, made use of the idea in his *Carmen de Virginitate*:

Virginitas castam servans sine crimine carnem
Cetera virtutum vincit praeconia laude;
Spiritus altithroni templum sibi vindicat almus,
Taliter immunis flagrat si corde voluntas,
Sanctus apostolicae cecinit dum sermo loquelae:
'Nescitis, quod fana Dei sint ilia vestra?
Spiritus in vobis habitat iam iure Tonantis!'
Quae temerare nefas est et maculare piaclo.

Virginity, which preserves chaste flesh without fault, defeats all other celebrations of virtue in glory. The bountiful spirit of the high-throned God claims a temple for itself if the pure will is thus aroused in the heart, as the blessed speech of apostolic words announces: 'Know you, that your loins are the temples of God. The spirit of the Thunderer now rightly dwells in you'. It is unnatural to stain or pollute (this temple) by sin. (lines 145-52, Ehwald, p. 359, Lapidge & Rosier 1985, 106).

Perhaps Aldhelm's startling paraphrase of St Paul's words ('ilia', 'loins', 150) reflects the special application of the words to the context of virginity.

The idea that the virgin's body was the temple of God can be found elsewhere. In a letter (dated 745 or 746) to Æthelbald of Mercia Boniface warned him of the magnitude of the crime of

fornication with virgins of Christ, and reminded him of St Paul's words:

Ut verbi gratia dicamus, cuius vindictae reus sit puer apud dominum suum, qui uxorem domini sui adulterio violaverit: quanto magis ille, qui sponsam Christi, creatoris caeli et terrae, putredine suae libidinis conmaculaverit; dicente beato Paulo apostolo: 'An nescitis, quia corpora vestra templa sunt spiritus sancti' et alibi: 'Nescitis, quia templum Dei estis, et spiritus Dei habitat in vobis? Si quis autem templum Dei violaverit, disperdet illum Deus: templum Dei sanctum est, quod estis vos'.

Let us put the matter in this way: if a slave is guilty of a heinous crime against his master, if he commits adultery with his lord's wife, how much greater is the crime of the man who besmirches with his lust the spouse of Christ, Creator of heaven and earth? St Paul says: 'Do you not know that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost?'. And in another place: 'Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the spirit of God dwells in you? If any man defiles the temple of God, him shall God destroy for the temple of God is holy, which you are'. (Tangl no. 73, 1916, 341; Talbot 1954, 121-22)³⁶

In Jerome's letter 22 to Eustochium, he referred to the idea that the virgin's body was the temple of God towards the end of a passage in which he made use of another idea³⁷ which similarly stressed the sanctity of a virgin's body: the body of a virgin was like a vessel sanctified for use in God's temple. God would avenge profanation of such a sacred vessel, as he had struck down Uzzah when he touched the ark:

Obtestor te coram Deo, et Christo Jesu, et electis Angelis ejus ut custodias quae coepisti, ne vasa templi Domini, quae solis sacerdotibus videre concessum est, facile in publicum proferas; ne sacrarium Dei quisquam profanus aspiciat. Oza arcam, quam non licebat tangere, attingens, subita morte prostratus est (II Kings 6.6-7).

Neque enim vas aureum, et argenteum tam carum Deo fuit, quam templum corporis virginalis.

I conjure you before God and Jesus Christ and His elect angels to guard that which you have received, not readily exposing to the public gaze the vessels of the Lord's temple (which only the priests are by right allowed to see), that no profane person may look upon God's sanctuary. Uzzah, when he touched the ark which it was not lawful to touch, was struck down suddenly by death. And assuredly no gold or silver vessel was ever so dear to God as is the temple of a virgin's body. (Letter 22.23, PL 22.409; Wace & Schaff VI.31)

Those who seek to violate the bodies of virgins in any way are punished, and Aldhelm also refers to the death of Uzza in his account of the sudden death of the would-be violator of St Agnes:

Nam cum praefatus obscenitatis amator flammis carnalibus succensus lupanar cum sodalibus scelerum aggredereetur, ut virgini sacratissimae spurca lenocinii ludibria labris procacibus irrogaret, caelestis irae mucrone perniciousiter percussus occubuit et, veluti Oza arcam testamenti ... profanis manibus contingere non metuens, ilico immaturae mortis vindictam exsolvit (II Kings 6.6).

When the aforementioned lover of lewdness [i.e. her erstwhile suitor], on fire with carnal passion, entered the brothel accompanied by his partners in crime, so that he could impose with his impudent lips the foul sports of his lechery on the sacred virgin, suddenly struck down by the sword of celestial anger, he died, and paid on the spot the penalty of an untimely death, just like Uzzah, who had not feared to touch with his profane hands the ark of the testament. (*De Virg.* ch. 45, Ehwald, p. 299; Lapidge & Herren 1979, 112).

The same episode is related in Ælfric's 'Life of St Agnes':³⁸ when the evil-intentioned prefect's son hastens into the brothel, he is struck down (LS 7.170-73). This version does not compare the incident with that of Uzzah and the ark, but it demonstrates nonetheless the idea of

the sanctity of the virgin's body, consecrated to Christ. We are in addition given, as it were, a gloss on the episode. When the youth's father asks why his son has been destroyed, Agnes explains that the Christians still live because they worship the God who clothed her, and who sent his angel to defend her body, consecrated to Christ; but the angel struck down the prefect's 'shameless son, with his shameless intention', and delivered him to the devil, who immediately destroyed him:

Agnes him cwæð to . hwi synd þa oðre cuce .
þe hider inneodon . buton forðon þe hi arwurðodon
pone ælmihtigan god . þe me myldheortlice gescrydde .
and asende me his encgel . þe minne lichaman geheold .
se þe wæs fram cyldcradole criste gehalgod .
þin sceamleasa sunu . mid sceamleasum anginne .
arn into me . ac se encgel hine afylde .
and ðam deofle betæhte . þe hine adydde þærrihte. (184-91)

Thus the incident which demonstrates the holiness of the virgin's body teaches also that to worship God, and, we may say, respect his sacred vessels, is to live; to do otherwise is to sin, and to be punished with death and damnation. Similarly, in Ælfric's 'Life of St Agatha', destruction is wrought, in the form of an earthquake, upon those who attempt to roll the saint on burning coals in accordance with the orders of her persecutor Quintianus ('the devil's servant', 'se deofles þen', 167), whose advances she has scorned (LS 8.167-75).

An explicit expression of the idea that the body of the virgin was a temple of the Holy Spirit can be seen in Ælfric's 'Life of St Lucy' (LS 9). It occurs in the course of an account of the saint which reveals, with some depth and force, what it was to be a virgin.

Lucy's virtues, her good works, the strength of her faith, and her choice of virginity for Christ are established in the first part of the Life (1-56; and see above, pp. 77-78). Lucy has given away all her wealth, now she has only herself to offer to God:

nu ic wylle me sylfe him soðlice geoffrian .
forðan ic leng næbbe . hwæt ic on his lacum aspende. (66-67)

Her words are reminiscent of some lines from Ælfric's homily on the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary which have been quoted above, in the discussion of what it was to be a virgin (p. 43), but which may be quoted again here:

Micel geoffrað gode, þe hine sylfne geoffrað.
þæt synd ða mæstan lac, þe man mæg geoffrian,
þæt he holocaustum beo, þæt is eall godes lac.
(Assmann 3.288-90)

Lucy's suitor Paschasius is angered by her words, and the two 'spræcon fela' (68), until, in his exasperation, he offers to beat her if she will not be silent (69).³⁹ But Lucy replies 'þæs lifigendan godes word ne magon geswican ne forsuwode beon' (70-71). Contemptuously Paschasius asks 'Eart þu la god?' (72). Lucy answers that she is the almighty's handmaid (or servant), and she quotes Christ's words to his apostles when he told them that when they were delivered up to their persecutors the Holy Spirit would speak in them (Matthew 10.20):

Ic eom þæs ælmihtigan þinen .
forþi ic cwæð godes word . forþan þe he on his godspelle cwæð .
Ne synd ge þe þær sprecð . ac sprycþ se halga gast on eow. (73-75)

This may be compared with Gregory's account of the operation of the power of prophecy (above, p. 90); and it is also perhaps relevant to

note that Lucy quotes the Scriptures, which themselves were regarded as inspired by the Holy Spirit.⁴⁰

When Paschasius scornfully asks whether indeed the Holy Spirit dwells in her, Lucy quotes St Paul's words; the form is, in its reference to chastity, closer to the version found in the Acts of Paul and Thecla than to the Corinthians text (above, p. 98, and note 35):

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.⁴¹ (76-80)

These words help to establish the foundation for the miracles which are to follow. Lucy is one who preserves her chastity, and so becomes the temple of God and dwelling of the Holy Spirit. Paschasius says he will make the Holy Spirit flee from her by sending her to a brothel so that she will lose her virginity:

þa cwæð se arleasa . Ic hate þe ardlice lædan .
to þæra myltestrena huse . þæt ðu þinne mægðhad forleose .
þæt se . halga gast þe fram fleo . ðonne þu fulllice byst gescynd.
(81-83)

Lucy expresses in her answer the supremacy of the pure will of the virgin: if he raises her hand to his idols against her will, she will remain innocent, since God judges according to the will (84-89).⁴² Whatever he may do to her body against her will, 'that can be of no concern to me' (90-93):⁴³

Lucia andwyrde þus . ne bið ænig gewemmed .
lichama to plihthe . gif hit ne licað þam mode .
þeah þu mine hand ahebbe . to ðinum hæpengilde .

and swa þurh me geoffrige mines unwilles .
 ic beo þeah unscyldig . ætforan ðam soðan gode .
 seþe demð be þam willan . and wat ealle þincg .
 gif þu me unwilles gewemman nu dest .
 me bið twifeald clænnysse⁴⁴ . geteald to wuldre .
 Ne miht þu gebigan minne willan to þe .
 swa hwæt swa þu minum lichaman dest . ne mæg þæt belimpan to me.

(84-93)

The calm certainty of Lucy's faith and will is given added force (for the reader) from the contrast between the way her statements are introduced (she simply 'spoke' or 'answered'), and the variety of words which refer to Paschasius's volatile emotions (anger, scorn and pride) and wicked character whenever he speaks: 'þa yrsode paschasius ... Lucia him cwæð to ... He axode ða mid olle ... Lucia him andwyrde ... paschasius orgelllice befran ... Lucia andwyrde þam arleasan and cwæð ... þa cwæð se arleasa ... Lucia andwyrde þus ... (68-84).⁴⁵ She is also always 'Lucia', whereas Paschasius is 'se arleasa' as well as 'Paschasius'. There is a strong sense of her integrity and identity, which cannot be violated, 'ne mæg þæt belimpan to me'.

The truth of what she has said is demonstrated by what takes place when Paschasius attempts to carry out his threat, for he finds she is physically as well as spiritually immovable, and cannot be dragged to the brothel. 'God's power was straightaway revealed in the virgin', 'godes miht wearð geswutelod.sona on þam mædene' (97); 'the Holy Spirit held her', 'se halga gast hi heold' (98); and men with ropes find her as firm as a mountain, 'ac heo næs astyrod . ac stod swa swa munt' (102); the enchantments of magicians (104-05), and oxen attached to her (106) also fail to move her. When Paschasius asks her

why she cannot be moved, she says 'þeah þu clypige tyn þusend manna . hi sceolan ealle gehyran þone halgan gast þus cweðende' (111-12), and she quotes (113) and translates Psalm 90.7: 'þusend feallað fram þinre sidan . and tyn þusend fram þinre swyðran . þe sylf soðlice ne genealacæð nan yfel' (114-16).⁴⁶ The promise of the Psalm has been fulfilled; and the miracle has shown that Lucy is indeed, in her purity and strength of will and faith, which were the spiritual counterparts of virginity, a temple of God and dwelling of the Holy Spirit.

111) In order to understand something of the 'inward truth' behind the many miracles in which saints endure extraordinary physical suffering, and are then restored to physical wholeness by God, it is necessary to recapitulate some of the themes of earlier chapters of this study. Before the fall of man, body and spirit had been fully integrated. As long as man had been obedient to God, the flesh was obedient to the spirit. When man disobeyed God, he lost the obedience of the body, and the flesh and spirit were at odds (see above, ch. 1). The struggle of the virgin was to free himself or herself from subjection to the flesh, and so to restore the balance which had been lost by the fall. The body would once again be subject to the spirit, as the spirit, in its turn, was again obedient to God. The capacity of the virgin saints to endure and suffer bodily tortures whilst remaining steadfast in spirit demonstrated their capacity to bring the body under control, and their recovery of the supremacy of the spirit over the flesh. This achievement of spiritual control over the body was accompanied in saints' lives by other manifestations of divine

power; in particular, evidence of the divine presence and assistance was provided by the miraculous restoration of physical wholeness to tortured and wounded bodies. This was a visible sign of the virgin's spiritual and physical integrity. Peter Brown identifies these concerns in Prudentius' accounts of the sufferings of martyrs in the *Peristephanon*:

Having been made to feel the full horror of the dissolving body, the reader is reassured by the triumph of integrity over its disintegration. For, while the body is 'painted with wash on wash of blood, its core remains all of one piece' (*Peristephanon* 3.144). For Prudentius, integrity resided primarily in the survival of the untouched soul. (Brown 1981, 83)

Miracles of this kind proliferate in the Lives, but one or two examples will be discussed here. In Ælfric's version of the 'Life of St Agatha' (LS 8), Agatha has been shown not to be corruptible by Affrodosia and her daughters, who attempt to obtain her submission to Quintianus by flattery and threats (14-21). When Quintianus orders Agatha's breast to be cut off Agatha makes the curious declaration that she has her breast sound in her soul: 'ic habbe mine breost on minre sawle ansunde' (126). This suggests a spiritual wholeness, which she will retain whatever may be done to her body (this is rather like Lucy's argument, quoted above, pp. 103-04); and the fact that Agatha is willing to embrace - even rejoices in embracing - physical suffering, shows that her spirit is in control, not her flesh (22-25, 116). The subsequent restoration of her breast with the healing of the rest of her wounds indicates the spiritual integrity she has never lost: she has her breast sound again in her body as well as her soul

(145-46). The contrast between Agatha and her adversary Quintianus is also an instructive one. Quintianus, who is at the mercy of his fleshly desires and a slave of the devil ('se wæs grædig gitse and his galnysse underþeod / deofles þeowetlincg', 5-6) is defeated in his attempt to gain sadistic pleasure from such torture, while Agatha's words and the restoration of her breast indicate how far she has overcome the consequences of the fall. Her perfect faith, perfect obedience and perfect virginity are reflected by the restoration of her body to its perfect condition. It is appropriate, in contrast, that Quintianus should be savaged by horses and his body subsequently lost at sea (210-14).

Among the consequences of the fall was the susceptibility of mankind thereafter to such things as heat, cold and hunger, as well as vicissitudes of desire and temper (see above, p. 16). Cecilia's description of the pains and sorrows of 'this life' is a description of the fallen human condition:

Cuð is gehwiltcum menn
 þæt þis lif is geswincful . and on swate wunað .
 þis lif bið alefed on langsumum sarum .
 and on hætum ofþefod . on hungre gewæht .
 mid mettum gefylled . and modig on welum .
 mid hafenleaste aworpen and ahafen þurh iugoðe .
 mid ylde gebiged . and tobryt mid seocnysse .
 mid unrotnysse fornumen . and geangsumod þurh cara .

(LS 34. 141-48)

The saint, whether martyr or ascetic, (including the virgin, who overcame his or her sexual desires), was able voluntarily to accept and endure bodily pain and hardship beyond the common lot. This

represents the perfect obedience of the saint to God's will without which the obedience of the flesh to him (or her) was not possible. The result, or the reward, and the sign of this obedience was that the saint could be tortured with fire, ice or starvation, yet be unaffected. Cecilia, for example, placed in a bath over a fire, does not even sweat:

heo læg on þam bæðe bufan byrnendum fyre .
ofer dæg . and niht . ungederodum lichaman .
swa swa on cealdum wætre . þæt heo ne swætte furðon . (346-48)

Her persecutor Almachius has been provoked to command this torture by Cecilia's taunt about his gods who, she says, are mere stone images covered with lead, which would turn to lime if they were placed on a fire (334-41). Her comments may have suggested to him the nature of the torture to which he subjects her, but which proves so ineffectual. It serves instead to demonstrate the virgin's superiority both to his gods and to ordinary fallen humanity, who would be expected at least to suffer in the same position, certainly to sweat, perhaps to die.

Something should be said here about the attitude of virgin saints to death. Death, too, was a consequence of the fall (see above, pp. 14, 17, 21); and death comes, even to virgin saints, in the end. Christian martyrs in general are shown to be unafraid of death: instead of sharing the natural (fallen) human fear of death, they welcome it. Cecilia is unafraid of death because of her faith in the life to come (LS 34.138-39). Valerian and Tiburtius go happily to their execution 'swylce to gebeorscipe' (LS 34.227-29). But virgins will receive the greatest rewards, those promised to the 144,000

virgins of Revelations 14.3-4; and the hundred-fold fruit of the parable of Matthew 13.8 (see Aldhelm, above, pp. 44-45; Lapidge & Herren 1979, 55; and compare Ælfric: Assmann 3.379, 421 ff.). Agnes, for example, has welcomed death, and her parents do not sorrow at her martyrdom, but take her body with joy (LS 7.246-48). The vision which they have after her death, of Agnes in a great company of virgins clothed in golden garments,⁴⁷ and the words she speaks to them, confirm the appropriateness of joy and the inappropriateness of sorrow at her death, since Agnes has received the reward of virgins:

þa on sumere nihte gesawon hi cuman
mycel mædenlic werod . and agnes tomiddes .
Hi wæron ealle geglengede mid gyldenum gyrlum .
and mid ormætum leohte arwurðlice ferdon .
þa cwæð seo halige agnes to hire magum ðus .
Warniað þæt ge ne wepon me swa swa deade .
ac blyssiað mid me . Ic eom þysum mædenum geferlæht .
and ic mid him underfeng . swiðe fægere wununga .
and ðam ic eom on heofonum geþeodd . þe ic her on eorðan lufode .
(250-58)

The vision would no doubt also be seen as an encouragement and assurance to all virgins who face torments, perhaps, but death, certainly.

It was quite common for the bodies of saints to be found healed and incorrupt after their death; this incorruption was seen as evidence of their purity and sinlessness during life. But it was on occasion also linked explicitly with their virginity. Bede made this connection in the case of Æthelthryth. Her body was found incorrupt at her translation, sixteen years after her death:

Nam etiam signum diuini miraculi, quo eiusdem feminae sepulta caro corrumpi non potuit, indicio est quia a uirili contactu incorrupta durauerit.

And the divine miracle whereby her flesh would not corrupt after she was buried was token and proof that she had remained uncorrupted by contact with any man. (HE 4.19, Colgrave 1969, 392-93)

Cumque corpus sacrae uirginis ac sponsae Christi aperto sepulchro esset prolatum in lucem, ita incorruptum inuentum est, ac si eodem die fuisset defuncta siue humo condita.

When the tomb of the sacred virgin and bride of Christ was opened and the body brought to light, it was found to be as uncorrupt as if she had died and been buried that very day (ibid., pp. 394-95)

Ælfric, following Bede, wrote:

Hit is swutol þæt heo wæs ungewemmed mæden .

þonne hire lichama ne mihte formolsnian on eorðan . (LS 20.107-08)

Bede made a similar point about Æthelburh, Æthelthryth's sister. Æthelburh's body was found incorrupt at her translation seven years after her death:

ipsa [Aedilberg] Deo dilectam perpetuae uirginitatis gloriam in magna corporis continentia seruauit; quae cuius esset uirtutis magis post mortem claruit ... et aperientes sepulchrum eius, ita intemeratum corpus inuenere, ut a corruptione concupiscentiae carnalis erat immune.

Aethelburh ... lived a life of great self-denial, also preserving the glory of perpetual virginity which is well pleasing to God. But after her death the greatness of her virtue was more clearly revealed ... On opening her sepulchre they found her body as untouched by decay as it had also been immune from the corruption of fleshly desires. (HE 3.8, Colgrave pp. 240-41)

Ælfric wrote that Edmund's incorrupt body after death showed that he lived 'without unchastity' during his life: 'His lichama us cyð, þe

līð unformolsnod, þæt he butan forligre her on worulde leofode and mid clænum life to Crist sipode.' (lines 155-57, Needham 1976, 53-54)⁴⁸

Another point which Ælfric made in connection with the incorruption of the bodies of saints Edmund and Æthelthryth was that it proved that God could restore bodies at the resurrection:

On þysum halgan [Edmund] is swutel, and on swilcum oþrum, þæt God ælmihtig mæg þone man aræran eft on domes dæg andsundne of eorþan, se þe hylt Eadmunde halne his lichaman oð þone micclan dæg, þeah ðe he of moldan come. (lines 206-10, Needham, p. 57)

and godes miht is geswutelod soðlice þurh hi [Æthelthryth] .

þæt he mæg aræran ða formolsnodon lichaman .

seðe hire lic heold hal on ðære byrgene

git oð þisne dæg .

(LS 20.109-12)

The healing of their wounds and incorruption of their bodies after death reflected the saints' sinlessness during life. But Ælfric's words suggest the possibility that the incorrupt flesh of saints after death can be seen further as an anticipation of the ultimate incorrupt state, that of the resurrected body. Physical death and decay, like the disobedience of the flesh, were consequences of the fall (see above, p. 16). Just as the recovered obedience of the flesh during life anticipated the condition of the blessed, the return to paradise and fellowship with the angels, so it may be that the incorrupt flesh of the saints after death was an anticipation of the resurrection of the body and its subsequent incorruptibility.

Augustine wrote of the bodies of saints at the resurrection:

[fides Christiana praedicat] sanctos in resurrectione habituros ea ipsa in quibus hic laboraverunt corpora ut nec eorum carni aliquid

corruptionis vel difficultatis nec eorum beatitudini aliquid doloris et infelicitatis possit accidere.

[the Christian faith proclaims that] at the resurrection the saints will inhabit the actual bodies in which they suffered the hardships of this life on earth; yet these bodies will be such that no trace of corruption or frustration will affect their flesh, nor will any sorrow or mischance interfere with their felicity. (*De Civ. Dei* 13.19, Levine 1966, 210; Knowles 1972, 532)

In the next chapter, after having referred to Luke 21.18, 'But there shall not an hair of your head perish', Augustine wrote of the resurrected body:

spiritui summa et mirabili obtemperandi facilitate subdetur usque ad implendam immortalitatis indissolubilis securissimam voluntatem, omni molestiae sensu, omni corruptibilitate et tarditate detracta.

it will submit to the spirit with a ready obedience, an obedience so wonderfully complete that the body will fulfil the will of the spirit in such a way as to bring perfect assurance of indissoluble immortality, free from any feeling of distress, and relieved of any possibility of corruption, any trace of reluctance. (13.20, Levine, p. 212, Knowles, p. 533)

Pelikan comments that according to Ambrose, 'who voiced the standard view ... that the doctrine of immortality was incomplete without the doctrine of the resurrection', resurrection meant 'the conferral upon the body of that deathless life which the soul already possessed' (1971, 52). In their earthly lives virgin saints anticipated the life in heaven. Their undecayed bodies after death could also be seen as further assurance of the reward that awaited them, for virgins, as St Ambrose says, transcended the mortal limits of time and space:

Nam de resurrectione quid dicam, cujus praemia jam tenetis? 'In resurrectione autem neque nubent, neque ducent uxores: sed erunt sicut angeli,' inquit, 'in coelo' (Matthew 22.30). Quod nobis promittitur, vobis praesto est, votorumque nostrorum usus apud vos. De hoc mundo estis, et non estis in hoc mundo. Saeculum vos habere meruit, tenere non potuit.

What shall I say of the resurrection of which you already hold the rewards: 'For in the resurrection they will neither be given in marriage, nor marry, but shall be', he says, 'as the angels in heaven'. That which is promised to us is already present with you, and the object of your prayers is with you. Ye are of this world, and yet not in this world. This age has held you, but has not been able to retain you. (*De Virg. ad Marc.* 1.8.52, PL 16.203; Wace & Schaff X.371)

NOTES

1. See Lapidge & Rosier's Introduction (1985, 98-100).
2. Jerome's use of the same two figures had a similar import, although he was less elaborate: 'Samson leone fortior et saxo durior, qui et unus et nudus mille persecutus est armatos, in Dalilae mollescit amplexibus. David secundum cor Domini electus, et qui venturum Christum sanctum saepe ore cantaverat, postquam deambulans super tectum domus suae, Bethsabae captus est nuditae, adulterio junxit homicidium.': 'Samson was braver than a lion and tougher than a rock; alone and unprotected he pursued a thousand armed men; and yet, in Delilah's embrace, his resolution melted away. David was a man after God's own heart, and his lips had often sung of the Holy One, the future Christ; and yet as he walked upon his housetop he was fascinated by Bathsheba's nudity, and added murder to adultery (II Samuel 11)'. (Letter 22.12, PL 22.401; Wace & Schaff VI.26)
3. Lapidge & Rosier translate 'girl'.
4. Ruth Waterhouse argues that the crowns in Ælfric's version of the story have a wider range of symbolic significance than those in

Chaucer's Second Nun's Tale, where it is stated that they are actually made of roses and lilies (1978, 132-36).

5. Virginity (*virginitas*, *mægðhad*), was the highest degree of chastity (*castitas*, *clænnys*), in the hierarchy of virginity, widowhood and marriage. (On the traditional hierarchy, see above, p. 28, and Lapidge & Herren's discussion of Aldhelm's adaptation of it, 1979, 55). Married people and the widowed could be 'chaste', although they were not virgins. Ælfric provides a precise definition of chastity in LS 16.321-25, in his discussion of chastity as one of the seven Virtues (or Remedia): it was opposed to *fornicatio* (*forliġr* or *galnyss*); see also 276-79. In line 324, Ælfric uses the inclusive (generic) term *clænnysse* (*castitas*), but is referring clearly to the specific 'virginity' (as Skeat quite properly translates), and as in the case of Valerian here. See also Ambrose and Aldhelm below, pp. 84 & 92.

6. Literally: 'inward miracles (or wonders)'; Bliss has supplied 'truths'.

7. On miracles performed by martyrs (not especially virgins), which bear witness to their faith, see Augustine, *De Civ. Dei* 22.8-9.

8. Lapidge & Rosier translate 'chastity'.

9. The syntax of line 80 is ambiguous: I have taken the antecedent of the relative clause to be *mægðhad*; but it could be *cyninge* ('whom she had chosen').

10. The 'Life of St Eugenia' is discussed further below, ch. 7.

11. Pagan cults of virginity have been discussed above, pp. 39-40.

12. See also below, pp. 79, 100-01

13. *wununge* (33): cf. line 80, and see the discussion below, p. 99 ff. on the image of the body as a temple and dwelling-place of the Spirit of God. A further suggestion may be made here about the meaning of lines 30-33. The Old English follows the Latin closely: 'sicut per me Catanesium ciuitas sublimatur a Christo, ita per te Syracusam ciuitas decorabitur; quia iucundum Christo in tua virginitate habitaculum praeparasti' (Surius 1525, 892). It is

possible that the idea that Lucy has prepared a pleasant dwelling for Christ in her pure virginity may also suggest an allusion to the Church, if we compare Agatha's words with a passage in Ælfric's homily on the Nativity of Holy Virgins:

Ðær is þæs geleafan mægðhad. þe wurðað ænne soðne god. and nele forligerlice to leasum hæðengylde bugan; Eal seo gelaðung ... is genamod to anum mædene. swa swa se apostol Paulus cwæð. to geleaftfullum folce; Disposauit uos uni uiro uirginem castam. exhibere christo (II Corinthians 11.2); þæt is on englisc. Ic bewedode eow anum were. þæt ge gearcian an clæne mæden criste;* Nis ðis na to understandenne lichamlice. ac gastlice; Crist is se clæna brydguma. and eal seo cristene gelaðung is his bryd. þurh ða he gestrynd dæghwomlice mennisce sawla to his heofenlican rice; Seo gelaðung is ure modor and clæne mæden. for ðan þe we beoð on hire geedcynnede to godes handa. þurh geleafan and fulluht. ('In Natale Sanctarum Uirginum' lines 79-92, Godden no. 39, 1979, 329-30)

[*Ælfric's translation of II Corinthians 11.2 implies a comma after *uiro*, and no punctuation after *castam*.]

gearcian is used in both passages; and although the word translates *exhibere*, 'present' (see BT Sup. s.v., II), in the homily, and *praeparare*, 'prepare' (BT Sup. s.v., I) in the Life of Lucy, an audience familiar with the translated words of St Paul, and with the ideas set forth in the passage of the homily, may have seen an allusion to the church in the lines on Lucy in LS 9. In his homily on the Nativity of Blessed Virgin Mary (Assmann 3), Ælfric again quotes the same words of St Paul (139-40), and he draws a parallel between the individual virgin and the church (153-56), and compares the church, in its virginity and faith, to the Virgin Mary (on these ideas see further below, pp. 125 ff.):

Nu syndon ða men swiðe wurðfulle,
 ðe on mægðhade wuniað sylfwilles for gode,
 þe healdað on lichaman, þæt þæt eall seo gelaðung (155)
 þurh geleafan hylt. And heo [= seo gelaðung] swa geefenlæcð
 hire weres meder, þe wunede on mægðhade

and Crist þeah gebær on hyre clænan bosme.
Swa is eac seo gelaþung þurh geleafan mæden
and on gastlicere cenninge acenð dæghwamlice (160)
micelne bearnteam on eallum middanearde. (Assmann 3, 1964)

A profound weight of meaning may thus be evoked by Lucy's faith and her virginity, in which she prepares a dwelling for Christ.

14. Peter Brown discusses 'guardian angels' (and saints) as 'invisible companions' of men (1981, 50-53, 55).

15. MS *life*; Skeat's emendation is based on the Latin: 'Angelum Dei habeo amatorem' (Delehaye 1936, 196-97). See Skeat's note, LS vol. 2, p. 454. The sense conveyed by the Latin, with its suggestion of a jealous lover, is more striking than the Old English, even if Skeat's emendation is accepted. However *life*, if retained, would provide a contrast with *leofast* (34). ✓

16. Saints' lives can be read in terms of this division into two cities: the saints and angels who serve God, and the heathen oppressors of saints, who serve the devil.

17. Compare Gregory, PL 76.1104; see Förster 1894, 13, §63; and Smetana 1959, 182.

18. Compare Augustine's 'cum vero sanamur' above, *De Civ. Dei* 8.25.

19. Verses from more than one of the gospel accounts concerning Christ's resurrection (e.g. Matthew 27.63, 28.2-3; Mark 16.1, 4-6; Luke 24.39) are discussed in the course of the homily. Gregory's exposition can be found in PL 76.1169-74 & 1111A; see Förster 1894, 2-3, §42; and Smetana 1959, 189.

20. Ælfric refers to the same belief in 'Sermo de Initio Creaturae', Thorpe no. 2, CH I.12.

21. Colgrave comments on the many angelic ministrations in Cuthbert's life, and he also cites some which occur in the Lives of Antony, Martin and in Irish Lives (1940, 312).

22. The Life is discussed below, ch. 8.

23. The ascetics of Syria and Egypt in the fourth and fifth centuries were called 'angels' (Brown 1989, 324 & 436). But see Jerome, pp. 85-86 below. Compare also the passages quoted above, p. 27, and pp. 142-43 below. On the use of *castitas* here see note 5 above.

24. Compare Matthew 11.12: 'the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent bear it away' (cf. 'take it by force': Authorised Version). Bishop Challoner's note on this verse reads: 'It [i.e. the kingdom of heaven] is not to be obtained but by main force, by using violence upon ourselves, by mortification and penance and resisting our perverse inclinations'. This would seem to be exactly how Aldhelm understood it.

25. On Jerome's letters to Eustochium and others, see above, ch. 2, note 1, p. 33.

26. For further discussion of St Margaret, see ch. 9 below.

27. Gregory, *Hom. in Ezek.* 1.1.1; see Dudden 1905, II.354. Dudden cites some of the principal passages in which Gregory discussed prophecy (II.354-56). I have drawn extensively on this work in this section.

28. Bugge cites passages from Jerome, Ambrose, John Chrysostom, and Cassian in which they connect the powers of prophets of the scriptures (Elias, Ezechiel, Jeremias & Daniel in the Old Testament, and the two Johns in the New Testament) with their virginity or chastity and the angelic life of virgins. Bugge also argues that 'a chief trait of virgin saints or virgin martyrs in early medieval legends is an intimate knowledge of the mind of God' (1975, 45). However, objections have been raised to some of his examples: Guthlac, for instance, did have prophetic gifts, but no mention is made of his virginity (Wittig 1977, 940).

29. The Acts of Paul and Thecla formed a part of the late second century apocryphal Acts of Paul, but was widely circulated separately. See Hennecke 1963, II.326 & 330; and James 1953, 272-81. The story was well known to the English: part of Aldhelm's entry on Thecla has been quoted above, pp. 68-69; Thecla also appears in the OEM (Sep. 24; Kotzor 1981, II.216); and she is mentioned at the opening of the

OE 'Life of St Margaret' (below, ch. 9). The Acts of Paul is is discussed further in connection with the EME Life of St Katherine (below, ch. 18).

30. This is perhaps the significance of the dream of Gregory of Nazianzus, a virgin, as related by Aldhelm. In Gregory's dream Virginity and Wisdom (see Augustine, p. 90 above), are personified as two sisters sent from 'the angelic regions' to take sanctuary in Gregory's heart, and share with him their friendship and fellowship:

Virgineo vidit fulgentes flore puellas;
Quas ille adspiciens torvis obtutibus horret,
Femineos quoniam non gestit cernere vultus.
Tum sanctum placidis compellant vocibus ambae:
'Ne graviter, iuvenis, devotas sperne puellas
Neuque indignatus vultum contemne sororum,
Dum tibi perpetuo fratris copulamur amore!
Nam nobis mundum tribuisti in corde sacellum,
Quo iucundantes semper laetabimur ambae!
Frater, amicitia numquam fraudabere nostra:
Altera Virginitas fecundo flore vocatur,
Altera gestabit solers Sapientia nomen;
Et sumus angelicis missae de sedibus istuc,
Ut tecum maneant nostrae consortia vitae'.

He saw two maidens glowing in virginal bloom. Seeing them, he shrank back with harsh gaze, since he did not undertake to witness the female face. But they both addressed this holy man with pleasing voices: 'Young man, do not harshly spurn us devoted maidens nor, indignant, despise the faces of us sisters, since we are joined to you in the perpetual love of a brother! For you have offered to us a pure sanctuary in your heart, where we both will always be joyful. Brother, you shall never be deprived of our friendship. One of us is called Virginity, of fruitful flower; the other, being sagacious, bears the name Wisdom; and we were sent here from angelic regions so that the fellowship of our life might remain with you'. (*Carmen de Virginitate* 716-29, Ehwald, p. 383, Lapidge & Rosier 1985, 118-19)

31. This latter is a vivid symbolic fulfilment of Agnes' prediction that the heathen would burn forever in the eternal fires of hell (137-40).

32. cf. 'Know you not that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you, whom you have from God; and you are not your own?' (I Corinthians 6.19).

33. Perhaps from I Thessalonians 4.4,7,8, and II Timothy 2.21; and see further below, p. 99, and LS 9.79 ff, quoted below, p. 103.

34. Compare Origen's statement that Christians 'have already learned ... that the body of a rational being that is devoted to the God of the Universe is a temple of the God they worship' ('Contra Celsum' 4.26; cited by Peter Brown 1989, 177).

35. The words 'they who have kept the flesh pure' need not apply only to virgins - and indeed may not mean any more than Ælfric's 'gif we us wið fule leahtras gescyldað' (for these words cf. I Thessalonians 4.7-8 & II Timothy 2.21, referred to in note 33 above). I have not been able to compare the translations of James and Hennecke's editions with the texts on which they are based. But James has 'chaste' rather than 'pure'; and furthermore, there is an emphasis on chastity throughout the Acts of Paul and Thecla (see Hennecke II.350); for example, in the series of blessings themselves, we find that of the thirteen, four (including the one already quoted) refer in some way to chastity or virginity: 'Blessed are they that abstain (or the continent) ... Blessed are they that possess their wives as though they had them not ... Blessed are the bodies of virgins, for they shall be well-pleasing unto God and shall not lose the reward of their continence (chastity)' (chs 5-6, James, p. 273).

There is also an important difference, which should be pointed out, between the formulation of the idea in I Corinthians and in the Acts of Paul & Thecla. St Paul's argument is: 'Your bodies are the temple of God, therefore they must be kept pure' (this is especially clear in I Corinthians 6.18-19). But the argument in the Acts of Paul & Thecla is rather: 'Your bodies will become the temple of God, because you have kept them pure'. Ælfric's fomulation is closer to that of the

Acts: 'We shall be a temple ... if we keep ourselves from sin'. The same is true of Ælfric's version in St Lucy (lines 79-80, quoted below, p. 103), - although Ælfric actually attributes this subtle distortion of St Paul's words to the apostle himself (possibly because of the influence of a version close to that found in the Acts of Paul and Thecla?). His use of *behet* is an indication of the difference: St Paul's words in I Corinthians are not a promise, but a statement of fact: 'Your members are ...' (6.19); 'You are' (3.16).

36. Boniface and his circle of fellow-missionaries and correspondents were very familiar with Aldhelm's works (Lapidge & Rosier 1985, 1-2).

37. Here also the basic metaphor (in which men and women are spoken of as vessels made of various materials and for various purposes, like a potter's vessels) is biblical: see Acts 9.15; and it is used by St Paul: Romans 9.21-23, and II Timothy 2.20-21.

38. cf. also above, p. 76.

39. Ælfric considerably abridges the much lengthier exchange of the Latin version (Surius 1525, 892-93).

40. Shepherd writes: 'For Anglo-Saxon scholars as for Gregory the Great ... the named authors of Scripture were the penmen of the Holy Ghost. Neither Gregory nor the Anglo-Saxons took the explanation metaphorically. The bible was essentially prophetic, the divinely inspired disclosure of secret wisdom' (1969, 368).

41. 'þæs halgan gastes wunung' (80): for this phrase, which is not in I Corinthians or the Acts of Paul and Thecla, cf. Ephesians 2.22.

42. Compare Augustine, *De Civ. Dei* 1.18, quoted above, p. 44.

43. Skeat has 'that cannot happen to me'. But compare the Latin: 'quicquid feceris corporis, quod in potestate tua videris habere, hoc ad ancillam Christi pertinere non poterit' (Surius 1525, 893); and see BT s.v. *belimpan* I, which gives the following example: 'Ne belimpp to ðe: non ad te pertinet': 'doth it not concern thee' (Mark 4.38); and BT Sup. s.v. *belimpan* I (5).

44. The meaning of the 'twofold purity' is unclear: 'if you now cause me to be defiled against my will, a twofold purity will be accounted

to my glory (lit: for (a) glory to me)'. The Latin reads: 'Nam si inuitam me violari feceris, castitas mihi duplicabitur ad coronam' (Surius 1525, 893). Ælfric understands *duplicare* to mean 'to double', although it can also mean 'to increase'. The sense of the Old English may be that far from being corrupted or dishonoured if she is violated against her will, she will be doubly honoured (or considered doubly chaste or pure). Another possibility is that the twofold purity refers to the two situations in which Lucy would remain innocent, because forced to sin against her will: in worshipping idols (86-87), and in losing her virginity (90).

45. Waterhouse has made a similar point with reference to the presentation of Cecilia and Almachius in Ælfric's 'Life of St Cecilia' (1976, 98).

46. This assurance of God's protection against all dangers is the theme of the whole Psalm, and for this reason St Benedict made it one of the psalms to be said every day at Compline (the last service of the day, immediately before the monks went to bed).

47. The dream (also based on Revelations), of the poet of the Middle English *Pearl*, may be compared.

48. Abbo had written in unambiguous terms (and at some length) that such bodily incorruption was the privilege of virgins: see ch. 17, lines 1-16 (Winterbottom 1972, 86-87; Hervey 1907, 55-57); and Winterbottom's note on ch. 17 line 5 (p. 86).

CHAPTER FIVE: VIRGINITY AND WOMEN

Virginity, as we have seen, was important in men and women alike in the Christian ascetic tradition. Why, then, did it receive more emphasis in the Lives of women saints than in those of men? And how far did the factors which encouraged this emphasis affect the Lives which were written in England before the Conquest? The three factors involved will be discussed in this chapter under three headings: historical conditions; the virgin Church; and attitudes towards women.

1) Historical conditions

Peter Brown writes:

By the end of the third century, attempts at sexual violence against dedicated women and threats of condemnation to the brothels (and no longer, simply, the threat of shameful execution) came to feature as a regular aspect of pagan persecutions of the Christians. (1989, 192)

This situation appears to be reflected in the accounts of martyrs found in the acts, passions, martyrologies and *vitae*, which relate how, in the face of all manner of threats and torments, men and women alike consistently refused to bow down to the images their persecutors worshipped. They were finally offered a choice: to abandon their faith or to die. Although this choice was presented to both sexes, women frequently had to defend their virginity together with their faith. They were generally threatened first with marriage, and when they rejected this, with rape. Both men and women were threatened with violence, but the threat of sexual violence became a standard aspect of the accounts of female martyrs.¹ Even if the men were also

vowed to virginity, sexual violation was not so obvious a threat to be employed against them.

Most of the lives of female saints extant in Old English were redactions of existing accounts of virgin martyrs of earlier times, and the motif of threatened virginity is quite prominent in them - for example in the Lives of Juliana and Margaret (on whom see below, chs 6 and 9), and in the versions by Ælfric of the Lives of Saints Agatha, Agnes and Lucy. In Ælfric's 'Life of St Agatha' (LS 8), the heathen governor of Sicily, Quintianus, first wants to possess Agatha, sexually presumably: 'com him to earan be Agathes drohtnunge. and smeade hu he mihte þæt mæden him begitan' (7-8). When he finds his strategy of employing Affrodosia and her daughters to corrupt Agatha has failed because of Agatha's steadfast faith (9-38), he asks the virgin to choose between sacrificing to his gods or death (62-64). Since he makes no further attempt to seduce her himself, he appears to have recognised that Agatha's virginity and her faith are inseparable, so it is from then on her faith which he attacks. However, the tortures he orders appear to be determined by frustrated lust, since they are strongly sadistic:

þa gebealh hine se wælhreowa and het hi gewriðan
on ðam breoste mid þære hencgene and het siððan ofaceorfan

(122-23)

Later he orders her to be rolled naked on burning coals and broken tiles:

het ða streowian geond þa flor .
fela byrnenda gleda . and tobrysede tigelan .
and hi swa nacode het wylan on þam fyre . (168-70)

It is as if the issue of faith provides him with an excuse to exact his revenge for her sexual incorruptibility. The attack on her femininity is made even more terrible by Agatha's words: 'Eala ðu arleasosta ne sceamode þe to ceorfanne þæt þæt ðu sylf suce' (124-25). The suggestion of motherhood perhaps calls Mary to mind (as have Agatha's earlier words 'ic eom godes þinen' (45). But then Agatha continues 'ac ic habbe mine breost on minre sawle,ansunde' (126). His sadistic attack cannot affect her spiritual integrity.²

Agnes (LS 7) is similarly punished for rejecting the prefect's son in favour of her chosen bridegroom, Christ. The prefect tells her that she must choose between offering to Vesta, or becoming a prostitute:

Geceos þe nu agnes an þæra twegra.
oððe þu mid mædenum þæra mæran uestan.
þinne lac geoffrige . oððe þu laðum myltestrum
scealt beon geferlæht . and fulllice gebysmrod. (117-20)

Lucy (LS 9) is wooed by a heathen youth, Paschasius, who attempts to make her engage in idol-worship. When she refuses, he orders her to be taken to a brothel, so that she may lose her virginity: 'Ic hate þe ardlice lædan. to þæra myltestrena huse. þæt ðu þinne mægðhad forleose' (81-82).³

2) The virgin Church

The symbolic representation of the Church as a virgin bride (but as also a wife and mother) provides a second reason for the emphasis on virginity in the lives of women saints. There were three stages in the development of the symbolism, which can be traced briefly: i) In the Scriptures, and in early biblical exegesis, the bridal metaphor was applied to all Christian men and women. ii) Gradually its application came to be restricted to virgins, male and female. iii) Eventually it is found used almost exclusively in connection with female virgins.

i) The Church was made up of all believers, men and women (II Corinthians 11.2, Ephesians 5.27-32), but was represented as female, and not just as female, but more specifically as the virgin bride of Christ. Furthermore, she was likened to the Virgin Mary: like Mary she was a virgin, but a virgin conceiving and bearing spiritual children for her groom. The bridal metaphor, based on St Paul (II Corinthians 11.2) and the Apocalypse (21.2,9; 22.17),⁴ was given further support by allegorical interpretations of the Song of Songs.⁵ The nuptial metaphor at first embraced all members of the Christian community, (male or female, virgin or not). Schillebeeckx writes:

In the Bible, the church is the bride of Christ. By the very fact of his baptism, every member is incorporated into this bridal relationship, which from about the time of Origen on is extended to each individual believer. (1968, 21)

11) By the fourth century the application of the image had come to be restricted to virgins (still both male and female):

Gradually the idea was restricted to the 'consecrated virgins', and in the fourth century, this shift is an accomplished fact. So the person unmarried for the sake of God was thought to be the typical Christian. (ibid.)

Tertullian and Cyprian, in the third century, had both written of the Christian virgin in these terms.⁶ Thus the virgin dedicated to Christ, holy in body and spirit, who defended his or her faith and virginity, and produced spiritual children (in the form of converts) for Christ the groom, came to be seen as more especially the living expression of the bridal relationship spoken of in the scriptures. Augustine articulated some of these concepts in *De Sancta Virginitate*:

Cum ipsa igitur universa Ecclesia virgo sit desponsata uni viro Christo, sicut dicit Apostolus (II Corinthians 11.2; Ephesians 5.27-32); quanto digna sunt honore membra ejus quae hoc custodiunt etiam in ipsa carne, quod tota custodit in fide? quae imitatur matrem viri sui et domini sui. Nam Ecclesia quoque et mater et virgo est, Cujus enim integritati consulimus, si virgo non est? aut cujus prolem alloquimur, si mater non est? Maria corporaliter caput hujus corporis peperit: Ecclesia spiritualiter membra illius capitis parit. In utraque virginitas fecunditatem non impedit: in utraque fecunditas virginitatem non adimit. Proinde cum Ecclesia universa sit sancta et corpore et spiritu, nec tamen universa sit corpore virgo, sed spiritu; quanto sanctior est in his membris, ubi virgo est et corpore et spiritu?

Since, therefore, the whole Church is espoused as a virgin to one man, Christ, as the Apostle says, how great honour her members deserve who preserve in their very flesh this which the whole Church imitating the Mother of her Spouse and Lord, preserves in the faith. The Church, too, is both mother and virgin. For, about whose integrity are we

solicitous if she is not a virgin? Or of whose progeny do we speak if she is not a mother? Mary bore the head of this body in the flesh; the Church bears the members of that Head in the spirit. In neither does virginity impede fecundity; in neither does fecundity destroy virginity. Therefore, since the whole Church is holy, both in body and in spirit, yet is not exclusively a virgin in body, but only in spirit, how much more holy is she in those members where she is a virgin both in body and in spirit. (ch. 2, PL 40.397; Deferrari 1969, 155)

iii) Although all Christians made up the Church (the virgin bride of Christ), and every Christian, male or female, was thought to stand individually in the same relationship to the Bridegroom as all stood collectively, the nuptial metaphor was perhaps naturally more readily applied to women than to men, and it was to female virgins that it came to be most commonly applied. Peter Brown comments on this development in the Eastern Church:

The language of the Song of Songs, which had been applied by Origen to the relation of Christ with the soul of every person, male and female, came, in the course of the fourth century, to settle heavily, almost exclusively, on the body of the virgin woman. (Brown 1989, 274)⁷

In the Western Church also, the application to female virgins of this imagery, which was based on the scriptures and their interpretation, had become well-established by the early Middle Ages.

The use of the nuptial metaphor in connection with female virgins can be amply illustrated from Anglo-Saxon writers. Bede, for example, wrote of parents who 'sent their daughters to be taught [in the monasteries of the Franks or the Gauls] and to be wedded to the heavenly bridegroom': 'filias suas [Francorum uel Galliarum

monasteriis] erudiendas ac sponso caelesti copulandas mittebant' (HE 3.8, Colgrave 1969, 238-39). In his account of Æthelthryth Bede described how she was appointed abbess at Ely, 'where she built a monastery and became, by the example of her heavenly life and teaching, the virgin mother of many virgins dedicated to God': 'ubi constructo monasterio uirginum Deo deuotarum perplurium mater uirgo et exemplis uitae caelestis esse coepit et monitis' (HE 4.19, Colgrave, pp. 392-93). Bede composed his hymn to Æthelthryth's virginity 'in honour of this queen and bride of Christ', 'in laudem ac praeconium eiusdem reginae ac sponsae Christi' (HE 4.20, Colgrave, pp. 397, 396). In his hymn he also celebrated the Virgin Mary, and virgin martyrs Agatha, Eulalia, Thecla, Euphemia, Agnes and Cecilia.⁸ Aldhelm similarly praised Eustochium (see above, ch. 2, note 1, p. 33), who spurned marriage, devoting herself instead to her spouse, Christ (*Carmen de Virginitate* 2136-41). Aldhelm indeed furnishes a rare example of the application of the bridal image to a male saint, Chrysanthus, in his *Carmen de Virginitate*. The pagan father of the saint tried to tempt his son with women, but the young soldier

Oscula virginels dispexit lubrica labris
Nec penetrare sinit stuprorum spicula pectus,
Sed procul excussit iaculatas fraude sagittas:
Non, sicut cecinit sponsali carmine vatis,
Mellea tunc roseis haerescunt labra labellis,
Dulcia sed Christi lentescunt labra labellis.

scorned the dangerous kisses of maiden-lips and did not allow the sharp sting of debauchery to penetrate his heart, but rather shook off the arrows launched in deceit. The 'honey-sweet lips' did not, as the poet sang in the betrothal song, 'cling to his rosy lips' [Claudian,

Epith. Laurentii, 801, but rather Christ's sweet lips lingered upon his. (lines 1155-60, Ehwald, pp. 401-02; Lapidge & Bosler 1985, 128).

This is a good illustration of the second stage of the development of the symbolism outlined above (pp. 125-27).

Ælfric must have thought that the ideas which Augustine had expressed in the passage from *De Sancta Virginitate* quoted above were still of value, for he translated them in his homily on the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary:

Nu syndon ða men swiðe wurðfulle,
ðe on mægðhade wuniað sylfwilles for gode,
þe healdað on lichaman, þæt þæt eall seo gelaðung 155
þurh geleafan hylt. And heo [= seo gelaðung] swa geefenlæcð
hire weres meder, þe wunede on mægðhade
and Crist þeah gebær on hyre clænan bosme.
Swa is eac seo gelaðung þurh geleafan mæden
and on gastlicere cenninge acenð dæghwamllice 160
micelne bearnteam on eallum middanearde.
Maria acende Crist lichamllice,
ure ealra heafod, and seo halige gelaðung
acenð gastlice Cristes limu oð ðis.
On ægþrum is mægðhad and eac swylce bearnteam, 165
and se bearnteam ne wanode, ne ne awyrde þone mægðhad
naþor ne on Marian, ne on godes gelaðunge.
Seo gelaðung is halig on lichaman and on gaste,
ac heo nis na eall mæden swa þeah on lichaman,
ac heo is swa þeah mæden soðlice on gaste, 170
and heo is eall halig for þam halgan geleafan,
and heo is swiðor halig on þam halgan mannum,
þe on mægðhade wuniað on lichaman and on gaste.

(Assmann 3.153-73)

Following Augustine, Ælfric refers here to both sexes: 'men' (153), 'mannum' (172); but in saints' lives, not least in those by Ælfric, the relationship between Christ and his bride is found expressed only in the lives of female saints.

Ælfric's 'Life of St Agnes' (LS 7) provides one of the most notable examples from the Old English Lives of the use of this imagery. The young Agnes, 'wlitig on ansyne . and wlitigre on geleafan' (13), responds to the overtures of the youth who woos her by telling him 'Ic hæbbe oðerne lufiend' (27). This lover she describes as far superior to the youth himself, 'þinne ungelican . on æðelborennysse / seðe me bead bæteran frætegunga' (28-29). She speaks of her lover in rich, sensuous, even erotic terms strongly reminiscent of the Song of Songs:

He befeng minne swiðran . and eac minne swuran .
mid deorwurðum stanum . and mid scinendum gimum ...

He geglængde me mid orle . of golde awæfen .
and mid ormettum mynum me gefretewode ...

His ansyn is wlitigre . and his lufu wynsumre .
his brydbedd me is gearo . nu iu mid dreamum .
His mædenu me singað . mid geswegum stemnum .
Of his muðe ic underfeng meoluc . and hunig .
nu ic eom beclypt . mid his clænum earmum .
his fægera lichama is minum geferlæht .

(32-47)

The youth, in his ignorance, can only understand what Agnes says literally. But her words and the riddling paradoxes which follow, referring to her lover's mother as virgin and to herself as virgin bride and mother have a symbolic application easily recognisable to

those aware of the tradition of exegesis and symbolism, the development of which has been described above:

His modor is mæden . and his mihtiga fæder
wifes ne breac . and him a bugað englas ...

þonne ic hine lufige . ic beo eallunga clæne .
þonne ic hine hreppe . ic beo unwemme .
ðonne ic hine underfo . ic beo mæden forð .
and þær bærn ne ateoriað . on ðam bryd-lace .

þær is eacnung buton sare . and singallic wæstmbærnyss . (49-62)

In her virginal fruitfulness she is like both Mary and the Church. At the close of her Life reference is made to the many who followed her example in virginity (293-95); she has borne many spiritual children for her groom.

There is one reference to the motif in the 'Life of Eugenia', in relation to Basilla, the young Roman convert who is wooed by a noble heathen suitor. She rejects the noble youth, whose patron is the emperor, for her chosen bridegroom, Christ:

Basilla hæfde enne hæðene wogere.
pompeius gecyged . swiðe æðelboren .
þam geuðe se casere . þæt kyneborenæ mæden .
ac heo hæfde gecoren crist hyre to brydguman .
and þone hæðenan wogere forþi habban nolde .

(LS 2.349-53)

20

Eugenia herself, who has disguised herself as a man, never speaks of Christ as her bridegroom, nor is she referred to in these terms by either the authors of the Latin versions or by Ælfric: the imagery was apparently not felt to be appropriate in the circumstances - as it was not, in general, in the lives of male saints.²

Later, in the twelfth century, Bernard (in his commentary on the Song of Songs) developed and expanded Origen's interpretation, that the devout soul was the bride wedded to Christ, or the Divine word (see Butler 1967, 97-98; and below, p. 397 ff.). The soul could of course be that of a man or woman - indeed, Bernard was principally addressing monks in his commentary. However, the identification of the bride of scriptures with the Church and with Mary continued; and in saints' lives throughout the Old and Early Middle English periods, the nuptial imagery is prominent in the lives of female saints.¹⁰

3) Attitudes to women

This part of the discussion is more complicated and needs to be treated at greater length. There seem to have been in the Christian tradition two kinds of attitude towards women, which I shall call i) the misogynist tradition, and ii) the moderate tradition.¹¹ Both traditions were available to the English. However, although, as we shall see, it appears to have been the misogynist tradition which played a greater part in the establishment of the emphasis on virginity in women, the evidence suggests that while virginity received emphasis in the Lives of women saints written in England, it was in fact the more moderate tradition which had found a response there. The two traditions will be described first, then the situation in England will be discussed.

1) The misogynist tradition.

This well-documented tradition associated women especially with sins of the flesh and sexual temptation.¹² Related to this were the special penalties Eve - and all her descendants - incurred with the

fall, the sorrows connected with marriage and childbirth (see Genesis 3.16).¹³ Virginity was therefore seen to be especially appropriate for women as a way out of their peculiar condition. Tertullian was a notable exponent of these attitudes, and his arguments in *De Cultu Feminarum* (dating from between 197 and 202) were echoed by his successors, particularly Cyprian, Ambrose and Jerome.¹⁴

In Tertullian's view, Eve was not only responsible for the fall, but she ultimately had to bear the responsibility for Christ's death:

Tu es diaboli ianua, tu es arboris illius resignatrix, tu es diuinae legis prima desertrix; tu es quae eum suasisti, quem diabolus aggredi non ualuit; tu imaginem dei, hominem Adam, facile elisisti; propter tuum meritum, id est mortem, etiam filius dei mori habuit.

You are the devil's gateway, you 'plucked the fruit'¹⁵ of that tree, you are the first who deserted the divine law; you are the one who persuaded him whom the devil was not strong enough to attack; all too easily you destroyed the image of God, the man Adam; because of your desert, that is, death, even the son of God had to die. (*De Cultu Feminarum* I,1.2, CCL I, 1954, p. 343; Dressler 1977, 117)

Tertullian argued that all women bore the guilt of Eve, just as they inherited the punishments mentioned in Genesis 3.16: sorrow in childbearing and subjection to their husbands. An awareness of this should be apparent in their dress:

Si tanta in terris moraretur fides, quanta merces eius expectatur in caelis, nulla omnino uestrum, sorores dilectissimae, ex quo deum uiuum cognouisset et de sua, id est de feminae condicione didicisset, laetiolem habitum, ne dicam gloriosiolem appetisset, ut non magis in sordibus ageret et squalorem potius affectaret, ipsam se circumferens Eua lugentem et paenitentem, quo plenius id, quod de Eua trahit, - ignominiam dico primi delicti et inuidiam perditionis humanae - omni satisfactionis habitu expiaret. In doloribus et anxietatibus paris,

mulier, et ad uirum tuum conuersio tua, et ille dominatur tui (Genesis 3.16): et Euam te esse nescis? Viuit sententia dei super sexum istum in hoc saeculo: uiuat et reatus necesse est.

If there existed upon earth a faith in proportion to the reward that faith will receive in heaven, no one of you, my beloved sisters, from the time when you came to know the living God and recognised your own state, that is, the condition of being a woman, would have desired a too attractive garb, and much less anything that seemed too ostentatious. I think, rather, that you would have dressed in mourning garments and even neglected your exterior, acting the part of mourning and repentant Eve in order to expiate more fully by all sorts of penitential garb that which woman derives from Eve - the ignominy, I mean, of original sin and the odium of being the cause of the fall of the human race. 'In sorrow and anxiety you will bring forth, O woman, and you are subject to your husband, and he is your master'. Do you not believe that you are (each) an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives on even in our times and so it is necessary that the guilt should live on, also. (*De Cultu Feminarum* I, 1.1-2, CCSL I.343; Dressler, pp. 117-8)

Tertullian advocated penitential garments and even neglect in the dress of women. Others writing after him also argued vehemently that the women they addressed (virgins and widows undertaking a holy life) should not adorn themselves. Thus Cyprian's condemnation of women who dared to try to improve on God's creation by colouring their hair:

Dominus tuus dicit: 'non potes facere capillum unum album aut nigrum' (Matthew 5.36): et tu ad uincendam Domini tui uocem uis te esse potiolem, audaci conatu et sacrilego contemptu crines tuos inficis, malo praesagio futurorum capillos iam tibi flammeos auspicas.¹⁶

Your Lord says 'You cannot make one hair white or black'. But you, in order to triumph over the word of your Lord, wish to be more powerful than He; in your wanton attempt and sacrilegious insolence you dye your

hair: with an evil foreboding of the future you begin now to have flame-coloured hair. (*De Habitu Virginum* 16, Keenan 1932, 60-61)¹⁷

Cyprian linked the use of adornments and cosmetics with the fallen angels. He deplored the use of ornaments, such as precious stones set in gold, and ear piercing, and went on:

quae omnia peccatores et apostatae angeli suis artibus prodiderunt, quando ad terrena contagia deuoluti a caelesti uigore recesserunt. illi et oculos circumducto nigrore fucare et genas mendacio ruboris inficere et mutare adulterinis coloribus crinem et expugnare omnem oris et capitis ueritatem corruptelae suae inpugnatione docuerunt.

All these things the sinful and apostate angels brought into being by their own arts, when, having fallen into earthly contagion, they lost their heavenly power. They also taught how to paint the eyes by spreading a black substance around them, and to tinge the cheeks with a counterfeit blush, and to change the hair by false colours, and to drive out all truth from the countenance and head by the assault of their corruption. (14, Keenan, pp. 58-59)

To use these articles was to alter God's image, and to prevent one from seeing God:

Non metuis, oro, quae talis es, ne cum resurrectionis dies uenerit, artifex tuus te non recognoscat ... dicat: 'opus hoc meum non est nec imago haec nostra est' ... Deum uidere non poteris, quando oculi tibi non sunt quos Deus fecit sed quos diabolus infecit.

Do you not fear, I ask, being such as you are, that when the day of resurrection comes, your Maker may not recognise you, ... may say: 'This work is not mine nor is this our image.' ... You cannot see God since your eyes are not those which God has made, but which the devil has infected. (17, Keenan, pp. 60-61)

Cyprian warned (and Jerome would have agreed with him - see above, pp. 36-37) that to use ornaments and cosmetics was to lose one's virginity:

sic dum ornari cultius, dum liberius euagari uirgines uolunt, esse uirgines desinunt, furtiuo dedecore corruptae, uiduae antequam nuptae, non mariti sed Christi adulterae, quam fuerant praemiis ingentibus uirgines destinatae, tam magna supplicia pro amissa uirginitate sensurae.

virgins in desiring to be adorned more elegantly, to go about more freely, cease to be virgins, being corrupted by a hidden^{1e} shame, widows before they are brides, adulteresses not to a husband but to Christ. Just as they had been destined as virgins for wonderful rewards, so now will they suffer great punishments for their lost virginity. (20, Keenan pp. 64-65)

Women who adorned themselves provoked a similar response in Ambrose: 'Tolerabilior propemodum in adulterio crimina sunt: ibi enim pudicitia, hic natura adulteratur': 'The crime of adultery is almost more tolerable than yours: for adultery adulterates modesty, but this adulterates nature' (*De Virginibus* 1,6.28, PL 16.197).

It is perhaps not surprising that the use of cosmetics was attacked when it seems clear that many male ascetics feared all women as potential sources of temptation, as some quotations from the *Vitae Patrum* and the *Historia Monachorum* will illustrate:

Monachus occurrit ancillis Dei in itinere quodam. Quibus visis divertit extra viam. Cui dixit abbatissa: Tu si perfectus monachus esses, non respiceres nos sic, ut agnosceres quia feminae eramus.

A monk met the handmaids of God upon a certain road, and at the sight of them he turned out of the way. And the Abbess said to him, 'Hadst thou been a perfect monk thou wouldst not have looked so close as to

perceive that we were women. ('Verbum Seniorum', 'The Sayings of the Fathers' translated from the Greek by Pelagius the Deacon and John the Subdeacon, *Vitae Patrum* 4.62, PL 73.872; Waddell 1962, 104)

Her remark has a certain edge to it.

A macabre story is told of Macarius in the *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, Rufinus' Latin redaction of c. 400-410 of the Greek account of a journey through Egypt by a monk from Jerusalem some years earlier:

Alia quoque minor puella ad eum deducta est, cujus obscoena corporis ita omni ex parte computruerant, ut consumptis carnibus, interiora quoque et secreta naturae nudarentur, ac vermium ebulliret inde innumera multitudo, ita ut nec accedere quidem quisquam ad eam posset prae foetoris horrore. Haec cum allata a parentibus, et projecta fuisset ante fores ejus, miserans virginis cruciatus: Aequo animo, inquit, esto, filia, haec tibi ad salutem Dominus, non ad interitum dedit: unde providendum est magis, ut sanitas tua nullum tibi periculum conferat. Et cum institisset orationibus per septem continuos dies, et oleum benedicens in nomine Domini perungeret membra ejus, ita eam sanam reddidit, ut muliebris in ea naturae nulla forma, nulla species appareret, sed esset ei inter viros conversatio, absque femineae suspicionis obstaculo.

Another story is about a little girl who was brought to him, her body so diseased in all its parts that the flesh was eaten away and the inside parts were laid bare, and there an innumerable host of worms was breeding, so that no one was able to come near her because of the horror of the stench. She was brought to him by her parents and thrown down in front of his door; he had pity on the tormented girl and said, 'Be calm, my daughter, for the Lord has given you this for salvation and not for death. It is a great work of providence so that you should not be in danger'. When he had arranged for prayers to be said for seven days continuously, he blessed oil, anointed her limbs in the name of the Lord and so he restored her health, but in such a way that no

femininity showed in her form, no female parts were apparent, so that in all her contact with men, she never beguiled them with womanly deceits. (ch. 28, PL 21.451-52; Russell 1981, 151)¹⁹

It is perhaps worth noting that in the words attributed to Macarius he himself comforts the child by telling her that she will have been saved from danger; the teller of the story, however, changes the emphasis in his own comments, implying that men would thereafter be safe from her. In either case, however, it is accepted that her female form would have been dangerous, whoever needed the greater protection. The fate of the little girl who loses her female attributes can be compared with the torture of St Agatha, who has her breast cut off as a punishment for rejecting the overtures of Quintianus - almost as a punishment for being female at all, if she would not do as he wished (LS 8).

Another story from the *Vitae Patrum*, that of Arsenius, explains that all women are potentially dangerous because the devil uses them to tempt holy men:²⁰

Sedente eodem abbate Arsenio aliquando in Canopo, venit una matrona virgo de Roma, dives valde, et timens Deum, ut videret eum, et suscepit eam Theophilus archiepiscopus. Illa autem rogavit eum ut ageret cum sene, ut videret eum. Qui abiens ad eum rogavit, dicens: Aliqua matrona venit de Roma, et vult videre te. Senex vero non acquievit (5) ut veniret ad eum. Cum ergo haec renuntiata fuissent supradictae matronae, jussit sterni animalia, dicens: Credo in Deum, quia videbo eum. Sunt enim in civitate nostra multi homines; sed ego veni prophetas videre. Et cum pervenisset ad cellam ejusdem senis, juxta Dei ordinationem inventus est opportune foris cellam senex. Et ut (10) vidit eum supradicta matron, prostravit se ad pedes ejus. Ille autem levavit eam cum indignatione; et intuens in eam, dixit: Si faciem meam videre vis, ecce vide. Illa autem prae verecundia non consideravit

faciem ejus. Et dixit ei senex: Non audisti opera mea? haec enim videre necesse est. Quomodo autem praesumpsisti tantam navigatio- (15) nem assumere? Nescis quia mulier es, et non debes exire quoquam? An ut vadas Romam, et dicas aliis mulieribus: Quia vidi Arsenium, et facias mare viam mulierum venientium ad me? Illa autem dixit: Si voluerit me Deus reverti Romam, non permitto aliquam venire huc. Sed ora pro me, et memor esto mei semper. Ille autem respondens dixit (20) ei: Ora²¹ Deum ut deleat memoriam tui de corde meo. Quae audiens haec, egressa est turbata. Et cum venisset in civitatem, prae tristitia febrile coepit. Et nuntiatum est archiepiscopo quia infirmaretur; et venit eam consolari, interrogans quid haberet. Illa autem dixit ei: Utinam non pervenissem huc! dixi enim seni: Memor esto mei. Et (25) dixit mihi: Ora Deum ut deleatur memoria tui de corde meo, et ecce ego ipsa prae tristitia morior. Et dixit ei archiepiscopus: Nescis quia mulier es, et inimicus per mulieres sanctos viros impugnat? Propterea hoc dixit senex, nam pro anima tua semper orat. Et ita curata est mens ejus. Et discessit cum gaudio ad propria. (PL 73.858-9)

At one time when the abbot Arsenius was living in Canopus, there came from Rome in hope to see him a lady, a virgin, of great wealth, and one that feared God (lines 1-2).

Arsenius refused to see her, but still she approached him and cast herself at his feet (2-11). He rebuked her and complained that she would return to Rome, tell of her visit, and then 'a high road of women' would start coming (11-18);

But she said, 'If God will that I return to Rome, I shall let no woman come hither. But pray for me, and always remember me'. He answered her and said, 'I pray God that He will wipe the memory of thee from my heart' (18-21).

Thus dismissed, the woman returned to Rome and fell ill with sorrow over the incident (21-23). The archbishop came to comfort her:

'Knowest thou not that thou art a woman, and through women doth the Enemy lay siege to holy men? For this reason did the old man say it,

but he doth ever pray for thy soul.' And so her mind was healed. And she departed with joy to her own place. (Waddell 1962, 92-94)

Thus women were to be shunned because they were instruments of the devil. But it was not enough to keep away from women; even when a man was alone, and far from women, he was still subject to sexual temptation by the devil in female form. A classic case is that of St Antony, whose *Vita*, in the Evagrian version, provided a model for so many subsequent lives. The *Vita* describes Antony's resistance to the devil's temptations. The devil began by attempting to sow lustful thoughts in Antony's mind and arouse his senses. He then masqueraded as a woman in order to tempt him. St Antony fought off the attacks on his thoughts with prayer; his body was fortified against lust by watching and fasting; and the recollection of the threat of the flames of hell and the pain of the worm enabled him to resist temptation:

Nam et ille cogitationes sordidas conabatur inserere, et hic eas oratu submovebat assiduo. Ille titillabat sensus naturali carnis ardore; hic fide, vigiliis et jejuniis corpus omne vallabat. Ille per noctes in pulchrae mulieris vertebatur ornatum, nulla omittens figmenta lasciviae; hic ultrices gehennae flammam et dolorem vermium recordans, ingestae sibi libidini opponebat. (Evagrius, *Vita Antonii* ch. 4, PL 73.129. See also Meyer 1950, 23)

This devil identified himself as the 'Spirit of Fornication': 'Ego sum, propter quem propheta lapsos increpat, dicens: 'Spiritu fornicationis seducti estis' (compare Osee 4.12) (PL 73.130). Other examples of the devil tempting holy men in the form of women can be found in the *Historia Monachorum* (see Russell 1981, 57 & 60, on John of Lycopolis).

The immediate cause of the weaknesses and distractions and dangers of the flesh in men was evidently thought to be the sight of the female form.

Such attitudes may also have received support from an exegetical tradition which identified Eve with the flesh: Burchmore points out that a common patristic interpretation of the story of the fall of Adam and Eve was that Eve represented the senses and Adam reason (1986, 118 & 128).²² According to Augustine, for example, 'Eve was deceived because, living according to the carnal senses and not directly in touch with God, she was intellectually weaker than Adam, who lived according to the spirit and received God's law directly' (*De Gen. ad litt.* 11.42, PL 34.452-53; Burchmore, p. 132). Gregory's use of the idea was more symbolic, and not necessarily dependent on the idea of Eve's inferiority. In a passage in which he described the stages by which sin is committed, he wrote: 'All sin is committed in three ways, namely by suggestion, pleasure, and consent. The devil makes the suggestion, the flesh delights in it and the spirit consents. It was the serpent who suggested the first sin, Eve representing the flesh was delighted by it, and Adam representing the spirit consented to it': 'Tribus enim modis impletur omne peccatum, uidelicet suggestione, delectatione, consensu. Suggestio quippe fit per diabolum, delectatio per carnem, consensus per spiritu; quia et primam culpam serpens suggessit, Eva uelut caro delectata est, Adam uero uelut spiritus consensit' (HE 1.27, Colgrave 1969, 101 & 100; see also Genesis 3.1-6). Regarding the struggle between the flesh and the spirit, Gregory goes on to quote and comment on St Paul's lament in

Romans 7.23: 'I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members' (ibid., p. 103).

Together with the tradition which identified woman with the flesh was an aversion evident in some writers, notably Jerome, to the idea of female bodily functions. This can be compared with Old Testament taboos, for example on menstruating women.²³ These seem to have been regarded as part of the special penalties Eve incurred with the fall. It was commonplace in virginity treatises to point out the advantages to women of virginity over marriage and childbearing. Cyprian wrote:

Seruate, uirgines, seruate quod esse coepistis. seruate quod eritis. magna uos merces habet, praemium grande uirtutis, munus maximum castitatis. uultis scire quo malo careat et quid boni teneat continentiae uirtus? 'multiplicabo', inquit mulieri Deus, 'tristitias tuas et gemitus tuos, et in tristitia paries filios, et conuersio tua ad uirum tuum et ipse tui dominabitur' (Genesis 3.16). uos ab hac sententia liberae estis, uos mulierum tristitias et gemitus non timetis, nullus uobis de partu circa filios metus est: nec maritus dominus, dominus uester et caput Christus est ad instar et uicem masculi, sors uobis et condicio communis est. Domini uox est illa dicentis: 'filii saeculi huius generant et generantur: qui autem habuerint dignationem saeculi illius et resurrectionis a mortuis, non nubunt neque matrimonium faciunt: neque enim incipient mori. aequales enim sunt angelis Dei, cum sint filii resurrectionis' (Luke 20.34-36). quod futuri sumus, iam uos esse coepistis. uos resurrectionis gloriam in isto saeculo iam tenetis, per saeculum sine saeculi contagione transitis: cum castae perseueratis et uirgines, angelis Dei estis aequales.

Persevere, virgins, persevere in what you have begun to be. Persevere in what you will be. A great recompense is reserved for you, a glorious prize for virtue, a most excellent reward for purity. Do you

wish to know from what misery the virtue of continence is free, what advantage it possesses? 'I will multiply', said God to the woman, 'thy sorrows and thy groans, and in sorrow shalt thou bring forth thy children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall have dominion over thee.' You are free from this sentence; you do not fear the sorrows of women and their groans; you have no fear about the birth of children, nor is your husband your master, but your Master and Head is Christ, in the likeness of and in place of the man; your lot and condition are in common. This is the voice of the Lord that says: 'the children of this world beget and are begotten; but they who shall be accounted worthy of that world, and of the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; neither will they die any more, for they are equal to the angels of God since they are the children of the resurrection.' What we shall be, already you have begun to be. The glory of the resurrection you already have in this world; you pass through the world without the pollution of the world; while you remain chaste and virgins, you are equal to the angels of God. (*De Habitu Virginum* 22, Keenan 1932, 66-7)²⁴

Jerome went further than this in his horror of pregnancy and childbirth. Woman was bad enough. How much worse was a naked woman. A pregnant woman was revolting, and a virgin's nakedness was a danger to her own virgin state; with regard to bathing, he wrote:

Scio praecepisse quosdam, ne virgo Christi cum eunuchis lavet, nec cum maritalis feminis: quia alii non deponunt [al. 'deponant'] animos virorum, aliae tumentibus uteris, praeferunt [al. 'praeferant'] foeditatem. Mihi omnino in adulta virgine lavacra displicent, quae seipsam debet erubescere, et nudam videre non posse. Si enim vigiliis et jejuniis [II Corinthians 6.5] macerat corpus suum, et in servitutem redigit [I Corinthians 9.27]; si flammam libidinis et incentiva ferventis aetatis extinguere cupit continentiae frigore; si appetitis sordibus turpare [al. 'turbare'] festinat naturalem pulchritudinem: cur e contrario balnearum fomentis sopitos ignes suscitatur?

As regards the use of the bath, I know that some are content with saying that a Christian virgin should not bathe along with eunuchs or with married women, with the former because they are still men at all events in mind, and with the latter because women with child offer a revolting spectacle. For myself, however, I wholly disapprove of baths for a virgin of full age. Such a one should blush and feel overcome at the idea of seeing herself undressed. By vigils and fasts she mortifies her body and brings it into subjection. By a cold chastity she seeks to put out the flame of lust and to quench the hot desires of youth. And by a deliberate squalor she makes haste to spoil her natural good looks. Why then, should she add fuel to a sleeping fire by taking baths? (Letter 107.11, PL 22.876; Wace & Schaff VI.194)²⁵

Jerome's disgust was such that he seemed to feel that a most important aspect of Christ's sacrifice was that he submitted to being born from a woman at all:

Dei Filius pro nostra salute, hominis factus est filius. Novem mensibus in utero ut nascatur expectat, fastidia sustinet, cruentus egreditur, pannis involvitur, blanditiis delinitur [al. 'deridetur'].

For our salvation the Son of God is made the Son of Man. Nine months He awaits His birth in the womb, undergoes the most revolting conditions, and comes forth covered with blood, to be swathed in rags and covered²⁶ with caresses. (Letter 22.39, PL 22.423; Wace & Schaff, p. 28)

Jerome may have used the strongest language on the subject, but his views were shared by other writers. Ambrose also described the sorrows of marriage, childbirth and motherhood in colourful detail (see *De Virg. ad Marc.* ch. 6). Writers recommending virginity to

women clearly felt that these provided them with powerful arguments for their cause.²⁷ Virginity was an effective antidote to the special sufferings of women on earth since the fall.

11) The moderate tradition.

There was another tradition, in which more moderate and humane attitudes towards women were expressed. It must be remembered, however, that such 'moderation' is often a question of degree. Two of the fathers, Augustine and Gregory, who will be quoted in connection with this tradition have already been quoted in connection with 'the misogynist tradition', where they were used to illustrate the identification of Eve with the flesh (above, pp. 141-42). However, we shall see that in practice, particularly in the case of Gregory, this traditional symbolic identification did not inevitably, or overwhelmingly, influence the writer's attitudes to real women.

A story from one of Cassian's *Conferences* shows that Cassian clearly felt it was possible to be over-zealous in avoiding women:

Hic igitur abba Paulus in tantam cordis puritatem quiete solitudinis silentioque profecerat, ut non dicam uultum femineum, sed ne uestimenta quidem sexus illius conspectui suo pateretur offerri. Nam cum eidem pergenti ad cuiusdam senioris cellam una cum abbate Archebio eiusdem solitudinis accola casu mulier obuiasset, offensus occursum eius tanta fuga ad suum rursus monasterium praetermisso quod adripuerat pia uisitatio officio recucurrit, quanta nullus a facie leonis uel inmanissimi draconis aufugeret ... Quod licet zelo castitatis et puritatis ardore sit factum, tamen quia non secundum scientiam praesumptum est, sed obseruantia disciplinae iustaeque districtio-
nis excessus est modus (non enim solam familiaritatem quae vere est noxia feminarum, sed ipsam quoque figuram sexus illius credidit exsecrandam), tali confestim correptione percussus est, ut

eius uniuersum corpus paralyseos ualitudine solueretur ... ut in eo nihil amplius ex homine quam immobilis tantum atque insensibilis figura remaneret. Eo autem redactus est, ut infirmitati eius nullo modo uirorum diligentia deseruire sufficeret, nisi sola ei muliebris sedulitas ministrasset. (Conf. 7.26, SC 42, pp. 268-69)

The Abbot Paul had made such progress in purity of heart in the stillness and silence of the desert, that he did not suffer, I will not say a woman's face, but even the clothes of one of that sex to appear in his sight. For when as he was going to the cell of one of the Elders together with Abbot Archebius who lived in the same desert, by accident a woman met him he was so disgusted at meeting her that he dropped the business of his friendly visit which he had taken in hand and dashed back again to his own monastery with greater speed than a man would flee from the face of a lion or terrible dragon.

The Abbot's reaction is like that of the monk in the *Vitae Patrum* (above, pp. 136-37). But he is misguided, and is punished for his excessive zeal. The tale ends with a satisfying sense of justice:

But though this was done in his eagerness for chastity and desire for purity, yet because it was done not according to knowledge, and because the observance of discipline, and the methods of proper strictness were overstrained, for he imagined that not merely familiarity with a woman (which is the real harm), but even the very form of that sex was to be execrated, he was forthwith overtaken by such a punishment that his whole body was struck with paralysis ... so that there was left in him nothing more of his [humanity]²⁸ than an immovable and insensible [form].²⁹ But he was reduced to such a condition that the utmost care of men was unable to minister to his infirmity, but only the tender service of women could attend to his wants. ('First Conference of Abbot Serenus', Wace & Schaff XI.371-72)

Paul had to submit to the ministrations of women for the remaining four years of his life.

Augustine's advice on how women should conduct themselves was expressed with rather more moderation than that of Jerome or Cyprian. He wrote a letter (Letter 221, dated 423) to the nuns of the monastery at Hippo where his sister had been prioress, setting out general rules for their guidance. Augustine's general advice was that the nuns should avoid quarrels and petty disagreements and jealousies, as this had apparently been a problem for them. On contact with men, he said that the sight of men was not forbidden, although more than a passing glance could lead to loss of chastity:

Oculi vestri etsi jaciuntur in aliquem, figantur in neminem. Neque enim quando proceditis, viros videre prohibemini, sed appetere, aut ipsis appeti velle.

Though a passing glance be directed towards any man, let your eyes look fixedly at none; for when you are walking you are not forbidden to see men, but you must neither let your desires go out to them, nor wish to be the objects of desire on their part. (PL 33.961; Wace & Schaff I.565)

His comment on bathing was, in comparison with Jerome's, remarkably succinct and unemotional:

Lavacrum etiam corporum, ususque balnearum non sit assiduus, sed eo quo solet intervallo temporis tribuatur, hoc est, semel in mense.

Let the washing of the body and the use of baths be not constant, but at the usual interval assigned to it, i.e., once a month. (PL 33.963; Wace & Schaff, p. 567)³⁰

He says no more about it than this. On the question of adornments and cosmetics, Augustine was firm but not angry. In making his comments, moreover, he referred to both men and women ('Christianorum et

Christianarum'). His views are expressed in a letter to Possidius, a friend, who became bishop of Calama in 397:

Nolo tamen de ornamentis auri vel vestis praeproperam habeas in prohibendo sententiam, nisi in eos qui neque conjugati, neque conjugari cupientes, cogitare debent quomodo placeant Deo. Illi autem cogitant quae sunt mundi, quomodo placeant vel viri uxoribus, vel mulieres maritis (I Corinthians 7.32-4). Nisi quod capillos nudare feminas, quas etiam caput velare Apostolus jubet (I Corinthians 11.5-13), nec maritatus decet. Fucari autem pigmentis, quo vel rubicundior vel candidior appareat, adulterina fallacia est, qua non dubito etiam ipsos maritos se nolle decipi, quibus solis permittendae sunt feminae ornari, secundum veniam, non secundum imperium. Nam verus ornatus maxime Christianorum et Christianarum, non tantum nullus fucus mendax, verum ne auri quidem vestisque pompa, sed mores boni sunt.

I would not have you pass a hasty judgement against ornaments of gold or dress, except in the case of the unmarried, and those not wishing to marry, who have to think how they may please God. Now, married people *do* think of worldly things: husbands how they may please their wives, and wives how they may please their husbands. Yet even married women should not uncover their heads, for the Apostle orders them to keep them veiled. But it is immoral deception to be painted with cosmetics, in order to appear to have either more or less colour. I have no doubt that even husbands are unwilling to be so deceived, and it is for their sakes alone that wives are allowed to adorn themselves, as a concession, not as a command. For not only is lying paint not a real adornment, especially in the case of Christian men and women, nor are grand dresses, nor gold ornaments. Their good life is their adornment. (Letter 245, PL 33.1960; Allies 1890, 45)

Gregory also revealed a more humane, and less reproachful or censorious attitude than some of his predecessors. His moderate personal feelings affected his theology as much as Jerome's or Tertullian's dislikes and obsessions affected theirs. Gregory's

replies to questions from Augustine of Canterbury, for example, show that he did not share Jerome's distaste for female bodily functions:

Mulier etenim pregnans cur non debeat baptizari, cum non sit ante omnipotentis Dei oculos culpa aliqua fecunditas carnis? ... immortalitatem homini pro peccato suo abstulit et tamen pro benignitate suae pietatis fecunditatem ei subolis reseruauit ... In illo quippe mysterio, in quo omnis culpa funditus extinguatur, ualde stultum est, si donum gratiae contradicere posse uideatur.

Why indeed should a pregnant woman not be baptized, since the fruitfulness of the body is no sin in the eyes of Almighty God? ... He deprived man of immortality because of his transgression and yet in his loving-kindness and mercy He preserved man's power of propagating the race after him ... In this mystery [baptism] in which all guilt is utterly blotted out, it would be extremely foolish if a gift of grace could be considered an objection. (HE 1.27, Colgrave 1969, 88-91)

mulier, dum consuetudinem menstrum patitur, prohiberi ecclesiam intrare non debet, quia ei naturae superfluitas in culpam non ualet reputari, et per hoc quod inuita patitur iustum non est ut ingressu ecclesiae priuatur. Nouimus namque quod mulier, quae fluxum patiebatur sanguinis, post tergum Domini humiliter ueniens uestimenti eius fimbriam tetigit, atque ab ea statim sua infirmitas recessit (Matthew 9.20). Si ergo in fluxu sanguinis posita laudabiliter potuit Domini uestimentum tangere, cur quae menstruum sanguinis patitur, ei non liceat Domini ecclesiam intrare?

A woman must not be prohibited from entering a church during her usual periods, for this natural overflowing cannot be reckoned a crime; and so it is not fair that she should be deprived from entering the church for that which she suffers unwillingly. For we know that the woman who was suffering from the issue of blood humbly came behind the Lord's back and touched the hem of his garment and immediately her infirmity left her. So if she, when she had an issue of blood, could touch the Lord's garment and win commendation, why is it not lawful

for a woman in her periods to enter the Lord's church? (HE 1.27, Colgrave, pp. 92-93)

iii) Attitudes to women in England before the Conquest

The Anglo-Saxons were familiar with all the writers discussed above; both with the works which expressed a fear or dislike of women, such as those of Cyprian, Jerome, and the *Historia Monachorum*, and with those which revealed more moderate and humane attitudes, such as those of Cassian and Gregory. The influence of Gregory must have had a good deal to do with the fact that it was the current in the Christian tradition which did not view women as intrinsically inferior, or more culpable or dangerous than men which found a response in England.³¹

Even the accounts of male ascetic saints show that women were not feared or avoided, or regarded as dangerous. Colgrave points out that 'Cuthbert's attitude to women is always represented ... as being of the friendliest' in both the Anonymous Life and in Bede's Prose Life (Colgrave 1940, 318-19). Unlike some of the desert fathers, whose way of life provided an example for him in many other ways, Cuthbert visited women, ate with them and answered their questions (see the Anon. Life 2.7, 3.6, 4.5, 4.6, 4.10; and Bede's Life, chs 10 & 37).

There is a notable absence of sexual temptation in Felix's life of the English hermit saint Guthlac (Colgrave 1956). Felix's use of his sources in this particularly thoughtful and well constructed *Vita* suggests that sexual temptations and the dangers of women were not seen as a problem or an issue of interest either to the saint, apparently, or to Felix: Felix chose what seemed most important to him

in connection with Guthlac's life and sanctity. He had used Evagrius's *Vita Antonii* as a model for his chapters on Guthlac's fights against devils (see Roberts 1979, 9); but he did not include sexual temptation in his account of Guthlac's temptations, and there is no indication of whether or not Guthlac was a virgin.³² Guthlac had been a successful soldier before deciding to become instead a 'miles Christi'. Felix based this aspect of his life on the *Vita Martinii* by Sulpicius Severus, a work not in the misogynist tradition. Martin had also been a soldier. Sulpicius Severus wrote that Martin never shared the (unspecified) vices which the other soldiers indulged (ch. 2). Martin was also attacked by devils, but not in the form of women. Lust was not mentioned as one of his temptations. Women, indeed, are scarcely mentioned either by Sulpicius Severus or Felix. The only woman of any note is Guthlac's sister, Pege. The same is true of the English versions of Guthlac's life. The English saints Guthlac and Cuthbert were thus in some respects more like Martin than Antony, in spite of the continuing influence of Antony's Life.

Bede and Aldhelm stressed the positive value of virginity in women - celebrated it, indeed, (see Bede's hymn in praise of Æthelthryth, HE 4.20), but without denigration or discussion of their inferiority or disadvantages. Aldhelm addressed his *De Virginitate* to the nuns of Barking Abbey.³³ It is a significant innovation that his catalogue of virgin saints consisted of both men and women; none of the earlier producers of virginity treatises had given much attention to male virgins. Barking was indeed a double house, and this may partly have been the reason for Aldhelm's inclusion of male virgins

(as Lapidge & Herren suggest, 1979, 57). But the treatise was addressed to the nuns, and it seems possible that in Aldhelm's eyes virginity was of equal value in both men and women, so that male virgins as well as female could provide a model to be followed by women. In the work he quoted Cyprian (in ch. 27), Jerome, and Ambrose, and he implied that the recipients of his work were familiar with them too (see ch. 8); but he advised the reading of Cassian and Gregory (ch. 13). He did quote Cyprian's strictures on women adorning themselves (ch. 56), but he asserted a little later:

Pudet referre quorundam frontosam elationis impudentiam et comptam stoliditatis insolentiam, quae in utroque sexu non solum sanctimonialum sub regimine coenubii conversantium, verum etiam ecclesiasticorum sub dicione pontificali in clero degentium contra canonum decreta et regularis vitae normam deprehenduntur usurpatae ob id solum, ut crustu interdicto falerataque venustate carnalis statura comatur et habitudo corporea membratim ac particulatim perornetur. Nam cultus gemini sexus huiuscemodi constat subucula bissina, tonica coccinea sive iacintina, capitium et manicae sericis clavatae.

It is a disgrace to mention the shameless impudence of vanity and the sleek insolence of stupidity which (vanity and insolence) are to be discerned in those of both sexes, not only those living cloistered under the discipline of the monastery but even the ecclesiastics whose clerical sphere of duty is under the control of a bishop, contrary to the decrees of canon law and of the norm of the regular life: which (scil. vanity and insolence) are adopted for one purpose only, that the bodily figure may be adorned with forbidden ornaments and charming decorations, and that the physical appearance may be glamorized in every part and every limb. This sort of glamorization for either sex consists in fine linen shirts, in scarlet or blue tunics, in necklines and sleeves embroidered with silk. (ch. 58, Ehwald, pp. 317-18; Lapidge & Herren 1979, 127-28)

Aldhelm placed his emphasis on the joys and strengths of virginity; the disadvantages to women of a married life occupy a very small part of the work, and there is no echo of the idea that women were especially associated with the sins of the flesh.

The letters which passed between Boniface and his circle of fellow-missionaries and correspondents express relationships of mutual respect and affection far removed from the fears and dislikes of some earlier writers. Men and women worked together in the common struggle. Boniface wrote this encouragement to the Abbess Bugga:

tribulationes mundanas toto mentis adnisu contemne, quia omnes milites Christi utriusque sexus tempestates et tribulationes infirmitatesque huius saeculi despexerunt pro nihiloque duxerunt.

Scorn earthly trials with your whole soul; for all soldiers of Christ of either sex have despised temporal troubles and tempests and have held the frailties of this world as naught. (Tangl no. 94, dated 732-754: 1916, 381-82; Emerton 1940, 171)

A letter from Pope Zacharias to Boniface suggests that this was the prevailing view:

Nam et hoc inquisivit fraternitas tua: si liceat, sanctimoniales feminas, quemadmodum viri, sibi invicem pedes abluere tam in caena Domini quamque in aliis diebus. Hoc dominicum preceptum est, quod, qui per fidem impleverit, habebit ex eo laudem. Etenim viri et mulieres unum Dominum habemus, qui in caelis est.

You enquire whether nuns are to wash each other's feet, as men do on Holy Thursday as well as on other days. It is the Lord's teaching that he who does good works by faith shall receive praise. Men and women have one God, who is in heaven. (Tangl 87, dated Nov. 4 751: p. 371; Emerton, p. 162)³⁴

The evidence for attitudes on the subject in the later Anglo-Saxon period is rather scanty. What there is suggests that while the works mentioned above were still known, again, women do not seem to have been particularly identified with the flesh. *Genesis B* is worth examination in this context for the attitude it expresses towards Eve and the effects of the fall. *Genesis B* is an Old English translation from an Old Saxon poem dating from the mid ninth century (Greenfield & Calder 1986, 210). The translator, 'probably a continental Saxon in England' (ibid.), gives a dramatic and moving account of the temptation and fall of Adam and Eve rather different from any other extant account (see Evans 1963, and Woolf 1963). Eve is shown to have been deceived because she had a weaker mind. But Adam and Eve's nakedness is associated with cold, not sexuality (a point which Kliman has made, 1977, 42; see also 39-42). The poem describes how the tempter in angelic guise, having failed in his first approach to Adam, succeeds in deceiving Eve because of her 'weaker mind', 'hæfde hire wacran hige metod gemearcod' (Krapp 1931, lines 590-91). Thus susceptible to the devil's deception she is persuaded that only if she can cause Adam to eat the fruit will she save him from the anger he has incurred by his refusal to heed the words of the being who seems to be God's messenger, and his instructions to eat the fruit:

Heo dyde hit þeah þurh holdne hyge, nyste þæt þær hearma swa
fela,
fyrenearfeða, fylgean sceolde
monna cynne, þæs heo on mod genam
þæt heo þæs laðan bodan larum hyrde (709-12)

She is thus not moved by pride or vanity, and can scarcely be blamed. Even the poet wonders that God should have suffered so many of his servants to be led astray by lies which came as (good) advice:

þæt is micel wundor
þæt hit ece god æfre wolde,
þeoden þolian, þæt wurde þegn swa monig
forlædd be þam lugenum þe for þam larum com. (595-98)

The poet here seems above all to be sympathetic to Eve's predicament and he does not identify her particularly with the flesh. The pair feel their nakedness, but their awareness of their bodies takes the form of a new vulnerability to hunger, thirst, cold and heat:³⁵ Adam laments:

Nu slit me hunger and þurst
bitre on breostum, þæs wit begra ær
wæron orsorge on ealle tid.
Hu sculon wit nu libban oððe on þys lande wesan,
gif her wind cymð, westan oððe eastan,
suðan oððe norðan? Gesweorc up færeð,
cymeð hægles scur hefone getenge,
færeð forst on gemang, se byð fyrnum ceald.
Hwylum of heofnum hate scineð,
blicð þeos beorhte sunne, and wit her baru standað,
unwered wædo. (802-12)

The emphasis here is not on pride and disobedience leading to the disobedience of the flesh characteristic of the fallen condition, nor on the culpability of Eve. (See Kliman, pp. 39-42; and Woolf 1963, 187)

In Ælfric's homily on the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which contains his fullest discussion of virginity, he expressed the

view that virginity had been, and still was, important for both men and women wishing to lead a Christian life:

Se mæðhad is gemæne ægðrum, cnihtum and mædenum,
þe clænlice lybbað æfre fram cildhade
oð ende heora lifes for Cristes lufon,
swa swa þa clænan munecas doð and ða clænan myncena
on mynstrum gehwær wide geond þas woruld,
swa swa hit awriten is on *Vitas Patrum*
and on fela bocum be manegum þusendum
on mynstrum and on westenum.

(Assmann 3.224-32)

Ælfric was aware of the tradition which had seemed to place greater stress on virginity in connection with women; an emphasis supported by the feminine imagery used in relation to it (see above, pp. 125 ff.). This is perhaps why he felt it necessary to emphasise the importance of virginity to men as well as women.

The attitudes of the English which have been discussed here in the area of religious writing are supported by the historical evidence. The relatively high status of women in Anglo-Saxon society, particularly in religion, but also in politics, has long been recognised.³⁶ Christine Fell writes:

In the first enthusiasm for Christianity we not only see men and women engaging as equals in the challenge of a new religion and way of life, we see also women specifically asked to take a full and controlling part. No women could have been asked to take on so powerful a role as the early abbesses unless they were used to handling power. (1984, 13)

The researches of historians in recent years, for example in the area of laws governing property rights, have confirmed that the legal

standing of women in Anglo-Saxon England throughout the period was certainly much higher than it came to be after the Conquest (Fell 1984, Gies 1978, 20-23, Meyer in Kanner 1980, 59-70). A suggestion made by Angela Lucas merits quotation in this context:

The complete subjection of woman to man, coming from the East with Christianity, was a notion alien to the Germanic tradition of the Anglo-Saxons. Tacitus wrote that the Germani believed that 'there resides in women an element of holiness and prophecy, and so they do not scorn to ask their advice or lightly disregard their replies' (*Germania*, ch. 8). (1983, 68)

Thus those who produced and adapted the lives of saints in England do not seem to have based their accounts of female virginity on a view of women as inferior or culpable or more prone than men to the sins of the flesh. In the light of this, the fact that virginity receives as much emphasis as it does in the lives of women saints written in England (including that of the English saint, Æthelthryth), requires some explanation. There are three factors to be considered here. First, there was the powerful influence of tradition. For the reasons which have been discussed above, virginity already occupied a central place in the texts of the lives of female saints which Cynewulf, Ælfric and others had available to them (as in the cases of the virgin martyrs Agatha, Agnes, Cecilia, Eugenia, Juliana, Lucy and Margaret, versions of whose lives were produced in Old English). Hagiography was a highly conventional genre, and the English were writing in a tradition in which this aspect of female sanctity had long been established; and the symbolism which encouraged the identification of female virgins with the Church and bride of Christ

continued, as we have seen, amongst the Anglo-Saxons. Secondly, historical conditions played their part; for although the status of women in Anglo-Saxon England was relatively high, the religious life was still the only alternative to marriage for most women. Thus the historical reality supported the traditional antithesis between virginity and marriage found in the lives of women saints. Finally, as the writings of Bede, Aldhelm and Ælfric show, the English valued virginity no less highly than their predecessors - it held the topmost rank in the familiar hierarchy of virginity, widowhood and marriage; and where virginity was so highly regarded, it was natural that it should have been praised in the women whose holiness was celebrated.

NOTES

1. See, for example, the accounts of Potamiana, Sabina, and Irene (Musurillo 1972, 133, 147 & 291); and Aldhelm's account of Daria (Lapidge & Rosier 1985, 130). Glasser points out that male saints were 'rarely forced to choose between marriage and martyrdom, though they often ran away from marriage', as did Malchus (1981, 15).
2. This episode has been discussed above, pp. 106-07.
3. See also above, p. 103.
4. See also Ephesians 5.27-32; Matthew 9.15; 25.1-13.
5. The most common interpretations of the Song in the Western Church identified the bride with the Church and with Mary (see Rowley 1937, 346-47; Butler 1967, 97; Bugge 1975, 64-65; Pelikan 1978, 70-71). Origen's identification of the bride of the Song with the faithful soul, that of the individual believer, male or female (in his *Homilies on the Song of Songs*, written in about 240; see Rowley 1937, 341), did not receive much emphasis in the West until the twelfth century (see below, p. 397 ff.).

6. Cyprian, *Ep.* 4; see Butler 1967, 110; Tertullian, 'De oratione' 22, PL 1.1296-7; see Bugge 1975, 59, 66.
7. See also Bugge 1975, 66-66.
8. See Plummer's note on Bede's list of virgins (1896, II.241-42).
9. On the Latin versions of the story see Appendix.
10. See below, chs 16-18, on the Katherine Group of Lives.
11. On the two traditions and their origins in antiquity, see Quéré-Jaulmes 1968, 16-18.
12. See, for example, Lucas 1983. A recent, polemical account is that by Ute Ranke-Heinemann (1990); see especially chapters 2 & 5.
13. Anthropological studies have indicated that 'cultural notions of the female often gravitate around natural or biological characteristics: fertility, maternity, sex and menstrual blood. And women, as wives, mothers, witches, midwives, nuns, or whores, are defined almost exclusively in terms of their sexual function. A witch, in European tradition, is a woman who sleeps with the devil; and a nun is a woman who marries her god. Again, purity and pollution are ideas that apply primarily to women, who must either deny their physical bodies or circumscribe their dangerous sexuality' (Rosaldo 1974, 31). See Peter Brown (1989) on fertility and virginity in Late Antiquity and early Christianity.
14. The NCE, describing Tertullian as an 'outstanding third-century theologian and ecclesiastical writer', says he 'was an extremist ... it is not unreasonable to suppose that the exaggerated asceticism of his later views resulted, at least in part, from a reaction of disgust at the licentiousness of his earlier life' (p. 1019). His objectivity with regard to women may have been affected in this way by his own past excesses, but however personally based his views, his theology was very influential; as, indeed was his style. Peter Brown comments on Tertullian's writing: 'It was the voice of an inimitable master of Latin rhetoric, whom Jerome would read, two centuries later, with delight and, one fears, with all too great profit' (1989, 78).

15. Literally, 'the one who broke the seal', i.e. 'you are the one who opened'.
16. Keenan has a comma after 'malo', and none after 'potiorem'.
17. This treatise was written in 249. Cyprian was bishop of Carthage from 249 until his martyrdom in 258. Keenan describes *De Habitu Virginum* as 'coming from the pen ... of the greatest known bishop of the third century. Herein are crystallized all the facts known through incidental references in earlier Church literature of the degree of development of the ascetical life of women in the first three centuries' (1932, 6). On Cyprian and his milieu see Peter Brown 1989, 192-95.
18. Or 'secret act of'.
19. It should be pointed out that Russell's translation moderates the effect of the Latin (e.g. 'her body' for 'cujus obscoena corporis', and 'the inside parts' for 'interiora quoque et secreta naturae'); and is inaccurate in some places (e.g. 'you should not be in danger' for 'ut sanitas tua nullum tibi periculum conferat', and 'she never beguiled them with womanly deceits' for 'absque femineae suspicionis obstaculo').
20. I have numbered the lines of this passage for convenience.
21. Waddell's text apparently had *Oro* here, and again at line 26.
22. Burchmore cites the relevant commentaries on pp. 118-19, note 9.
23. See Peter Brown 1989, 40, 145-46, and Ranke-Heinemann 1990, ch. 2.
24. Compare the discussion above, pp. 83 ff.
25. For a note on abstinence from bathing as a feature of the ascetic life, see Plummer 1896, II.237.
26. al. 'derided', i.e. 'made ridiculous'.
27. It has been suggested that amenorrhea - failure of menstruation - which can be caused by fasting, may also have been regarded as one of the ways in which an ascetic life relieved women of the disadvantage

of their physical nature (see Warner 1976, 74-75); although the writings of the Fathers do not appear to mention this.

28. Wace & Schaff have 'manhood'.

29. Wace & Schaff have 'figure'.

30. See also note 25 above.

31. The quotations from Gregory in the first two sections of this part of the chapter (pp. 141-42, 148-49) are from his replies to Augustine of Canterbury; replies which Augustine no doubt did his best to act upon in the course of his subsequent work in the conversion of the English, and which must also have influenced later generations directly, since they are recorded in Bede's HE, a work well known throughout the Anglo-Saxon period.

32. Compare above, pp. 138-40.

33. The *Carmen de Virginitate* was apparently also written for them (Lapidge & Rosier 1985, 97). If it was, the comments on the prose work which follow may be applied also to the poetic one.

34. For further examples and discussion see Kanner 1980, 36-38; Fell 1984, ch. 6, and Fell 1990.

35. See above, p. 16, on the vicissitudes of body and mind which were a consequence of the fall.

36. See for example Browne 1919, and Doris Stenton 1957. Fell (1984) surveys the views of historians to 1984. See especially her introduction and bibliography.

PART II: OLD ENGLISH LIVES

CHAPTER SIX: CYNEWULF'S *JULIANA*

Cynewulf's poem is more abstract and schematic, more intellectual and high-minded than the Latin *Acta*.¹ Critics over the last two decades have focused especially on typological or figural approaches to Cynewulf and other Old English hagiography. Campbell has drawn analogies between the methods of Anglo-Saxon art and literature. 'External realism,' he wrote, 'was weak and transitory compared with the permanence of spiritual realities, so the artist used only as much as he needed of the lower order of perception to reach the higher one'. He quoted André Grabar's words on the paintings of the catacombs: 'the paintings are schematic - that is, they are image signs, which appeal above all to the intellect, which imply more than they actually show' (Grabar 1968, 8; Campbell 1974, 13). Campbell discussed the way in which audiences would have been aware of the figurative significance of the literal narrative. Earl has commented on how typological approaches produce a 'tendency toward generalisation and de-individualisation in hagiographic narrative' (1975, 16). Wittig has made perhaps the most important contribution in this area on *Juliana*: 'The poem's force arises from something other than convincing mimesis - from the connection of Juliana with central and potent Christian events, of which she is the imitator, embodiment and new exemplar' (1975, 38). Juliana's life was an imitation of Christ's, his passion, his harrowing of hell. On another level she represented the Church in the age of martyrs; persecuted, and finally triumphant. Calder, in a discussion of the ritual aspect of the poem, described it as 'not

character-revealing but theme-revealing'. He quoted lines 93a-104b, and wrote:

Cynewulf, dilating upon the curt and strictly informational Latin sentences, lists the motifs which become central to the interpretation of the narrative as a whole: love and affection, wisdom and judgement, vanity, wealth and treasures, protection. (Calder 1973, 359)

The concentrated and schematic nature of Cynewulf's poem means that the issues are much more sharply defined than in the Latin *Acta*. Cynewulf impresses on the reader that there is a pattern and significance in the life of Juliana which needs to be recognised. The style and structure of the poem invite the kind of readings which critics have given it:

The action of the poem is not an attempt to record accurately the significant deeds committed by historical persons, but a fixed ceremony and public ritual involving figures reenacting the cosmic struggle between Christ and Satan. (Calder 1981, 80)

As in the lives of other virgin martyrs, Juliana's virginity, her rejection of marriage, and what this represents, is itself a central issue in the poem, and plays a most important part in this 'cosmic struggle' between the representatives here of Christ and Satan (see Wittig 1975). In addition to the figural readings, however, the conflict between the virgin Juliana and her persecutors, between the church and heathenism, can also be read in terms of the conflict which is inseparable from the issue of virginity, that between the flesh and the spirit.

Juliana's virginity symbolises the identification of her will with God's, and it becomes a militant and powerful virtue when

threatened by its opposites. The poem dramatises the conflict between the forces of the spirit and the flesh in a series of confrontations which are strongly physical: the violent warriors are faced with the radiantly beautiful Juliana; they tempt, threaten, imprison and torture her, yet she remains unblemished in spirit and body. They themselves are humiliated, and the figure of evil, the source of temptation and sin, the devil, is physically bound by the saint. This almost allegorical presentation of the spiritual battle in Juliana is somewhat reminiscent of the *Psychomachia* of Prudentius, particularly the description of the death of Libido at the hands of Pudicitia, an active and militant virtue who is aware of the power of virginity since the birth of Christ from a virgin (see lines 40-108, Thomson 1949, 282-87).²

This study will examine firstly the ways in which Juliana's human opponents are tied to 'the flesh', and how their condition is expressed by Cynewulf; secondly, the presentation of Juliana herself, in her confrontations with her enemies, and the way in which her holiness of body and spirit are manifested, so that her virginity is seen to symbolise the victory of the spirit over the flesh. Juliana's human adversaries are from the start and throughout the poem associated with the flesh, in their speech and their actions, and in the language used in connection with them. Her father, Affricanus, and her suitor, Heliseus, are earthbound and flesh-bound in their heathenism.

The first lines of the poem set the scene and describe the context in which Heliseus belongs: the epic opening is swiftly

modified by the description which follows of violence and persecution (4b) throughout the world (3). Maximian the wicked heathen king (4a, 7a) shed the blood of Christians (5a, 6, 7b, 8a) and destroyed their churches (5b)³:

Hwæt! We ðæt hyrdon hæleð eahtian,
deman dædhwate, þætte in dagum gelamp
Maximianes, se geond middangeard,
arleas cyning, eahtnysse ahof,
cwealde Cristne men, circan fylde,
geat on græswong Godhergendra,
hæpen hildfruma, haligra blod,
ryhtfremmendra. (1-8)

The extent of Maximian's power is described:

Wæs his rice brad,
wid ⁊ weorðlic ofer werþeode,
lytesna ofer ealne yrmenne grund. (8-10)

The earth is a battlefield where Maximian's soldiers, his powerful servants (12a), who hate God's law (13b f.), raise up idols (15a), slay saints and destroy the learned (15b-16a), persecute God's warriors with spear and fire (16b-17):

Foron æfter burgum, swa he biboden hæfde,
þegnas þryðfulle; oft his þræce rærdon,
dædum gedwolene, þa þe Dryhtnes æ
feodon þurh firencræft; feondscype rærdon,
hofon hæþengield, halge cwelmdon,
breotun boccræftge, bærndon gecorene,
gæston Godes cempaþan gare ⁊ lige. (11-17)

Thus the earthly hierarchy is established, with its powerful heathen persecution of Christians. Heliseus is introduced into this

background, a rich and powerful man of noble lineage (18-22a), and eager in his idol-worship:

Sum wæs æhtwelig æþeles cynnes,
rice gerefa; rondburgum weold,
eard weardade oftast symle
in þære ceastre Commedia,
heold hordgestreon. Oft he hæþengield,
ofer word Godes, weoh gesohte
neode geneahhe. (18-24)

Then we are told that 'his mod ongon fæmnan lufian' (26b-27a). His 'love', however, is immediately qualified, 'hine fyrwet bræc' (27b).⁴ To be thus tormented is rather different from 'lufian'. Heliseus' motives for wanting to marry Juliana are characteristic of the qualities associated with him; power, wealth, heathenism, and susceptibility to emotional torment. He is the 'goldspedig guma' (39a), impatient to have Juliana:

þa wæs se weliga þære wifgifta,
goldspedig guma, georn on mode,
þæt him mon fromlicast fæmnan gegyrede,
bryd to bolde. (38-41)

It has often been pointed out that Cynewulf blackens his villains in comparison with the Latin *Acta* (see, for example, Woolf 1966, 15). Cynewulf's Heliseus is dehumanised in comparison with the figure in the *Acta*, who appears at first worldly rather than wicked. In the Latin Eleusius is prepared to make what concessions he can to Juliana's demands: he attains the office of Prefect at her request, but says he is unable to adopt her faith for fear of the Emperor:

Juliana: Accipe Spiritum Dei, et nubam tibi. Praefectus dixit: Non possum, Domina mea, quia si fecero, audiet Imperator, et successorem mihi dans caput meum gladio amputabit. (§ 3)⁶

It is only after her scornful reply that he becomes angry and orders her to be beaten: 'Audiens haec Praefectus, commotus iracundia jussit eam caedi' (§ 4). In the poem, however, Heliseus' desire for Juliana is a symptom of his spiritual condition, and inseparable from his heathenism and wickedness; and as the poem proceeds, and as his anger and violence are described, the sense of his dependence on 'the flesh' is continually reinforced. At the same time, Cynewulf gives Juliana's father, Affricanus, a larger part than he has in the *Acta*, and the suitor and the father become almost interchangeable in their behaviour and the nature of their sinfulness. Good and evil are polarised. The suitor is heathen, rich, powerful, and tormented by his curiosity. The father has betrothed Juliana 'to the rich man', 'welegum' (33a). When the two men meet to discuss Juliana, Heliseus' anger at Juliana's speech (46-57) seems to encompass both men, and their heathenism is mentioned (64b) almost in explanation of the anger (58b), sinfulness (59a, 65a), suggestion of noise (62b) and incipient violence (63b) which attend their conference:

 Ða se æþeling wearð yrre gebolgen,
 fīrendædum fah, gehyrde þære fæmnan word;
 het ða gefetigan ferend snelle,
 hreoh ⁊ hygeblind, haligre fæder
 recene to rune. Reord up astag,
 siþþan hy togædre garas hlændon,
 hildeþremman. Hæðne wæron begen
 synnum seoce, sweor ⁊ aþum.

(58-65)

The language of this passage is characteristic of a pattern of imagery in the poem which suggests the nature of their heathenism; their spiritual condition is expressed in terms which are also physical. The phrase 'firendædum fah' (59a), is (like e.g. 'synnum fah', 705b) formulaic (see Grein 1912, s.v. 'fah'). Its primary meaning is 'guilty of crimes', but it is possible that 'fah' could also carry overtones of 'fag', 'stained', so that Heliseus is seen as both guilty of wicked deeds and stained with sins.⁶ 'hygeblind' (61a) also has scriptural connotations, where blindness sometimes refers to moral and spiritual blindness (e.g. Matthew 15.14).⁷ One is reminded of this image later when Juliana says she will not promise tribute 'to deaf and dumb idols', 'dumbum 7 deafum deofolgielsum' (150). Finally, the idea that they are 'synnum seoce', 'sick with sins', suggests not only a physical affliction but one also over which they perhaps have little control. The language of the passage as a whole is suggestive of that susceptibility to moral and physical corruption which came with the fall (see above, ch. 1), and the sinfulness of the two men is rendered almost tangible by the use of this kind of vocabulary. Later in the poem, the devil's confession - part of which serves as a commentary on individuals and events in the poem (see below, pp. 176-77), and therefore on this episode too - echoes this language. Here too there is a merging of the physical and the spiritual in his claim to have caused moral and physical injury, to have 'deprived of sight, blinded with evil thoughts countless warriors of mankind, covered⁸ the light of eyes by a covering of mist through poisoned spear point in dark showers':

Oft ic syne ofteah,
ablende bealoþoncum beorna unrim
monna cynnes, misthelme forbrægd
þurh attres ord eagna leoman
sweartum scurum.

(468-72)⁹

It is fitting therefore that the spiritual condition of Juliana's adversaries, manifested in the emotional disturbance which they experience, should be combined with a strong sense of the physical.

Juliana has provoked Heliseus' wrath by saying that she will never marry him as long as he remains a heathen, and her resolve will never be broken whatever torments he may threaten (51-57). His threats of torments do not in fact cause Juliana any fear, or pain, or indeed any difficulty; but her words of rejection do cause Heliseus pain. Calder comments:

ironically, it is Eleusius, not Juliana, who bears the pain. Afflicted with sexual desire (27b), Eleusius finds that her refusal causes him great torment: 'Me þa fraceðu sind / on modsefan mæste weorce' ('Her insults are most painful to my mind,' 71b-72b)' (Calder 1981, 86).

This is partly a matter of injured pride, their humiliation at finding a woman's will and strength of purpose superior to theirs. Juliana's adversaries complain that they have no power over a woman's mind (225-27a; cf. 594-600, quoted below; and 430-34: see p. 177):¹⁰

Ða þam folctogan [i.e. Heliseus] fracuðlic þuhte,
þæt he ne meahte mod oncyrran,
fæmnan foreþonc.

(225-27)

Affricanus and Heliseus seem scarcely to be in control of themselves; they are almost taken over by their anger. Indeed, as the devil's confession (289 ff.) makes clear, their submission to the flesh is also slavery to the devil. Their own threats backfire on them. Affricanus threatens to throw Juliana to wild beasts (125). Towards the end of the poem Heliseus becomes in his rage like a wild beast, and gnashes his teeth and tears his robe and reviles his gods, because they too could not withstand the power of a woman's will:

Ða se dema wearð
hreoh 7 hygegrim, ongon his hrægl teran,
swylce he grennade 7 gristbitade,
wedde on gewitte swa wilde deor,
grymetade gealgmod, 7 his godu tælde,
þæs þe hy ne meahtun mægne wipstandan
wifes willan.

(594-600)''

Thus from the beginning of the poem, Juliana's human adversaries are identified incontrovertibly with the flesh and its values. All their worldly power can give them no control over their emotions; their worship of the devil removes from them any control over their destinies; and, most importantly, they have no control over Juliana, no real power either physical or spiritual.

Juliana, in contrast, is identified with the spirit. She is a virgin saint, and her virginity symbolises her spiritual condition and status. She is holy, and she is powerful. The contrast between the two sides, and its significance, is reinforced with every renewed confrontation between them. How Juliana's sanctity operates in some of these confrontations will be considered here.

A comparison between the *Acta* and Cynewulf's treatment of the story up to Juliana's betrothal reveals significant differences in the arrangement of the narratives. Cynewulf's method is to express the nature of the conflict between the two sides by the use of ironic contrasts and juxtapositions. The Latin tells us who Eleusius was; that he was betrothed to a nobly born girl, Juliana; that her father Affricanus was a persecutor of Christians. Then we are given an account of her virtues and religious commitment:

Denique temporibus Maximiani Imperatoris, persecutoris Christianae religionis, erat quidam Senator in civitate Nicomedia, nomine Eleusius, amicus Imperatoris. Hic desponsaverat quandam puellam nobili genere ortam, nomine Julianam. Cujus pater Africanus cognominabatur, qui et ipse erat persecutor Christianorum: ... Juliana autem habens animum rationabilem, prudensque consilium, et dignam conversationem, et virtutem plenissimam, hoc cogitabat apud se, quoniam verus est Deus, qui fecit coelum et terram: et per singulos dies vacans orationibus concurrebat ad ecclesiam Dei, ut Divinos apices intelligeret. (§ 1)

In the poem Juliana's virginity is mentioned in the first sentence describing her point of view, which follows the account of Heliseus and his intentions discussed above, pp. 166 ff.:

Ða his mod ongon
fæmnan lufian, (hine fyrwet bræc),
Iulianan. Hio in gæste bær
halge treowe, hogde georne
pæt hire mægðhad mana gehwylces
fore Cristes lufan clæne geheolde.

(26-31)

The Latin does not mention her virginity at this point, as Cynewulf does. On the other hand, Cynewulf does not elaborate on Juliana's

virtues, since to list them as the Latin does would tend to weaken the dramatic and symbolic force of her virginity. The next lines state the fact of her betrothal (32-33a), and her attitude to the nobleman with all his riches (33b-37). Cynewulf's weaving of the two viewpoints, Juliana's and her betrothed's, creates a richness of contrast and sets up ironies not present in the sequential narrative of the Latin: 'Iulianan', the object (28a) of Heliseus' desire, is contrasted in the second half-line (28b) with the beginning of a sentence of which Juliana is the subject; a subject, moreover, with a viewpoint quite opposed to that of the unsuspecting suitor (33b-35a). This sets the pattern of the poem, for throughout, her opponents' intentions are to be baffled by Juliana. They are tormented, while she continues to bear the holy faith in her spirit, and thus takes control.

Thus her virginity is established with her entrance. As the poem proceeds, the various qualities which are symbolised by her virginity are demonstrated: her unshakeable purity of faith; her closeness to God, as evidenced by the companionship of the Holy Spirit, the voice from heaven and the help of an angel; and, related to this, the power which her holiness confers.

The most important quality is purity of faith. Because this is the cause of her refusal to marry, her faith becomes the source of the conflict on which the poem turns, and in her faith she is steadfast: she will not be tempted by worldly offers, by flattery or by threats. In her first speech Juliana expresses the certainty that no torments will make her change her mind (55-57). This provokes the anger of her

suitors, 'Ða se æþeling wearð yrre gebolgen' (58; as it does her father's, when reported to him: 90b). Her fearlessness is emphasised at several points through the poem, whenever she is threatened (e.g. 134, 147, 210). On one of these occasions her undismayed (210a) response (to Heliseus) is described and explained:

Him þæt æþele mod unforht oncwæð:
'Ne ondræde ic me domas þine,
awyrgeð womsceaða, ne þinra wita bealo;
hæbbe ic me to hyhte heofonrices Weard,
mildne Mundboran, mæгна Waldend,
se mec gescyldeð wið þinum scinlace
of gromra gripe, þe þu to godum tiohhast ...

... Ic to Dryhtne min
mod stapelige, se ofer mæгна gehwylc
waldeð wideferh, wuldres Agend,
sigora gehwylces: þæt is soð Cyning.' (209-24)

Her faith enables her to be unafraid of torture. Her opponents' inability to intimidate her demonstrates the purity of her faith.

Her opponents discover (but are unable to accept or learn from the fact) that neither arguments nor threats can touch her mind and alter her faith. When they resort to physical violence, this is a measure of their failure over her mind.¹² But they discover that they no more have power over her body than they do over her mind. Juliana remains calm and steadfast in her faith when surrounded by threats and torments. When she is taken down from the cross¹³ and led to prison

hyre wæs Cristes lof
in ferðlocan fæste biwunden,
milde modsefan, mægen unbrice. (233-35)

'The praise of Christ was firmly enclosed in her breast ('locked place of the mind'), she was gentle at heart, her virtue unshaken'. The metaphor of 'ferðloca' is conventional, but may not be a dead metaphor in this context, since it seems to be echoed and linked to the literal, physical meaning in the immediately following description of the saint locked in prison; the door is closed with bolts, and the prison is covered with darkness, but she remains faithful within it, and continually praises the king of glory in her heart:

Ða wæs mid clustre carcernes duru
behliden, homra geweorc; halig þær inne
wærfæst wunade. Symle heo Wuldorcýning
herede æt heortan, heofonrices God,
in þam nydcleafan, Nergend fira,
heolstre bihelmad. (236-41)

The physical closing of the door upon her cannot affect the place of safety in which she holds the praise of Christ. The prison becomes, paradoxically, not imprisoning, but simply a further enclosure for Juliana's faith, and a demonstration of its strength; like her virginity, a powerful image of the integrity and inviolability of her faith. Between the 'sace singrimme' (230a) she has suffered, and the sudden entrance into the prison of the devil disguised as an angel (242b-244b), the poet has interposed this reminder of Juliana's firm faith and spiritual strength.

He states here, furthermore, in preparation for the confrontation with the devil, a fact which is further confirmation of Juliana's saintly status: the holy spirit is her constant companion, 'hyre wæs Halig Gæst / singal gesið' (241b-242a). Cause and effect are indistinguishable with regard to the companionship of the holy spirit. The holy spirit did not 'become' her companion, but 'wæs'. Combined with the description of Juliana's calmness and stillness at this point, this contributes to the sense that Juliana is in union with the eternal and spiritual, not tied to the temporal and physical, a contrast reinforced by the violent but impotent activity of her adversaries. As they are associated with one another in their heathenism, she is joined to the forces of good, with God, through her faith. Even the devil, who belongs to the supernatural realm, seems circumscribed by his own narrative, for his crimes have been committed through history, a history which has to be seen within the Christian perspective of his ultimate defeat, a defeat foreshadowed by his defeat by Juliana in the poem.

The devil breaks almost violently into the still scene presented, of the saint within the prison, her faith safe within her: 'Ða cwom semninga / in þæt hlinræced hæleða gewinna' (242b-243b). His temptation is rather like those of Affricanus and Heliseus, who had approached her with blandishments, pretending to be on her side while intending evil (93-96; 164-68; cf *Acta* § 3). In this case, too, Juliana's immediate response is bold: she 'forht ne wæs' (258). She is, however, struck with terror for a moment, when she hears him say that God has sent him:

Ða wæs seo fæmne for þam færspelle
egsan geaclad, þe hyre se aglæcan,
wuldres wiþerbreca, wordum sægde. (267-69)

But she overcomes her momentary weakness, and prays for guidance. Her prayer is answered by a voice from heaven, perhaps as a reward for her constancy. Now, in obedience to the command of the voice, Juliana takes physical control: 'Heo þæt deofol genom' (288).¹⁴

At one point in his account of Juliana's relentless interrogation of the devil ('þu scealt furþor gen ... siþfæt secgan', 317-18; cf. 347-48), Cynewulf writes: 'him seo halge oncwæð / þurh gæstes giefe' (315b-316a). This presumably refers to the grace of the holy spirit. There is no equivalent comment at the same point in the *Acta*. The phrase is a reminder of the grace in which she stands, and an explanation also of the devil's inability (like the inability of her human adversaries) to alter her mind. His confession reveals that he has made a grave miscalculation:

Ic þæt wende, ⁊ witod tealde
þriste geþoncge, þæt ic þe meahte
butan earfeþum, anes cræfte,
ahwyrfan from halor ... Þus ic soðfæstum
þurh mislic bleo mod oncyrrre. (357-63)

This reminds us of the similar miscalculations made by Juliana's father and suitor; and on another level, of the futile attempt made by the devil to tempt Christ. Then follows his account of the process of temptation (364-411).¹⁵

The devil admits he cares more about the destruction of the soul than the body (413b-415). In the case of the virgin saint Juliana,

however, his attempts (his own and those of his servants, her father and bridegroom) have failed, and both body and soul remain intact. Furthermore, he has found not merely that he is ineffective in his effort to attack her spiritually, but that instead she has seized him; his spiritual attack has been neatly countered by a physical measure which also signifies her spiritual power. He wants to know how she, 'ofer eall wifa cyn' (432b), has managed what no other woman has, (and she does not answer him, since she is the one asking the questions). Later in his confession there is a further plaint about Juliana's extraordinary daring and power, power beyond that which his own father has given him (518-25; see also 547b-551a). This comment carries, ironically (because he seems to be unaware of it), an implicit suggestion concerning the source of her power.

When Juliana is led forth from the prison, dragging the devil bound with her she is described as 'on hyge halge', 'holy in mind (or at heart)' (533a) and 'breostum inbryrdeð', 'inspired in her breast' (535a). The former phrase indicates her holiness, the latter suggests the source of the power which enables her to drag the devil along with her:

 Ða se gerefa het,
gealgmod guma, Iulianan
of þam engan hofe ut gelædan,
on hyge halge, hæpnum to spræce
to his domsetle. Heo þæt deofol teah,
breostum inbryrdeð, bendum fæstne,
halig, hæpenne.

(530-36)

The reeve has given the order for her to be led out (530), but his capacity to give orders represents only superficial power. For he, the heathen (533b), is linked with the devil, who is also called a heathen (536); and of this heathen Juliana has taken control. The postponing of the adjective 'halig' (which qualifies the subject 'heo'), so that it can be juxtaposed with the adjective 'hæpenne', (which goes with the object 'deofol'), draws attention to, and effectively expresses, their relative positions.

The second lacuna in the text occurs after line 558, but what remains of the final scene consolidates all that we have so far learned about the nature of the conflict between the protagonists. The integrity of Juliana's faith and spirit is revealed before her judges and the crowd when the fire which is lit for her leaves her untouched. It is both a symbol, a physical counterpart of her spiritual integrity, and a reward for it. Her preservation by an angel from 'the fiercely ravenous flame' (566b-567a) is associated with her freedom from sin (566a):

Ða cwom engel Godes
 frætsum blican 7 þæt fyr tosceaf,
 gefreode 7 gefreobade facnes clæne,
 leahtra lease, 7 þone lig towearp,
 heorogiferne, þær seo halie stod,
 mægþa bealdor,¹⁶ on þam midle gesund. (563-568)

Surrounded by sin and temptation she has resisted. Surrounded by flames she is untouched.

Not only does her holiness protect her, it is destructive of evil. Physically she has bound the devil. On a spiritual level she

has recognised him for what he is, a devil disguised as an angel, resisted his temptation, and rendered him powerless. Here, when a vessel of boiling lead is prepared for her at his suggestion, the lead springs out and kills seventy-five of the heathen army. Juliana stands in her beauty untouched by the flames, giving thanks to God:

Ða gen sio halge stod
ungewemde wlite; næs hyre wloh ne hrægl,
ne feax ne fel fyre gemæled,
ne lic ne leoðu. Heo in lige stod
æghwæs onsund, sægde ealles þonc
dryhtna Dryhtne. (589-94)

Again, physically Juliana cannot be harmed by the tortures, as spiritually she is unblemished. The following lines are those (quoted above, p. 170), which describe the prefect become like a wild beast, gnashing his teeth and tearing his robes. There is a nice irony in the fact that he should be reduced to tearing his own robes, 'ongon his hrægl teran' (595b) while the fire cannot damage Juliana's (590b, 591b).

The next sentence relates Juliana's steadfast, fearless strength to God's will:

Wæs seo wuldres mæg
anræd 7 unforht, eafoða gemyndig,
Dryhtnes willan. (600-02)

The position of 'Dryhtnes willan' in this sentence is parallel, syntactically and metrically, to that of 'wives willan' in the preceding sentence:

þæs þe hy [= his godu] ne meahtun mægne wipstondan
wifes willan.

(599-600)

The virtual identification here of Juliana's will with God's makes explicit what has been implicit from the start. Juliana's adversaries are indeed 'hygeblind' not to have recognised it. While Juliana stands calm and firm in her faith, her body untouched, her will at one with God's, they attempt to make her act according to their will. At every step they reveal their own slavery and powerlessness, and their raging minds render them beastlike.

Juliana is proof of the value of the advice she gives the crowd before she is martyred (647-69). Her image of the house which must be made firm against the winds and storms of sin recalls and varies the devil's image of the soul as a fortress under violent attack.¹⁷ She has defended her fortress, her house, she has kept her faith firmly, and God has mercy on her. Finally Juliana is killed by a sword-blow, which releases her soul from her body. She has been holy in both, and when she dies her death is swift and her soul's destination certain:

Ða hyre sawl wearð
alæded of lice to þam langan gefean
purh sweordslege.

(669-71)

At the end her body is carried with much ceremony to its grave in the city by a great multitude singing songs of praise (688-92). In contrast Heliseus comes to a fittingly grim end. He takes ship and is tossed for a long time on the sea, until at last he is drowned with all his wicked companions (672-78). They go straight to hell - a hell where his men look in vain for treasure-giving, where all the earthly

riches with which he had tried to tempt Juliana count for nothing. These had, indeed, been symptomatic of the sinfulness which led him there.¹⁸ Cynewulf draws attention to the contrast between their fates by placing the account of Heliseus' death between the description of Juliana's martyrdom and the account of her burial.

The differing fates of Juliana and her adversaries thus suggest the Judgement, when the final destination of the bodies and souls of all will be decided (and this is also suggested by the final words of Juliana's speech, 666-69). The narrative portion of the poem has to its conclusion dramatised the conflict between the body and the spirit which had afflicted mankind since the fall, with Juliana representing the forces of the spirit in the battle against the flesh. Juliana's spiritual integrity, contrasted with the strong sense of the physical in the presentation of her adversaries - carnal even in the spirit - conveys very powerfully the ascendancy of the spirit over the flesh.

In the movement to a more personal and human level which marks the beginning of the 'epilogue', the poem extends its concern with the body and the spirit. Cynewulf writes of the help he will need from the saint on the separation of his own body and soul:

Is me þearf micel
þæt seo halge me helpe gefremme,
þonne me gedælað deorast ealra,
sibbe toslitað sinhiwan tu,
micle modlufan. Min sceal of lice
sawul on siðfæt, nat ic sylfa hwider,
eardes uncyðþu.

(695-701)

The poet speaks as if he is reluctant that 'the married couple', 'sinhiwan tu', should 'sever [their] bond, [their] great affection [for each other]', although he knows the separation is inevitable. His soul and body are tied in a way which the saint has transcended, for she welcomes death (607-12). In the context of their previous use in the poem, the words he uses suggest that this marriage, this bond between his body and soul is connected with sin: the devil had spoken of 'modlufan' with reference to the wicked love he made attractive (370); and 'sinhigan' (if the emendation is accepted) at line 54 (an alternative form of 'sinhiwan' in line 698 above) refers to the marriage with Heliseus which Juliana says she will never agree to as long as he remains an idol-worshipper. Thus Cynewulf's reference to the attachment between his own body and soul seems to express, by association, his sense of his own sinfulness. Calder comments on how 'deorast ealra' (697b) recalls the endearments used by the father, bridegroom and the devil when they address Juliana: 'Cynewulf ... ties himself by means of his words to the devil' (1981, 101-02). Then, faced with the prospect of judgement, he has been too slow, he says, to repent while his body and spirit were together:

Wæs an tid to læt
 þæt ic yfeldæda ær gescomede,
 þenden gæst 7 lic geador sipedan,
 onsund on earde. (712-15)

Thus as the poem reaches its conclusion the inevitable progress of all souls towards judgement is brought into focus. The outcome for the individual depends on the relationship between the body and the soul during life. The cosmic battle fought by Juliana is not simply an

abstraction; it is not just that the battle is fought between a figure of the Church, of Christ, an abstract representation of the power of virginity, against the powers of evil. It is also a struggle which is of very present concern for the poet, as for all men.

NOTES

1. On the source, see Appendix, p. 483.
2. It has been pointed out that it was not until Prudentius that allegorical virtues were opposed to vices. Till then, allegorical vices had been opposed to human beings, individual Christians (Wieland, 1986, 86). The allegorisation of a virtue has the effect of raising its status; this is partly due to the nature of the impact of virginity in legends of virgin saints, where this single virtue (encompassing as it does all others), is opposed to the whole range of evils. Aldhelm's *Carmen de Virginitate* presents virginity in a way similar to Prudentius. Rosier comments on how, in comparison with the prose work, '*virginitas* in the poetic account becomes a much more aggressive virtue, vigorously "trampling" down foul vice ... the sense of aggression associated with virginity is matched by the vocabulary of filth and foulness associated with the flesh' (Lapidge & Rosier 1985, 98). See Wieland 1986 for a discussion of Aldhelm's *Carmen* in relation to Cassian and Prudentius.
3. Greenfield & Calder 1986, 168, summarise Calder 1981, 82-84: 'Cynewulf ... begins with a 25½-line expansion, ironically establishing the counter-themes he will oppose in the saint's person and figure: the wealth and breadth of the emperor's worldly kingdom and of his thegn's (Heliseus') dominion, idol-worship, and the persecution of Christian saints'.
4. The phrase is apparently a formula; it occurs three times in the same form in *Beowulf*, always followed by an indirect question, and appears to mean 'he was curious (or anxious, desirous) to know'. *fyrwet* is usually taken to mean 'curiosity' (*curiositas*). The word in

its context in *Juliana* suggests sexual curiosity: hence, presumably, Woolf's gloss, 'desire'. Calder similarly translates the phrase 'desire tormented him' (1981, 85). For some comments on the uses of *lufu* and *lufian* in the poem, see Anderson 1983, 93.

5. References are to the text of the *Acta* printed in AASS Feb. 16, vol. II, pp. 875-78. Discussions relating to the relationship between the *Acta* and Cynewulf's poem are noted in the Appendix, p. 483.

6. The two words are homophones, although etymologically quite distinct, and it is not always easy to distinguish between them. Greenfield writes 'two words, *fah* and *fag* had coalesced in Old English pronunciation and spelling, so that the graphic form ending in *g* or *h* is no indication of which word was intended. The basic meanings are 1) decorated, shining; and by extension (blood)stained; and 2) hostile; and by extension guilty, outlawed' (Greenfield 1972, 90). However, it should also be pointed out that the meaning 'stained', developed from the primary meaning 'shining, coloured', applies in only very limited contexts; see Timmer's note to *Judith* line 104 (1978, 23). Stanley discusses *fah* in *Beowulf* 420, and concludes that there it combines the sense of 'hostile' with '(blood)stained': 'Klaeber in his first two editions gave 'blood-stained' (at line 420) with a question mark in his glossaries, and in his third gives the line reference under both words, both times with a question mark. That seems best for *Beowulf* coming from the fight, for our poet used both senses at once happily combined for Cain (1263), hostile and bearing his mark, therefore 'marked', the ambiguity of a single word summing up a great deal of Genesis 4.11-15' (Stanley 1979, 69). Swanton, in his discussion of ambiguity and the interplay of abstract and physical in *The Dream of the Rood* argues that both meanings are relevant in line 13, 'Syllig wæs se sigebeam, ond ic synnum fah': 'The use of *fah* here presents a dual contrast between vision and visionary in both physical and abstract aspects, 'se sylligasigebeam' being set against the dreamer both in its visual brightness and innocent virtue' (Swanton 1969, 408). It is possible, therefore, that both meanings could have been present here in *Juliana*.

7. See also the saint's accusations in *Elene* 297-312 (ed. Gradon 1977), where blindness refers to the perverse sinfulness, error, guilt, of those whose physical sight had been restored, yet who nevertheless later condemned Christ.

8. Woolf glosses *forbregdan* 'snatch away', evidently following BT Sup. s.v. *forbredan*, etc. (3). However, BT gave 'cover' (s.v. *forbregdan*); and cf also Grein 1912, *obducere* (drawn over, cover over, overspread). In the Enlarged Add. & Corr. to the Dict., Campbell suggests a reversion to BT 'cover'. Campbell cites another example of the word with the meaning he attributes to it, but the Sup. gives no other examples of the meaning 'snatch away'. 'Cover' seems also to make better sense in the passage in *Juliana*.

9. 'The arrows of the devil are at once allegorical and real; they form part of the Anglo-Saxon theory of disease, for the devil afflicts mankind by means of his shafts with sinful thoughts and physical illness' (Stanley 1968, 465).

10. Compare Ælfric's Homily on the book of Judith, where Holofernes and his followers have also been shamed by a woman: 'An wifmann hæfð nu us ealle gescynd / and urne cynehlaford' (Assmann 9.367-68).

11. This perhaps recalls Nebuchadnezzar. Schaar points out that 'in the *Acta*, when Juliana has been imprisoned, before the appearance of the devil, she says a prayer in which God is asked to preserve her as He preserved Daniel in the lion's den, the three men in the fiery furnace [see Daniel 3], the sons of Israel in the desert, etc. ... In Cynewulf this is shortened into a few lines of indirect speech, 238 ff.' (1967, 30). It is possible that Cynewulf may be alluding here to the story of the three young men. Aldhelm had made the connection between virginity and the preservation of Daniel and the three young men. He relates the story and comments: 'Virginitas castum sic servat semper amicum / Tetrica contemnens millenis damna periculis': 'Thus virginity always preserves a chaste friend, scorning foul dangers with their thousands of perils' (*Carmen de Virg.*, lines 365-66, Ehwald, p. 368; Lapidge & Rosier 1985, 111. cf. also the prose *De Virginitate*, ch. 21). The portrayal of Heliseus as beastlike

may also owe something to Gregory the Great's treatment of the image in his *Moralia*:

homines dicit eos quos a bestiis ratio distinguit, id est quos non atteri bestiali passionum motu demonstrat ... hi qui carnali affectioni succumbunt, non jam homines, sed jumenta nominantur, sicut de quibusdam in peccato suo morientibus per prophetam dicitur: 'Computruerunt jumenta in stercore suo (Joel 1.17)'. Jumenta quippe in stercore suo computrescere est carnales homines in fetore luxuriae vitam finire.

[Holy Scripture] calls those 'men', whom reason distinguishes from the beasts, that is, whom it shows to be unaffected by the bestial influence of passions ... they who yield to the desires of the flesh, are no longer called men, but beasts. As is said by the Prophet of some who were dying in their sins, 'The beasts rotted in their dung'. For for beasts to rot in their dung, is for carnal men to finish their life in the filth of lust. (24, § 15, PL 76.294; Bliss 1844, III.59)

12. The similarity of reaction of her father and Heliseus when faced with her unflinching resistance have been noted, p. 167 above; see further Affricanus's anger, 138-43; and see lines 225 ff., on Heliseus' humiliation: quoted above, p. 170.

13. Or 'post': *beam* (228b). The Latin does not mention this (§ 4).

14. At this point occurs the first of the two lacunae.

15. For a discussion of the metaphor of the soul as fortress, and the influence of Gregory's analysis of temptation, see Anderson 1983, 89-90. See also Woolf's comments, p. 18.

16. *bealdor* (568a) means 'prince, hero, chieftain, lord, king, ruler', and is normally used of men. Its use in connection with Juliana serves to emphasise her strength and her victory: she is the 'mægpa bealdor', the 'hero of maidens', who - though a woman (see pp. 169-70) - overcomes both the earthly ruler (and erstwhile suitor) who subjects her to the flames, and the devil who has tried to tempt her. The Latin has no equivalent for the phrase: 'Sancta autem Juliana stans illaesa glorificabat Dominum in igne' (§ 17).

17. Compare also *ferðlocan* (234, discussed above, p. 174). Lines 648-54 allude to the parable of the houses built on rock and sand (Matthew 7.24-27; Luke 6.47-49).

18. Anderson discusses the symbolic significance of these events: the *mare vitae* topos, and the typology of the flood: 'Noah's ark is a type of the Church. At the time of the flood, only those creatures who were found in the ark escaped death by drowning, just as at the time of the judgement, only those who are found in the Church will escape death in the lake of fire' (1983, 99-100). For further discussion of the typology of the flood see Daniélou 1960; Hill discusses the typology of the flood in *Andreas*, and its baptismal and eschatological dimensions (1969, 261-73).

CHAPTER SEVEN: ÆLFRIC'S 'LIFE OF ST EUGENIA'

The various treatments of Lives of women who disguised themselves as men are particularly suggestive about attitudes towards women.¹ There are two in Old English: the 'Life of St Euphrosyne' (LS 33), which will be discussed in the next chapter; and Ælfric's 'Life of St Eugenia' (LS 2). An examination of these, together with their Latin sources, suggests that the two Old English Lives, and the Latin 'St Euphrosyne' are written in a tradition more sympathetic towards women than the Latin account of 'St Eugenia' which is closest to Ælfric's version.²

The basic framework of the part of the story with which this discussion is concerned is fairly simple: a young woman disguises herself as a man in order to avoid discovery in her chosen way of life as a Christian ascetic.³ The way in which the essentially simple story is told can imply a good deal about the attitudes and preoccupations of the teller, and, by extension, those he expects in his audience.

A feature of the Latin Life is its interest in wordplay, most notably in connection with the masculine disguise which St Eugenia adopts. As we shall see, this disguise enables the author to play on the literal meanings of particular scriptural passages. This has the effect, it will be suggested, of drawing attention to the idea of women's inferiority at the same time as the character and actions of the saint herself are praised.

The motive attributed to Eugenia's assumption of a masculine guise in the Latin is practical and uncomplicated enough at the

beginning of the story: she wishes to join the Christians whom she has heard singing, and no women are allowed in their dwelling-place, so she tells her servants that she has decided to have her hair cut:

ad diversorium huius congregationis, in quo Deo canitur, nulla patitur venire feminarum. Hoc [H. hęc] ego [C. F. H. ergo] considerans, tonderi me extimo [C. F. aestimo; H. dignum estimo]. (FG § 5)⁴

She further explains her choice of secrecy later, in the speech in which she defends herself against Melantia's accusation:

Obtaveram ... castitatem meam illi soli ostendere ... Non enim ad laudem hominum, sed ad honorem Dei, pudicitia a sapientibus regitur, custoditur integritas, et castitas possidetur. (FG § 25)⁵

I had wished to reveal my chastity to him (i.e. to God) alone ... For it is not for the glory of man, but for the honour of God, that modesty is ruled by the wise, integrity is guarded, and chastity held.

The theme of chastity is, as one would expect, an important one, and towards the end of the story, Eugenia is given a speech with which she wins converts. She describes the joys and virtues of virginity, emphasises its primacy, and the glory of dying for it:

[Virginitas] est virtutis indicium [C. F. H. Virginitas enim primae est uirtutis indicium]. Deo proxima, similis angelorum, parens vite, amica sanctitatis, magistra securitatis, domina gaudii, dux itineris salutaris, virtutis fomentum, [C. F. H. add corona fidei,] spei adminiculum, et subsidium charitatis. Nicil itaque nobis elaborandum est, nicilque ita est enitendum, nisi aut [H. ut aut] cum virginitate vivamus, aut, quod est gloriosius, pro virginitate etiam moriamur. (FG § 34)

Virginity is a sign of virtue [C. F. H. Virginity is a sign of foremost virtue]. It is nearest to God, an imitation of angels, parent of life, friend of sanctity, mistress of safety, ruler of joy, leader of the way of salvation, nourishment of virtue, [C. F. H. crown

of faith,] support of hope, and protection of love. Thus we should labour at nothing, strive after nothing, save that we should either live in virginity, or, which is more glorious, that we should die for virginity.⁶

There is nothing here to surprise a reader familiar with traditional virginity literature; the implication of these passages seems to be that Eugenia's disguise was adopted simply in order that she would be able to live a life in which virginity played a central role, as it did in the life of many an ascetic and Christian martyr.

However, other passages in the Latin suggest that in the eyes of the writer there is more to the disguise than this; that the assumption of a masculine disguise is not just a matter of convenience, but an action of some symbolic significance. When the disguised Eugenia approaches the bishop Helenus (to whom her identity has already been revealed in a vision, FG § 10) with her request to be admitted into his monastery, he asks her her name. She does not say 'Eugenia', but 'Eugenius':

ego [C. F. H. ego uero] Eugenius nuncupor. Cui beatus Elenus: Recte, inquit, vocaris Eugenius, quia [C. F. quia enim] viriliter agendo, virum perfectum in agone te dominico obtulistī. (FG § 11)

I am [C. F. H. indeed] called Eugenius. To whom the blessed Helenus said 'Rightly are you called Eugenius, because by doing manfully, you have offered yourself a perfect man in the Lord's contest'.

Helenus's words recall I Corinthians 16.13, 'Vigilate, state in fide, viriliter agite, et confortamini' ('Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, do manfully, and be strengthened').⁷ Helenus plays on the literal meaning of 'viriliter': Eugenia is not only behaving 'courageously' -

the usual, metaphorical meaning of the word; her disguise enables him to draw attention to the etymology of 'viriliter'. By dressing as a man she is literally 'doing manfully'.⁹ The wordplay is continued with 'virum perfectum'. Helenus here seems to be referring to Ephesians 4.13: 'donec occurramus omnes in unitatem fidei, et agnitionis Filii Dei, in virum perfectum, in mensuram aetatis plenitudinis Christi' ('Until we all meet into the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ').⁹ The 'perfect man' of Ephesians seems to combine the idea of unity in faith and knowledge of Christ with the idea of attaining (spiritual) maturity.¹⁰ By 'doing manfully' Eugenia has become, in some way, a 'perfect man'.

Bede quotes I Corinthians 16.13 in the course of his homily on the story of the feeding of the five thousand (John 6.1-14). Commenting on the spiritual meaning of the 'five thousand men' who received sustenance, he writes

Quinque milia uiri qui manducauerunt perfectionem eorum qui uerbo uitae reficiuntur insinuant. Virorum quippe nomine solent in scripturis perfectiores quique figurari quos feminea mollities nulla corrumpit quales esse cupit eos quibus dicit apostolus: 'Vigilate state in fide uiriliter agite et confortamini'. ('Homelia' 2.2, CCSL 122.197)

The five thousand men who ate make known (or set forth) the perfection of those who are refreshed by the word of life. The scriptures use the word men to refer figuratively to the more perfect, whom feminine weakness does not corrupt. That is what the apostle desires them to be like, to whom he says: 'Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, do manfully, and be strengthened'.

Ælfric used this homily as one of the sources for his homily on the same subject (see Förster 1894, § 72, and Smetana 1959, 188). While the Old English retains the underlying implication of 'feminine' weakness, Ælfric adds that women can also 'be manfully constituted' in the figurative sense, i.e. of a courageous disposition:

Ðær wæron getealde æt ðam gereorde fif ðusend wera; forðon þe ða menn, þe to ðam gastlican gereorde belimpað, sceolon beon werlice geworhte, swa swa se apostol cwæð; he cwæð, 'Beoð wacole, and standað on geleafan, and onginnað werlice, and beoð gehyrte.' Ðeah gif wifmann bið werlice geworht, and strang to Godes willan, heo bið þonne geteald to ðam werum þe æt Godes mysan sittað. ('Dominica in media quadragesima', CH I.188)

There were numbered at that meal five thousand men (i.e. male persons); because the people (i.e. human beings of either sex) who belong to the spiritual meal are 'manfully constituted' (i.e. of a courageous disposition), as the apostle said; he said, 'Be watchful, and stand firm in faith, act manfully and be encouraged'. However if a woman be 'manfully constituted', and strong in performing God's will, she will then be numbered with the men (i.e. male persons) who sit at God's table.'¹

In their elucidation of the 'spiritual' (i.e. allegorical) meaning of the 'men' in the story, the words of both Bede and Ælfric imply received prejudices about masculine and feminine;¹² but Ælfric may be more sensitive to the difficulty inherent in the application of 'werlice' to women as well as men, since he takes the trouble to draw attention to the metaphorical and more inclusive meaning of the word. This may not have been so necessary for Bede, since 'courageously' was the normal meaning of the Latin word 'viriliter'.

In contrast, however, to these passages of scriptural interpretation by Bede and Ælfric, the Latin Life of *Eugenia* delights in the literal as well as metaphorical enactment of St Paul's words in *Corinthians* and *Ephesians* in *Eugenia's* story. The author comments on *Eugenia's* conduct when she has entered the monastery: '*Illa vero virili habitu et animo, in prædicto virum monasterio permanebat*': 'Indeed she remained in the aforesaid monastery of men with the dress and mind (or courage) of a man'. Her progress in learning is mentioned, and her virtues. Then the account continues:

Quis enim eam [C. F. H. omit eam] deprehenderet [C. F. deprehenderit] quod esset femina, quam ita virtus Christi et virginitas immaculata [H. omits immaculata] protegebat, ut imitabilis [C. F. inimitabilis] esset etiam viris? Sermo autem eius erat humilis in caritate [C. F. claritate], clarus in mediocritate, vitio [C. F. H. vitiis] carens, et facundiam fugiens [H. facundia fulgens], omnes in humilitate superabat. Nullus illi ad orationem inveniebatur anterior, [C. F. H. add Efficiebatur autem omnibus omnia], tristem consolabatur, læto congaudebat, irascentem uno sermone [C. F. add suo] mitigabat; superbientem ita [H. adds uno] suo edificabat exemplo, ut ovem subito factam ex lupo, credere delectaret. (FG § 13)¹³

For who could detect that she was a woman, whom the power of Christ and immaculate virginity protected, so that she was a model, even for men [C. F. inimitable, even to men]? For her speech was humble in (its) love [C. F. plainness], shining in (its) moderation, free from vice [C. F. H. vices], and avoiding fine words [H. shining in eloquence]. She surpassed all in humility. No one was found sooner than she at prayer. [C. F. H. She became all things to all men (cf. I *Corinthians* 9.22)], she comforted the sorrowful, rejoiced with the glad, soothed the angry by a single word. She instructed the proud by her [H. single] example so that he delighted to believe that suddenly a sheep had been made from a wolf.

It is possible that 'virili habitu et animo' simply describes Eugenia's dress and her 'courage': 'animus' alone often means 'courage',¹⁴ so that 'virili animo' may be taken as equivalent to 'viriliter', 'courageously'. Nevertheless, the phrase does seem at the same time to exploit the prejudice enshrined in the language, so that her masculine dress is seen to symbolise one of the qualities for which she is praised.

Eugenia herself becomes the mouthpiece of the clearest expression in the Life of the idea of male superiority and female inferiority. This is in the speech in which she defends herself against Melantia's charge of attempted seduction - a defence which culminates in the dramatic revelation of Eugenia's sex. I have numbered the lines of this passage for convenience of comparison between the versions:

Tanta enim virtus est nominis eius [= Christi], ut etiam femine, in timore [H. adds nominis] eius positę, virilem obtineant dignitatem. Neque enim diversitas sexus inveniri potest in fide [C. F. H. add superior], quum beatus Paulus, magister omnium [C. F. H. omit omnium] (5) christianorum, dicat quod apud Deum non sit discretio masculi et femine: omnes enim in Christo unum sumus. Huius ergo [C. H. ego] normam animo ferventiori [C. F. fervente; H. ferventi] suscipiens [C. F. add et] confidentiam, quam in Christo habui, nolui esse feminam [C. H. femineam; F. femineal]. Consideravi enim non esse inimicam (10) honestatis [H. honestati] simulationem per quam femina virum simulat, sed magis hoc iure puniri, si pro affectu vitiorum vir feminam fingat [F. fingit]. Et hoc iure laudandum, si pro amore virtutum¹⁵ sexus infirmior virilem gloriam imitetur. Idcirco nunc ego, amore divino [C. H. divine; F. diuinę] religionis accensa, virilem (15) habitum sumsi [C. adsumsi F. adsumpsi H. assumpsi], et virum gessi perfectum, virginitatem Christo fortiter conservando. Et hec

dicens, scidit a capite tunica [C. F. H. tunicam] qua erat induta, et apparuit femina. (FG §§ 25-26)

The power of Christ's name is so great that even women placed in the fear of him [H. his name] may obtain the dignity (i.e. (high) rank) of a man. Indeed no difference of sex can be found in faith [C. F. H. a difference of sex cannot be found, i.e. thought to be, superior in faith], since the blessed Paul, teacher of all [not C. F. H.] Christians, says that in the Lord there is no distinction between male and female, for we are all one in Christ (Galatians 3.28). Therefore [C. H. omit] accepting his law with a burning spirit, [C. F. and] (accepting) the trust (or confidence) I had in Christ, I did not wish to be a woman [C. F. H. womanly]. For I considered the pretence by which a woman pretends to be a man not to be injurious of [H. to] honour. But this is rightly to be punished if with a desire for vices a man feigns (to be) a woman. And this is rightly deserving of praise if for the love of virtues the weaker sex imitates manly glory (i.e. the glorious masculine condition). Now for that reason, kindled with the divine love of piety, [C. F. H. the love of divine piety] I assumed a manly dress, and conducted myself as a perfect man, by preserving with fortitude (my) virginity for Christ. And saying this, she rent the tunic, with which she was clothed, from the top, and showed herself to be a woman (or, and a woman appeared).

This is difficult to interpret, since there seems to be a contradiction between St Eugenia's acceptance of the inferiority of women and the words she quotes from Galatians. In spite of the reference to Galatians, her words suggest that the 'dignity' of a man is greater than that of a woman, and that 'we are all one in Christ' if women become like men.

We may compare the parallel passages in the VP and Mombricitus versions. The VP version is very different from the Cotton-Corpus one from 'Huius' (line 6 above) to 'conservando' (line 16 above):

Tanta enim est virtus nominis ejus, ut etiam feminae in timore ejus positae virilem obtineant dignitatem; et neque ei sexus diversitas fide potest inveniri superior, cum beatus Paulus apostolus, magister omnium Christianorum, dicat quod apud Dominum non sit discretio (5) masculi et feminae, omnes enim in Christo unum sumus. Hujus ergo normam animo fervente suscepi, et ex confidentia quam in Christo habui, nolui esse femina, sed virginitatem immaculatam tota animi intentione conservans, virum gessi constanter in Christo. Non enim infrunitam honestatis simulationem assumpsi, ut vir feminam simularem: (10) sed femina viriliter agendo, virum gessi, virginitatem quae in Christo est fortiter amplectendo. Et haec dicens, scidit a capite tunicam qua erat induta, et apparuit femina. (PL 73.614)

The power of his name is so great that even women placed in the fear of it may obtain the dignity of a man; and to him difference of sex cannot be found (to be) greater (i.e. more important) than faith, since the blessed apostle Paul, teacher of all Christians, says that in the Lord there is no distinction between male and female; for we are all one in Christ. Therefore I accepted his rule with a burning spirit, and from the trust (or confidence) I had in Christ, I did not wish to be a woman, but preserving unstained virginity with all the zeal of my spirit, resolutely in Christ I conducted myself as a man. I did not indeed assume a senseless pretence of virtue (or beauty),¹⁶ so that, being a man, I might pretend to be a woman; but being a woman, by acting in a manly way, I conducted myself steadfastly as a man, in embracing with fortitude the virginity which is in Christ. And saying this, she rent the tunic, with which she was clothed, from the top, and showed herself to be a woman (or, and a woman appeared).

The penultimate sentence quoted from this version may explain what Eugenia is referring to when she says 'I acted like a man'. 'Fortiter' and 'viriliter' are synonyms (cf Lewis & Short s.v. 'fortiter' 2): she 'embraced' virginity with fortitude, and so conducted herself like a man, by 'doing manfully'.¹⁷

Eugenia's speech in the Mombricitus version is just over half the length of that in the Cotton-Corpus version. The passages quoted from FG & VP from 'Tanta enim' (line 1) to 'quam Christo habui' (FG line 8, VP lines 7-8) have no parallel in the Mombricitus version. From 'consideravi' (FG line 9) the Mombricitus and Cotton-Corpus versions are very close:

quia uiriliter in amore dei agit animus christianus: confidentiam meam nolui esse foemineam. Consideravi enim [non (esse)]¹⁸ inimicam honestati simulationem: per quam foemina uirum simulat. Sed magis hoc iure puniri: si pro affectu uiciorum uir foeminam stringat [= fingat?] et hoc iure laudandum: si pro affectu uirtutum sexus infirmior uirilem formam¹⁹ imittetur. Id circo ego nunc amore diuinae religionis [sic] accensa uirilem habitum sumpsi: et uirum gessi perfectum: uirginitatem Christo fortiter conservando. Et haec dicens: scidit a capite tunicam: qua erat induta: et insignis facie paruit et pulcro pectore uirgo . (p. 395)

Because the Christian soul acts manfully in the love of God, I did not wish my trust (or confidence, or perhaps boldness) to be womanly. For I considered the pretence by which a woman pretends to be a man [not] to be injurious to honour. But this is rightly to be punished if with a desire for vices a man [feigns] (to be) a woman, and this is rightly deserving of praise if for the love of virtues the weaker sex imitates a manly appearance. Now for that reason, kindled with the love of divine piety, I assumed a manly dress, and I conducted myself as a perfect man, by preserving with fortitude (my) virginity for Christ. And saying this, she rent the tunic, with which she was clothed, from the top, and showed herself, remarkable in appearance, and with a beautiful breast, to be a woman (or, a woman appeared, remarkable etc.).

Eugenia does not quote Galatians here. Her words, however, as in the other versions, continue the interplay between the literal and the

metaphorical; her dress reflects, or symbolises, her 'courage' or 'fortitude', as she fulfils St Paul's injunction in I Corinthians 16.13 to 'do manfully' (quoted above, p. 190 and cf. note 7). Her words also, as in the other versions, indicate an acceptance of the notion of male superiority and female inferiority. The saint expresses this prejudice even as she reveals her sex to prove her innocence.

Jerome might have approved this point of view. The Latin Lives of St Eugenia nicely exemplify his notion of the relative status of men and women. Jerome wrote in his commentary on Ephesians:

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. ('Comm. in Epist. ad Ephes.' III, 5.28, PL 26.533)

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 [in the words of St Paul] 'to meet into a perfect man' (cf. Ephesians 4.13). (cf Daly 1968, 43)

In a letter of encouragement to a man who had taken a vow of continence with his wife, Jerome wrote how this decision raised her to her husband's level and enabled her to achieve equality with a man:

Habes tecum prius in carne, nunc in spiritu sociam; de conjugē germanam, de femina virum, de subjecta parem: quae sub eodem iugo ad coelestia simul regna festinet. (Letter 71.3, PL 22.670)

You have with you one who was once your partner in the flesh but is now your partner in the spirit; once your wife but now your sister;

once a woman but now a man; once an inferior but now an equal. Under the same yoke as you she hastens toward the same heavenly kingdom. (Wace & Schaff VI.153)

Ambrose wrote in similar vein in his explanation of the Ephesians verse:

Quae non credit, mulier est, et adhuc corporei sexus appellatione signatur: nam quae credit, occurrit in virum perfectum, in mensuram aetatis plenitudinis Christi, carens jam nomine saeculi, corporis sexu, lubrico juventutis, multiloqueo senectutis. ('Expos. evang. sec. Lucam', X.161, PL 15.1844)

She who does not believe is a woman and is still designated by the name of her sex, for she who believes 'has met into a perfect man, into the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ', giving up then the name of (her) sex (i.e. the name of woman),²⁰ the sex of (her) body (i.e. her physical sex), the unsteadiness of youth, the loquaciousness of old age. (cf Daly 1968, 43)

This fits Eugenia's case particularly well. Eugenia has achieved such perfect manhood, in her own view and that of Helenus (see pp. 190 & 194 ff. above).²¹ It is perhaps rather paradoxical that a female saint can be presented in such a way as to reinforce the idea that women are inferior.

The potential weakness, indeed wickedness of woman is in turn exemplified in the figure of Melantia. Eugenia, who has become a Christian and transcended her sex by taking on the role of a monk in order to preserve her virginity, is confronted with Melantia, the wanton woman, the rich widow who attempts to seduce a monk. Melantia provides the author with another opportunity to indulge in wordplay. This time the play is on Melantia's name, which the author takes to be

derived from Greek 'melanthēs, -es', 'black' (and cf. 'melas, -anos', 'black, dark'; and of character, 'dark, malignant').²²

When 'the miserable Melantia' has been attempting 'to approach (Eugenia) with her filthy embraces, and to turn her to wantonness with her idle talk' ('obscenis eam amplexibus infelix Melantia tentabat adire, et sermonibus vanis ad lasciviam inclinare', FG § 18), Eugenia arms herself with the sign of the cross (§ 19), and proceeds to rebuke Melantia at some length:

Recte Melantia nomen habere cognosceris; nigredinis [H. nigredine] enim repleta perfidia [H. inuidie], nigra diceris et obscura, socia tenebrarum, amica diaboli, dux pollutionis, fomentum libidinis, soror anxietatis perpetue, et mortis filia sempiternae. (FG § 19)²³

Rightly are you known to have the name Melantia: for (you are) filled with the treachery of blackness [H. blackness of envy], you are called black and dark, companion of darkness (cf. II Corinthians 6.14), friend of the devil, leader of pollution, nourishment of lust, sister of perpetual anxiety, and daughter of everlasting death.

Two things may be said about this passage. First, Eugenia's first words to Melantia seem to be a deliberate echo of Helenus's words to Eugenia (see p. 190 above); and secondly, the phrasing and vocabulary of the remainder of the passage (from 'nigra diceris') provide a parallel with Eugenia's account of the virtue of virginity, quoted above (p. 189): e.g. amica sanctitatis / amica diaboli; dux itineris salutaris / dux pollutionis; virtutis fomentum / fomentum libidinis. Thus attention is drawn to the contrast between the wickedness of the lust of which Melantia is guilty, and the virtue of virginity which Eugenia embraces; and Melantia's name is shown to signify her wicked character, much as Eugenia's masculine dress, and adoption of the

masculine form of her name, symbolise her 'courage' - and perhaps also her transcendence of the weakness associated with her sex.

There are significant differences between the Latin versions, with their playing on words, and consequent reinforcement of certain prejudices, and Ælfric's treatment of St Eugenia's Life (LS 2). Ælfric's is a much more straightforward account. What he retains (in terms of phraseology as well as structure) is very close to the Latin Cotton-Corpus version; what he omits, however, considerably alters the perspective of the life.

One of the few additions he makes is the opening sentence, which has no parallel in the Latin versions:

Mæg gehyran se ðe wyle be þam halgan mædene .
eugenian philyppus dæhter .
hu heo ðurh mægðhad mærllice þeah .
and þurh martyrdom þisne middaneard oferswað. (lines 1-4)

This draws attention at the outset to Eugenia's virginity and her martyrdom, suggesting that these are to be the two principal concerns of her Life. This is indeed the case in the Old English, unlike the Latin, where further complicating interests emerge as the story progresses.

Like the Latin, but more briefly, Ælfric describes how Eugenia has encountered and been inspired by the teaching of St Paul,²⁴ and has then been moved by the singing of the Christians so that she asks her servants to cut her hair and help disguise her as a man in order that she may approach the Christians without being exposed:²⁵

Ða nam eugenia hi on sundorspræce .
 het hi gebroðra . and bæd þæt hi
 hyre fæx forcurfon on wæpmonna wysan .
 and mid wædum gehiwodon . swylce heo cniht wære .
 wolde ðam cristenan genealecan
 on wærlicum hiwe . þæt heo ne wurde ameldod. (48-53)

Her motive, that of avoiding discovery, remains uncomplicated throughout Ælfric's version. When she approaches Helenus he recognises her sex, for it has been revealed to him in a vision, 64-65, (as in the Latin: see p. 190 above). However he does not take the opportunity to comment on her having 'acted manfully' as the Helenus of the Latin does (pp. 190-91 above). Rather, what he says reinforces the theme of virginity established at the opening, together with the idea, if not of martyrdom, of persecution; and when he tells her to retain her masculine disguise, it is purely with a view to preserving secrecy:

He genam hi þa onsundron . and sæde hyre gewislice .
 hwæt heo man ne wæs . and hwylcere mægþe .
 and þæt heo þurh mægðhad mycclum gelicode .
 þam heofonlican cyninge . þe heo gecoren hæfde .
 and cwæð þæt heo sceolde swiðlice æhtnyssa .
 for mægðhade ðrowian . and þeah beon gescyld
 þurh þone soðan drihten . þe gescyldt his gecorenan ...
 Ða behead se biscop þam gebogenan mædene .
 þæt heo swa þurhwunade . on þam wærlicum hiwe .
 oppæt hi on fante gefullode wurden .
 and mynsterlicre drohtnunge . dearnunge ge-þeodde. (77-83, 88-91)

It is important to note that there is nothing here that Helenus does not also say in the Latin, although Ælfric condenses the exchange of information about her origins (FG § 11); but by concentrating on her

virginity and omitting the punning reference to her having 'done manfully',²⁶ Ælfric has changed the emphasis.

The passage in the Latin describing Eugenia's conduct in the monastery (quoted above, p. 193) has its counterpart in Ælfric's 'Life':

Eugenia þa wunode on þam mynstre
mid wærlicum mode . þeah þe heo mæden wære .
 mid hyre twam cnihtum . uncuð gehwam .
 And heold on hyre þeawum halige drohtnunge .
 ðurh modes liþnesse . 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 sceape. (92-100)

The question of Ælfric's emphasis here is rather more arguable. The Old English, though much abbreviated, echoes some of the phraseology of the Latin:

virili habitu et animo / mid wærlicum mode
 ut ovem subito factam ex lupo / awend of wulfe to sceape

If 'mid wærlicum mode' (93) carries the same connotations as I have argued the Latin does, that the change is also one which confers on her the status and dignity of a man, it is also true that Ælfric does not dwell on the idea, here or elsewhere; nor does he offer any further explanation. Both 'on þæm wærlicum hiwe' just previously (89), and 'on wærlicum hiwe' (53), are neutral concerning any symbolic implications of the disguise. Ælfric uses not the adverb *werlice* (which would correspond to *viriliter*), but the adjective *werlic* at lines 53, 89, & 93.²⁷ The point of the phrase here may instead be the

remarkable fact that Eugenia's sex remains unrecognised. Interestingly, Ælfric has taken the image of the wolf becoming a sheep to refer to Eugenia - it may be possible to read the Latin in this way. 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.²⁸ But unlike the Latin, which assumes the inferiority of women in its treatment of the story, the general tenor of Ælfric's account, quite deliberately, it seems, is not to attach the same weight to the spiritual significance of her disguise as the Latin does. Ælfric does not refer to the idea of the 'perfect man'; nor does he play on the two senses, literal and metaphorical, of 'werlice'.

All this affects one's reading of the episode of the attempted seduction of Eugenia by Melantia. In Ælfric, in the confrontation between the two, with its physical incident - Melantia actually embraces Eugenia - the contrast is not between a wicked woman and a woman who is good partly, as I have tried to show, because she has behaved 'manfully', but between two kinds of woman, the 'prostitute' and the virgin: 'beclypte seo myltestre pæt clæne mæden' (169).²⁹ The force of this is not that Eugenia has transcended her female sex by adopting a masculine disguise and behaving with ('masculine') courage, but rather that she has overcome the weakness of sexuality with her virginity. Certainly it is Eugenia's virginity and not her 'manly' -

or indeed 'courageous' - behaviour which receives the emphasis. There is, in addition, no play on Melantia's name in the Old English, although Melantia's character is here also described as 'black'. As in the Latin (quoted above, p. 200), Eugenia reproves the widow in no uncertain terms:

beclypte seo myltestre þæt clæne mæden .
and wolde hi gebygan to bismorlicum hæmede.
Hwæt ða eugenia . hi gebletsode.
and cwæð to ðære sceande . þæt heo soðlice wære
galnysse ontendnyss . and gramena mæge .
þeostra gefæra . and mid swearnysse afylled .
Deaðes dohtor and deofles fætels .³⁰ (169-75)

Any play on Melantia's name would presumably have been lost on an Anglo-Saxon audience without an accompanying explanation.³¹ Whether the idea is not reproduced by Ælfric because he himself did not understand it (or possibly because it was not in his precise source); or whether he understood it, but was no more interested in a play on the literal and metaphorical meanings of 'Melantia' than he was in such a play on *viriliter* / *werlice*, its omission is consistent with the more straightforward, less playful (and less prejudiced) methods and concerns of his version.

When the time comes for Eugenia to prove her innocence Ælfric reports her defence in indirect speech. Eugenia, 'seo æpele fæmne' (227), expands a little on the motive assigned to her when she adopted her disguise; but what she says before she tears her garment apart, in comparison with her lengthy speech in the Latin, is brief and simple:

.... þæt heo wolde hi sylfe bediglian.
and criste anum hyre clænnysse healdan .

on mægðhade wunlende . mannum uncuð .
and forðy underfænge æt fruman þa gyrlan .
wærlices hades . and wurde geefsod .
Æfter þysum wordum heo totær hyre gewædu .
and ætæwde hyre breost . (228-34)

In the Old English, Eugenia has not suggested it might be better not to be a woman, nor referred to the 'weaker sex' (see pp. 194 ff. above). The disguise was assumed to preserve secrecy and virginity, and this is all the explanation offered by Eugenia in the Old English.

It is also worth noting, in this context, that Ælfric comments on the virginity of Eugenia's servants Protus and Jacintus.³² The two are martyred for their faith before Eugenia, and Ælfric gives them this epitaph:

Ðas martyras næron næfre on life
þurh wif besmytene . ac hi wunedon on clænnysse .
oð heora lifes ænde . mid mycclum geleafan . (380-82)

This comment is not present in the Latin versions (although it is possible that Ælfric's precise source might have included such a comment). The strong expression 'þurh wif besmytene', 'defiled with women', presumably alludes to the hundred and forty-four thousand virgins of Apocalypse 14.4: 'These are they who were not defiled with women'. These lines are an indication that in Ælfric's view (as in that of medieval writers in general) virginity is desirable and praiseworthy, a mark of purity and faith, regardless of sex.

Thus although Ælfric appears to have used a Latin Life of Eugenia similar to those discussed, his interpretation of the story is quite different. The tradition in which he was writing, and wished to pass

on to his audience, seems to be less prejudiced in its views towards women, and in its notion of what constituted a woman's holiness, than that which produced the Latin versions of the same story.

NOTES:

1. See Anson's discussion (1974); and for further references see Szarmach 1990, 156, note 4.

2. The discussion of the Latin 'St Eugenia' will be based principally on the 'Cotton-Corpus' version, since Ælfric's Life appears to have been based on a version very similar to this one (see Appendix, pp. 478-79 for information about the Cotton-Corpus Legendary and a brief account of the various Latin versions of the 'Life of St Eugenia' and their possible relationships). Quotations will be from the text of this version as printed by Fábrega Grau 1955, 83-98 [FG]; references are to his paragraph numbers. I have collated this text with the three manuscripts of the Cotton-Corpus Legendary in which the Life of Eugenia is to be found: Cambridge, Corpus Christi Library, MS 9, pp. 410-26 [C]; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 354, fols 176r-186v [F]; Hereford, Cathedral Library, MS P7 vi, fols 205b-213a [H]. MS abbreviations, except *ę*, have been silently expanded. Variant spellings (e.g. *ae/e*, *ill-/inl*, *nihil/nicil*, *op-/ob-*) and punctuation are not in general recorded, but those variant readings which affect the sense are noted. My emendations are indicated by italics. Reference will also be made where appropriate to the *Vitae Patrum* version: PL 73.605-24 [VP] and the Mombritius version (Mombritius II.391-98), because they may have been used by the compiler of the Cotton-Corpus version, and a comparison can sometimes be helpful. They also help to illustrate the difference in approach between the Latin and Old English versions. Words and phrases given particular attention in the discussion are underlined.

3. For discussions concerning the historicity of such stories, see Delehaye 1962, Delcourt 1961 and Anson 1974.

4. VP: 'tondere me arbitror' (PL 73.608). The Mombritiis version has no precise parallel to these words. She says to her companions Protus and Hiacythus 'crinibus meis tonsuram adhibete' (p. 392).

5. There is considerable variation in detail between the versions here, although the gist of what she says is very similar (PL 73.614, Mombritiis, p. 395). The remainder of this speech will be discussed below, pp. 194 ff.

6. There are some minor differences between this and the VP text:

Virginitas enim est primae virtutis indicium Deo proximum, similis angelis, parens vitae, amica sanctitatis, via securitatis, domina gaudii, dux virtutis, fomentum et corona fidei, adminiculum et subsidium charitatis. Nihil ita nobis laborandum, nihil ita est enitendum, nisi cum virginitate vivamus, aut quod est gloriosius, pro virginitate moriamur. (PL 73.617)

Of this passage the Mombritiis text has only 'uirginitas enim prima est uirtutis indicium: similis angelorum, parens uitae amica sanctitatis: gaudii dux' (p. 396).

7. The VP version is even closer to I Corinthians 16.13:

ego vero Eugenius nuncupor. Cui beatus Helenus dixit: Recte te Eugenium vocas; viriliter enim agis, et confortetur cor tuum pro fide Christi. Ergo recte vocaris Eugenius. (PL 73.610)

There is nothing in the VP version which corresponds to 'virum perfectum ... obtulisti'. The Mombritiis version has 'Recte inquit uocaris Eugenius : quia uir(i)liter agendum te in agone obtulisti' (p. 393). For 'in agone' see I Corinthians 9.25 and II Timothy 2.5. 'obtulisti', 'you have offered', perhaps carries the suggestion of a (sacrificial) offering: see Vulgate Concordance, s.v. 'offero'; and cf. the injunction given to Moses in Leviticus 1.3, 10, that offerings to the Lord must be male ('masculum') and without blemish ('immaculatum').

8. The passage in Corinthians itself echoes 14 occurrences of the words in various permutations in the Vulgate Old Testament, including 2 from the Psalms. The first is Deuteronomy 31.6, where Moses

instructs the Israelites to 'do manfully'. The others are: Joshua 1.18, I Paralipomenon 19.13, 22.13, 28.20, II Paralipomenon 32.7, Judith 15.11, Psalm 26.14, 30.25, I Maccabees 2.64, 6.31, II Maccabees 10.35, 14.43, III Esdras 8.96. *Viriliter* in these cases is used in the metaphoric sense of 'courageously'; not 'like a man' in any literal sense. This is also the case with the instance in the Book of Judith, where the Israelites use the words in their song of praise to Judith. She is described as a courageous woman whom the Lord has strengthened because she has remained chaste in her widowhood:

Quae cum exisset ad illum benedixerunt illam omnes una voce, dicentes: Tu gloria Hierusalem, tu laetitia Israhel, tu honorificentia populi nostri; quia fecisti viriliter, et confortatum est cor tuum, eo quod castitatem amaveris, et post virum tuum, alterum non scieris: ideo et manus Domini confortavit te et ideo eris benedicta in aeternum. (Judith 15.10-11)

The significance of 'fecisti viriliter ... tuum' here probably lies in the fact that the words deliberately recall earlier uses in the OT; Judith's actions may thus be seen to accord with the commands of the OT prophets, such as Moses. In the context *viriliter* does not suggest any particular preoccupation with feminine weakness, except insofar as a word which equates courageous behaviour with acting 'manfully', - in a manner worthy of a man - can always be taken to imply such weakness. The extant OE versions of the Book of Judith have no equivalent for the word. The OE poem *Judith* omits verses 9-12, passing at line 323 from Judith 15.8 to 15.13 (see Timmer 1978, 15-16). In his homily on the Book of Judith Ælfric uses the verses, but does not directly translate *viriliter*. His phrasing places even greater emphasis on her chastity:

And hi hi swiðe bletsodon,
ealle þisum wordum: þu eart wuldor soðlice
ure byrig Hierusalem and Israheles bliss,
ures folces arwurðnyss, forþan þe þu wunodest
æfter þinum were wiflice on clænnysse,

and god þe gestrangode for þære clænnysse,
and forþan þu sylf bist gebletsod on worulde.

(Assmann 9.388-394)

Even if an ambiguity remains in the Vulgate, clearly neither Ælfric nor the author of the OE poem is concerned with the 'manly' quality of Judith's conduct.

In the Latin 'Acta S. Agathae' (see Appendix, p. 476), Agatha recalls the phrase 'viriliter agite' in her final prayer in prison before her death: 'Domine, qui me creasti, et custodisti me ab infantia mea, et fecisti me in iuventute viriliter agere' (AASS Feb. 1.623). Apart from the usual metaphorical meaning of acting courageously, the contrast implied here seems to be between (spiritual) youth and adulthood (cf. I Corinthians 13.11) rather than between female and male. As in the case of Judith, it is not a point Ælfric takes up in his (generally close) translation of the Life of Agatha: he provides no equivalent of these words in her prayer (see LS 8.184-94).

There is an interesting example of the use of *viriliter* in the *Life of Christina of Markayate*, an English recluse of the twelfth century, during the course of an episode in which Christina and a cleric suffer temptation:

Quandoque miser homo instigatus veniebat nudus ante illam ardens et amens. ac tam nefando genere se agens: quod a turpitudine non possum illud prodere ne vel scribendo ceram vel eloquendo aerem ipsum polluam. Quandoque procidens adorabat eam usque ad terram obsecrans ut respiceret ac miseraretur suam miseriam. Illa vero adoranti exprobrabat irreverenciam ordinis ipsius. et obsecrantem amovebat duris increpacionibus. Cumque laboravit et ipsa incendio miserabili. prudenter tamen simulabat se nichil tale pati. Unde nonnunquam virum illam non feminam esse dicebat quem virago virtute virili predita recte effeminatum appellare poterat. Vis scire quam viriliter ipsa se continuerit in tam grandi periculo?

Sometimes the wretched man, out of his senses with passion, came before her without any clothes on and behaved in so scandalous a manner that I cannot make it known, lest I pollute the wax by writing

it, or the air by saying it. Sometimes he fell on his face at her feet, pleading with her to look pityingly upon him and have compassion on his wretchedness. But as he lay there she upbraided him for showing so little respect for his calling, and with harsh reproaches silenced his pleadings. And though she herself was struggling with the wretched passion, she wisely pretended that she was untouched by it. Whence he sometimes said that she was more like a man than a woman, though she, with her more masculine qualities, might more justifiably have called him a woman.* Would you like to know how manfully she behaved in so imminent a danger? [There follows an account of Christina's fastings, scourgings, and various other kinds of self-mortification.] (§§ 43-44, Talbot 1959, 114-15).

[* Translated more literally: 'Whence he sometimes said that she was a man not a woman, (he) whom the valiant woman (or heroine), endowed (as she was) with manly qualities, could justifiably have called womanish'.] Christina is discussed further below, ch. 13.

9. cf. also Genesis 6.9, where Noah is called 'vir iustus atque perfectus', 'a just and perfect man'.

10. The idea is further explained in Ephesians 4.12, 14, 15; and cf. I Corinthians 13.11: 'When I was a child ... I understood as a child ... but when I became a man ...'.

11. Ælfric makes a distinction here between *wer* and *mann*: *wer* translates *vir*, 'a man, a male person'; 'a male that has reached man's estate' (BT s.v. 'wer' I & II); *mann* often translates *homo*, 'a human being of either sex' (BT s.v. 'mann'). For the sense of *geworht(e)* here, see BT Sup. & Add. & Corr. s.v. 'gewyrca' V.

12. Gregory explained the literal and figurative uses of *vir* and *mulier* in the Bible in his commentary on Job 14.1 ('man that is born of a woman liveth a short time, and is full of many miseries'), where he says that in the Bible the word 'woman', *mulier*, is used either literally (pro sexu) or figuratively (pro infirmitate). An example of the former is Galatians 4.4: 'God sent his son, made of a woman, made under the law'; of the latter, Ecclesiasticus 42.14: 'Better is the iniquity of a man than a woman doing well'. In the latter passage

(and by implication elsewhere also), the word *vir* is applied to anyone (man or woman) strong and discerning, while the word *mulier* is taken as referring to a weak and undiscerning mind:

In sacro eloquio mulier aut pro sexu ponitur, aut pro infirmitate. Pro sexu quippe sicut scriptum est: 'Misit Deus filium suum factum ex muliere, factum sub lege' (Galatians 4.4). Pro infirmitate vero sicut per quemdam sapientem dicitur: 'Melior est iniquitas uiri, quam benefaciens mulier' (Ecclesiasticus 42.14). Vir etenim fortis quilibet et discretus vocatur, mulier vero mens infirma vel indiscreta accipitur. (*Moralia* 11, § 65, PL 75.982; cf. Bliss 1844, II.40)

It is worth noting that by interpreting the latter passage in this way, Gregory completely neutralises what, taken literally, is a virulently sexist statement. See the comments on Gregory above, pp. 148-50).

Compare Isidore's etymologies of *vir* and *mulier*:

Vir nuncupatus, quod major in eo vis est, quam in femina. Unde et virtus nomen accepit ... *Mulier* vero, a *mollitie*, tanquam *mollier*, detracta littera, vel mutata, appellata est *mulier*. (*Etym.* XI, ii, 17-18, PL 82.417).

13. The VP version is very close to C & F in this passage (e.g. it shares with them the readings 'deprehenderet' & 'claritate'). The major variants are 'mirabilis' for 'imitabilis/inimitabilis' ('she was wonderful, even to men'); and, at the end of the passage quoted, 'ut ovem subito factam ex lupo se credere delectaretur' ('he delighted to believe that suddenly he had been made a sheep from a wolf') (PL 73.611). Of the passage, the Mombricitus version has only 'Beata uero Eugenia uirili habitu et animo cum Protho et Hiacyntho in predicto monasterio persistebat' and the sentence which follows (which has not been quoted) concerning her progress in learning (p. 393).

14. See Lewis & Short s.v. 'animus' II B 2a.

15. See Isidore quotation, note 13 above.

16. 'virtue' does not make sense here. Possibly it may mean 'beauty, comeliness', recorded as 'very rare' in classical Latin (see Lewis &

Short, s.v., II B); and compare I Corinthians 12.23 ('honestatem': 'comeliness' in the Douai translation).

17. Anson & Szarmach also translate and discuss this passage (Anson 1974, 23, 27; Szarmach 1990, 153-54).

18. The sense seems to require the insertion of 'non' as in FG (although 'esse' is not so necessary): it seems unlikely that she considered it 'injurious to honour for a woman to pretend to be a man', since that is what she did, and she is now defending herself for having done so.

19. 'virilem formam': compare 'virilem gloriam' (FG line 13). It seems likely that one is a corruption of the other. If the Mombricitus version was used by the compiler of the Cotton-Corpus version (see Appendix, p. 479), then 'gloriam' may be a corruption of 'formam'. However, on the present evidence, it is not possible to be certain about the precise relationship of the versions.

20. 'saeculum' here means 'species, kind'.

21. In a sermon on the martyrdom of Saints Perpetua and Felicity, Augustine comments on the achievement of manliness by 'the weaker sex'. He writes that the crown (of martyrdom) is more glorious where the sex is weaker; and a 'virile soul' in the women accomplished something greater when feminine fragility did not grow weak under such a weight (i.e. of martyrdom). He ends the chapter by saying how Christ caused the women to die 'manfully and faithfully', he who for their sake mercifully deigned to be born from a woman:

Ibi est corona gloriosior, ubi sexus infirmior. Quia profecto virilis animus in feminas majus aliquid fecit, quando sub tanto pondere fragilitas feminea non defecit ... Ille fecit feminas viriliter et fideliter mori, qui pro eis dignatus est de femina misericorditer nasci. (Sermo 281.1, PL 38.1284)

Augustine is opposing manly courage with feminine frailty, making use of the rhetorical effect of oxymoron by linking *virilis/ viriliter* and *feminas*. His point here, perhaps, is that the stereotype is

contradicted by the particular instance. The OEM entry for Perpetua and Felicity may be compared:

[Perpetua] mætte þa heo wæs on mædenhade þæt heo wære on wæres hiwe ond ðæt heo hæfde sword on handa ond þæt heo stranglice fuhte mid þy. þæt wæs eall eft on her martyrdome gefylled, ða heo mid werlice geðohte deofol oferswiðde ond þa hæðnan ehteras. (March 7, Kotzor 1981, II.29)

The indication here, once again, is that 'werlic geðoht' is found not just in men, but also in women; and that its possession could be symbolised (here in a dream) by the assumption of the physical form and behaviour of the male. Cross suggests that this detail in the OEM entry is derived from Augustine's sermon (1986, 284), and he comments on the entry 'The phrase "mid werlice beðohte" echoes *virilis animus* in Augustine, Sermo 281 ... and the idea that Perpetua was manly in behaviour although feminine in form is one emphasized in the sermons. It does not appear in the *Passiones*' (p. 298, note 64).

22. Liddell & Scott, s.v. 'melanthēs', & 'melas' I & III.4. Compare also Gk. & Lat. 'melania', 'blackness', 'black spots (on the skin)' (Liddell & Scott, s.v., I & II; Lewis & Short, s.v.). Aldhelm drew attention to the meaning of the widow's name in his account of Eugenia, *De Virg.* ch. 44: 'Melantia nigro nominis praesagio traducta', 'Melanthia, inspired [lit. led] by the black omen of her name' (Ehwald, p. 297; Lapidge & Herren 1979, 111). Lapidge notes that Gk. 'melanthēs' = 'black'.

23. VP has only 'Recte nomen tuum nigredinis testatur perfidiam': 'Your name rightly bears witness to the treachery of (your) blackness' (PL 73.612). Mombritius is almost exactly the same as the Cotton-Corpus version:

Recte Melancia nomen habere cognosceris. Nigredinis enim repleta perfidia: nigra diceris: et obscura tenebrarum amica diaboli: dux pollutionis: fomentum libidinis: soror anxietatis perpetuae: et filia mortis sempiternae. (p. 394)

24. Ælfric omits Eugenia's rejection (before her conversion) of the suit of the son of the proconsul. She refuses to marry him on the

grounds that 'Maritus moribus, non natalibus eligendus est; ipsis enim postea non parentibus utendum est': 'A husband is to be chosen for his character, not his birth; for they (i.e. husbands) are subsequently to be enjoyed, not the parents' (FG § 3). She is said to have been resisting other requests 'with a mind (or spirit, soul) of chastity', when the teaching of St Paul came into her hands: 'Igitur quum aliis atque aliis poscentibus animo castitatis obsisteret, pervenit ad manus eius beatissimi Pauli apostoli doctrina' (FG § 3). According to the Mombricitus text both a letter of St Paul and the story of Thecla came into her possession: 'peruenit ad manus eius beati Pauli Apostoli epistola et uirginis Teclae historia' (Mombricitus II.391). The Acts of Paul & Thecla relate how Thecla was so inspired by St Paul's preaching that she abandoned her betrothed and later dressed as a man in order to follow Paul (Hennecke 1963, II.353-64; James 1953, 272-81). This story would have provided ample precedent for Eugenia's actions, but neither Ælfric nor the Latin versions closest to his mention it. The idea may have been lost in the course of transmission.

25. Skeat translates 'betrayed' (and cf BT Sup. s.v. 'ameldian' III (1). However, the meaning under BT Sup. II, 'make known' etc. (and hence 'exposed') might be more appropriate, for although Ælfric does not explain her motive, the implication, as he relates the story, is that she does not wish to be discovered by her father. In the Latin, it is clear that she disguises herself as a man because only men are allowed to join the Christians she has heard singing (see above, p. 189).

26. On Ælfric's use of the adjective *werlic*, rather than the adverb *werlice*, see below, and note 27.

27. In the passage from the homily on the feeding of the five thousand (quoted above, p. 192) he uses the adverb, and reminds his audience that the term could also be applied to the conduct of women. Elsewhere in his homilies he also used *werlice* in its metaphoric sense (see CH I.542 & 586; & Godden 1979, 289).

28. Szarmach comments: 'The image is startling because Eugenia has hardly been wolvisish in any of her actions or thoughts, but it does emphasise the fundamental redirection of her moral life' (1990, 149).

29. This is the reading of the Julius MS. MS O, however, has 'pone abbod', not 'pæt clæne mæden', and, accordingly, 'hine', not 'hi' in line 170, quoted below. See Skeat's notes 11 & 12, LS I.34. Some of the impact of the contrast between Melantia's lust and Eugenia's virginity is therefore lost in the readings of MS O. On the other hand, these readings do point the irony of Melantia's mistake, and the effectiveness of the saint's disguise. On the MSS, see Appendix, p. 475.

30. 'deofles fætels' (175): this appears to correspond to 'magnum enim in te diabolo habitaculum preparasti' (FG § 19, not quoted above because it occurs in a part of Eugenia's speech not concerned with Melantia's 'blackness').

31. But see Aldhelm, note 22 above.

32. These two are potentially interesting, in that they are eunuchs. The literal interpretation of Matthew 19.12 had been discredited since Origen (c. 185 - c. 254) decided he had misinterpreted the verse, but in any case, Protus and Jacintus are eunuchs because they are Eugenia's servants; this is a matter of historical custom, and has nothing to do with their Christianity. Szarmach, however, argues that their status as eunuchs is important to an understanding of Ælfric's treatment of the theme of sexuality, particularly in relation to Galatians 3.28 (1990, 147-48, 155). What is certainly important in connection with the two is the idea that St Eugenia regards them not as her servants but as her brothers (49); compare also Helenus's quotation of Christ's words in John 151.15, 'Ne hate ic eow na þeowan . ac ge synd mine freond' (87).

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE 'LIFE OF ST EUPHROSYNE'

The other female saint who disguised herself as a man and whose story is extant in Old English is St Euphrosyne (LS 33). The Old English Life, by an anonymous author, follows the Latin (PL 73.643-52) closely, and the Latin will not, therefore, be discussed separately.

St Euphrosyne, like St Eugenia, disguised herself as a man and entered a monastery. However, the treatment of her story is quite different from that of the Latin 'Life of St Eugenia'; this understated narrative does not engage in wordplay of the kind which has been commented on in relation to Eugenia; and there is no suggestion of the idea that she might be discarding her 'weak femininity' for a superior 'manliness'. Euphrosyne's disguise is significant, but for other reasons: the monastic habit she adopts symbolises the spiritual life she embraces when she rejects the world; as it would, indeed, (or should), for a man. As in Ælfric's version of the 'Life of St Eugenia', the saint disguises herself as a man simply in order to avoid discovery. It happens that as a consequence she, a woman, by the holiness of her life, provides an example to the men around her.

Euphrosyne's position in relation to the world and to God undergoes a change as the story progresses. She is born in answer to the prayers of the abbot because her father Pafnuntius wants a child to inherit his possessions. Her birth, therefore, contains elements of both the holy and the worldly, the two sets of values which are opposed in the story. Pafnuntius is a loving father, and devout in his way, but tied to worldly matters. The description of Pafnuntius

at the opening of the story is that of a good man: 'Se ~~wæs~~ eallum mannum leof and wurð . and godes beboda geornlice healdende' (2-3); but his longing for a child stems from a concern about the inheritance of his possessions. His wife

~~wæs~~ mid eallum wurðfullum þeawum gefylled. ac heo ~~wæs~~ unwæstmære . þa ~~wæs~~ hire wer þearle gedrefed forþam him nan bearn næs gemæne . þæt æfter his forðsiðe to his æhtum fenge. (4-7)

His wife distributes her wealth to the poor and prays for a child, but 'swiþost forþam heo geseah hire weres sarignysse' (9-10); it is really her husband who is most distressed for want of a child. Pafnuntius's unnamed wife, who dies when Euphrosyne is twelve, accepts her husband's wishes. It has not occurred to Pafnuntius that there might have been an alternative method of dealing with his possessions, by giving them away.

Pafnuntius is also inclined to treat his daughter as a possession. Euphrosyne is a dutiful daughter, and when her father betroths her to the most suitable man, she appears quite passively obedient to his wishes at first. Her betrothal takes place therefore according to the usual course of life in the world, and her suitor, 'weligra and wurþra . þonne ealle þa oþre' (34), an indistinct figure in the background of the story, is certainly no villain, as her father is no tyrant. But despite Pafnuntius's friendship with the abbot, and his connections with the monastery, it is Euphrosyne who gradually comes to recognise and respond to the values of the monastery, and her father who ultimately, and painfully, has to learn from her and accept

her values. Tentatively and questioningly, Euphrosyne moves towards a role other than that of earthly daughter and bride.

The change begins when she is taken to the monastery by her father for the blessing of the abbot on her betrothal. She remains for seven days and listens to the songs of the brothers and observes their customs. She is moved to say that they are like angels:¹

heo þa wunode þær seofon dagas . and geornlice hlyste þæra broðra sanges . and heora drohtnunga beheold . and þæs ealles swiþe wundrigende cwæð . Eadige synd þas weras þe on þisse worulde syndon englum gelice . and þurh þæt begitað þæt ece lif . and heo wearð bihydig be þissum. (43-47)

She has been given an insight into the possibilities of living another kind of life, 'in this world', through which one may attain the eternal life. Before they leave, her father asks the abbot to bless his 'servant':² 'Gang fæder þæt þin þeowen ðe mæge gegretan . and þine bletsunge onfon' (48-49). In giving his blessing, the abbot also refers to her as God's servant. The word quietly adds another dimension to Euphrosyne. She is no longer only a daughter from a well-to-do household, she is now also a servant of the abbot and of God:

þa aþenode se abbod his hand . and hi gebletsode and cwæð . Drihten god ... gemedema ðe þæt þu gymenne hæbbe þisse þinre þeowenne . and þæt heo sy dælnimende þæs heofonlican rices. (52-55)

The abbot is unaware of the way in which his prayer will be answered, and how Euphrosyne will indeed be God's servant, one who devotes herself uncompromisingly to his service.

A year passes, during which time Euphrosyne receives the blessings of the monks at her father's request whenever they come to Pafnuntius. Ironically, he is thus unwittingly instrumental in the 'loss' of his own daughter. One day, when a monk comes to visit him, she takes the opportunity of questioning the monk about monastic custom. When she has listened, she confides her predicament to the monk: she is caught between duty to her father and her desire to serve God:

Ic wolde gecyrran to pyllicre drohtnunga ac ic onsitte þæt ic beo
minum fæder ungehyrsum . se for his idlum welum me wile to were
geþeodan. (74-76)

In his reply the monk, 'the brother', addresses her as 'sister'. This also establishes a new kind of relationship beyond that of the earthly and constricting blood-relationship between father and daughter. He advises her not to 'defile' her body, but to betroth herself instead to Christ, to go secretly to a monastery, and set aside her worldly dress and wear a monastic garment.³

Se broþor cwæð . Eala swustor ne geþafa ðu þæt ænig man þinne lichaman
besmite . ne ne syle þu þinne wlite to ænigum hospe . ac bewedde þe
sylfe criste . se þe mæg for þisum gewitenlicum þingum . syllan þæt
heofonlice rice . ac far nu to mynstre digellice . and alege þine
woruldlican gegyrlan . and gegyre þe mid munucreafe. þonne miht þu swa
ypest ætberstan. (76-82)

His words contrast ideas associated with virginity, the forsaking of the world, and Christ's gift of the heavenly kingdom with the 'transitory things' which are the concerns of Euphrosyne's father. She is to exchange the garments of the world for the garments of

monasticism. The exchange of garments is at once a practical measure, to help her escape, and a symbol of the casting aside of one way of life for another. In her reply Euphrosyne expresses her practical concern for a further, connected act. She asks who will cut her hair:

Ac hwa mæg me beefesian. [Soðlice] ic nolde þæt hit þa [dydon þe nænnel geleafan nabbað to gode. (83-86)

This too may be a symbolic and ritualistic act, (perhaps anticipating the tonsure), a representation of the ascetic's renunciation of the world.⁴ So far, no mention has been made of a masculine disguise.

Euphrosyne has now reached the point where she can make her choice. She is no longer passive and obedient, an observer and listener. She sends for a monk when her father is away and asks for instruction. His quotation of Christ's words (Luke 14.26) confirms her in her decision to forsake her father and bridegroom to follow Christ:

[Heo cwæð to him] . Nu bidde ic ðe for þam edleane þinre sawle þæt þu me wisige to þam þingum . þe to gode belumpon . Ða cwæð se broðor . Drihten cwæð on his godspelle . swa hwa swa ne wipsæcð . fæder . and meder . and eallum his magum . and þærtoeacan his agenre sawle . ne mæg he beon min leorningman. (110-15)

These words are crucial for Euphrosyne. She will renounce everything for Christ; so 'se broðor þa hi gegyrede mid munucrafe⁵. and hi bletsode' (123-24). But Euphrosyne knows her father will not let her go if he can find her. She dares not disobey him, she cannot face him with her decision, and so she resorts to subterfuge, the classic response of a daughter in such a situation (it is rather like an elopement). She reasons that if she goes to a convent her father will

find her and remove her by force for her bridegroom's sake. In a monastery, dressed as a man, she will not be suspected:

Gif ic nu fare to fæmnena mynstre . þonne secð min fæder me þær . and
me þær findað . þonne nimð he me neadunga þanon for mines brydguman
þingan . ac ic wille faran to wera mynstre þær nan man min ne wene .
Heo þa þone wiflican gegyrlan^e hire ofdyde . and hi gescrydde mid
werlicum . (127-31)

Her motive for the adoption of male dress is thus the same as Eugenia's. Both need to escape, and both adopt a masculine disguise; although in other ways their backgrounds are quite different, for Euphrosyne is the daughter of a loving and Christian, though flawed, father, whereas Eugenia's father is a heathen and persecutor of Christians. But there is no further discussion or analysis of Euphrosyne's disguise. She presents herself to the abbot, in fact, as a eunuch, Smaragdus. On the level of verisimilitude, this makes her disguise more plausible. At the same time, her change of name (more complete than Eugenia's adoption of the masculine form of her own name) and assumption of the status of eunuch suggests the extent of her renunciation of gender, even sex, and identity.

When she enters the monastery, the abbot becomes the 'father' whom she promises to obey: 'Ic do min fæder æfter þinum wordum' (152). In her new place in the Christian community she also becomes 'son' to Agapitus, into whose care the abbot gives her: 'Heononforð þes sceal beon þin sunu' (158). But however successfully Euphrosyne has renounced the world and its temptations, those around her remain weak. She has had to enter the monastery in secrecy because her father is still too tied to the affections of the world to give up his daughter.

Even in the apparent security of the monastery, Euphrosyne's disguise, like Eugenia's, cannot prevent those around her from being attracted to her. But whereas the Melantia episode in the Life of Eugenia furnishes an example of the weakness of a woman, the disruption caused in the monastery by Euphrosyne's beauty reveals the frailty, *tyddernys* (165-66), of men, the monks, who can be so disturbed by the beauty of one whom they take to be a young man that 'Smaragdus' has to be removed and placed in solitary confinement. The abbot explains to her:

Min bearn þin ansyn is wlitig . and þissum broþrum cymð micel hryre for heora tyddernyssum (165-67).

She has progressed beyond even the monks, her 'brothers' and 'fathers' in the community, in her devotion of herself to God, and she, as Smaragdus, is very briefly described absorbed in her devotions alone in her cell:

Agapitus ... gelædde smaragdum into þære westan cytan . þær he hine abysgode on fæstenum and wæccum dæges and nihtes gode þeowigende on heortan clænnysse. (171-74).

Then, in an expansive passage which contrasts with this brevity, the narrative returns to her father and bridegroom, occupied with their loss and their extensive searches across land and sea, in nunneries (as Euphrosyne had anticipated), deserts and caves, and at the houses of friends and neighbours. Her bridegroom

sende ridende men geond ealle alexandria land and egypta . and hi sohton betwux scipliþende . and on fæmnena mynstre . and on westenum . ge on scræfum . and æt eallra heora cupra freonda . and neahgebura husum . and þa hi þa þær hi nahwær ne fundon . hi weopon hi swýlce

hio dead wære . se sweor bemænde his snore . and se brydguma his bryd . (186-92)

It is ironic that they should weep for her as if she were dead, for she is indeed 'dead to the world' in her monastery cell, as they search their world for her. Her father mourns the loss of what had been his:

Se fæder his dohtor beweop . and cwæð . wa me mine sweteste bearn . wa me mira eagena leoht . and mines lifes frofor . hwa bereafode me minra speda . oððe tostencte mine æhta . hwa forcearf minne wingearð . oððe hwa adwæscete min leohtfæt . Hwa bescirede me mines hihtes . oþþe hwa gewemde þone wlite mire dohtor. (192-97)

She is not only his 'sweetest child', the 'light of his eyes' and the 'comfort of his life', his 'lamp' and his 'hope', but also, significantly, his 'riches', his 'possessions' and his 'vineyard'. In his outpouring of grief the words which describe what his daughter meant to him include the vocabulary of worldly possession. His words in the last clause quoted here also echo, unconsciously and ironically, the advice of the monk who advised Euphrosyne earlier, and the words of Euphrosyne herself to his confrère:

Eala swustor ne geþafa ðu þæt ænig man þinne lichaman besmite . ne ne syle þu þinne wlite to ænigum hospe. (77-78)

Nu wile min fæder for his idlum welum me were syllan . ac ic nolde [næfre] me sylfe þurh þæt gewemman. (103-05)

Pafnuntius's distress causes him to turn to the abbot again for help to find the daughter the abbot's prayers had once given him. But this time all the prayers and fasting of the abbot and the monks combined are, unusually, ineffective, for Euphrosyne is praying at the

same time that she might not be discovered; and her prayer is more powerful:

Hi ealle wucan fæstan . and on heora gebedum þurhwunodon . ac him nan swutelung ne com swa him gewunelic wæs þonne hi hwæs bædon . Witodlice þære eadigan femnan eufrosinan ben wæs to gode dæges and nihtes . þæt heo næfre on hire life gecyðed wære. (211-15)

Her prayer is referred to as that of 'the blessed woman Euphrosyne'. This acknowledges her sex in conjunction with her blessedness. The redactor does not draw any particular attention to it, but this in itself helps to underline the distinction between the attitude here, and the interest in the sexual ambiguities found in the Latin versions of the 'Life of St Eugenia'.

Euphrosyne, as Smaragdus, comforts Pafnuntius with a quotation from Matthew 10.37, parallel to that from Luke which the monk had quoted to her:

man ne sceolde fæder and modor . and oþre woruldlice þing lufian toforan gode . (241-42)

These and other words of encouragement comfort him effectively for 38 years, until Smaragdus falls ill, when Pafnuntius visits her again in great distress again because he has learned nothing about his daughter. He has been unable to take her lesson completely to heart. Euphrosyne reveals herself to him before she dies, with none of the elaborate explanations Eugenia provides in the Latin versions of her life:

Ða onget smaragdus . se ær wæs eufrosina gehaten . þæt se dæg wæs to becumen hire geleorednysse . Ða cwæð heo to him . God ælmihtig hæfð wel gedihtod min earme lif and gefylled minne willan þæt ic moste þone

ryne mines lifes werlice geendian⁷ . næs þurh mine mihta ac þurh þæs
fultum þe me geheold fram þæs feondes searwum . and nu geendodum ryne
me is gehealden rihtwisnysse weg wuldorbeah. (284-90)

Her use of *werlice* may refer partly to her disguise; but it principally appears to refer to the strength which has enabled her to live her life undiscovered to the end as she had hoped (see note 7). She does not play on the word, or her disguise, in a way which draws attention to the idea of male superiority. When the abbot is told, he says:

Eufrosina cristes bryd . and haligra manna tuddor . ne beo þu
forgitende þinra efenþeowa . and þyses mynstres . ac gebide to drihtne
for us . þæt he gedo us werlice becuman to hælo hyðe . and us do dæl-
nimende mid him and his halgum. (313-17)

Eugenia is never referred to as 'bride of Christ'. Here, Euphrosyne's femininity is accepted as part of her holiness. It is also interesting that the abbot should ask her to pray that they might come 'manfully', '*werlice*', into safe harbour. In the circumstances, it might seem oddly insensitive if he were to use the word without reference to Euphrosyne and her disguise. The point of the abbot's use of the word seems to be that he and the other monks need Euphrosyne's prayers so that they - who are men physically - may, by living or acting 'like men', come to the port of heaven, as she - who was not physically a man - has done, by the life she has lived 'manfully'. When the monks express wonder that God works such wonders in a 'womanly and frail nature (or sex)', the word they use for her 'frailty', *tydre*, has the same stem as that used for the frailty of

the monks earlier (see above, p. 223), who had been disturbed by the beauty of Smaragdus:

þa hi ða onfundon þæt heo wæs wifhades man . þa wuldrodan hi on god se
þe on þam wiflican . and tydran had swilce wundra wyrcað. (318-20)

Euphrosyne, however, has been able to overcome her natural frailty in a way in which the other men in the story have not.

Thus the 'moral' of the story, and Euphrosyne's sanctity, is not symbolised by the masculine nature of her disguise in the way that I have suggested that St Eugenia's is in the Latin versions of her Life. In practical terms it has been useful because it has enabled Euphrosyne to devote herself uncompromisingly to the religious life. On a symbolic level the monastic habit represents what she has become, in contrast with all that she has left behind: she can no longer be a dutiful daughter - she abandons her father, her suitor, her wealth, her sex, and her very identity to follow Christ, in accordance with his teachings in the passages from Matthew and Luke quoted in the course of the story. Her story conveys a sense, not that Euphrosyne is overcoming her sex, but rather that she is leaving it behind her, as she does the rest of the world. Her separation from the other monks within the monastery serves to reinforce this: they, with their susceptibility to her beauty, are still attached to the flesh as she is not; so is her father, with his attachment to her. The story of St Euphrosyne is written with considerable sympathy for human weakness in general; it does not draw attention to female weakness in particular. Quite the opposite, indeed, since she provides an example

of holiness from which not only her father, but the monks and the abbot, and the wider audience of the story, may learn.

NOTES

1. On angels and the ascetic life see above, pp. 79 ff.
2. Skeat translates 'handmaid'. The Latin has *ancilla* (ch. 4, PL 73.644). In modern English the association of 'handmaid' is with Luke 1.38; but *þeowen*, and its masculine equivalent *þeow*, (like Latin *ancilla*) means a servant, even a slave. 'Godes þeow' is a common phrase.
3. *munucreaf* (line 82), can apparently refer to the dress of a monk or a nun: see BT Sup., s.v. Only this passage is cited in support of the latter, but see 'munuchad' II. The Latin at this point has 'tunicam schematis' (ch. 7, PL 73.640): the note (no. 5, col. 652), explains *schēma*: 'Graecis monachi habitus'. There is not necessarily any question of a disguise at this stage.
4. For a detailed discussion of the origins and significance of the Christian tonsure see Gobillot 1925. He shows that the cutting of the hair symbolised, variously, the casting aside of sins; the renunciation of worldly concerns (p. 442); the sacrifice of one's self to God (p. 449); mourning (associated with being dead to the world and its passions), and penitence (p. 452). The penitential aspect of cutting one's hair may be referred to when the second monk comes to Euphrosyne and tells her 'þu wast þæt hit is nu hreowsunga tid', and she replies 'forþy ic gelaðode þe hyder þæt ic wold þæt ðu me . e bletsodest and me syððan feaxe becurfe' (121-23).
5. See note 3 above.
6. This apparently refers to the *munucreaf* with which the brother clothed her at line 124.
7. These words seem to be an echo of St Paul's 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith': 'Bonum certamen certavi, cursum consumavi, fidem servavi' (II Timothy 4.7).

The echo seems to be confirmed by the immediately following echo of the next verse of St Paul's letter: 'There is laid up for me a crown of justice': 'reposita est mihi corona iustitiae', in lines 289-90. Compare the Latin passage parallel to OE lines 286-90: 'Quia omnipotens Deus bene disposuit meam miseriam, et adimplevit desiderium meum, quod [meae vitae cursum]* ad finem usque viriliter certando perduxī, non mea virtute, sed ejus adjutorio, qui me custodivit ab insidiis inimici: peracto cursu superest mihi corona justitiae' (PL 73.650) [*My emendation]. If Euphrosyne's *werlice* (line 287), which translates *viriliter*, corresponds to, or was suggested by, St Paul's 'bonum certamen certavi', it seems fairly clear that the metaphorical meaning of the word is the one which was primarily intended here.

Skeat does not translate *weg* (line 290), and it is not in the Latin. If it meant 'the crown of the way of righteousness', one would have expected *weges*, since *weg* is masculine. It might be an unconscious insertion by the scribe, since the phrase 'via iustitiae' (OE 'rihtwisnesse weg' cf. BT s.v. 'rihtwisness') would be familiar from the Bible (Matthew 21.32 and elsewhere).

CHAPTER NINE: THE 'LIFE OF ST MARGARET'

St Margaret faces a tyrant, a dragon and a devil before her final glorious martyrdom, when she is attended by the holy spirit and angels. In outline her story is similar in both the Old English versions (Cockayne 1861 & Assmann no. 15; see Appendix, pp. 485-86). St Margaret's life follows the familiar pattern of that of the virgin martyr: she has dedicated her virginity to Christ; she resists the overtures of a heathen suitor, and overcomes the devil, thus preserving both her virginity and faith. In common with other saints who fit this pattern, Margaret may be seen as a figure of the church in the age of persecution; and a figure of Christ, who resisted temptation, bound the devil, suffered and triumphed.¹ But, examined in more detail, the Life of St Margaret, particularly in the Cockayne version differs from the Lives so far discussed in that it draws attention to its own significance in a rather unusual way. Margaret's opponents are bent on destroying not just her virginity and her faith, but her very memory from the earth. Thus a central concern of the Life is the importance of Margaret's story being preserved and told;² indeed the preservation of her story, (the importance of which is expressed by the narrator at the beginning and end, and within the narrative itself), is inseparable from the preservation of Margaret's virginity and faith. Although this idea is present in both the Old English versions, it is more clearly and consciously expressed in the Cockayne version (as it is in the Latin version), so the Cockayne text will be taken as the basis for this discussion.³

The opening lines remind the audience that since Christ's passion, resurrection and ascension many saints had suffered in his name, and through their suffering attained eternal rest:

Efter þære ðrowunge 7 þære ariste . 7 þære wuldorfæstan upastignesse ures drihtnes . hælendes cristes . to god[el]⁴ fæder ealmihtigum swiþe maniga martyres þrowiende [wæron] . 7 þurh þa þrowunge to ece reste becoman. (Cockayne, p. 39)

Margaret was one of the many martyrs who suffered at the hands of heathen persecutors. The narrator Theotimus tells us he earnestly wanted to learn⁵ how she fought and overcame the devil:

Ic þa ðeotimus, wilnode georne to witanne hu seo eadega. Margareta wiþ þone deofol gefæht. 7 hine oferswiþðe. (Cockayne, p. 39)⁶

Thus in his introduction the narrator places the story he is about to tell in the context of Christ's passion, resurrection and ascension, the martyrdoms of other saints, and the fight against the devil. It is clear, even before the story begins, that the conflict between Margaret and her opponents is not just Margaret's own, it is part of, and represents, the wider struggle. But before Theotimus actually begins, he urges his audience to 'hear and understand how Margaret suffered for God's name, and through that tribulation came to eternal rest with saints Thecla and Susanna':⁷

Geheraþ nu ealle 7 ongytaþ hu seo eadega margareta. geþrowade for godes naman. 7 þurh þæt geswenc to ece reste becom mid þære halgan teclan 7 susannan (Cockayne, p.40)

His exhortation to hear and understand recalls the words of Christ which he spoke at the end of many of the parables: 'Qui habet aures audiendi, audiat', 'He that hath ears to hear, let him hear' (Matthew

13.9); and more particularly the words in his interpretation of the parable of the sower:

Omnis qui audit verbum regni, et non intelligit, venit malus, et rapit quod seminatum est in corde eius ... Qui vero in terram bonam seminatus est, hic est qui audit verbum, et intelligit.

When anyone heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, there cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart ... But he that received the seed upon good ground, is he that heareth the word, and understandeth. (Matthew 13.19,23)⁸

The allusion lends weight and authority to the Life of Margaret: like the parables, it is a story which should be heard and understood.

The story itself begins by telling us that Margaret was the daughter of Theodosius, the heathen patriarch, worshipper of idols: 'Seo eadiga margareta wæs. ðeodosius dohter. se wæs þære hæþenne hehfæder. deofolgeld he wurpode' (Cockayne, p. 40). She was filled with the holy spirit: 'seo wæs mid halgum gaste gefylled' (ibid.).⁹ Margaret is given into the care of a foster-mother. Her own mother dies. Apparently her father wants nothing to do with her and disowns her. He drops out of the story with the comment that Margaret 'was very hateful to her father and very beloved of God': 'heo wæs hire fæder swiþe læp > gode swyþe leof' (Cockayne, p. 40).¹⁰ When Margaret is fifteen her would-be seducer Olibrius enters the story. Margaret is tending sheep one day with her companions when the reeve, journeying from Asia to Antioch, sees her and immediately desires her: Sume dæge þa mid þy¹¹ þe heo geheold hyre fostor modor scæp.¹² mid oþrum fæmnum. hire heafodgemacum. Ða ferde Olibrius se gerefa fram

asia. to antiochia þære ceastre. þa geseh he þa eadegan margaretan be þam wege sittan. ⁊ hrædolice he hire gyrnde. (Cockayne, p. 40)¹³

When Olibrius sends a messenger to Margaret saying that he will have her for his wife or his concubine (he is quite legalistic, and would arrange the fulfilment of his desire lawfully), her response is to pray. She recognises at once that it is not just her body which is threatened with defilement; Olibrius' desire is a matter of both body and soul:

Gemildsa¹⁴ me dryhten ⁊ ne læt þu mine sawle mid arleasum *forwyrþan*. Ac gedo me blissian. ⁊ þe symble herian. ⁊ ne læt þu næfre mine sawle ne min[nel]¹⁵ lichoma[n]¹⁶. wyrþan besmitan. (Cockayne, p. 40)¹⁷

The exchange of words between them when she refuses, 'places' them both:

ic gebidde *me* on ealmyhtigne god. ⁊ on his sunu hælend crist. se þe minne mægþhad unbesmiten geheold. oþ þysne ⁊weardan dæg. Se gerefa hire to cwæþ. clypest þu on þone crist þe mine fæderas anhengon. Seo halga margareta him to cwæþ. þine fæderas crist ahengon. ⁊ þy hi *ealle* forwurdon. (Cockayne, p. 41)

Her story resembles Christ's. Margaret - and no doubt the audience of her Life - can see the pattern, so her words are like a prediction: Margaret will die at his hands, as Christ did at the hands of his forefathers; and Olibrius will also perish for his deed as his forefathers had. Olibrius 'was then very angry'.¹⁸ The combination of lust, anger and heathenism is typical of the opponents encountered by virgin martyrs. Olibrius orders her to be shut in prison 'until he could think how he might "destroy" her virginity':

Se gerefa ~~wæs~~ þa swiþe yrre ⁊ het þa halgan margaretan on karcerne betynan op þæt he geþohte hu he hire mægþad forspilde. (Cockayne, p. 41)¹⁹

Margaret's virginity and faith have, for her, always been inseparable. Now Olibrius sees they are connected. He proposes to satisfy his desire (and thereby destroy her and what she represents) by threatening her with violence unless she prays to his god; but if she will listen to him and believe in his god, he will receive her as his wife:

Se gerefa hire to cwæþ. gif þu ne gebiddest þe on minne god min swurd sceal fandian²⁰ þin[n]le lichaman ⁊ ealle þine ban ic tobrysige. Gif þu me gehyrest ⁊ on minne god gelæfst æt foran eallum þissum folce ic þe to cweþe. þæt ic þe onfo me to wife. (Cockayne, p. 41)

In effect, Olibrius will be able to destroy her virginity as a consequence of her giving up her faith. Margaret, however, prefers her body to suffer torments for the sake of her soul: 'ic sylle minne lichoman in tintegro. þæt min sawle mid soþfæstum sawlum gereste' (Cockayne, p. 41). Conventionally enough, torments follow. But Olibrius' desire to destroy Margaret's virginity is more than an attack on her virginity and faith. The women who watch and weep while Margaret is being tortured try to tempt her to save herself, because, they say, the reeve is (a) very wrathful (man), and will destroy her and blot out her memory from the earth: 'þes gerefa is swiþe hatheort man. ⁊ he þe wile forspillan. ⁊ þin gemynd of eorðan adilgian' (Cockayne, p. 42). Thus the desire to destroy her virginity and blot out her memory from the earth are combined in Olibrius.

The combination is encountered again in the dragon who will appear to Margaret in prison. Margaret herself anticipates the appearance of the dragon and makes the connection between it (and its appetite) and Olibrius by calling the reeve an 'insatiable dragon', 'þu ungefyllledlican dracan' (Cockayne, p. 42). Then she prays for the holy spirit to come to her aid so that she may preserve her virginity unblemished, and see her adversary face to face:

gesend me þinne þone halgan gast fram heofonum se cyme to fultume þæt ic gehealde ungewæmd minne mægðhad ⁊ þæt ic geseo minne wiperweardan se þe wiþ me gefihtap [ansyne to ansynel].²¹ (Cockayne, p. 42)

Imprisoned again, she crosses herself and prays. Then from the corner of her cell, the dragon itself appears to her. Olibrius had tortured Margaret. Now, the very presence of the dragon is an assault on the senses: multicoloured and glittering, breathing smoke and fire, creating a stench, he rears up and hisses with a fierce sound, the fire from his mouth producing a great light in the dark prison:

þa eode ut of þæs karcernes hwomme swiþe egeslic draca. missenlices hiwes. his loccas ⁊ his beard wæron gylden gepuhte. ⁊ his tep wæron swilc swa asniden isen. ⁊ his egan scinan swa searagym. ⁊ ut æt his nosu eode micel smocca ⁊ his [tunge]²² eþode ⁊ micel fulnesse he dyde on þæm karcernne ⁊ he hig þa upærærde. ⁊ he hwystlode stranglice stemne. Ða wæs geworden micel leoht on þæm þystran karcerne of ðæm fyre þe ut eode of þæs dracan muþe (Cockayne, p. 43)

This compelling creature of violence - with his threatening, snake-like characteristics, his teeth like cut iron, and eyes shining like precious gems - is also, with his golden hair and beard, one which is clearly masculine. Olibrius had wanted to destroy Margaret's virginity, and blot out (*adiligian*) her memory from the earth: the

dragon actually swallows Margaret: 'se draca sette his muþ ofer þære halgan fæmnan heafod. ⁊ hi forswearh' (Cockayne, p. 43).²³ But the sign of the cross causes the dragon to split in two:

Ac cristes rode tacen þe seo halga margareta worhte *innan þæ[s]* dracan innope seo²⁴ hine toslat on twægen dælas. ⁊ seo halgæ fæmna eode ut of þæs dracan innope ungewæmmed. (ibid.)

Margaret emerges 'unblemished', *ungewæmmed*, from the entrails of the dragon. The word reminds us that she had prayed that her virginity might be preserved unblemished (p. 42; quoted above, p. 235). When the second devil appears and speaks, his words indicate the correspondence between the devils' intentions and Olibrius' desire: 'I sent my brother Rufus to you in the likeness of a dragon, so that he would swallow you up and destroy your virginity and your beauty and blot out your memory from the earth':

Ic sende to þe hrufum minne broþur on dracan gelicnesse. to þam þæt he þe forswulge. ⁊ þinne mægþhad ⁊ þinne wlite forlure. ⁊ þin gemynd of eorþan [adylige].²⁵ (Cockayne, p. 44)

Olibrius had begun by wanting literally to destroy her virginity; but her virginity is symbolic, too, and identified with the very being the dragon attempts to destroy by devouring. Her virginity and her memory are, however, preserved with the destruction of the devils. The second devil says 'you have killed him (i.e. his brother Rufus) with the sign of Christ's cross and now you will kill me', 'þu hine þonne mid cristes rode tacne²⁶ acwealdest. ⁊ nu þu wilt me acwyllan' (ibid.). The power of the cross has indeed destroyed the dragon. But the second devil has not anticipated quite how he will be overcome. Margaret's treatment of him demonstrates rather differently, but

graphically, the power of good to disable evil. She treats this devil with even greater violence than Juliana did hers, seizing him by the hair, throwing him to the ground, putting out his eye and breaking his bones:

Seo halga margareta gegrap þane deofol þa be þæm locce. 7 hine on eorþan awarep. 7 his swyþran ege ut astang 7 ealle his ban heo to brysde 7 sette hire swiþran fott ofer his swyran. (ibid.)²⁷

On the instructions of the Holy Spirit, who tells her that she has desired the eternal kingdom with her virginity '[þul þurh mægþhad gyrndest þære eacan rice' (p. 44), she makes him confess his deeds.²⁸ After he has done so, he asks her about the source of her life and body and soul and belief, and how Christ dwelt in her: 'Sæcg me margareta hwanon is þin lif. 7 þin lichama. 7 hwanon is þin sawul. 7 þin geleafa. oþþe hu wæs crist wuniend on þe' (Cockayne, p. 45). But she says he is not worthy of hearing her voice, and tells him she will hear no more words from him. Immediately the earth swallows the devil, 'hrædlice seo eorþe forswalg þone deofol grimlice' (Cockayne, p. 45). Thus the devil himself is swallowed up, while Margaret survives to be martyred, and her virginity and memory remain.

The value of preserving her memory becomes clear with her long prayer at the end before she is martyred. It is not just Margaret who is important, but her story. Her life has earned her the power to intercede on behalf of those who remember her. She prays that the sins of those who write her sufferings, or hear them read out, should be blotted out (*adylgian*); or if anyone 'puts a light (or lights)' in her church, whatever the sin for which he asks forgiveness, she prays

that his sin should not be ascribed to him. She prays that if any man be found at the judgement, if he remembers her name and God's, he should be delivered from torments; that the sins of whoever reads the book of her martyrdom or has it in his house should be forgiven. She prays that the holy spirit should be sent into him who builds churches in her name and there writes her martyrdom or buys it out of his earnings, and that children born where the book of her martyrdom is (kept) should be free from physical handicaps and from the harassment of (any) unclean spirit; and (she prays) that peace and love and the spirit of righteousness should be there, and that whoever prays in such a place for forgiveness of his sins, God should show it (or grant (?) his prayer):

God þu þe heofenan mid honda gemettest. ⁊ eorþan on þinre fyst betyndest. geher mine bena. þæt swa hwilc man swa writeþ mine þrowunga. oþþe hi geheraþ rædan of þære tide syn adylgade hira²⁹ synna oþþe gif hwilc man leoht deþ on minum cirican of his gewinne.³⁰ be swa hwylcæn gylte swa he bidde forgifnesse. ne si him seo synn[al] geteold. Ic bidde þe drihten. þæt gif hwilc mon si gemetod on þinum þam egeslican dome. ⁊ he si gemindig minum naman. ⁊ þines. gefreolsa hine drihten of tintregan. Get ic þe bidde drihten þæt se þe [rædeþ]³¹ boc mines martirhades. oþþe on his huse hæbbe. sy his synna alætnesse for þon þe we syndon flæsc ⁊ blod. æfre syngiende. ⁊ næfre ablinnende. Get ic þe bidde *drihten* þæt se þe cyrcan timbrige on minum naman. ⁊ þær awrite mine þrowunge. oþþe of his gewinne gebicge. send on hine drihten þone halgan gast. ⁊ þær boc sy mines martyrhades. ne sy þær geboren blind cild ne healt. ne dumb. ne deaf. ne fram unclænum gaste geswenct. Ac sy þær sib ⁊ lufu ⁊ soþfæstnesse gast. ⁊ se þe þær biddeþ his synna forgifnesse gecyþe him drihten *his bene*. (Cockayne, p. 47)

When she has finished praying for those who will remember her in the various ways she has mentioned, there comes a voice from heaven with thunder, and a dove bearing a cross, and Margaret is told that all her prayers have been heard and granted: God will place three hundred angels in her church to receive the prayers of each person who calls to God in her name, that their sins should be blotted out:

ic þe swerige þæt swa hwæt swa þu bæde eall hit biþ gehered æt foran godes gesyhþe. ⁊ swa hwæt swa þu wære gemyndig þæt forgifep þe god. God gesættet on þinum cyrcan þreo hund englas to þon þæt hi onfop ælc þæra manna bena þe to drihtene clypaþ on þinum naman þæt³² hira synna synt adylgode. (Cockayne, p. 47)

In fact she is granted more than she asked for, because her body will be honoured among men, and her relics will have the power to heal and to ward off evil:

þin lichama biþ wurpful mid mannum. þæt swa hwa swa [ahrineþ]³³ þine reliquias of þære tide fram swa hwylcre untrumnesse swa he hæfþ he biþ gehæld. ⁊ þær þine reliquias beop. oþþe boc þines martirhædes ne genealæcþ þær naþor yfel ne se unclæne gast. (Cockayne, pp. 47-48).

Before the voice calls her away to heaven at last, there is a reminder of the deliverance made available through her intercession: she is told that he who calls out her name with all his heart and with a shedding of tears will be delivered from all his sins:

se þe þinne naman of ealra heortan cigeþ mid tearum agotennesse. he biþ gefreolsad fram eallum his synnum. (Cockayne, p. 48)

All this takes place in the public field of execution, and Margaret there speaks to those around her:

Se halga margareta besæh on hire embhwyrft ⁊ to cwæp. Ic eow bidde þurh naman ures drihtnes hælendes x̅p̅es. þæt he eow sylle eowra synna forgyfnesse (Cockayne, p. 48)

After a brief prayer of thanks and praise to God, she tells the reluctant executioner 'gif þu þæt ne dest næfst þu dæl mid me on neorxna wonge' (Cockayne, p. 48). She is beheaded, and angels bless her body and take her head. The promises begin to take effect immediately (note *ahrineþ* above, p. 239 and *gehrinon* here): the ill, lame, blind, dumb and deaf are healed when they touch her body:

ealle þa þe wānnhale³⁴ wæron healtte. ⁊ blinde. dumb. ⁊ deafe. ⁊ hi gehrinon þære halgan fæmnan lichaman ealle hi wurdon gehælde. (ibid.)

The voice of angels is heard over her body telling her that she and those who believe through her are blessed, because she has earned eternal rest with holy women. They comfort her and tell her not to be sorrowful because her body is left on the earth, for whoever touches the relics or her bones will have their sins blotted out (the verb is *adilgian* once more) and their name written in the book of life:

Eadig eart þu ⁊ þa þe þurh þe gelæfeþ. for þon þe þu gewunne reste a oþ ende mid halgum fæmnum. ⁊ ne beo þu sorhfull be þinum halgan lichaman for þon þe he is forlætan on eorþan. to þon þæt swa hwylc mann swa hrineþ þine reliquias oþþe þine ban. on þære tide syn adilgade hira³⁵ synna ⁊ hira naman writan on lifes bocum. (Cockayne, pp. 48-49)

Theotimus takes charge of her relics and places them in a new shrine, just as he takes charge of her story and its preservation and dissemination. The Life concludes with a brief account of what Theotimus has done, and some words of exhortation and encouragement

for those who hear her story, pray to Christ and believe in him, and remember the saint:

Ic þeotimus wæs þe hire geþenode mid hlafe. ⁊ mid wætere ⁊ ic gesæh eall hire geflit þe heo hæfde wiþ þone arleasan deoflan. ⁊ hire gebed ic awrat. ⁊ ic hit gesende to eallum cristenum mannum. ⁊ seo halga margareta gefylde hire þrowung on iulius monþe. on þone þreo ⁊ twentegþan dæge. Ealle þa þe þis gehyraþ on heortan wesap onbryrdad³⁶ ⁊ þa þe drihten crist biddaþ ⁊ on hine gelifaþ. ⁊ gemindop³⁷ þære halgan margaretan. þæt hi³⁸ mid hira benum us oþfæste on gesihþe hælendes cristes. þam sy wuldor. ⁊ lof. ⁊ wurþmynt. ⁊ þrym ⁊ anweald ⁊ micelnys. on ealra worulda woruld. soþlice a butan ænigum ende. Amen. (Cockayne, p. 49)

He has fed her, witnessed her strife with the devil, written down her prayer, and has sent it to all Christian men.³⁹

The story he has told and urged his audience to remember has shown how the powers of evil have attempted to destroy Margaret's virginity and faith, and to wipe out her memory from the earth. But instead, one by one, they themselves have been destroyed. Olibrius, the human representative of the devil in the story, is not mentioned at the end; ironically he, not Margaret, seems to have been forgotten. The fate of the persecutor of a saint is usually related, as a salutary contrast to that of the saint. Here, the fact that Olibrius' fate is not thought worthy of notice or interest provides the contrast. No more is necessary, for he has been associated with those who crucified Christ (see above, p. 233). Not only has Olibrius failed, but the dragon (almost Olibrius' supernatural alter ego), who swallows Margaret in his attempt to destroy her, is exploded; although rather more memorable than the somewhat undifferentiated tyrant (and a

reason, no doubt, for the popularity of the story,⁴⁰ he too is destroyed; and the second devil, the 'brother' of the dragon, is, in a stroke of poetic justice, swallowed up by the earth. Far from being 'blotted out', Margaret's memory has been preserved so that the sins of those who remember and honour her may be blotted out. Thus Margaret's virginity and faith were preserved, and her story was recorded and transmitted. The particular enemies she encountered have been destroyed, but her story continues, powerful on the side of good.⁴¹ The survival of her memory symbolises the survival of the faith which the devil has tried, and failed, to destroy.

NOTES

1. See above, p. 162, for references to 'figural' interpretations in relation to Cynewulf's *Juliana*; and note 27 below.
2. This it shares with the stories of the desert saints, where the concern becomes a motif. Alison Elliott writes 'the essential plot of these legends [the lives of the desert solitaires] is a journey, a quest. The hero goes forth, finds a person who imparts knowledge (the story of his life) and who then usually dies. Although the traveler would like to remain in the enchanted spot, he may not do so but must return to the world with his acquired knowledge' (Elliott 1987, 73). See Mary of Egypt, below, ch. 10.
3. Cockayne 1861, 39-49, ed. from British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius A iii, fols 73b-77b (fols 71b-75b in Cockayne's edition). In quotations, italics indicate corrections and additions in the MS not printed in Cockayne's text; square brackets indicate emendations to MS readings. Abbreviations are silently expanded, except for > ('and': cf. 'hand', Cockayne, p. 39). Words and phrases important to the discussion are underlined.

Reference to the Assmann OE version (Assmann 15: 1889, 170-80, ed. from Cambridge, Corpus Christi Library MS 303, pp. 99-107) will be made in the notes below where appropriate. No source for this version has been identified (see Appendix, p. 486).

Quotations from the Latin version are from Assmann 19: 1889, 208-20. The Cockayne version appears to have been based on a Latin version similar to this (see Appendix, p. 486).

4. MS 'god' (fol. 73b). Emended following Cockayne: see his note to fol. 71b/6, p. 82.

5. There is an inconsistency in the narrative, since Theotimus also represents himself as an actor (albeit in a minor role) in St Margaret's story, feeding her in prison (p. 42) and taking charge of her relics (p. 49, quoted here on p. 241).

6. The Assmann version tells us that that 'þa halga seagntes ofercomen þa deofla, þe wið heom gewunnon' (Assmann 15, lines 3-4).

7. There were several saints Thecla and Susanna (see, for example, Holweck 1969, s.vv., and cf. note 41 below). Since the two names are mentioned together here, the reference may be to two of the three Roman virgins martyred together at Salerno in 293 (feast day 18th Jan. in the Roman Martyrology), Archelais, Thecla and Susanna (Holweck, p. 101). According to tradition they fled from Rome when the Diocletian persecution broke out, and retired to live humble and holy lives in poverty at a monastery near Nola. They were denounced, and taken to Salerno and martyred. See also *Bibliotheca Sanctorum*, s.v. 'Archelaide, Tecla e Susanna'.

8. The Latin more clearly echoes Christ's words in the verses cited; and there also seems to be an echo of Matthew 13.15 (note 'corde'): 'Aures habentes, omnes audite corde, et intelligite, viri; virgines, proponite vos velut puellae tenerae. Lectionem legentes ita laborate, ut accipiatis requiem sempiternam cum beata Thecla et sancta Susanna', 'All you who have ears, listen with your heart and, o men, understand; (o) virgins, imagine yourselves tender girls. You who read the text, so strive that you may receive eternal rest with the blessed Thecla and saint Susanna' (Assmann 19, lines 21-24). The Cockayne version

does not address 'men' and 'virgins' separately. The introductory passage in the Assmann OE version is much shorter, and does not include this exhortation.

9. The Assmann version neatly contrasts the father and the daughter and their service, respectively, to the devil and to God: 'Seo eadiga Margareta wæs Theodosius dohtor; se gehersumode þan deofle and hi gehersam[old[el]* gode and ealle his halgan' (Assmann 15, lines 30-32). *[Assman has 'gerhersamedo']

10. According to the Assmann version she is exposed because she is a female child (lines 12-14).

11. 'þam' written above 'þy' (fol. 73b).

12. So MS (fol. 73b). Cockayne 'sceap'.

13. The Latin explains that he is on his way to Antioch, seeking out Christians to persecute. It is then that he sees Margaret tending sheep, and desires her:

transibat Olibrius praefectus de Asia in Antiochiam civitatem. Veniebat autem persequi Christianos et deos suos vanos suadebat adorare. Et ubi audiebat, quod aliquis Christum nominaret, statim eum ferreis nexibus constringebat. Et ubi vidit beatam Margaretam in propinque pascentem oves nutricis suae, statim eam concupivit (lines 41-46).

The Old English version in Assmann also gives the reason for his journey: 'Ða ferde Olibrius se heahgerefa fram Asia þæra burh to Antiochiam, axiende, hwær þa wæron, þe heora godan her[ian]* noldan' (lines 51-52). *[Assmann has 'here']

14. So MS (fol. 74a). Cockayne 'Gemiltsa'.

15. MS *minna* (fol. 74a).

16. Emended following Cockayne: see his note to fol. 72a/8, p. 82.

17. This passage is a slightly abbreviated version of the Latin, in which Margaret also prays for the protection of her life and her faith:

Miserere mei, domine, miserere mei. Ne perdas cum impiis animam meam et cum viris sanguinum vitam meam. Fac me laetari semper in te, domine Iesu Christe, et te laudare semper. Ne permittas animam meam contaminari et ne polluat fides mea. (lines 51-55)

The parallel passage in the Assmann OE version is somewhat longer: she prays that her soul should not be corrupted by these heathen men; that the devils should not deceive her soul, turn her faith from God, nor defile her pure body; that the Lord should not allow her to be deceived (or betrayed), nor her understanding to be turned from him, nor her virginity defiled: 'Gemiltse me, drihten, gemiltse me, þæt min sawle ne seo awæmmod þurh þisum hæpenum mannum. And ic þe wille biddan, þæt deofle mine sawle ne beswican, ne mine treowðe fram þe ahwerfan, ne minne clæne lichaman gefylan. Drihten leof, æfre ic þe lufode, and þu wuldorcýning, ne læt þu me naht beswican, ne næfre min gewit fram þe gehwerfan, ne min mægþhad afylan. (lines 62-68)

18. 'þa wearð Olibrius swiðe yrre' is like a refrain throughout the Assmann version: lines 87, 143, 168, 286, 303.

19. This is quite close to the Latin: 'Tunc iratus praeses iussit beatissimam Margaretam in carcerem recludi, donec inveniret, per qualem machinationem eius virginitatem perderet' (lines 79-81).

The Assmann version has Olibrius wondering how he can 'shame' her (or 'mock' or 'revile' her; as Christ was mocked: see *The Dream of the Rood* ed. Swanton 1970, line 48; & BT s.v. 'bysmerian'): 'he to his þegnum spræc and þus cwæð: On hwilca wisa ræde ge me, hu ic muge þes mæden bismærian?' (lines 93-94).

20. This somewhat unusual use of *fandian* gives a rather sinister effect. 'Min swurd sceal fandian þin lichaman', 'My sword shall explore (or perhaps 'taste', as if it were a creature tasting blood: see BT Sup. [4]) your body', corresponds to 'gladius meus dominabitur carni tuae', 'my sword shall rule your body' (lines 92-93). The Assmann version is more graphic: 'min swyrd sceal þinne þone fægran lichaman eall to styccan forcyrfan', 'my sword shall cut up your fair body all to fragments' (line 107).

21. MS (fol. 74b) & Cockayne: 'synna to ansynna'. The Latin has 'ut loquar cum eo facie ad faciam' (line 169). The phrase 'facie ad faciam' occurs at Deuteronomy 34.10, where it is translated in the OE Heptateuch (ed. Crawford 1969, 376) 'of ansyne to ansyne': see BT Sup. s.v. 'ansin'.

In the Assmann version, although she prays to God on the entrance of the dragon and says 'Drihten god ælmihtig, georne ic þe bæd, þæt ic hine geseage' (lines 188-89), in fact this particular request is missing from her prayer beforehand.

22. MS (fol. 75a) & Cockayne: 'tungla'. cf. the Latin: 'Lingua eius anhelabat' (line 182).

23. The Assmann version has: 'And se deofol him þa abalhc and þa fæmne forswelgan wolde' (lines 196-97). Margaret, however, protects herself with the sign of the cross, 'and eall sticmælum toðwan se draca ut of þan carcerne' (lines 200-01): 'burst all into pieces and vanished' (see BT s.v. 'to-dwinan').

24. 'seo': presumably referring back to *rode* (fem.), not *tacen* (neut.). Compare the Latin 'ipsa (crux)': 'Sed crux Christi, quam sibi fecerat beatissima, ipsa crux crevit in ore draconis et in duas partes eum divisit' (lines 202-03).

25. MS 'adylgīan' (fol. 75b). Emended following Cockayne: see his note to fol 73b/3, p. 84.

26. MS corrects 'tacene' to 'tacne' (fol. 75b); Cockayne 'tacen'.

27. In her encounters with the devils Margaret is clearly a figure of Christ. In the Assmann OE version (in which the dragon is spotted like a snake, and sports no hair or beard), Margaret refers to the Harrowing of Hell in her prayer when the dragon appears: 'Lord God Almighty ... you were hanged on a cross and you descended to hell and you let out your saints and bound the great devil Satan fast: help me, dear lord, that I might bind this devil fast' 'Drihten god ælmihtig, ... þu on rode wære gehangen and þu to helle astige and þu þine halgan ut gedydost and þone mycele deofol Sathan fæste gebunde: gehelp þu me, leofe drihten, þæt ic þisne deofol fæste mote gebinden' (lines

191-95). The Latin has: 'Deus invisibilis, - [qui] infernum devastasti, diabolum ligasti, qui extinxisti potestatem magni draconis (lines 190-94).

Her placing of her foot on the second devil's neck recalls scriptural references to the enemies being made a footstool, eg. Psalm 109.1, Matthew 22.4 etc.

The second devil in the Latin says that Margaret has bound him through the sign of Christ, who has rested within her: 'Christus ergo - requievit in te, per cuius sigillum colligasti me' (lines 260-62). In the Latin and Cockayne versions, a light has shone in the prison, and Christ's cross has been seen rising up to heaven, with a dove sitting on it, which has told Margaret that she is blessed and that the gates of paradise await her (lines 241-44; Cockayne, p. 44). In the Assmann version, the light comes with an angel who bears the sign of the cross in his hand (lines 222-24).

28. In his confession in the Latin the second devil uses the image of swallowing to express how he has destroyed the work of the just: 'Multorum iustorum labores in meo degluttivi ventre - Ego multorum labores abstuli et gluttivi in ventre meo' (lines 250, 262).

29. 'heora' written above 'hira' (fol. 76b).

30. MS 'gewinne' altered to 'geswinge' (fol. 76b). Cockayne emends to 'geswince': see his note to 74b/18, p. 86. MS 'gewinne', however, gives the same sense: see BT Sup. s.v. 'gewin' II (1) or (2).

31. MS 'rærdeð' (fol. 76b). The Latin has 'qui legerit' (line 358). Emended following Cockayne: see his note to fol. 74b/22, p. 86.

32. Cockayne omits 'pæt' (in error).

33. MS 'ahwinep' (fol. 77b). Emended following Cockayne: see his note to fol. 75a/5, p. 86.

34. So MS (fol. 77b). Cockayne 'wonnhæle'.

35. 'heora' written above 'hira' (fol. 77b).

36. 'beon blið ⁊' is written above 'wesap onbryrdad' (fol. 77b).

37. Altered to 'gemundyt' (fol. 77b).

38. So MS (fol. 77b). Cockayne 'he'.

39. In the concluding words to the lost OE life of Margaret (see Appendix, p. 485), the narrator also exhorts his audience to 'keep the festivals of Saint Margaret and the Blessed Virgin Mary, and (to) give alms to please them, that they may receive you in the sight of Christ':

Nu ge gebroðra mine ge gehyrdon be þære eadigan Margaretan þrowunge. hu heo ofer swið[dle* ealra deofla mægen. gelyfað on hi. 7 on God ælmihtine. 7 doþ gemynd þære halgan fæmnan Sancta Margaretan 7 Sancta Marian 7 on heora ðanc ælnessan syllað. þæt hi eow onfon on gesihþe hælendes cristes. Him is lof. 7 wuldor 7 weorþmynt 7 a he lyfaþ mid englum. 7 mid heahfæderum. and mid witegum. 7 mid apostolum. and mid haligum fæmnum. in ealra worulde woruld. a butan ende. Amen. (Ker no. 177C). *[Ker has 'ofer swiðe']

40. See Mack 1934, x-xi.

41. In the Assmann version those who tempt Margaret to save herself say nothing about Olibrius wanting to wipe her memory from the earth (lines 126-32). Nor does the second devil make a connection between Olibrius' intentions and the dragon's in the way that he does in the Cockayne version (see above, p. 236); so that although Margaret's prayer at the end (lines 314-25) is similar to that of the Cockayne version, the ironies and correspondences are lacking in the Assmann version.

The nexus of ideas found in the Cockayne version may be compared with interpretations of the story of Thecla (i.e. Thecla of Iconium, the Thecla of the Apocryphal Acts of Paul. & Thecla: Hennecke 1963, II.353-64): Peter Brown writes:

Thecla was the ideal Christian in an age of persecution. Her story summed up 'a vision of human integrity imprisoned in a world that it is in but not of ... always managing to avoid the one fate that is worse than death, the annihilation of one's identity' (Northrop Frye, *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance*, Cambridge,

Mass., 1976, p. 86) ... To preserve her virginity meant to preserve an individual identity rooted in her physical body, because expressed in the state of physical intactness that she had carried with her from her birth ... [Her intact body] was a condensed image of the individual, always threatened with annihilation, poised from birth above the menacing pressures of the world. (Brown 1988, 158-59).

CHAPTER TEN: THE 'LIFE OF ST MARY OF EGYPT'

The Old English Life of St Mary of Egypt (LS 23B) is a fairly literal, not very elegant rendering of the Latin. It survives only in corrupt or incomplete manuscripts.¹ Nevertheless the story itself is a carefully structured and complex narrative, which retains its power in the Old English despite these disadvantages. Mary is very different from any other female saint whose life is extant in Old English. She is from an early age, and rather spectacularly, not a virgin. Nor is she a martyr who has to face marriage, persecution or the devil. She is a sinner who finds that her struggles are with herself, who repents and spends the rest of her days in solitude in the desert as an ascetic.² Thus she provides a model very different from that provided by virgin saints. Benedicta Ward (who discusses the Latin version) has placed the story of Mary, together with those of other female penitents (Mary Magdalene, Pelagia, Thaïs, and Maria, the niece of Abraham) in the context of a monastic literary tradition of stories of repentance and conversion.³ Behind the stories of sinful women who repent, Ward suggests, is 'the pattern of the great penitent of the New Testament, Mary Magdalene'. Mary Magdalene came to be identified as a prostitute, although she is not described as such in the Gospels (1987a, 14, 22-5). Ward suggests a reason for this:

Her identification as a prostitute lies ... in the imagery of sin throughout the whole of the scriptures. Mary Magdalene takes to herself the image of unfaithful Israel, so graphically described as a prostitute in relation to God.⁴ This image was transferred by the New Testament writers to the whole of humanity in the new covenant, and therefore each soul in sin can be described as a prostitute, as unfaithful to the covenant of love between God and man. It is in this

profoundly illuminating sense that Mary of Magdala assumes the character of a prostitute, not because lust is a specially terrible sin but because she is all sinners insofar as sin is unfaithfulness to the covenant of love. Just as the sin of Eve was described as lust because that image best describes the disobedience of the Fall, so the sins of Mary of Magdala were seen as prostitution; that is, unfaithfulness to the love which is the name of God. (pp. 14-15)

Although the model of the repentant sinner ~~was~~ very different from that of the virgin saint, the Life of Mary of Egypt does reveal in its account of Mary's sin and repentance - no less than do the Lives of the virgin saints - a concern which we have found to be central in Christian ascetic thought, and on which Ward touches towards the end of the passage just quoted: the subjection to the flesh experienced by mankind since the fall. Virgin saints and saints who have been sexual sinners equally reflect the perception that 'it is in its sexuality that the body's proneness to sin is most evident' (Shepherd 1959, xli). Mary's story also offers what no virgin's life could: hope and consolation to the many who were not virgins. It demonstrates the readiness of God to forgive sins, and to provide guidance for those who need it. Mary is called to repentance; Zosimus (whose story frames that of Mary) is directed, first, to the monastery by the Jordan and then in the desert to Mary, from whom he has to learn.

The first two parts of the discussion which follows will concentrate on the theme of flesh and spirit in Mary's sin and repentance. Woven into and around the Life's central motif of repentance are a range of other, related themes. Two of these are of special concern to monastic audiences: the first is humility, that

virtue essential to the spiritual life, which Zosimus, who is directed to learn from Mary, has been lacking. The second is that of the search for paradise through asceticism. As well as these ascetic concerns, Mary's story also reveals, in its pattern of repentance, and by means of symbolism and allusion, the relationship between the individual and the church. Her story teaches that God's grace was mediated through the church and its sacraments: through penance, baptism and the eucharist. These various themes will be discussed in turn.

Flesh and spirit: sin and repentance

The struggle against the flesh which had faced all mankind since the fall was a particular concern of those who undertook the ascetic life, whether as solitaries or in communities. Ascetic discipline was a means of combating the domination of the flesh and of reasserting the supremacy of the spirit. Within the Life, this is commented on both in relation to Zosimus and to the monks of the monastery by the Jordan. It had been Zosimus' desire, in the monastery in Palestine which had been his home since childhood (23, 45-46), to subject his flesh to the spirit:

he ealle þæs regoles bebodu, and fulfremednysse þæs munuclican
peowtscypes untallice geheold . and he eac swilce wisan him þær sylf
toeacan geihte . forþan þe he gewilnode his flæsc þam gaste
underþeodan. (25-28)

The eagerness of the monks in the monastery by the Jordan to which Zosimus has been directed by the angel (61-62) to be 'dead in body and living in spirit' is described:

þæt an wæs swiðost fram heom eallum geefst^e . þæt heora ælc wære on lichaman dead . and on gaste libbende. (90-91)

Both Zosimus and the monks are assiduous in the observance of monastic customs and discipline. Zosimus practised self-restraint, 'forhæfednyss^e_λ' (23), psalm-singing, praise, and meditation on the holy scriptures, 'sealm-sang mærsung . and haligra gewrita smeagung' (36).^e In the monastery by the Jordan 'þær wæs unablinndlic stapolfæstnys godes herunge æghwylcne dæg . and eac nihtes', (86-87), and the monks 'heora lichaman witodlice mid þam nydþearfnyssum anum feddon' (93).

Set against this background is the figure of Mary. It is in her sin and in her solitary life of penance and hardship in the desert that the struggle against the flesh is principally embodied. In this discussion of Mary's progress through penitence from her sinful subjection to the flesh, particular attention will be given to a feature of the narrative which gives the theme of flesh and spirit added emphasis: the way in which Mary's spiritual condition is physically manifested.

Mary's account of herself (which begins at line 310 and continues for almost three hundred lines) reveals how her sin took the form of complete subjection to her sexual desires. She tells Zosimus how she ran away to Alexandria from her family in Egypt at the age of twelve (324-27). Then she says:

Ac me sceamað nu to gereccenne hu ic on þam fruman ærest minne fæmnhad besmat . and hu ic unablinndlice . and unafyllendlice þam leahtrum.⁷ þæra synlusta . læg underþeoded. (327-30)

She continued in this way of life for seventeen years, only because she wanted to, not in return for payment or gifts, but to fulfil her insatiable desires:

eac on . xvii . wintrum ic openlice folca meniu geondferde on þam bryne forligeres licgende; Ne forleas ic na minne fæmnhad for æniges mannes gyfum; Oþpe ic witodlice ahtes onfenge fram ænigum þe me aht gyfan woldon . ac ic wæs swiðe onæled mid þære hatheortnysse þæs synlustes . þæt ic gewilnode butan ceape þæt hi me þe mænigfealdlicor to geurnon . to þy þæt ic þe eð mihte gefyllan þa scyldfullan gewilnunga mines forligeres; Ne þu ne wen na þæt ic aht underfenge for ænegum welan . ac symle on wædlunge lyfde . for þon ic hæfde swa ic ær sæde unafyllendlice gewilnunga swa þæt ic me sylfe unablinndlice on þam adele^e þæs manfullan forligeres besylede and þæt me wæs to yrmðe . and þæt ic me tealde to life þæt swa unablinndlice þurhtuge þæs gecyndes teonan; (333-45)

She describes how she boarded a ship filled with pilgrims bound for Jerusalem in order to indulge her desires on the journey, paying her passage with her body (345-84). Conscious of her sinfulness now, as she was not at the time, she says to Zosimus as she recounts this episode that she knows her words pollute both him and the very air: 'ic wat þæt þas mine word ægðer gewemmað ge þe . ge þas lyfte' (361-62). On arrival in Jerusalem she continued in the same way, until the time came for the festival of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross:⁹

ic eac swilce mænga ælðeodige . and ceastergewarena . on þa dæda minra scylda gegadrigende¹⁰ . and beswicende besmat. Ða þa seo symbelnyss becom þære halgan deorwurðan rode . upahefennysse; Ic foregeode þa geongan swa swa ær on þæt grin forspillednysse teonde. (396-400)

Her words show how Mary takes all the blame, all the responsibility for her sins, upon herself; her sin and responsibility are not affected or diminished by the willingness of the nameless numbers whom she seduced. But then, no one was as obsessed with their desires as she: when the time came for the pilgrims to go to the church, they left her and went; that had been the purpose of their journey. Thus she was the one who needed to be made aware of her sinfulness and alienation from God by finding herself unable to enter the church with the others. Mary describes how 'the power of God' prevented her when she tried to cross the threshold and she was left alone in the courtyard (or 'vestibule', 'cafertun': Latin 'atrium', PL 73.681):

þa geseah ic soðlice on ærne mergen hi ealle anmodlice to þære cyrcan
yrnan . þa ongan ic yrnan mid þam yrrendum . and samod mid heom
teolode toforan þam temple becuman . þa þa seo tid becom þa halgan
rode to wurþigenne . þa ongan ic nydwræclice gemang þam folce wið þæs
folces þringan . and swa mid micclum geswince ic ungesælige to þæs
temples dura becom mid þam þe þær ineodon . þa ic sceolde in on þa
dura gangen . þa ongunnon hi butan ælcere lættinge ingangan . me
witodlice þæt godcunda mægen þæs ganges bewerede . and ic sona wæs ut
aþrunge fram eallum þam folce . oððe ic ænlipigu on þam cafertune to
læfe oþstod . (400-10)

She thought at first - characteristically, since she was preoccupied with her body - that it was a physical reason, her 'womanly weakness', which was preventing her; but after three or four attempts at entry, she stood wearied by the effort:

þa ongan ic þencan þæt me þæt gelumpe for þære wiflican unmihte . and
ic me þa eft ongan mæncgan to oþrum . þæt ic wolde on sume wisan inn
geþringan . ac ic swanc on idel . mid þam þe ic þone ðerscwold þæra
dura gehran . and hi ealle þyder inn onfangene wæron butan ælcere

lettinge . þa wæs ic ana ut asceofen; Ac swilce me hwilc strang meniu
 ongear stode . þæt me þone ingang beluce . swa me seo færllice godes
 wracu þa duru bewerede; Oððe ic eft standende on þæs temples
 cafertune wæs . þus ic þrywa . oþþe feower siþum þrowode minne willan
 to geseonne . and eac to fremanne . and þa ða ic naht ne gefremode .
 þa ongan ic ofer þæt georne wenan and min lichama wæs swiðe geswenced
 for þam nyde þæs geþringes. (410-21)

We see that this was the first time she had been prevented from
 carrying out her will. Mary describes how she went to a corner and
 thought about why she was being denied the sight of the life-giving
 cross:

Ða gewat ic witodlice þanone . and me ana gestod on sumum hwomme þæs
 cafertunes . and on minum mode geornlice þohte and smeade for hwilcum
 intigumⁿ me wære forwyrned þæs liffæstan treowes ansyn. (421-24)

There came a realisation, 'a perception of salvation touched my mind
 and the eyes of my heart, as I thought to myself that the filthiness'¹
 of my misdeeds had closed the entrance against me'. Her physical
 inability to enter the church revealed a spiritual truth: the
 invisible barrier was her spiritual separation and distance from God,
 that is, her sins. She wept - for the first time - and beat her
 breast, and sighed:

þa onhran soðlice min mod and þa eagan minre heortan hælo andgit mid
 me sylfre þencende þæt me þone ingang belucen þa onfeormeganda² minra
 misdæda. Ða ongan ic biterlice wepan . and swiðe gedrefed mine breost
 cnyssan . and of inneweardre heortan heofonde forðbringan . þa
 geomorlican siccetunga. (424-29)

Mary's inability to enter the church had prompted a new self-knowledge
 and spiritual awareness. Recognising her alienation from God because

of her sins, she was moved by compunction, the necessary prelude to repentance, accompanied by tears and beating of the breast, which expressed her sorrow for her sins.¹³

Until this point she had always followed her own will, but at the church door, her realisation of her sinfulness seems to have made her receptive to guidance, for she saw a 'likeness' of the Virgin Mary, whom she asked for help:

Ða geseah ic of þære stowe þe ic on stod . þære halgan godes cennestran anlicnysse¹⁴ standende . and ic cwæð to hire geornlice ... Eala þu wuldorfæste hlæfdige ... forþan ðe ic gehyrde þæt god wære mann forðy gefremod þe þu sylf acendest . to þon þæt he þa synfullan to hreowsunge gecygede¹⁵ . gefultuma me nu anegre¹⁶ ælces fylstes bedæled. (429-42)

God's action in preventing her from entering the church was the means by which she was 'called to repentance'. At this time, Mary appeared to recognise both that she had a choice, and that she needed guidance. Cassian's discussion of the will is relevant here, and in the light of Mary's sense, as she recounted her story, of willed sinfulness:

Et idcirco manet in homine liberum semper arbitrium, quod gratiam dei possit uel neglegere uel amare. Non enim praecepisset apostolus dicens: 'cum metu et tremore uestram salutem operamini', nisi scisset eam uel excoli a nobis posse uel neglegi. Sed ne crederent se ad opus salutis diuino auxilio non egere, subiungit: 'deus est enim qui operatur in uobis et uelle et perficere, pro bona uoluntate' (Philippians 2.12, 13). Et idcirco Timotheum monens 'noli, inquit, neglegere gratiam dei quae est in te' (I Timothy 4.14).

The will always remains free in man, and can either neglect or delight in the grace of God. For the Apostle would not have commanded saying 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling' had he not known that it could be advanced or neglected by us. But that men might not

fancy that they had no need of Divine aid for the work of Salvation he subjoins 'For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure'. And therefore he warns Timothy and says 'Neglect not the grace of God which is in thee'. ('Conf.' 13.12; SC 54.167, Wace & Schaff XI.249)

Mary asked to be allowed to enter the church and see the Cross, although she was 'unworthy', and promised both the Virgin and her son, who shed his blood for her redemption, that she would 'never afterwards pollute (her) body with the dire and shameful sport of wicked fornication', but would forsake the world and its deeds and go wherever the Virgin advised her for her protection:

forlæt me and me þa leafe forgif to geopenigenne þone ingang þinre
þære halgan cyrcan . þæt ic ne wurðe fremde geworden þære deorwurpan
rode gesihðe . on þære gefæstnod wæs ealles middaneardes hælend . þone
þu femne geeacnodost eac swilce fæmne acendest . se þe his agen blod
ageat for minre alysednysse . ac hat nu þu wuldorfæste hlæfdige . me
unmedemre for þære godcundan rode gretinge . þa duru beon untynede and
ic me þe bebeode . and to mundbyrdnysse geceose wið þin agen bearn .
and inc bam gehate þæt ic næfre ofer þis minne lichaman ne besmite
purh þæt grimme bysmergleow þæs manfullan geligeres . ac sona ic
halige fæmne þines suna rode geseo . ic mid þam wiðsace þissere
worulde . and hire dædum mid eallum þingum þe on hyre synd . and
syððan fare swa hwider swa þu me to mundbyrdnysse geredst. (442-54)

Mary's repentance and acceptance of guidance, her new-found humility and promise of obedience, enabled her to enter the church. She was afraid as she approached the door once again, but it was as if the power which had before prevented her from entering now assisted her:

ic wearð þa gelæd mid þære hætu þæs geleafan . and mid þam truwan
ophrinon . and be þære arfæstan godes cennestran mild-heortnysse

prystlæcende . ic me of þære ylcan stowe astyrede ðe ic þis gebæd .
 cwæð . and me eft to þam ingangendum gemengde. syppan næs nan þincg þe
 me utsceofe oþpe me þæs temples dura bewerede . and ic þa ineode mid
 þam ingangendum; Ðe gegrap me witodlice stranglic fyrhto . and ic wæs
 eall byfigende gedrefed . þa ic me eft to þære dura geðeodde þe me wæs
 ær ingang belocen . swilc me eall þæt mægen þe me ær þæs inganges duru
 bewerede æfter þan þone ingang þæs siðfætes gegearwode. (454-64)

Within the church, the theme of God's reception of penitents is
 reinforced: as is the strong sense of the physical always associated
 with Mary, for she threw herself to the floor and kissed the ground:
 'ic þær geseah þa halgan godes gerynu hu he symle geare is þa
 hreowsigendan to underfonne; Ða wearp ic me sylfe forð on þa flor .
 and þa halgan eorðan gecyste' (467-69).

After she had prayed before the cross, she returned outside to
 the spot where she had seen the vision, and prayed for direction. She
 would go where the Virgin willed: 'gerece me nu on þone wæg þe þin
 willa sy' (479-80). Mary's search was no longer for ways of
 fulfilling her desires for sexual pleasures, but for salvation and
 truth, and she sought a guide 'going before her in the path that leads
 to repentance': 'beo me nu hælo l^tæow æteowod . and soðfæstnysse
 ealdor. before me gangende on þone wæg þe to dædbote læt' (480-82).
 There is a poetic justice in the fact that the Virgin, humble and
 obedient and the ideal of female virginity, should be the one to help
 Mary, who had wilfully lost her virginity at twelve and spent her life
 obsessively indulging her sexual desires. Mary felt it to be
 incongruous (432-38). But the very incongruity helps to express one
 of the lessons of the story; that God calls sinners to repentance
 (439-41, quoted above. p. 257), and it is possible for one who is

truly penitent to be saved through repentance, no matter how sinful she or he has been.

In answer to her prayer for guidance, a voice told Mary to cross the Jordan (483-84). The sacramental significance of the Jordan in Mary's story will be discussed below. Here, the continuing sense of the physical in relation to Mary should be noted. Just as she had thrown down her work and run to the sea to join the pilgrims: 'Ic þa sona þa spinle'¹⁷ me fram awearp . þe ic seldon gewunode on handa to hæbbenne . and to þære sæ arn' (367-68), and had run to the church (401-2), then been brought to a stop, pushing, but unable to gain entry, Mary ran all the way to the river, in obedience to the Virgin's instructions, weeping: 'Ða þa ic þone weg wiste'¹⁸ ic wepende be þam siðfæte arn symle þa axunga þæra æscan towriðende'¹⁹. and gemang þam ðæs dæges siðfæt wepende gefylde' (494-96). Her energies, like her will, had been redirected, though she retained her tendency to run; when she saw Zosimus, she had run from him too (188, 196-98).

Mary's account of herself during her early career has described, at some length, what it was to be fallen (as mankind was fallen), and sinful, and subject to the flesh, in a particular, obsessive way. When she turns to her life of penitence, we learn that although Mary had led a life of solitary penitence until Zosimus found her, she still felt herself to be susceptible to the flesh, with its desires and troubles. Even after she had spent forty-seven years in the desert (515), Zosimus's questions could disturb her:

And mihtst þu swa manegra tida lencgu oferfaran . þæt þu ne freode þone bryne þære flæsclican gehwyrfednysse;²⁰ Heo þa gedrefedu him andswarode . Nu þu me axast þa ðincg þe ic swiðe pearle sylf

beforhtige gif me nu to gemynde becumað ealle þa frecednysse þe ic
ahrefnode . and þæra unwislicra geþanca þe me oft gedrefedon;
(522-527).

Her life in the desert had been a constant struggle. This daily struggle is indeed something that characterises the ascetic life.²¹ Mary's continued sense of her own vulnerability both displays a psychological realism and elicits sympathy; she did not suddenly become a saint. Mary had both to endure her present hardships, and fight the desires they provoked for remembered past pleasures. For the first time we hear of the meat, wine and fish, and even 'shameful poems' and 'devilish songs' which had given her pleasure in the world. Longings for these things had troubled her for seventeen years (perhaps in atonement for the seventeen years she had spent indulging her desires to excess):²²

Abbud gelyf me . seofontyne wintre ic wan on þam gewilnunga þære
manðwæra . and ungesceadwisra wildeora lustum . þonne me hingrigan
ongan . þonne wæron me þa flæscmettas on gewilnungum . ic gyrnde þara
fixa þe on egyptum wæron . ic gewilnode þæs wines on þam ic ær
gelustfullode to oferdruncennysse brucan . and nu hit is me eac swilce
swyðe on gewilnunga . forþon þe ic his ær ofer gemet breac . þa ic on
worulde wæs . eac ic her wæs swiðe geprest for þyses westenes wæter-
wædlnysse uneaðe þa frecendlican nydþearfnysse adreogende; Me wæs
swilce swiðlic lust þæra sceandlicra sceopleoða me gedrefde²³ . þonne
hi me on mode gebrohton þa deoflican leop to singanne þe ic ær on
worulde geleornode. (530-41)

As before, it was through repentance and acceptance of guidance from the Virgin that she had been able to overcome her inner conflicts and find tranquillity. She describes how, when she was troubled by her desires and memories, she reminded herself of her promise and of the

protection she had chosen: transporting herself in mind through the desert she arrived before the likeness of the Virgin. She wept and prayed and beat her breast; then she beheld a light that came from all sides shining about her,²⁴ and felt a firm peace come to her:

ic þonne mid þam wepende mine breost mid minum handum cnyssende . and me sylfe myngode mines foregehates . and þære mundbyrdnysse þe ic ær fore geceas . and swa geond þis weste hwearfigende²⁵ purh min geðoht becom toforan þære godan . and þære halgan godes cennestran anlicnysse . þe me ær on hyre truwan underfeng . and ic beforan hyre wepende bæd . þæt heo me fram aflymde þa fulan geðances . þe mine earman sawla swencton . ðonne ic soðlice oferflowendlice sorgiende weop; And ic heardlice mine breost cnyssende . þonne geseah ic leoht gehwanon me ymbutan scinende . and me þonne sona sum staðolfæstlic smyltnyss to becom. (541-51)

This time, however, alone in the desert, it was a purely spiritual, not physical journey she made. Contrite and penitent before the Virgin, she could find peace.

The troubles of the flesh experienced by Mary were not only those connected with temptations and pleasures. As well as these thoughts and memories and desires, she was exposed to bodily sufferings in the desert. After her garments had worn out, this vigorous, energetic woman was left naked to face by turns the misery of the 'icy coldness of the winter' and 'the excessive burning of the heat of the sun', so that she was often left 'almost completely motionless without spirit' on the earth:

Zosimus hire to cwæð . and ne beþorfstest þu nanre andlyfene . oððe hræglunge; Heo him andswarode and cwæð . seofontyne gear swa ic þe ær sæde. ic notode þære hlafa . and syððan be þam wirtum leofode þe ic on pysum westene funde . se gegyrla witodlice þe ic hæfde sona swa ic

lordanen oferfor . mid swiðlicre ealdunge totorene forwurdon . and ic
syppan mænigfeald earfeðu dreah . hwilum þære isihtan cealdnysse þæs
wintres . hwilum þæs unmætan wylmes þære sunnan hæta . ic wæs grimlice
beswæled for þam micclan byrne . and eft for þære micclan forstigan
cealdnysse þæs wintres . swa þæt ic for oft ofdune on þa eorðan . and
forneah eallunga unastyrigendlic butan gaste læg . þus ic wæs lange on
mænigfealdum . ^{and} misclicum nydpearfnyssum . and on unmætum costnungum
winnende . and wraxligende . (566-78)

Such susceptibility to hunger, thirst, heat and cold were - like slavery to one's desires - among the consequences of the fall. At this point Mary, naked and vulnerable, seems 'weighed down' by her body.²⁶ However, while Mary tells of her sin, her sorrow and her struggle, what Zosimus sees is her holiness. He learns more about Mary than the story she tells. It is evident to him that she possesses spiritual gifts, which she uses, but of which she speaks little, and only in reply to his questions. He witnesses some miraculous events which reveal how little she is now tied down by her body. These gifts and miracles indicate to what an extraordinary degree Mary has progressed through her life of penitence from her sinful subjection to the flesh.

Flesh and spirit: spiritual gifts and miracles

Among the gifts Mary has acquired are prophecy and foreknowledge: she knows who and what Zosimus is (204, 213-16, 227-31); she is familiar with the rules of the monastery, and mentions the name of the abbot, John (612-15, 632); she foretells that Zosimus will be ill during Lent and unable to leave the monastery during the customary Lenten fast (619-20; the fulfilment is related, 648-54). She has

also, without literacy (593-95: quoted below), a miraculous knowledge and understanding of the scriptures. This last requires some comment.

When Zosimus asks her how she has lived all these years without food or clothing, she speaks of the hardships and temptations she has endured; her three loaves lasted seventeen years (a miracle in itself), after which she subsisted on roots, and her clothes wore out, leaving her exposed to the elements (568-78, just quoted, pp. 262-63; see also 518-21). But, she says, the divine power (the same divine power which had prevented her entry into the church, 408) has preserved her soul and body; she is 'fed to the full with the most abundant sustenance, that is with the hope of her salvation', and she is 'clothed with the garment of God's word', and she quotes the words spoken by Christ in the wilderness to the devil: 'Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God' (Matthew 4.4):²⁷

mine earman sawle . and minne lichaman þæt godcundlice mægen geheold .
mid me sylfre symle smeagende of hu micclum yfelum heo²⁸ me alysde;
Soðlice ic eom afeded of þam genihtsumestan wistmettum minre fylle .
þæt is mid þam hihte minre hæle . and ic eom oferwrigen mid þam
oferbrædelse godes wordes . se ðe ealle þincg befehð and befædmað; Ne
leofað na se man soðlice be hlafe anum . ac of æghwīlcum worde þe
forðgæð of godes muþe. (579-86)

When Zosimus hears that she 'brought forth the sayings of the holy books, both from the gospels and from many others' he asks whether she has ever learned the psalms or other holy writings:

Zosimus þa witodlice gehyrende þæt heo þæra haligra boca cwydas forð-
brohte . ægðer ge of þæm godspelle . and of manegum oþrum . he hire to

cwæð; Eala modor leornodest þu æfre sealmas . oþpe oþre halige gewritu. (586-90)

She replies:

Gelyf me ne geseah ic nænne man buton þe . oððe wildeor . oþpe æniges cynnes nyten siððan ic iordanen þæt wæter oferferde . and ic hyder on þis westen becom; Ne ic stæfcyste witodlice ne leornode ne þæra nanum ne hlyste þe þa smeadon and ræddon . ac godes word is cucu . and scearp innan lærende þis mennisce andgyt. (591-96)

Mary herself seems to be proof of the truth of the words she has quoted from the scriptures. In the wilderness, she has survived, physically, with very little sustenance. Her physical needs for clothing and food have been transmuted into spiritual needs, and she is sustained by the word of God which 'clothes' her, 'feeds' her and instructs her understanding.

The contrast between Mary's spiritual achievement and the subjection to the flesh indicated by her sin is expressed particularly vividly by three miracles which Zosimus witnesses, or of which he becomes aware. The first takes place during the first encounter between them, when she levitates. She and Zosimus have asked for one another's blessings and prayers. Mary feels unworthy, and says it befits Zosimus to pray and bless; but in obedience she will pray for Zosimus and for the world (224-64). As she prays, silently, he sees her 'hanging in the air':

[hi] upahafenum eagum on þa heahnysse and aþenedum earmum ongan gebiddan mid þære welera styrungum on stilnesse swa þæt ðær næs eallinga nan stemne gehyred þæs þe man ongyten mihte . þæs gebedes eac swylce zosimus nan þing ongytan ne mihte . He stod witodlice swa swa he sylf sæde byfiende and þa eorþan behealdende . and nan þing

eallunga sprecende. He swor witodlice god him to gewitan on his wordum foresettende þæt ða get þa þa heo þus þurhwunode on þære gebedes astandendnyssse he his eagan lythwon fram þære eorðan upahof þæt he geseah hi upahefene swa swa mannes elne fram þære eorðan. and on þære lyfte hangiende gebiddan ongan. (264-75)²⁹

Although Mary appears to use words, since her lips move, her silent prayer seems to approach that of the praying solitary who has submitted himself to spiritual discipline as described by Cassian:

Atque ita ad illam orationis incorruptionem mens nostra peruenit ... quae non solum nullius imaginis occupatur intuitu, sed etiam nulla uocis, nulla uerborum prosecutione distinguitur, ignita uero mentis intentione per ineffabilem cordis excessum inexplebili spiritus alacritate profertur, quamque mens extra omnes sensus ac uisibiles effecta materies gemitibus inenarrabilibus atque suspiriis profundit ad deum.

Our mind will reach that incorruptible prayer [which has been the subject of his previous treatise] ... and this [prayer] is not merely not engaged in gazing on any image, but is actually distinguished by the use of no words or utterances; but with the purpose of the mind all on fire, is produced through ecstasy of heart by some [insatiable]³⁰ keenness of spirit, and the mind being thus affected without the aid of the senses or any visible material pours it forth to God with groanings and sighs that cannot be uttered. ('Conf.' 10.11; SC 54.93, Wace & Schaff XI.408).

Levitation is not directly discussed in works on asceticism, although as a miracle it also occurs in other saints' lives. Loomis writes:

a rather frequent miracle which reminds one of India is the one in which a saint by the sheer ecstasy of his devotions is elevated to a considerable extent from the ground. Albert represents a typical case of levitation. This father spent all night with bare feet kneeling before the crucifix and reading his psalter. During the whole time of

his occupation, he was lifted a distance of three cubits from the ground. When he finished his prayers, he sank gently to the earth'.³¹

Mary's experience of levitation during prayer may perhaps be seen as a physical counterpart to the experience of contemplation described by Gregory and Augustine. Contemplation, the most advanced form of prayer, required the discipline of asceticism: 'It is the constant teaching of the great mystics that there can be no progress in prayer without mortification; no contemplation without self-denial and self-discipline seriously undertaken; no real mysticism without asceticism, in its full sense of spiritual training' (Butler 1967, 24-25; see also pp. 27 & 68). 'Ascesis in the strict sense [was a] training in self-control and the fuller use of the higher powers' (Shepherd 1959, xlv). Leclercq writes in his discussion of Gregory's view of the role of prayer in the life of a Christian:

At the root of [Gregory's] concept of the Christian life is found a lively awareness of man's misery ... Man's wretchedness comes from his physical nature, from Original Sin, from the egoism which harries each one of us ... St Gregory recalls the 'weight' which attracts us to earth; the weight which is proper to what is changing and mortal, the 'gravity' which is the sign of corruption, the particular attribute of sin, the reason why we speak of 'grave sins'.³²

Mary has been 'weighed down' by her physical nature and her sin, the condition of fallen man in the world.³³

Butler quotes Gregory's description of the experience of the mind in contemplation:

Ecce enim electorum mens ... iam cuncta quae considerat praeterire transcendit, iam ab exteriorum delectatione suspenditur, et quae sint bona invisibilia rimatur, atque haec agens plerumque in dulcedinem

supernae contemplationis rapitur ... et ultra se evecta ad semetipsam relabi dedignatur; sed quia adhuc corpus quod corrumpitur aggravat animam (Wisdom 9.15), inhaerere diu luci non valet, quam raptim videt.

The mind of the elect ... already mounts above all the objects that it sees are of a nature to pass away, is already lifted up from the enjoyment of things external, and closely searches what are the invisible good things, and in doing the same is frequently carried away into the sweetness of heavenly contemplation ... and being carried beyond self, disdains to sink back into self. But forasmuch as the corruptible body still weighs down the soul, it is not able to cleave for long to the Light which it sees in a momentary glimpse. (*Moralia* 8.50, Butler 1967, 73)

Augustine's account also describes the transient nature of such experiences:

Aliquando intromittis me in affectum multum inusitatum introrsus ad nescio quam dulcedinem, quae si perficiatur in me, nescio quid erit, quod vita ista non erit. Sed recido in haec aerumnosis ponderibus et resorbeor solitis. (*Confessions* 10, 40.65, CCSL 27)

Sometimes you allow to enter into me such an uncommon feeling within, (rising to) an extraordinary sweetness, which, could it be perfected in me, will be I know not what, which this life will not be. But by my wretched burdens I fall back again into my present condition, and am swallowed up by my usual state.

Butler points out that such experiences were not confined to Augustine and Gregory: 'the mental state described is a common experience of those who have attained to contemplation' (p. 75). Although 'Gregory suggests little more than a profound absorption of the mind' (p. 85), it is possible to see from the language of the passages quoted how such a spiritual state might be expressed in the physical phenomenon of levitation. Mary might thus be supposed to have attained to a

degree of perfection in prayer (if not, strictly, contemplation) through her asceticism.

The next visible sign of Mary's spiritual attainment is her ability to walk on water, manifested when she comes to meet Zosimus in the second year. While Zosimus is wondering whether he has missed her, and, if she comes, how she will cross the waters, he sees her on the other side. He is joyful, but uncertain how she will cross:

Zosimus soðlice hi geseonde mid micclum wynsumigendum gefean . and god wuldrigende up aras . swaƿeahhwæðere on his mode tweonigende . hu heo mihte iordanes wæteru oferfaran (678-81).

Mary makes the sign of the cross in the waters; the brightness of the moon illuminates the darkness of the night, as soon as she makes (lit: 'submerges') the sign of the cross in the water;³⁴ then she walks on the waves as if on dry land:

ƿa geseah he witodlice ƿæt heo mid cristes rodetacne iordanes wæteru bletsode . soðlice ealra ƿæra nihte ƿeostru ƿa ðæs monan byrhtnysse onlihte sona swa heo ƿære rode tacn on ƿa wætru drencte . swa eode heo on uppan ƿa hnescan yða wið his weardes gangende swa swa on drigum (681-85).³⁵

After she has received the eucharist from Zosimus, she asks him to return the following year to the place of their first meeting; then she makes again the sign of the cross in the water, and walks back across the Jordan (700, 706-9, 722-24).³⁶

Finally, Zosimus returns a year later, to the appointed spot, and finds Mary lying dead. He realises from the writing on the ground, giving the date and time of her death (749-54), that she had completed

in the course of one hour the journey which had taken him twenty days with much toil:

he swutole ongeat sona swa heo³⁷ þa godcundan gerynu æt iordane onfeng
þære ylcan tide þyder becom and sona of middanearde gewat . and se
siðfæt þe Zosimus on .XX. dagum mid micclum geswince oferfor . þæt
eall MARIA on anre tide ryne gefylde . and sona to drihtne hleorde.
(757-61)

Like the miracles in which Mary levitates and walks on the water, Mary's miraculously fast journey from the river to the place where she and Zosimus had first met reveals her spiritual progress. The sinner who had lived for seventeen years only to indulge her body and its desires had become, it seems, a spiritual being, whose body could rise in the air, who could walk on water, and who could cover great distances at extraordinary speed.

The discussion so far has concentrated on Mary's progress from her subjection to the flesh. We shall turn now to two further aspects of the nature and aspirations of the ascetic life which her story illuminates: the necessity for humility, and the search for paradise.

Humility

The Life teaches about humility through the person of Zosimus as well as Mary. Humility is the first and most important lesson which he has to learn from her.³⁸ Zosimus has been a model of monastic practice; so much so that other monks come from distant places to learn from him and imitate him (28-32), and he is apparently accorded visions by God (37-41). However, he has come to have an excessively high opinion of himself and his attainments; at the age of fifty-three

(line 47) he finds himself 'assailed by certain thoughts, as if he were perfected in all things, and did not need in his mind the example of any more teaching; and he was saying thus (to himself): "Is there any monk on earth who can teach me anything new?"':

he *wæs* gecnyssed fram sumum gepancum . swa swa he *wære* on eallum þingum fulfremed . and he nanre *mæran* lare bysene ne beporfte on his mode; and he *wæs* þus sprecende . hwæðer ænig munuc on eorðan sy . þat me mage aht niwes getæcan . (48-52)³⁹

Zosimus is quite unaware of his pride; but his thoughts are immediately answered by an angel, who instructs him to go on a journey 'þæt þu *mæge* ongytan . and oncnawan hu miccle⁴⁰ synd oþre hælo wegas' (59-60).

Zosimus is holy enough to be spoken to by an angel, but not so holy that he has nothing to learn.

In the desert, the apparently disciplined, calm, self-satisfied monk of advancing years whose example of monastic 'perfection' others sought to imitate is made to undergo an extraordinary experience. One who had been accustomed to be a model for others and to receive divine revelations in his monastery finds himself in the desert weeping (e.g. 191, 195, 200-03, 322, 363, 600-01, 669), fearful (e.g. 169, 212-13, 232), and uncertain (169-70, 182-84, 278-81, 667-68, 674-75, 679-81). The contrast between Zosimus' pride in his achievements and Mary's humility in spite of hers is striking. Every word and every event which reveals Mary's holiness to Zosimus is accompanied by evidence of her complete humility. From their first encounter, Mary speaks as one conscious of her sinfulness, and quite unconscious of what her

spiritual gifts might indicate. She is able to address him by name at their first meeting, yet she calles herself a 'wretched sinner': 'gif þu wille me earmre forworhtre þine halwendan gebedu to forlætan' (209-10), and she asks why he had such great need to see her, 'a sinful woman': 'Hwi wæs þe la abbod Zosimus swa micel need . me synful wif to geseonne' (221-22). Now, each is so humble before the other, he in deference to her evident holiness, she to his priestly status, that there is some awkwardness in protocol: 'He þa sona on þa eorðan hine astrehte . and hire bletsunga bæd heo ongear hine astrehte . and his bletsunga bæd' (225-26). Mary's knowledge of who and what Zosimus is frightens him (227-32); still, she asks 'Eala man for hwylcre wisan come þu to me synfulre' (249-50). After the prayer during which she has risen from the ground, she reassures him that she is no spirit, speaking of herself as 'a sinful woman ... dust and ashes and all flesh': 'ic eom synful wif ... æmerge and axe and eall flæsc' (284-86). She walks across the waters of the Jordan, but prevents Zosimus from kneeling to her because he carries the eucharistic elements with him (688-89). After her death, the writing on the earth asks Zosimus to bury and compassionate her body, and resign to the earth that which is the earth's, and dust to the dust, and pray for her: ' bebyrig abbud Zosimus . and miltsa maria lichaman.⁴¹ ofgif þære eorðan þæt hire is . and þæt dust to þam duste . geic eac gebiddan⁴² þeahhwæðere for me' (749-52). In spite of the progress she has made through her struggles, she seems quite unaware that she has achieved anything, and still regards herself as a sinner. This is the most important lesson for Zosimus, and a reminder also to the wider audience of the Life.

The search for paradise through asceticism

Another theme of the ascetic life which Mary's story illuminates is that of the search for paradise. Although baptism, through which the individual was inaugurated into the Christian life, symbolised the entry into paradise (Daniélou 1960a, 25, 1960b, 31-35), it was through the contemplative life that paradise was most profoundly realised (Danielou 1960a, 25-8);⁴³ and the life of the desert ascetic was regarded as the pinnacle of such a life.⁴⁴

The association of the desert with paradise would have been in the minds of any audience of the stories of desert saints, as it was in the minds of the ascetics who ventured there in their efforts to find paradise, a state of blessedness. Peter Brown writes: 'The men (*sic*) of the desert were thought capable of recovering, in the hushed silence of that dead landscape, a touch of the unimaginable glory of Adam's first state' (1989, 220). The 'paradise' sought in the desert could refer, as here, to that which had been lost, and to that which was to come.⁴⁵ Cassian referred to the latter:

Haec igitur destinatio solitarii, haec esse debet omnis intentio, ut imaginem futurae beatitudinis in hoc corpore possidere mereatur et quodammodo arram caelestis illius conversationis et gloriae incipiat in hoc uasculo praegustare.

This then ought to be the destination of the solitary, this should be all his aim that it may be vouchsafed to him to possess even in the body an image of future bliss, and that he may begin in this world to have a foretaste of a sort of earnest of that celestial life and glory. ('Conf.' 10.7; SC 54.81-82, Wace & Schaff XI.404)

The idea that the desert could become paradise was expressed by Jerome in a reproachful letter to a monk who had abandoned the ascetic life and returned home:

O desertum, floribus vernans! ... O eremus familiaris Deo gaudens! ... Infinita eremi vastitas te terret? sed tu paradisum mente deambula. Quotiescumque illuc cogitatione conscenderis, toties in eremo non eris.

O desert, bright with flowers! ... O wilderness gladdened with God's especial presence! ... Does the boundless solitude of the desert terrify you? In the spirit you may walk always in paradise. Do but turn your thoughts thither and you will be no more in the desert. (Letter 14.10, date: 373-74; PL 22.353-54, Wace & Schaff VI.17).

The theme of paradise is touched upon in connection with the monks of the monastery by the Jordan: '[h]il þone godcundan neorxnawang butan ablinnendnysse geedniwodon' (97-98). But in the Life, it is through Mary that the recovery of paradise which was the aim of the ascetic life is revealed. Mary's communion with God, her instruction in knowledge (discussed above, pp. 263-65) is like the direct communion with the creator enjoyed by Adam. At her death, Mary's recovery of paradise in the desert is indicated by the lion 'of immense size' (772, quoted below) which arrives to help bury her. Daniélou states that 'one of the features of [the] revival of Paradise will be the dominion over the brute creation, a dominion found so frequently among the Fathers of the Desert' (1960a, 28); and Benedicta Ward: 'the theme of the restoration of paradise in which the holy man resumes the role of Adam is a topos in hagiography' (1987b, 79). The lion acknowledges Mary's holiness and pays homage to her by licking the soles of her feet:⁴⁵ 'þa [Zosimus] hine beseah þa geseah he

unmættre micelnysse leon wīð þære halgan lichaman standan . and his fotlastes liccode' (772-73). The huge beast obediently digs a grave for Mary and goes off afterwards into the desert 'swa swa þæt mildeste lamb' (794-95). In its obedience and gentleness it is like an animal in paradise before the fall, when man in his sinless state had dominion over all living creatures.⁴⁷ Mary is thus shown to have achieved the state of blessedness to which all those who sought paradise in the desert aspired.

The themes discussed so far have been those which were of special concern to those who undertook the ascetic life. It remains now to examine the aspects of the Life which touch upon subjects of importance to all Christians.

The individual's relationship with the church

Much of the power of Mary's story lies in the way in which Mary's experiences, miracles and needs illuminate, in an understated, informal and apparently spontaneous way, some of the most important formal observances of the church: penance, and the two principal sacraments, baptism and the eucharist, with which penance was closely associated.⁴⁸ The period of the church year when these were given special prominence was during and at the culmination of Lent. Mary's encounters with Zosimus take place during and towards the end of Lent. The place of penance and the two sacraments in Mary's story will be examined in turn.

Penance was the means by which the sinner, alienated from God through sins, could be reconciled to the church (Pelikan 1978, 32, 210). The account of Mary's penitence alludes both to the formal

system of public penance, and to the Lenten fasts carried out by the monks of the monastery by the Jordan to which Zosimus was directed by the angels. Before these are discussed, it will be useful to recapitulate briefly the events in Mary's story which relate to penance, although many of the relevant passages have been quoted above (p. 255 ff.). Mary finds herself unable to enter the Church door (406 ff). She is prompted to recognise her alienation from God because of her sins (422 ff). She is moved to compunction, the necessary prelude to repentance, accompanied by the tears and beating of the breast which express her sorrow for her sins (427 ff). She confesses her sinfulness to the Virgin, prays for aid, and promises to sin no more; to forsake the world and to go wherever the Virgin wills (432 ff). She is then able to enter the church (459 ff). After she has prayed, she buys three loaves, goes to the Jordan, and prays in the church there (490-501). She washes her face and hands in the river, and receives the eucharist in the church of John the Baptist (489-505). She eats half of one of the loaves and drinks some water (505-06). Then she crosses the river and prays to the Virgin for direction (507-09). She remains in the wilderness, living a life of solitary penitence for forty-seven years (509 ff) until she is found by Zosimus. She tells him her story (300 ff). She receives the eucharist from him before she dies (700, 757-59).

Mary's experience at the church door and her subsequent period of penance are strongly reminiscent of the formal system of public penance, which had developed by the third century, and which was in use in both the Eastern and Western churches:⁴⁹ penitents were

excluded from entry into the church at the start of their penance and had to remain outside weeping, entreating the faithful for their prayers, and confessing their sin. In the course of their penance, they would enter the church, but remained separated from the other members. Throughout their period of penance they could not receive the eucharist. After the completion of the appointed period, penitents were readmitted with the other members and granted the sacrament. The reconciliation of penitents took place commonly on Holy Thursday (Maundy Thursday).⁵⁰ Mary's experience does not correspond to this formal penance at every point, (most notably, she receives the eucharist before she crosses the Jordan to begin her penance, 503-04); but her exclusion from the church, her weeping and confession of sin allude to it. So too, later, does her reception of the eucharist from Zosimus at the end of her life and of her period of penitence, marking her reconciliation with the church.⁵¹ The details which remain unexplained by comparison with this outline of public penance become clear when one compares them with the description of the Lenten fasts of the monks of the monastery by the Jordan.

Lent was the pre-eminent penitential period in the church year. In the Life, before the customs of the monks are described, we are reminded of the significance of the Lenten fast for all Christians: the fast was appointed for all Christians to observe, and to cleanse themselves (in preparation) for the celebration of the Passion and Resurrection: 'genealæhte seo tid þæs halgan lenctenfæstenes þe eallum cristenum mannum geset is to mærsigenne . and hi sylfe to clænsunga for wurðunga þære godcundan þrowunga . and his æristes'

(98-101). Then follows an account of the customs of the monks. On the first Sunday of Lent the divine mysteries were celebrated: 'þær wæron gewunelice gedone þa godcundan gerynu . and þonne gemænsumedon heo þæs libbendan . and þæs unbesmitenan lichaman ures drihtnes hælendes cristes' (112-14). Then, after eating a little together, the monks prayed together and asked their abbot's blessing: 'ætgedere hwon gereordende syppan . wæron ealle on þæt gebædhus gegaderode ... and heora abbudes eadmodlice bletsunga bædon' (115-18). They then went out of the monastery, taking with them little or no food (122-29), for they would be fed with the plants which grew in the desert, 'hi wæron gefedde ... mid þam wyrtrum þe on þam westene weoxon' (129-31). They crossed the Jordan and separated from one another (133-35). They would turn out of their way if they saw another coming (135-37). They spent the period in solitary prayer and fasting (137-38). They returned to the monastery on Palm Sunday, the Sunday before Christ's resurrection (139-41). The narrator tells us: 'Ðis wæs witodlice þæs mynstres regol . and þus fulfremodlice wæs gehealden æghwīlc swa ic ær cwæð . þæt hine sylfne on þæt westen to gode geðeodde . and mid him sylfum wunnon þæt hi mannum ne licodon buton gode sylfum' (145-48).

The details of the Lenten fast undertaken annually by the monks correspond exactly to Mary's own period of penance. Like them, she prays before she sets out (500-01). She receives the sacrament: 'gemænsumode þam liffestan and þam unbesmitenum gerynum ures drihtnes hælendes cristes' (503-04; compare 112-14, above). She eats a little, as the monks do (505-06; compare 115-16). She crosses the river (507) and prays to Mary for direction (508-09: if her prayer to the Virgin

corresponds to the monks' prayer for the abbot's blessing, there is a small change in the order here, for they ask his blessing before they cross the water). Mary dwells alone in the desert. Like the monks, she avoids others: when she sees Zosimus, she runs away from him (187-88). She uses what remains of her bread for seventeen years, after which she lives on the plants which she found in the desert, 'seofontyne gear ... ic notode þære hlafa . and syððan be þam wyrtrum leofode þe ic on þysum westene funde' (568-69; compare 125-31). She has had to fight with herself, as the monks do. The difference between Mary and the monks is one of degree. What is for them an annual period of solitary prayer and fasting has become her life.

Penance was the means by which the cleansing effected by baptism could be renewed: 'Penance was instituted as a means of grace because those who had received the forgiveness of sins through baptism went on to sin again and needed "a second refuge after this shipwreck" to reconcile them to the church, from which they were alienated by their transgression' (Pelikan 1978, 210, quoting Rupert of Deutz, c. 1075-1130, 'On Divine Offices' 5.19). We shall turn now to the ways in which Mary's Life illuminates, and is also illuminated by, the sacrament of baptism.

It is significant that the river upon which Mary walks (684 ff) is not just any river, but the Jordan. The Jordan forms a part of the landscape of the story, both physical and spiritual. The monastery to which Zosimus has been directed by the angel stands by the Jordan, 'the holiest of waters', '[he] to iordane becom ealra wætera þam halgestan' (63-64). The monks of the monastery cross the Jordan and

go into the wilderness for their solitary Lenten fasts (133-35); the voice of the Virgin tells Mary that if she crosses the Jordan she will find rest (483-84); Mary prays in the church of John the Baptist by the river, washes her face and hands in the water and receives the eucharist in the Church; she crosses the river and enters the wilderness, where she prays to the Virgin for guidance (499-509). Her crossing of the Jordan marks the start of her new life of ascetism and obedience, and she seems to use the event as a point of reference: she speaks of the loaves she had brought with her when she passed over the Jordan, 'Twægen healfa hlafas ic brohte hider mid me . þa ic iordanem oferfor' (518-19); similarly of the garment she had, 'se gegyrlla witodlice þe ic hæfde sona swa ic iordanen oferfor' (570). She has not received the eucharist since before she crossed the Jordan, 'ær ic iordanen oferfore' (627-28). Zosimus himself has crossed the river to find her (148-50). Mary asks Zosimus to bring her a portion of the consecrated elements the following year, but to wait for her 'on þa healfe iordanen þe to worulde belimpeð' (624-25). She walks across the water to reach him. After she has received the sacrament she leaves him there and crosses again into the wilderness, walking on the water (700, 720-24).

The river Jordan is resonant with biblical associations.⁵² The most important for the Christian, and relevant to Mary's story, is its connection with the sacrament of baptism.⁵³ John the Baptist preached repentance on its banks (Matthew 3.2), and baptised Christ in its waters (Matthew 3.13). Mary had already been baptised (284-85); but when she washes her hands and face in the water and then receives the

eucharist in the church of John the Baptist, this seems to be a symbolic re-enactment of the sacrament. It also serves as a reminder that although she is about to undertake a life of solitary penitence in the wilderness, she does so as a member of the church. Mary's crossing of the Jordan into the wilderness symbolises her spiritual renewal (preceded by her acceptance of faith and her repentance) and re-entry into paradise. It is a spiritual journey from a state of sin to salvation. The fact that her single garment wears out and leaves her naked (570) also suggests perhaps the liturgical baptismal stripping which symbolised the casting away of the old life of sin and corruption and the beginning of a new life (Daniélou 1960b, 37-38).

Baptism in the early church was intimately associated with Lent and Easter (as was penance, and the restoration of penitents to communion; see above, p. 277). The preparation of catechumens took place during Lent. They were baptised early on Easter Day, and received their first communion at the Easter celebration. Mary's two encounters with Zosimus both take place during Lent. The second takes place on Holy Thursday,⁵⁴ and it is at the beginning and again at the end of this meeting that she walks across the water. The association of Mary's miracle with baptism is suggested by her action when she makes the sign of the cross in the water (see above, p. 269). Ambrose's description of the baptismal rite includes the signing of the water with the cross.⁵⁵ The miracle expresses the faith which is confirmed by baptism: Mary's ability to walk on the water reveals both God's power and the strength of her faith in him.⁵⁶ This miracle is also a moment of illumination. Pelikan quotes Clement and Tertullian

and comments: 'Illumination as deliverance from darkness was a familiar metaphor for this deliverance from death through baptism, as Hebrews 6.4 and 10.32 suggest' (Pelikan 1971, 164). Thus when the moon illuminates the darkness of the night as Mary signs the water with the cross it is both a vivid and memorable moment in the narrative, and symbolic. It expresses Mary's own faith, repentance and renewal, and reveals, through her, the meaning of the sacrament of baptism.

As has been noted (above, pp. 275 & 281), baptism was closely associated with penance and both were associated with the reception of the eucharist, particularly at the end of Lent and at Easter. Baptism bestowed deliverance from sin, and inaugurated the Christian life. The purity conferred by baptism was renewed by penance. It was through the reception of the eucharist that the Christian participated in the church, the body of Christ (Rahner 1963, 83). The rite was the centre of the life and worship of the church.⁵⁷

At the end of their first meeting, after Mary has told Zosimus her story, she says that she has not partaken of the mysteries since before she crossed the Jordan into the wilderness, and she asks him to return the following year, on Holy Thursday, at the hour of the Last Supper, bringing with him a portion of the eucharistic elements (620-32).⁵⁸ This chronology underlines the significance of the sacrament, instituted by Christ at the Last Supper. Mary's reception of the eucharist marks her reconciliation with the church after forty-seven years of penance.⁵⁹ She gives Zosimus the kiss of peace and receives the sacrament (698-701).

Before she departs, Zosimus begs her to accept a little of the food he has brought with him. This she does, just three lentils, saying that the grace sufficed of him who kept the state of the soul stainless, 'þæs gyfe genihtsumode . þe þære sawle staðol unwemme geheold' (716-17).⁶⁰ Zosimus has offered the food in the spirit of courtesy and hospitality which traditionally characterised those who dwelt in monasteries and in the desert.⁶¹ Mary accepts in courtesy, and also humility. But she has moved beyond the physical requirement for food. Now her need has been only for the spiritual sustenance of the eucharist.⁶² It is after this that, as Zosimus realises the following year, Mary travelled the distance from the river to the place of their first meeting at a miraculous speed, and died at once (759). There is, perhaps, in the combination of this, her lack of need for the food offered by Zosimus, and what, it is now realised, was her last reception of the eucharist, an anticipation of the condition of the resurrected body. Augustine wrote of resurrected bodies:

Non enim potestas, sed egestas edendi ac bibendi talibus corporibus auferetur. Unde et spiritalia erunt, non quia corpora esse desistent, sed quia spiritu vivificante subsistent.

It is not the ability, it is the need to eat and drink that will be taken away from bodies like this. They will be spiritual, not by ceasing to be bodies, but by being supported in their existence by a life-giving spirit. (*City of God* 13.22; Levine 1966, 222, Knowles 1972, 536)

Easter was the feast of the death and resurrection of Christ, and, given the time at which the encounters between Mary and Zosimus take place, these events would inevitably be in the minds of the audience.

The events of Mary's Life are allusive and suggestive rather than precise in their correspondence in detail to the formal practices and rites of the church, but the story reveals, by means of its account of the experience of an individual penitent, the inner truths suggested by the formal observances of the church.

Thus the lessons contained within this life of a repentant sinner are various and profound. Mary provides an example of the conflict faced by all mankind since the fall, that between the flesh and the spirit. Her experience shows that God calls sinners to repentance, and that through penitence the flesh can be overcome. In its details the story is Mary's own, but its pattern is that of any sinner who repents and struggles and is redeemed. Her story is also that of Zosimus writ large: they have each been subject to sins - she, extravagantly, in her desire for sex; he, more subtly, but no less surely, in his pride. They have each had to accept guidance and journey into the desert to find a measure of knowledge and peace in their humility and obedience to God's will: Zosimus obediently and simply allows himself to be guided to learn her story; Mary obediently and humbly confesses it. At the end of her life she is shown to have found the paradise which was sought by all those who ventured into the desert to live an ascetic life. But the lessons of the Life go beyond the lessons in repentance, humility and ascetic living. Mary's story is held within the framework of the church and its sacraments. This is expressed by the allusions to formal penance, the symbolic reenactments of baptism discussed above, and through Mary's practical

and spiritual need for the services of Zosimus. Zosimus has been Mary's confessor and priest; he has heard her story, administered the eucharist and performed the burial rites for her. Since her entry into the desert he is the only contact she has had with the outside world. She has lived alone with herself and God for forty-seven years and achieved a degree of perfection previously unimagined by Zosimus. Yet, the transformation of desert into paradise is incomplete without the sacraments.

Mary's sex is not as important to the lessons of the story as is her sinfulness. If the nature of her sin would satisfy the prejudices (and possibly the prurience) of those who associated sexual sin particularly with women, the story as a whole counteracts this since it is so clearly meant to provide an example for all, and especially for those who undertook the ascetic life. Compare Baker's comments on the story: '[La Vie] aurait été écrite non pas pour la glorification de cette sainte elle-même, mais dans le but de démontrer que le régime claustral le plus rigoureux peut être dépassé en sévérité par la renonciation volontaire d'une femme' (1916, 145). Even a near-perfect monk has much to learn from this woman who had sinned; and he is sent to find her and hear her not just for his own benefit but for that of a wider audience, the monks of his monastery and beyond - he is the means by which the 'wondrous doings of God' (298) are made available to all.⁶³

NOTES

1. Magennis comments on the translation and manuscripts (1986, 332-33); and see Appendix, p. 488.
2. Accounts of the desert saints were enormously influential in Western ascetic thought: 'The stamp of Egypt was upon all Western monasticism' (Hoare 1954, xxiii).
3. The tradition begins, she suggests, with the story of St Antony, which gave the archetypal account of a conversion and repentance, which was followed by many other accounts of monks of the desert who underwent a similar experience (1987a, ch. 1).
4. This imagery has been referred to above, p. 49, & p. 62, note 10.
5. Skeat translates (somewhat freely) 'this alone was most earnestly striven for by them all'. 'Geefstan' means 'hasten', and the OE translates 'unum erat primum solummodo, quod festinabatur ab omnibus' (PL 73.675). One could retain the sense of 'hasten' by translating 'that one (thing) was especially hastened (towards) by them all'. cf. BT Sup. s.v. 'geefstan' (2), where this sentence is quoted and translated. Their translation is quite similar to Skeat's.
6. See Cassian's descriptions of monastic customs and the central place of these practices in ascetic life: 'Conf'. 9 & 10.
7. I have followed MS O in omitting 'and' after 'leahtrum'. Compare the Latin: 'quomodo quidem virginitatem meam in primis violaverim, et qualiter indesinenter et insatiabiliter vitio libidinis subjugata jacuerim, erubesco considerare' (PL 73.680).
8. The spelling of O is preferable to that of J, 'adale'. It is a rather uncommon, and strong, word. Here it translates 'sterquillinium' ('dung-heap') (PL 73.680). It is usually weak ('adela'), but seems here to be strong: cf. BT Sup.
9. Celebrated on 14 September.
10. The reading of O: see Skeat's note to line 397.
11. See note 12 below.

12. I have followed Skeat in translating this odd form as 'filthiness'. Compare the Latin: 'recogitans quia squalida actuum meorum scelera mihi introeundi aditum obserabant', 'thinking that it was the filthy wickedness of my actions that fastened the entrance against me' (PL 73.682). BT s.v. 'unfeormigende', 'inexpiable', translates 'the inexpiable circumstances', deriving the word from 'feormian', 'cleanse'. It seems, therefore, that the form here is taken as a nom. pl. neut. and translated either as a noun (Skeat), or with a noun supplied (BT).

13. Anderson comments on 'compunctio paenitentiae' in relation to Cynewulf's *Elene* (1983, 164). On monastic spirituality as the source of the theology of compunction, see Anderson p. 24.

14. *anlicnyss*: It is not clear what the 'likeness' refers to. *anlicnyss* translates the Latin 'imago' (PL 73.682). It may have been a sculpture, a painting, or, in view of the date and location of the event, a mosaic. It is difficult to ascertain, however, whether there were images of the Virgin in the entrances to early churches in Jerusalem. See Crowfoot 1941, 10 & 108; and Ovadiah 1970, 75-98, 206-07. The effect here is that of a vision.

15. '... gecygede': Compare Luke 5.32.

16. 'anegre': BT Sup. 'ænig' I (gen. pl.).

17. 'spinle': The reading of O: see Skeat's footnote.

18. 'wiste': Emended from G & O, following Skeat.

19. 'towriðende': Emended from G & O, following Skeat.

20. Skeat translates 'and couldst thou pass the length of so many seasons without loving the burning of fleshly inclination?'. *gehwyrfednyss*, however, normally means 'a conversion, change' (BT). Compare the Latin: 'Et sic absque dolore transisti tanti temporis longitudinem? nihil repentinae immutationis et conturbationis sensisti calorem?', 'and have you thus passed such a length of time without sorrow (or pain)? Have you not felt at all the fire of a sudden (or unlooked-for) change and disorder?' (PL 73.683). The meaning of the Latin is itself not clear. The OE is made more difficult by the use

of *freode*, 'loved', (J is here supported by the reading of O: *gefreode*), where the Latin has *sensisti*, 'felt'. (ge)*freode* may be a mistake for (ge)*fredde*, from (ge)*fredan*, 'to feel'.

21. Shepherd comments on the author of the *Ancrene Wisse*, that he 'usually presents the eremitical life not as a state of acquired grace, but as a progress towards sanctification' (1958, xlv).

22. The technical term was 'satisfaction', a reparation for sin, and a necessary element in penance. The term had become standard by the twelfth century, but had been used as early as the third century, by Tertullian ('On Penitence' 7.14; Pelikan 1971, 147; 1978, 143).

23. MS 'gedrefdon'. Emended following Skeat.

24. Skeat translates 'I then beheld light shining all around me'; but see BT Sup. s.v. 'gehwanon'.

25. MS & Skeat 'hreafigende'. For the emendation, see BT Sup. s.v. 'hwearfian' IV.

26. On the consequences of the fall, see above, p. 16. On the humility which Mary's view of herself indicates see below, p. 271 ff.

27. Compare also Deuteronomy 8.3, where the words are spoken by God to the Israelites, fed on manna in the wilderness; and John 6.27,35,59: here Christ speaks of himself as the bread of life.

28. 'Thinking to myself continually from how many evils *she* released (Skeat 'preserved') me'. *heo* apparently refers back to 'þæt godcundlice mægen'; if so, grammatically, *heo* should be *hit*. However, it appears more likely that *heo* is a mistake for *he*, referring to God, as if Mary had said 'God' instead of 'the divine power'. It seems unlikely that Mary is referring here to the Virgin. The Latin has 'virtus Dei ... de qualibus malis liberavit me Dominus' (PL 73.685). 'virtus' is feminine.

29. A section of the story is missing in J from lines 246 to 318. Skeat has supplied the missing portion from G, to line 292. See Skeat's note on p. 446.

30. *inexplebilli*. The translator has 'unaccountable'. Possibly his text had *inexplicabili*.

31. *Analecta Bollandiana* 17.330; Loomis 1948, 47. Loomis cites other examples in note 18, pp. 165-166. Brewer also gives examples (1897, 215-18). To judge by the examples given by Leroy (whose concern was to evaluate the veracity of alleged incidences of levitation), the phenomenon most often occurred during prayer (1928).

32. 'In Ezek.' 2.1.17; *Moralia* 8.19.53; 11.68; 12.17; (Leclercq 1978, 36-37).

33. In her penitential life as a desert solitary, she has become 'dead to the world', both as an ascetic, and, it seems, in contemplation: 'þu eart ... of þam strengran dæle þisse worulde dead gefremed' (236-38 [G]). The idea that the ascetic should be dead to the world was a common one (cf. lines 90 ff above, p. 253), but it is not clear here what 'the stronger part' means. Earle translates 'for the most part, to this world thou art become dead' (1861, p. 103). G corresponds closely to the Latin, except that there is nothing corresponding to 'world' in the Latin: 'tu ... fortiori parte mortua es' (PL 73.678), but it is not clear what this means either. The Latin suggests that 'geongran', the reading of J, is a mistake: at this point, where there are a number of differences between J & G, the readings of J are generally inferior to those of G.

cf. Gregory: 'Contemplativa vita ... nos quasi ab hoc mundo mortuos sepelit, dum a terrenis desideriis susceptos in intimis abscondit. Ab exteriori quippe vita mortui etiam sepulti per contemplationem fuerant, quibus Paulus dicebat : 'Mortui enim estis, et vita vestra abscondita est cum Christo in Deo' (Colossians 3.3).

Contemplation ... as it were buries us, dead to the world, in that it hides us in the interior world away from all earthly desires. For they being dead to the exterior life, were also buried by contemplation, to whom Paul said, 'For ye are dead, and your life is hid with God'. (*Moralia* 6.56; PL 75.760, Bliss 1844, I.355).

34. This appears to mean that she marks the sign of the cross in the water. Compare the Latin: 'vidit eam vexillo crucis aquas Jordanis

signantem' (PL 73.686). Before she returns across the water, 'heo þa eft mid ðære halgan rode gedryncnysse iordanem oþhrinan ongan' (722-23); lit: 'she then began again to touch the Jordan with the immersion of the holy cross' (BT Sup. s.v. 'gedryncness'). Compare the Latin: 'crucis iterum impressione Jordanem signans', 'marking the Jordan again with the impression of the cross' (PL 73.687). The baptismal significance of this miracle is discussed below, pp. 40 ff.

35. For examples of other saints who perform this miracle see Loomis 1948, 40, and note 38 on pp. 159-60. The miracle recalls Christ walking on the waves (Matthew 14.25).

36. See note 34 above.

37. Following Skeat's emendation of MS 'he': see his footnote 4, p. 50.

38. The reasons for the central position occupied by humility in ascetic thought are discussed above, p. 48 ff.

39. Compare the Latin: 'pulsatus est a quibusdam cogitationibus, quasi jam in omnibus esset perfectus, alterius non indigens in ullo doctrina. Haec autem, ut dicebat, in se cogitabat: Nunquid est in terris monachus, qui novum aliquid possit tradere mihi?': 'he was disturbed by certain thoughts, as if he were already perfected in all things and needed no teaching from another. Now as he said, he was thinking this to himself: Is there a monk on earth who can teach me anything new?' (PL 73.674).

'swa swa' (49) for *quasi* is rather awkward, and there is nothing corresponding to 'jam' (already).

'hwæðer' (51): Skeat translates 'whether'; but here the word introduces a direct question: compare the Latin, and see BT Sup. s.v. 'hwæðer' conj. Ib.

40. The Latin indicates that here 'miccle' means 'great' (as Skeat translates), rather than 'many': 'ut autem cognoscas quantae sint et aliae viae salutis' (PL 73.674).

41. MS 'lichama'.

42. Skeat's emendation of MS 'gebidde'.

43. Leclercq explains the meaning of 'paradise': 'For the Fathers of the Church, and the monastic fathers, paradise is a descriptive and symbolic biblical analogy by which they express not primarily a place or moment of time, nor an historical state of humanity, but a certain theological state of man. Man is in a state of harmony with God and with all creation, in a state of peace with God, and as a result, of peace between man and all creatures to whom Adam as master gave their names' (Leclercq 1960, 105).

44. Earl points out that the association of the desert with the earthly and heavenly paradise was a common idea in the Bible itself, e.g. Isaiah 51.3 (1970, 545). See further ODCC s.v. 'Paradise'. Colgrave notes the 'feeling general and widespread in Egypt, in Gaul and in Ireland ... that the life of the hermit, the life of divine contemplation, was more advanced than the cenobitic life' (1940, 349).

45. cf. also note 43 above.

46. Skeat translates 'it licked the traces of its [the body's] feet'; but compare the Latin 'plantas' (PL 73.688), and see BT Sup. s.v. 'fotlæst' (3).

47. This episode is very like the one described towards the end of Jerome's life of Paul the Hermit (written in 374 or 375 during Jerome's stay in the desert of Syria). Antony finds Paul dead (kneeling upright, in a posture of prayer), but has no means with which to dig a grave. Two lions come and dig the grave. They lick Antony's hands and feet, as a sign that they want his blessing, which he gives them. (§16, Wace & Schaff VI.302). An episode from this life is depicted on the Ruthwell Cross. See Saxl 1943, 3 & plate 1c; and Wolpers 1964, 51. Such animal miracles often occur in the lives of ascetic saints (see Colgrave 1940, 350). They were also common in the lives of martyrs. Ambrose writes of Thecla in his letter to his sister: 'The beast was to be seen lying on the ground, licking her feet, showing without a sound that it could not injure the sacred body of the virgin', 'Cernere erat lingentem pedes bestiam cubitare humi, muto testificantem sono quod sacrum virginis corpus violare non

posset' ('De virg. ad Marc.' 2.3.20, PL 16.223 [col. 212 in 1845 edition] (composed 377); Wace & Schaff X.376). Animal miracles occur in the following Old English lives: Abdon & Sennes: these two are thrown to bears and lions, who protect them (LS 24); Eustace: his sons are saved by wild beasts, and his family is thrown to a lioness, who bows to Eustace (LS 30); Martin, to whom a cow shows gratitude for deliverance from a devil (LS 31, 934); Edmund, whose head is guarded by a wolf (Needham 1976, no. 2); Vincent, whose body, thrown out for wild beasts, is guarded by ravens. He is compared with Elias (LS 37). See also Loomis 1948, 50, and Brewer 1897, 219.

48. Penance does not appear to have been formally defined as a sacrament until the twelfth century (Pelikan 1978, 209-10).

49. See ODCS s.v. 'Penance' and 'Penitents'. A different system, that of private penance, developed in the Celtic and Anglo-Saxon churches, although public penance was still known in tenth century England (Grundy 1989, 194). The system would therefore not have been unfamiliar to the redactor and audience of the OE Life of Mary of Egypt. A convenient summary of the seven steps of penance as enumerated in the twelfth century by St Bernard of Clairvaux is given by Pelikan: 'the knowledge of oneself; repentance; sorrow; oral confession; mortification of the flesh; correction [or satisfaction] by a work; perseverance' ('Sermons on Diverse Topics' 40; Pelikan 1978, 210). This framework had, however, been developed much earlier, and all the stages can be traced in Mary's life.

50. See, for example, NCE s.v. 'Holy Thursday'. Basil of Caesaria (c. 330-79) wrote three 'Canonical Letters' addressed to Amphilochius, bishop of Iconium, which contained detailed regulations for penitential discipline. These letters attained canonical authority in the Eastern Church. A fornicator, he wrote, 'on repentance, will be excommunicated for seven years, appointed as follows; for two years he must weep, standing outside the door of the house of prayer, beseeching the faithful as they enter to pray for him, and confessing his sin. After two years he will be admitted among the "hearers" and for two years will go out with them. For two years he will go out with the "kneelers". For one year he will merely stand with the

faithful, not partaking of the oblation (i.e. the eucharist). On the completion of this period he will be admitted to partake of the sacrament. He who has denied Christ ought to weep for the whole of his life, and must remain in penitence, being granted the sacrament only in the hour of his death'. The total periods of excommunication in the case of intentional homicides, unintentional homicides, and adulterers, were twenty, ten and fifteen years respectively. (Letter 217.56-58, 73; adapted from Bettenson 1977, 92-93).

51. This will be discussed further below, pp. 282-83.

52. In the OT see Joshua 3.16; II Kings 2.11, 5.14; in the NT Matthew 3.13. 'From these associations it became an emblem of the achievement of purity (especially in baptism) and of man's last hindrance to his final blessedness'. (ODCC s.v. 'Jordan').

53. 'According to John 3.5, Christ announced the necessity of a spiritual regeneration "of water and the spirit" in the conversation with Nicodemus, and it has been commonly held that He instituted the Sacrament either at an unspecified date before His Passion or after His Resurrection, when he gave the disciples the command to baptize in the threefold name (Matthew 28.19) ... From the Lord's words to Nicodemus it would seem that Baptism is necessary for salvation. It must be preceded by faith (Acts 8.13) and repentance (Acts 2.38), and according to St. Paul effects and represents the believer's union with Christ through which he participates in His death and resurrection (Romans 6.4), is cleansed from his sins (I Corinthians 6.11), and incorporated into the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12.13)' (ODCC s.v. 'Baptism'). Baptism was said to confer four gifts: the remission of sins, deliverance from death, regeneration, and the bestowal of the Holy Spirit; it was a substitution of faith for sin (Pelikan 1971, 163-64). The relevant scriptural passages are: Acts 2.38-41; Romans 6.3-5; Colossians 2.11-12; Hebrews 10.19-22. Cyprian wrote to virgins on baptism as a renewal by the Holy Spirit:

Omnes quidem qui ad diuinum munus et patrium baptismi sanctificatione perueniunt hominem illic ueterem gratia lauacri salutaris exponunt et

innouati Spiritu sancto a sordibus contagionis antiquae iterata natiuitate purgantur.

All indeed who attain to the divine and paternal gift by the sanctification of baptism put off therein the old man by the grace of the saving waters, and, renewed by the Holy Spirit, they are cleansed from the impurities of the old contagion by a second birth. ('De Habitu Virginum' ch. 23, Keenan 1932. This treatise was written in 249. On Cyprian see above, p. 160, note 17).

Baptism was also regarded as a reintroduction to paradise. See Daniélou 1960a, 25, 158-59; 1960b, 33; and above, p. 273. Earl discusses the typology of baptism in relation to the crossing of the Red Sea in the exodus story (1971).

54. At the end of their first meeting Mary asks Zosimus to bring her communion on the Holy Thursday of the following year (600-32); during the narrative of the second meeting the day when it actually occurred is not stated; it does not become clear that it indeed took place on Holy Thursday, until the following year again, when Zosimus finds Mary dead and learns that she died after she had received the eucharist on that day (753 ff.).

55. *De Mysteriis* 3.14, written 390-391. See Bettenson 1977, 183.

56. By contrast, Zosimus is quite unprepared for the miracle in spite of what he has witnessed so far. Compare the letter from Jerome to Eustochium in which he commented on Peter, who walked upon the water, but began to sink when he became afraid (Letter 108.23 (24), quoted above, p. 75).

57. Hoare points out that during the fourth century it was celebrated at least weekly (1954, xiii).

58. cf. note 54 above.

59. This also is connected with the theme of formal penance, since the reconciliation of penitents took place on Holy Thursday (see above, p. 277). If Mary knew she was to die almost immediately after she had been reconciled and had received communion, this may indicate

that she had taken upon herself the longest period of penance and excommunication possible (see above, note 50).

60. 'the grace' presumably refers to that of the Holy Spirit: compare the Latin: 'sufficere dicens gratiam Spiritus, ut custodiret animae substantiam immaculatam', 'saying that the grace of the [Holy] spirit sufficed to keep the substance of the soul spotless' (PL 73.687).

61. On the significance of food to desert ascetics of fourth century Egypt, Peter Brown writes:

By moving to the desert, the ascetic mobilized his physical person as a whole; and in the image of the person current in ascetic circles, food and the unending battle with the ache of fasting counted for more than did the sexual drive ... no Egyptian of the fourth century could have had any doubt that his was a land whose population lived under a pall of perpetual fear of starvation ... While the Nile valley was a zone of food, braced against the threat of famine, the desert was thought of as the zone deprived of human food: it was a zone of the non-human. For this reason, the most bitter struggle of the desert ascetic was presented not so much as a struggle with his sexuality as with his belly ... nothing less than the hope of Paradise regained flickered, spasmodically but recognisably, around the figures who had dared to create a human 'city' in a landscape void of human food. (Brown, 1988, 218; see also pp. 219-24)

There are elements of this in this Life; although another comment Peter Brown makes is more readily applicable to Mary: that what many Christians saw in their heroes was 'a sexual being poised between the bed and the desert' (1988, 180). The appetite for food and the appetite for sex are, however, connected, as Mary's own account suggests: they are both desires of the flesh, to which man has been susceptible since the fall.

62. Daniélou writes: 'It is an essential aspect of the Eucharist to be spiritual food under the species of bread and wine', and he quotes Theodore of Mopsuestia (c. 350-438): 'In the same way as, to live on in this life, we take as nourishment bread which possesses nothing of such a quality by its nature but which is capable of maintaining life

in us because God has given it this power, so we receive immortality in eating the sacramental bread, since even though the bread has no such nature, nevertheless when it has received the Holy Spirit, it is capable of bringing those who eat it to immortality' (1960b, 139). Compare also above, pp. 264-65.

63. Benedicta Ward describes the 'chain reaction' produced by such stories in their transmission, through personal contact or through books (1987a, 1-3).

Part III: FROM THE CONQUEST TO THE KATHERINE GROUP

CHAPTER ELEVEN: GOSCELIN AND ANSELM

a) Goscelin

Goscelin was a monk from the abbey of St Bertin in Flanders, and he came to England in 1058. He travelled between a number of monasteries, and is known to have spent some time at Ramsey, at Sherborne, and finally at St Augustine's, Canterbury. Goscelin 'seems to have been among the most prolific writers of eleventh-century England' (Rollason 1986, 141).¹ Goscelin is important here because of what his work reveals about attitudes towards women in England in the late eleventh century. The first part of this discussion will look briefly at his hagiographic works; the second, at his *Liber Confortatorius*. Although it is difficult, particularly in the case of the latter, to pinpoint precisely what gives this impression, it is possible, I think, to see that Goscelin's works indicate a continuation, for a time after the Conquest, of the positive attitudes towards women which we have found to have existed among the Anglo-Saxons.

Goscelin is best known in his capacity as a professional biographer of English saints who were associated with the various monasteries he visited. The historian William of Malmesbury (c. 1090 - c. 1154) wrote that 'he went over the bishoprics and abbeys for a long time, and gave many places monuments of his surpassing knowledge; for indeed he was inferior to Bede alone in the art of praising the saints of England'.²

Goscelin's hagiography served an official, public purpose: to validate the status of the monasteries over which his saints presided. The prestige of monasteries depended to a large degree on the reputations of their patron saints. Goscelin was commissioned by various houses to write the lives of the saints associated with them in order to counter the scepticism expressed by some late eleventh-century churchmen (notably Lanfranc), concerning the claims to sanctity of Anglo-Saxon saints.³ Goscelin's work has been described as 'defensive hagiography ... an attempt to vindicate not only the status of a saint but also the history, the traditions and the political status of the religious community with which that saint was associated: it was ... monastic propaganda on a grand scale' (Ridyard 1988, 175). The propagandist purpose and public nature of Goscelin's hagiographic works should enable us to find in them some indication of the views and values held by Goscelin's contemporaries.⁴ Some brief observations will be made here concerning what some of Goscelin's saints' lives suggest about attitudes to women.

Between about 1080 and 1097 Goscelin produced redactions (in Latin) of the lives of several Anglo-Saxon women saints, many of them abbesses.⁵ These included Edith of Wilton; Milburga, foundress and abbess of Wenlock; Werburga and Etheldreda, both abbesses of Ely; Ethelburga and Wulfilda of Barking; and Mildrith of Thanet.⁶ Goscelin's saints possess the general spread of virtues, and he emphasises, as would be expected, certain traditional saintly characteristics: notably virginity (including the prominent use of the *sponsa Christi* motif), and humility.⁷ Virginity is regarded as a

powerful virtue, and one to be celebrated. For example, Goscelin incorporates into his 'Life of St Edith' a poem in celebration of her virginity (rather as Bede had done in the course of his account of Æthelthryth: HE 4.20). He addresses the Virgin Mary, and continues, employing cosmological imagery:

Stellas luna premit, hanc superat dies.
Nuptis et uiduis uirginitas sol est;
Immortale genus uirginitas creat.
Nescit mortis opus hec generatio.
Salve, qua nichil est clarius ethere,
Consors angelicis uirginitas choris.
Hinc Edytha micat, signa ferens tua.

(lines 13-19, ch. 9; Wilmart 1938a, 60)

In his 'Life of Mildrith', Goscelin recounts a miracle in which the saint is unharmed by flames: she is untouched by fire as she is unstained by lust, 'Nullus omnino ardor, nullus estus eam tetigit, sicut nulla libido maculauit' (ch. 11, Rollason 1982, 124). Werburga's incorrupt body at her translation is evidence that she had pleased God with her virginity:

inenarrabilis Domini gratia in ipsa carne virginali diutius incorrupta evidenter ostendere est dignata, qualiter sibi placuerit intemerata ipsius pudicitia cum mente, qua Deum videbat, mundissima. (PL 155.107)

There is no denigration of women attached to Goscelin's praise of virginity. He does not suggest that his virgins were overcoming special weaknesses or disadvantages associated with their sex.

The sense that Goscelin held positive views towards women, views which he expected his audience to share, is supported by another

feature of these lives. Goscelin provided elaborate genealogies for his saints, emphasising both their royal or noble pedigree, and the Christian piety of their ancestors.⁸ From the point of view of political propaganda, these detailed accounts of the lineage of the saints were no doubt intended to impress Goscelin's contemporaries with the tradition of royal connections and patronage which could be claimed by the monasteries. From the point of view of sanctity, the genealogies served two functions: they emphasised the devotion of the saints to their faith,⁹ and revealed their humility, by providing a contrast between the worldly status and riches rejected by the saints and the religious life they chose in preference. In the case of Edith, according to Goscelin, her humility was such that she rejected both the offer of the throne (a considerable time after she had entered Wilton, ch. 19), and the offer of appointment as abbess of three religious houses (ch. 16). However, although these saints all rejected secular status and power, most of them became abbesses, often in charge of double houses. What is interesting here is the fact that the capacity of the women to assume positions of authority and responsibility (over both women and men, in the world and in religion) is accepted without comment or surprise. Goscelin could easily have added such comments had he wished, or felt it necessary, to do so. The fact that he did not, suggests that Goscelin's contemporaries, those whom the lives were designed to impress, did not regard women as the weaker sex, or inferior to men, whether in a secular or a religious context.¹⁰

Before we leave the subject of public hagiographic works, a comparable work of a slightly later date should also be mentioned. Osbert (or Osbern) of Clare, prior of Westminster, composed a life (in Latin) of St Edburga of Winchester in about 1130, at the request of the monks of Pershore, who were in possession of some of her relics.¹¹ Osbert emphasises the saint's virginity and her humility; and also her royal birth (she was the daughter of Edward the Elder, king of Wessex from 899 to 924, and of his third wife, Edgiva). Like other royal saints who were abbesses, Edburga rejected the secular life, with the riches and status this would have afforded, in favour of the religious life. Nevertheless, she too held a position of authority and influence in her monastery at Nunnaminster, near Winchester (see Ridyard 1988, 96-103). Again, this is reported without surprise.

We shall now look in more detail at another work by Goscelin, a private work, the *Liber Confortatorius* (ed. Talbot, 1955). While he was at Sherborne, Goscelin became closely associated with Wilton Abbey.¹² There, in 1065, he met Eve, then a girl of seven, who was given to Wilton by her parents. Goscelin became her friend and spiritual adviser. In about 1080, aged about twenty-two, Eve left Wilton without telling Goscelin, to live as a solitary in Angers, enclosed in an eight-foot cell. Later she moved to St Eutrope, to an enclosure adjoining the Priory of Levière, where she lived under the guidance of a monk, Hervé (see Wilmart 1934 & 1938b, and Talbot 1955, 22-23).¹³ Goscelin wrote the *Liber Confortatorius* for Eve in about 1082 or 1083, while Eve was at Angers, to comfort and guide her in her chosen way of life. The work is the only one of its kind extant from

this date in England.¹⁴ It is in the tradition of Jerome's letters to Eustochium and others; a tradition continued in the following century by Aelred of Rievaulx, and later by the author of the *Ancrene Wisse* (see below, p. 353 ff.). These were all works of instruction and encouragement written by men for women who had undertaken to lead a religious life. Goscelin regarded Eve as his spiritual daughter, and there is throughout the work an undercurrent of Goscelin's own sorrow at her departure. This personal engagement is characteristic of works in this tradition.

The *Liber Confortatorius* provides further evidence, this time of a more personal nature, on the attitudes with which this study is concerned: it reveals the attitude of one monk, whose background is Flanders and England, towards a woman educated in an English religious house. Goscelin was from St Bertin, which had a reputation for scholarship, and what he wrote to Eve reflects not only his own learning, but what he expected from her in the way of learning and spiritual capacity. He makes it clear that he thinks highly of her abilities in both respects, although he also reminds her that she is striving for perfection, but has not yet attained it.

The work is allusive and discursive. Goscelin's examples and allusions draw on a wide range of writings belonging to the Christian tradition, and on secular works. Goscelin recommends that Eve should divide her time between reading and prayer. While prayer was the more important (LC p. 82), Eve should also attempt to understand the Scriptures, with the help of the Fathers; she should 'sharpen her dulled mind' after prayer 'with the whetstone of books' and 'the fire

of divine love in the altar of her heart should be fed with the food of the examples of the saints and their works':

Post debita orationum libamina, post deficientia lassitudine pectora, sancta lectione reficere, hebetatam mentem cote librorum exacue, decidentem flamme materiem inde adhibe ... et ignis amoris diuini semper ardeat in altari cordis tui, quem nutries alimentis sanctorum documentorum et operum ... hoc oro, obsecro, et imploro, ut sacrorum uoluminum mensam sanctam audivitate et laudabili ingluuie peruadas, hanc ut uite panem ut uite fontem esurias et sitias, que ingeniolum tuum exacuat, nectare trahat, lampadem tuam oleo impinguet, atque ad supernam caritatem magis magisque inflammet ... Lege expositiones sanctorum patrum Ieronimi, Augustini, Gregorii ceterorumque uirtutis doctorum, et pone cor tuum ad intelligentiam scripturarum, que et ecclesie spiritualiumque bellorum in uariis enigmatibus continent misterium. (p. 80)

He suggests that Eve should also read the lives of the (desert) fathers, and especially the life of Antony:

Recita uitas ac diuersa documenta patrum, uitam uero beati Antonii, que te contra diaboli argumenta muniat. (ibid.)

Nor should she forget Augustine's *Confessions*, and she should read Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*; Augustine's *City of God*, Orosius and Boethius will pass the time and her solitude will delight her:

Nec librum inter cetera postponas Augustini confessionum, qui tibi diuinum altius instillet affectum. Ames etiam librum tripartitum ecclesiastice historie cum historia Eusebii, que tibi et sanctorum certamina, et fidei uictoriam canant in Christo fundate et cunctis tempestatibus inuicte. Respice Augustinum *De Ciuitate Dei*, Orosium *De Ormesta Mundi*, Boetium *De Consolatione Philosophie*, et intelliges nil miserabilius seculi gurgite, nil felicius Christi pace. His

exercitiis terga dabunt tedia, et breuia uidebuntur tempora, et delectabit te solitudo tua. (pp. 80-81)

Among the Fathers Goscelin quotes apart from those he advises her to read in the passages quoted above are Ambrose (pp. 63, 80, 98), Cyprian (p. 90), and Tertullian (p. 95). The list of secular authors to whom he refers is considerable: Vergil (e.g. pp. 36, 47, 49, 70), Prudentius (p. 48), Horace (pp. 48, 70), Cicero (p. 70), and Seneca (p. 79). Goscelin assumes her familiarity with at least some of them. It seems that in the late eleventh century in England a woman had access to a good education, at least at Wilton Abbey.¹⁵

The work shows no condescension to Eve as a woman. Goscelin regards her as one of an eminent line: she is related to Eve and to Mary and to female saints; but Goscelin also includes patriarchs, prophets, apostles and doctors among those with whom she is compared. Eve is, 'with Abraham', an exile seeking the home which the Lord will give her:

Egressa es cum Abraham de terra et de cognatione tua, ut uenias in terram quam Dominus Deus tuus dabit tibi, terram lacte et melle manantem, ut uideas bona Domini in terra uiuentium, et placeas Domino in regione uiuorum. (p. 37)¹⁶

She is among the famous pilgrims, captives and paupers of the Lord:

Abraham, Isaac, Iacob, Ioseph, Moyses, filii Israel, item Ieremias, Ezechiel, Daniel aliique prophete, item apostoli atque apostolicorum doctorum plurima turba, omnes uel peregrinatione uel captiuitate translati sunt, ut Dionisius ab Athenis in Gallias, Martinus gemma confessorum a Pannoniis in has regiones, Augustinus a Roma in tuam Britanniam ... Tu quoque inter omnes peregrinos et pauperes Domini, non solum in spiritu paupertatis et abrenuntiatione terrene uoluptatis,

sed etiam regionum longinquitate de terra tua existi, ut tanto propinquius quanto exulatus te commendare possis in aurem Domini. (pp. 37-38)

Eve, as a solitary, has (like Mary) chosen the better part (Luke 10.42; see p. 72); and it is interesting that Goscelin should quote the example of Arsenius (a hermit who had avoided women: see above, pp. 138-40) for her to follow, as well as that of Christ:

'Arseni, fuge homines, et saluus eris' (*Verba Seniorum* 1.190, PL 73.801). Ihesus declinauerat a turba, et inuentus in templo est.' (p. 72)

A true solitary becomes one of the people of God and a partner of angels: 'Verus solitarius, Dei popularis et angelorum particeps efficitur' (p. 72).¹⁸

It appears that Eve's status as a solitary does not depend on her condition of being a virgin. Indeed other aspects of the spiritual life take precedence over virginity during much of the work. Thus the fall is discussed in the context of the Redemption (pp. 52-53), and Goscelin does not mention Eve in his account, he simply states that the enemy had conquered Adam through gluttony, vainglory and avarice:

Vicerat hostis primum Adam gula, uana gloria, auaritia: gula, ostentans pomum pulchrum uisu et ad uescendum suaue (Genesis 2.9); uana gloria: 'Eritis sicut dii (Genesis 3.5)'; auaritia, scientes bonum et malum (Genesis 3.5). (p. 53)

There is no blame attached to the first Eve for the fall in Goscelin's work, and he does not, as might have been expected, play on the name 'Eve' in order to bring the Eve he is addressing into any particular relationship with the first Eve. In Goscelin's view there are no

negative aspects to Eve's womanhood. She does not bear an extra burden of guilt and punishment because she is a woman. This is in marked contrast to the attitude of writers in the tradition of Tertullian and Jerome - writers nevertheless whose works were among those which Goscelin advised Eve to read (see above, pp. 303-04).

Goscelin does mention virginity in the *Liber Confortatorius*, although it occupies a relatively small proportion of the work (it is far less prominent than in the saints' lives discussed above); and he employs motifs which had become traditional in ways which were often un-traditional. For example, he adopts the *sponsa Christi* motif, but not always with reference to virginity. On one occasion, he speaks of the church as bride, and describes her life in Paradise. Goscelin is here concerned with the individuals who make up the church. In his vision of paradise, what each will receive in paradise will be in proportion to what he or she has suffered on earth:

Ut sponsa: 'Introduxit me rex in cubiculum suum (Canticle 1.3)', tanto sublimior quanto conculcatior, tanto honoratior quanto despectior, tanto liberior quanto constrictior, tanto requietior quanto laboriosior, tanto ditior quanto pauperior, tanto letitior quanto tristior, tanto securior quanto tribulatio, tanto inter angelos consolatio quanto hic desolatio, tanto martyribus coniunctior quanto hic patientior et indulgentior, postremo tanto omnibus bonis cumulatio quanto hic malis depressior. (p. 114)

He goes on to describe a transformed Wilton (pp. 114-15). The *sponsa Christi* motif reappears in connection with Edith, who will visit the ideal Wilton from paradise, and bring with her her spouse together

with her many friends, from the angels and archangels to the glorified members of her (monastic) 'family':

Huc quotiens uoluerit, descendet potens regina tua Edgytha, magni Christi thalamo superba. Huc dilectum sponsum inducet cum summis amicis suis angelis et archangelis, apostolis et martyribus, cum regibus et patribus Romanis et Angligenis, cum patre Edgardo et fratre Eduuardo, cum Thecla, Agnete, Cecilia, et Argina, Caterina, multaque uirginum turba, totaque sua Wiltoniensis populi familia, quotquot dignos fecit Dominus in sorte sua. (p. 115)

In his final eschatological and nuptial vision, Goscelin is explicitly not concerned only with virgins:

... iuuenum et uirginum, uirorum et uiraginum, nuptorum et celibum, tam perfecta et inoffensa copula, quam sancta celebs et beata, quam omni corruptionis appetitu exempta, omni contagione peccati libera. 'Habitabit iuuenis cum uirgine (Isaiah 62.5)', dicit Dominus per prophetam, et iuuenes et uirgines, senes cum iunioribus laudabunt nomen Domini solius,¹⁹ quia exaltabitur Dominus solus in die illa,²⁰ et unicus rex erit uniuersorum. (pp. 115-16)

In his depiction of an innocent association, exempt from all desire of corruption and free of all sin, Goscelin is no doubt anticipating his own reunion with Eve. However, his vision here is characteristically inclusive.

This inclusiveness is apparent throughout the work. In an earlier vision of the crowds of the just at the Last Judgement, he describes the orders of angels, the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins, monks, hermits, and the infinite multitude of all the elect:

Tunc ueniet ex Syon species decoris Domini, et Deus noster manifeste ueniet iudicaturus, qui occulte uenerat iudicandus. Species decoris

eius, salua Deitatis eminentia, [et]²¹ omnium celorum comitatus et potentatus, angeli, ... patriarche, prophete, apostoli, martyres, confessores, uirgines, monachi, heremite, omniumque electorum infinita multitudo. (p. 108)

Again, in a discussion of martyrdom, Goscelin states that 'he who has not endured the persecutor is not called a martyr, but he who has lived in a martyrlike fashion participates with the martyrs. The widow is also joined to the virgins, who even after wounds (of love) has emulated the chastity of the virgin. John Chrystostom, that is, golden mouth, says "The Lord found a shepherd and made a prophet. He found a harp player and made a king. He found a fisherman and made an apostle. He found a publican and made an evangelist. He found a prostitute and made her equal to virgins"':

Non uocatur martir qui persecutorem non tulit, sed martyribus participatur qui martyrialiter uixit. Virginibus quoque iungitur uidua, uirgineam castitatem et post uulnera emulata. Ait Iohannes Chrisostomus, quod est aureum os: 'Inuenit Dominus pastorem et prophetam fecit. Inuenit citharedum et regem fecit. Inuenit piscatorem, et apostolum fecit. Inuenit publicanum et euangelistam fecit. Inuenit meretricem et uirginibus coequauit (*In Pentec.* 1, PG 52.803)'. (p. 98)

Goscelin does not attempt to raise the status of virgins at the expense of others.

This approach can also be seen in his chapter on the patience (or 'long-suffering') of saints, 'Longanimitas sanctorum'. He says here that Eve, as an anchorite, is of the family of John the Baptist and Paul the Hermit (p. 75). What is particularly interesting about this chapter, however, is that it is in this context that Goscelin chooses

to refer to the life of Mary of Egypt. Goscelin introduces Mary as 'a woman who ought to be venerated by virgins, a female who ought to be admired by men': 'mulier uirginibus ueneranda, femina uiris admiranda' (p. 75). Mary, for him, is an example of patient endurance. Nowhere does Goscelin refer to her sin (see above, ch. 10). Instead he dwells on how 'she lived for almost forty-six winters and summers in solitude under the plain heaven ... She bore with her naked body and head all the burning arrows of the sun, all the spears of winter, all intemperate weathers, the burning heat of the long days, and the tempests of the deep nights':

quadraginta sex fere hiemes et estates egit sub diuo solitaria ...
Omnia flagrantis solis spicula, omnia brume pila, omnis aeris
intemperies, longarum dierum ardores, profundarum noctium tempestates,
nudo corpore tulit [et]²² uertice. (p. 75)

Goscelin's treatment of the familiar stories of virgin martyrs is also in some ways unexpected. First of all, the theme of virginity is subordinated to wider concerns; this is indicated by the heading of the chapter which contains his examples of such saints, 'Merces elationis et humilitatis' (which may be translated 'The punishment of pride, and the reward of humility'). Secondly, while these virgins were prepared to suffer and die for their faith, one at least, as we shall see shortly, was ready to lose her virginity if this was the only way she could preserve her faith. Finally, and on a personal level, the undercurrent of the relationship between Goscelin and Eve continues to make its presence felt.

In these accounts, the apparent emphasis on the importance of preserving virginity must be seen within the wider context of

Goscelin's argument in the part of the chapter in which these examples are given; this is, that 'no one can have what the Lord has not given, no one can preserve what the Lord has not preserved', 'nemo potest habere quod Dominus non dederit, nemo potest seruare quod Dominus non seruauerit' (p. 97). Goscelin describes how Agnes, Lucy and Potamiana preserved their virginity: 'Likewise others have preserved their virginity among all the persecutors of chastity and from the very jaws of perdition have miraculously escaped intact. Thus shining Agnes and glorious Lucy, most strong Potamiana, from the den and jaws of lions and pimps have taken away the palm':

Item alie inter omnes castitatis persecutores uirginitatem seruauere, et ab ipsis faucibus perditionis intacte mirabilius euasere. Sic splendida Agnes, sic gloriosa Lucia, sic fortissima Potamiana, de lacu [hyatuque]²³ leonum²⁴ et lenonum palmam abduxere. (p. 98)

Goscelin then goes on to relate the part played by a young man in the story of Potamiana: Potamiana 'was consigned to a brothel, after all kinds of torments, as Eusebius reports. The young hunters flock to the booty of the devil. The chief of the torturers, Basilides, zealous for the merit of the virgin, drove them off, God bringing help for his [God's] beloved from her very enemies':

Hec [Potamiana] autem, ut Ecclesiastica Eusebii probat Historia, post uniuersa tormentorum genera lupanari est addicta. Concurrunt ad predam diaboli aucupes adolescentes. Reppulit eos Basilides prelatus tortoribus, dignitatem uirginis zelatus, ferente Domino dilecte sue auxilium ab ipsis hostibus. (p. 98)

The defender of her chastity shares her crown: 'For this the virgin, cherishing him greatly, says "Believe, o Basilides, that the reward

for this good deed shall not be lost to you". Then, covered in burning pitch, Potiamana triumphed with the twin palm of virginity and martyrdom. After these things had been seen by Basilides, she placed the crown on his head with these words: "In the words of Christ: He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive the reward of a prophet', you the defender of my chastity will be the sharer of my crown". He, aroused from the sleep of error, confessed Christ and was crowned with beheading':

Quod uirgo nimis amplexa: 'Crede, ait, o Basilides, quia non peribit tibi huius beneficii merces'. Ita ardenti pice perfusa Potamiana, gemina uirginitatis et martyrii triumphauit palma. Post hec uisa Basilidi, coronam cum his dictis eius imposuit capiti: 'Christo dicente: "Qui recipit prophetam in nomine prophete, mercedem prophete accipiet (Matthew 10.41)", tu mee defensor pudicitie, mee particeps eris corone'. Ille mox e somno et ab errore excitatus, Christum confessus et decollatione est coronatus. (p. 98)

In his account of Agnes, Goscelin places even greater emphasis on the part of the young man who exchanged his clothes with Agnes in order to protect her, and on the companionship of the two.²⁵ Goscelin's personal attachment to Eve always colours his interpretation of traditional material, so that the point of this story as he tells it seems to be that God granted Agnes a companion in her ordeal. But her attitude to her virginity in the speech which he attributes to her is also interesting. The devil wants her virginity more than her death. Agnes would rather lose her life than her virginity; but she puts her faith above everything, and if it is God's will, she will accept prostitution, but retain her faith: 'It is certain that I shall not be able to deny you, Lord God, since in such

a dire choice of two most evil things, it is better to perish in body than in faith. But the enemy refuses martyrdom and would rather destroy me through whoredom than through the sword. He would rather that I lived as a whore than that I died as a martyr. But it is in your power, lord, to preserve virginity and grant martyrdom. But if I deserve to be neither your spouse nor your martyr, I shall, constant in belief in you, be your whore':

Certum est quia te, Domine Deus, negare non potero, quia, in tam dira duorum pessimorum optione, melius est perire corpore quam fide. Sed hostis negat martirium, et mauult perdere stupro quam gladio, mauult uiuere scortum quam mori martyrem. Sed tuum est, domine, et uirginitatem seruare et martirium dare. Quod si nec sponsa nec martir tua esse merear, uel scortum tuum in tua confessione permanens ero. (p. 98)

Goscelin exclaims 'O how much more serious is the fear of the defiler than of the torturer, o how much greater are these dangers to chastity than to life': 'O grauior metus stupratoris quam tortoris, o maiora discrimina pudicitie quam uite' (p. 99). But as he approaches the conclusion of his account of Agnes, Goscelin returns again to what concerns him most, the relationship between Agnes and her defender: 'In this benign struggle, they who are about to adorn the heavenly choir of virgins with their roses and lilies, are together beheaded, together slaughtered for Christ. O, with what inseparable love, what blessed embraces they will cling thenceforth to one another in perpetual heaven ... You not only caused her who feared to be shipwrecked by shamefulness to triumph gloriously uncorrupted, but you even gave her forever a companion of the same age, and a worthy one':

In hac benigna contentione sidereum chorum uirginum rosis et liliis suis ornaturi, pariter obtruncati, pariter sunt Christo mactati. O quam inseparabili caritate, quam beatis amplexibus inde sibi perpetuo celo inhesuri! ... Que a turpitudine timuerat naufragari, non solum incorruptam gloriose triumphare fecisti, uerum etiam comitem illi coeuum et condignum sempiternae donasti. (p. 99)

Goscelin's distress at Eve's departure which is expressed throughout the *Liber Confortatorius* - and is indeed its *raison d'être* - does not detract from the fact that it is nevertheless a work of genuine spiritual instruction, and one which does not assume that women are morally or intellectually inferior to men, more sexually dangerous, or that a woman's struggle towards spiritual perfection is very different from a man's. Just a few examples have been given here from what is a long, dense, wide-ranging and highly literary work. However, they are enough, I think, to convey the flavour of the book, and to show that there is nothing of the anti-feminist strain in the *Liber Confortatorius*. Goscelin's attitude towards women may have been modified by his (perhaps somewhat exceptional) relationship with Eve, and one should not over-simplify the complexity of this. But taking the *Liber Confortatorius* in conjunction with his public works, it seems fair to conclude that in general, Goscelin's positive attitudes towards women reflected those of his background and culture.

b) Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109)

Anselm was a slightly younger contemporary of Goscelin. He was educated at the monastery of Bec in Normandy. In 1093 he succeeded Lanfranc as Archbishop of Canterbury.²⁶

Anselm's devotional works are characterised by a deeply felt and emotionally expressed sense of his own sinfulness.²⁷ What is relevant here, however, is that neither in his devotional nor his philosophical writings does he distinguish between the sins of men and those of women: mankind is sinful, and no-one, it often seems, more so than he.

Anselm developed his own arguments on the subject of the culpability of Adam and Eve in the fall.²⁸ He considered them indissolubly responsible, because the name 'Adam' applied by a sort of synecdoche to both the male and the female who were created on the first day:

quia illa duorum copula tota intelligitur in nomine principalis partis, sicut saepe per partem totum solet significari ... sicut legitur quia deus 'masculum et feminam fecit eos et benedixit illis, et vocavit nomen eorum Adam in die quo creati sunt (Genesis 5.2)'.²⁹

Furthermore, if only Eve had sinned it was not necessary for the whole human race to perish, but only Eve:

si non Adam sed sola Eva peccasset, non necesse erat totum genus hominum perire, sed solam Evam'. ('De Conceptu Virginali et de Originali Peccato' ch. 9; Schmitt II.150)²⁹

In *Cur Deus Homo*, Anselm explained why Christ was born of Mary.³⁰ Anselm was concerned with what was fitting in the pattern of fall and redemption:

Oportebat namque ut, sicut per hominis inoboedientiam mors in humanum genus intraverat, ita per hominis oboedientiam vita restitueretur. Et quemadmodum peccatum quod fuit causa nostrae damnationis, initium habuit a femina, sic nostrae iustitiae et salutis auctor nasceretur de femina. Et ut diabolus, qui per gustum ligni quem peruasit hominem vicerat, per passionem ligni quam intulit ab homine vinceretur.

For when death had entered into the human race through man's disobedience, it was fitting that life should be restored through the obedience of man. When the sin which was the cause of condemnation had its beginning from a woman, it was fitting for the author of our justice and salvation to be born of a woman. Since the devil, when he tempted man, conquered him by the tasting of a tree, it was fitting for him to be conquered by man's bearing of suffering on a tree. (*Cur Deus Homo* 1.3, Schmitt II.51; Fairweather 1956, 104-05)

Later in the same work he repeated (in almost identical words) the traditional view expressed in this passage that

quemadmodum hominis peccatum et causa nostrae damnationis principium sumpsit a femina, ita medicina peccati et causa nostrae salvationis nascatur de femina.

just as the sin of man and the cause of our condemnation took its beginning from a woman, so it is most fitting for the medicine for sin and the cause of our salvation to be born from a woman. (*Cur Deus Homo* 2.8, Schmitt II.104; Fairweather, p. 154)³¹

This, he goes on to say, should give women hope:

Ac ne mulieres desperent se pertinere ad sortem beatorum, quoniam de femina tantum malum processit, oportet ut ad reformandam spem earum de muliere tantum bonum procedat.

Also, lest women despair of sharing in the lot of the blessed, since such great evil came from a woman, it is right that such great good should come from a woman, to renew their hope. (ibid.)

However, this argument takes second place to a more unusual one (for which no source seems to have been traced), which has nothing to do with Eve's sin:

Quattuor modis potest deus hominem facere. Videlicet aut de viro et femina, sicut assiduus monstrat usus; aut nec de viro nec de femina, sicut creavit ADAM; aut de viro sine femina, sicut fecit EVAM; aut de

femina sine viro, quod nondum fecit. Ut igitur hunc quoque modum probet suae subiacere potestati et ad hoc ipsum opus dilatum esse, nil convenientius, quam ut de femina sine viro assumat illum hominem quem quaerimus.

God can make a man in four ways: from man and woman, as constant experience shows; neither from man nor from woman, as he created Adam; from a man without a woman, as he made Eve; or from a woman without a man, which he has yet to do. Therefore, in order to prove that this way is also within his power, and was deferred for this very purpose, nothing is more fitting than for him to take that man whom we are seeking from a woman without a man. (ibid.)³²

Neither did Anselm dwell on the sin of the first Eve in his prayers to Mary. Indeed, Eve is not mentioned in them.³³

Anselm's Prayers, together with his Meditations, were widely circulated amongst both monks and the educated laity during his lifetime. Southern writes:

Until his time meditation had been essentially a monastic exercise, and Anselm certainly wrote largely for monks; but he also wrote to meet the increasingly articulate needs of lay people, especially of women in great positions who had the time, inclination, and wealth to adopt the religious practices of the monastic life. Such women were among the earliest recipients of his prayers, and one of them, Countess Mathilda of Tuscany, was one of the main agents of their dissemination. (PM p. 9)³⁴

A letter to one of these women, possibly Gunhilda, daughter of King Harold II,³⁵ expresses Anselm's attitude towards the flesh. He rebuked her for her adultery, and there is a close association here between fornication and death:

Amasti amantem te comitem Alanum Rufum.³⁶ Ubi nunc est? Quo devenit ille amatus amator tuus? Vade nunc, soror, colloca te cum eo in lecto

in quo nunc iacet; collige vermes eius in sinu tuo; amplectere cadaver eius; osculare stricte nudos dentes eius, nam labia iam putredine consumpta sunt. Certe non curat nunc amorem tuum quo vivens delectabatur, et tu horres putridam carnem eius qua uti desiderabas.

You loved Count Alan Rufus and he you; where is he now? What has become of the lover you loved? Go and lie now with him in the bed where he lies; gather his worms into your bosom; embrace his corpse; kiss his bare teeth from which the flesh has fallen. He does not now care for your love in which he delighted while he lived; [and you shudder at his rotten flesh which you used to desire].³⁷ (Letter 169, Schmitt IV.47-48; PM p. 75)

Anselm, however, is no more vehement in his chastisement of Gunhilda than he is in the self-censure expressed in his Meditation 2, 'Deploratio virginitatis male amissae' ('A lament for virginity unhappily lost'):³⁸

Praecipitare, miser homuncio, in tenebrosum profundum immoderatae maestitiae, qui sponte praecipitatus es in baratrum horrendae nequitiae. Obruere, infelix, mole terribilis doloris, qui corruisti libens in caenum infernalis foetoris. Obvolvere, aerumnose, horridis tenebris inconsolabilis luctus, qui volens provolutus es in voraginem tam sordidi luxus. Volutare in gurgite amaritudinis, qui delectatus es in volutabro turpitudinis.

Miserable little man, throw yourself into the dark depths of boundless grief, for of your own will you fell into the dark depths of horrible iniquity. Unhappy man, let the weight of terrible sorrow bury you, for you freely sank into the mud of stinking hell. Wrap yourself round, wretch, in the horrible darkness of inconsolable mourning, for you were willing to roll into the pit of sordid lust. Plunge into the whirlpool of bitterness - you have wallowed in the trough of moral corruption. (Schmitt III.81; PM, p. 226)

In this lament, Anselm speaks of his loss of virginity as both a symbolic and a literal loss.³⁹ His virgin soul had been the spouse of Christ, and his sin was an act of adultery with the devil against Christ:

Tu, inquam, quae quondam candidata caelesti lavacro, dotata spiritu sancto, in Christiana professione iurata, virgo fuisti, Christo desponsata ... O fornicatio sordidatrix mentis meae, perditrix animae meae ... Tu namque, anima mea perfida deo, periura dei, adulter Christi ... Tu illa olim desponsata regi caelorum, ardenter facta es scortum tortoris tartarorum ... In caelo dereliquisti castum amatorem tuum, et in infernum secuta es odiosum corruptorem tuum, et in baratro parasti non thalamum, sed prostibulum tuum.

Once [you were] washed with the whiteness of heaven, given the Holy Spirit, pledged to the profession of Christianity; [you were] a virgin, [you were] the spouse of Christ⁴⁰ ... O fornication, by which my mind is defiled, and my soul betrayed ... For, O my soul, you are unfaithful to God, false to God, an adulterer from Christ ... You were once the spouse of the king of heaven and with alacrity you have made yourself the whore of the tormentor of hell ... You have abandoned your chaste lover in heaven and gone after your hateful corrupter in hell, and in the lower world you have prepared for yourself not a marriage chamber but a brothel. (Schmitt III.80-81; PM, pp. 225-26)

His sin was an act of perversity willingly committed, with the consent of the perverted will: 'Horror mirabilis, quam perversa voluntas: Miraculum horribile, quam voluntaria perversitas', 'Marvellous horror, that you have perverted your will; horrible marvel, that you willed your perversity' (Schmitt III.81; PM, p. 226).⁴¹

Anselm nowhere expresses fear or horror of women themselves; he is only horrified by the sin itself, whether committed by him or by anyone else, man or woman.

NOTES

1. For accounts of Goscelin and his oeuvre, see Talbot 1955, 8-10, 13; Barlow 1962, 91-111; Hamilton 1973, 123-24; Elkins 1976, 26-36.

2. 'Is multo episcopatus et abbatias perlustrans tempore, praeclarae scientiae pluribus locis monumenta dedit, in laudibus sanctorum Angliae post Bedam secundus' (*Gesta Regum Anglorum* 4.342, Stubbs 1887, 389. The readings given here are those of MS Arundel 35, dated c. 1130. The translation is that from DNB s.v. 'Goscelin'. William knew at least eight of Goscelin's Lives at first hand (Thomson 1987, 203). For other appreciations of Goscelin, from his own time onwards, see Hamilton 1973, ch. 1; on Goscelin's writing skills see Hamilton ch. V; Rollason 1982, 60-62, & 1986, 141-43.

3. See Grandsen 1988, 49; Ridyard 1988, 6, 9, 171-75; Rollason 1982, 64-67. Relics were even sometimes subjected to testing by fire (Grandsen p. 49).

Lanfranc became archbishop of Canterbury in 1070.

4. Elkins has made a similar suggestion (1976, 30).

5. He based his versions both on written and on oral tradition (Talbot 1955, 16-22). Chapters 1-12 of his account of Ethelburga, for example, are based on Bede's HE; for the remainder (chs 13-20) he relied on the testimony of a member of Barking Abbey (see Colker 1965, 391). On the various written sources Goscelin used for his Life of St Mildrith see Hamilton ch. 4, note 320 (1973, part 2, pp. 239-42).

6. The 'Life of Edith' is edited by Wilmart, 1938a; 'Werbunga', in PL 155.94-110; 'Ethelburga' and 'Wulfilda' by Colker, 1965; 'Mildrith' by Rollason, 1986. The 'Life of Milburga' is unpublished, and that of Etheldreda (the Anglo-Saxon Æthelthryth) is not extant. On the question of the traditional attribution of the 'Life of Werbunga' to Goscelin see Hamilton part 2, p. 20, and Ridyard 1988, 60. Doubts have also been raised about the attribution of the 'Life of Milburga' (Hamilton part 2, p. 21). These questions, however, do not affect the general argument of this chapter.

7. On virginity, see for example 'Edith' chs 1, 9, 13 (and Elkins 1976, 35); 'Mildrith' ch. 11; 'Wulfilda' ch. 3; 'Werburga' ch. 1. On humility: 'Edith' ch. 10; 'Mildrith' ch. 9; 'Wulfilda' ch. 7; 'Werburga' ch. 2.
8. For example 'Edith' ch. 8; 'Mildrith' chs 1-4; 'Werburga' ch. 1.
9. Ridyard discusses this aspect (1988, ch. 3).
10. Compare Frank Barlow's observation that Goscelin 'liked women ... he wrote the lives of several saintly women, and never said unpleasant things about their sex' (1962, 98-99).
11. This is edited by Ridyard (1988) in her appendix. On the political function of the work see Ridyard pp. 36-37. On Osbert (and on the Osbert/Osbern confusion), see the entry in DNB under 'Clare, Osbert de'.
12. He may have been chaplain there: see Barlow 1962, 98.
13. On the latter part of Eve's life, and her friendship with Hervé, see Elkins 1988, 25-27.
14. For works written on the continent see Millett 1982, xxv.
15. On Wilton at this date see Elkins 1976, 13-14; and 1988, 6-16, 21.
16. The passage is an interesting mosaic of biblical allusions (Genesis 12.1; Deuteronomy 26.9; Psalm 26.13; Psalm 114.9; cf. also Acts 7.3, and Hebrews 11.8-10).
17. John 5.13 (& cf. 14, & Luke 2.46).
18. On the companionship with angels attained by ascetics, see above, pp. 79 ff.
19. cf. Psalm 148.12 (13).
20. Isaiah 2.11.
21. Talbot 'est'.
22. My emendation.
23. My emendation. Talbot has 'hyatus'.

24. For 'lacus leonum' see Daniel 6.7 ff.
25. The story here differs from Ælfric's version, LS 7.
26. For a detailed account of his life and for further references see Evans 1989, 1-20.
27. This will be discussed further below, ch. 14 (i).
28. Southern comments 'Anselm is conspicuously original, and we must often look several times to see how solid is the learning on which his originality is based' (1970, 9).
29. d'Alverny discusses this passage (1977, 25)
30. This work was begun after 1093. See Evans 1989, 21 & 71.
31. I have altered Fairweather's translation here so that the order of the Latin is followed more closely.
32. Evans comments 'it does not seem to Anselm worth asking whether this was more fittingly to be done from a virgin or not' (1989, 86).
33. See PM, pp. 107-26. These prayers are discussed below, pp. 369-71, 373, 392-93
34. See also Evans 1989, 27-36.
35. Harold succeeded Edward the Confessor in 1066, and died in the same year. Gunhilda, 'the last known descendant of the last Anglo-Saxon king' (Southern 1963, 185), was a nun at Wilton. Anselm had written to her earlier (letter 168), to urge her to return to the monastery. There is some uncertainty about whether Letter 169 was addressed to Gunhilda or to another nun at Wilton (Elkins 1988, 17, note 8). Letter 169 was written c. 1094 (Southern 1963, 185).
36. Alan Rufus was Count of Richmond. He died in 1089.
37. Ward translates 'and the flesh which you desired now rests' (PM p. 75). On her translations, see note 40 below.
38. Southern compared this Meditation with Letter 169 (1963, 186); as Ward does (PM, p. 75).

39. There is a brief discussion of how the imagery is to be interpreted in Ward's introduction to PM, pp. 74-75.

40. Ward translates 'Once I was washed ... I was a virgin, I was ... '. Ward's translations of Anselm's Prayers and Meditations have been used here and in chs 14 & 15 below, since they are the most readily available and complete. They are, however, very free (and sometimes inaccurate). Changes and additions to her translations have been indicated by square brackets.

41. It is interesting that Anselm should have applied the traditional nuptial imagery to himself, to the relationship between his soul and Christ which was spoiled by his sin - imagery which was indeed to be greatly expanded by St Bernard in his commentary on the Song of Songs (see below, p. 397 ff.).

CHAPTER TWELVE: THE CONTINENT IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY

Before we look at developments in England during the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, it is necessary first to turn to the continent, particularly to France, because changing attitudes towards women there also influenced those who wrote in England.

A number of continental religious movements which were rapidly expanding in the twelfth century brought a change in attitude towards women and their place in the religious life. A short period of opportunity for women in religion in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries had been followed by a reaction (Southern 1983, 310-18). With this reaction, and especially with the Cistercian movement, came a loss of status for women, and the friendly and mutual respect with which men had regarded their colleagues in religion gave way to a resurgence of attitudes characteristic of the more anti-feminist writings of earlier periods. Women were once more spoken of as the weaker sex; Eve was more culpable than Adam; contact between men and women was dangerous. Such views, we shall see, were expressed not only by men, most importantly by St Bernard, but also by women. This discussion will begin with St Bernard and end with Heloise.

The most powerful influence was that of St Bernard (1090-1153) and the Cistercians. A partial explanation for the Cistercian attitude may be found in the fact that the Cistercians were founded as reformed Benedictines. St Bernard and his companions desired the strict observance of the Benedictine Rule. But that alone was not sufficient:

That for which their souls were longing was not merely a strictly regular Benedictine life, but also that Christian perfection itself to which this life has power to lead ... To be a true Benedictine ... it was enough to put into zealous practice the first seventy-two Chapters of the Rule ... nevertheless, even for Benedict himself, all that was insufficient to make a perfect Christian, unless to this observance there should be added that of the seventy-third and final chapter. (Gilson 1940, 14)

Chapter 73 of the Rule reads as follows:

Regulam autem hanc descripsimus, ut hanc observantes in monasteriis aliquatenus vel honestatem morum aut initium conversationis nos demonstramus habere. Ceterum ad perfectionem conversationis qui festinat, sunt doctrinae sanctorum patrum, quarum observatio perducatur hominem ad celsitudinem perfectionis. Quae enim pagina aut qui sermo divinae auctoritatis veteris ac novi testamenti non est rectissima norma vitae humanae? Aut quis liber sanctorum catholicorum patrum hoc non resonat ut recto cursu perveniamus ad creatorem nostrum? Necnon et Collationes Patrum et Instituta et Vitas eorum, sed et Regula sancti patris nostri Basilii, quid aliud sunt nisi bene viventium et oboedientium monachorum instrumenta virtutum?

The reason we have written this rule is that, by observing it in monasteries, we can show that we have some degree of virtue and the beginnings of monastic life. But for anyone hastening on to the perfection of monastic life, there are the teachings of the holy Fathers, the observance of which will lead him to the very heights of perfection. What page, what passage of the inspired books of the Old and New Testaments is not the truest of guides for human life? What book of the holy catholic Fathers does not resoundingly summon us along the true way to reach the creator? Then, besides the Conferences of the Fathers, their Institutes and their Lives,¹ there is also the rule of our holy father Basil. For observant and obedient monks, all these are nothing less than tools for the cultivation of virtues. (Fry 1981, 294-97)

Gilson thus explains the efforts of the reformers:

What was required was the inspiring contagion of example, and this it was precisely that St Bernard and his companions found in the *Vitae Patrum*: the *Lives of the Fathers of the Desert*... (an) acquaintance with a type of mortification that threw everything later attempted into the shade, as if it were no more than a moderate penance. The asceticism of Cîteaux, and of Chartreuse, derived from the Fathers of the Desert. Cîteaux and Chartreuse were 'deserts' peopled by the ascetics of the twelfth century. To set out to observe to the letter the Rule of St Benedict, not omitting the last chapter is thus to follow in the footsteps of St Antony, of Macarius and Pacomius. (Gilson 1940, 18)

But in returning to the ideals of the desert fathers they returned also to their fear of contact with women. Southern writes, quoting from Bernard's Sermons on the Song of Songs:²

To St Bernard every woman was a threat to his chastity, and he saw vast and nameless dangers in that easy association of men and women which marked the early evangelistic efforts of Robert of Arbrissel and St Norbert:³ 'To be always with a woman and not to have intercourse with her is more difficult than to raise the dead. You cannot do the less difficult: do you think I will believe that you can do what is more difficult?' (Southern 1983, 314-15)

As the passage translated by Southern indicates, Bernard was apparently uncompromising in his view of the consequences of contact between men and women. In the original the passage reads:

Cum femina semper esse, et non cognoscere feminam, nonne plus est quam mortuum suscitare? Quod minus est non potes, et quod maius est vis credam tibi? (*Sermones super Cantica* 65.4; Leclercq & Rochais II.175)

It is true that Bernard - like Jerome - did express affection towards women in letters. He wrote to Ermengarde, formerly Countess of Brittany and benefactress of Clairvaux:

O quam libentius ista praesens colloquerer, quam scribo absens! Crede mihi, irascor occupationibus quibus frequenter impediri videor ne te videam, et delector occasionibus, quibus vel interdum expediri videor, ut te videam. Rara quidem datur huiusmodi opportunitas.

How much sooner would I converse with you in your presence than write to you in your absence! Believe me, I become angry with the affairs by which I always seem to be hindered from seeing you, and I greet with joy the opportunities of seeing you which I seem to get so seldom. (Letter 117 (120), Leclercq & Rochais VII.297; James 1953, 182)⁴

But the attitude to women expressed in his letter to 'the virgin Sophia' seems to belong to the misogynistic tradition (see above, pp. 132 ff.):

Quod si tibi exprobraverint filiae Belial, illae quae, extento collo, fractis incedunt gressibus, compositae et circumornatae ut similitudo templi (Isalah 3.16) responde: Regnum meum non est de hoc mundo (John 18.36) ... Ille [Sponsus] in medium veniat summo decore spectabilis, ipsis quoque angelis admirandus ornatus, et proferant si quid simile habent filiae Babylonis, quarum vere gloria in confusione (Philippians 3.19). Induuntur purpura et bysso (Luke 16.19), et subinde conscientia pannosa jacet; fulgent monilibus, moribus sordent.

And if those daughters of Belial who 'put on airs, walk with heads high, and with mincing steps' got up and adorned like a temple, abuse you, answer them: 'My kingdom is not of this world' ... May [the Bridegroom] come out into the open to be seen by the angels in all his glory. If the daughters of Babylon have anything like this, let them bring it forth, 'whose only glory is their shame'. They are clothed

in purple and fine linen, but their souls are in rags. Their bodies glitter with jewels, but their lives are foul with vanity. (Letter 113 (116).2,3, Leclerq & Rochais VII.288-89; James p. 175)⁵

Elsewhere Bernard argued that it was dangerous for men and women to be together. He wrote in a letter advising Abbot Luke (Abbot of Culissy, an abbey of the Premonstratensian Order of monks and nuns, in the diocese of Laon):

Obsecramus per sanguinem illum qui pro animabus fusus est, ne tanti emptarum parvi pendatur periculum, quod maxime ex virorum et feminarum cohabitatione non immerito timetur ab his, qui in schola Dei diu iam contra diaboli tentamenta luctati, propria experientia edocti dicere possunt cum Apostolo: 'Non enim ignoramus astutias eius' (II Corinthians 2.11),⁶ ... Est aliud apud vos de quo ea praesumptione, qua soleo, non cunctabor dicere quod sentio. De molendino illo dico, quod conversi⁷ custodientes feminarum pati coguntur frequentiam. Si mihi creditur, unum e tribus fiet: aut videlicet feminarum accessus omnimodis a molendino prohibebitur; aut molendinum cuicumque extraneo, et non conversis, custodiendum committetur; aut idem omnino molendinum relinquetur.

I implore you by the blood that Christ shed for souls to beware of the fearful danger incurred by souls bought at so great a price, when men and women live together under the same roof. It is a danger especially to be feared by those who have learned from long experience of the devil's wiles to say with the Apostle: 'We know well enough how resourceful is Satan'⁸ ... There is another matter which, with my usual presumption, I shall not hesitate to mention. I refer to that mill where the lay-brothers in charge have to submit to the company of women. If I am to be trusted there are only three courses open to you. Either you forbid all access to women or you put the mill in charge of outsiders and not lay brothers or else you give it up completely. (Letter 79 (81).1,3, Leclerq & Rochais VII.211-12; James pp. 118-20)

Bernard held the view that women were to be identified with the flesh, by nature lacking in courage and constancy. This seems to be implied in his exegesis of Song of Songs 1.7, 'pulcherrima inter mulieres', in which he wrote:

Ego enim puto mulierum nomine hoc loco appellatas animas carnales ac saeculares, nihil in se virile habentes, nihil forte aut constans in suis actibus demonstrantes, sed totum remissum, totum femineum et molle, quod vivunt et quod agunt.

I believe that by 'women' in this passage He means worldly souls, who live according to the flesh, and who have nothing manly in them, and who show no fortitude or constancy in their conduct, but their lives and actions are entirely slack, entirely feminine (or womanish) and weak. (*Sermones super Cantica* 38.4, Leclercq & Rochais II.16)⁹

And in his tract *The Steps of Humility and Pride* he placed the blame on Eve for bringing death upon all her children:

Nascimur, morimur: ideoque nascimur morituri, quia prius morimur nascituri. Propterea grave iugum super omnes filios tuos usque in hodiernum diem.

We are born and we die. We are born dying men, for the doom of death is laid upon us before ever we are born. This is the heavy burden you have laid upon all your sons even to this day. (*De Gradibus Humilitatis et Superbiae Tractatus* 10.30, Leclercq & Rochais III.40; Pennington 1974, 59)¹⁰

It was not only Bernard and the Cistercians who held these views during the twelfth century. The material gathered by d'Alverny (1977) indicates that such views were common at this time. D'Alverny comments 'la critique de la femme est un topos au XII^e siècle' (p. 36). It will be convenient to summarise some of her evidence here.

In discussions of the fall, and of the relative burden of sin to be borne by the sexes, Eve was deemed the more culpable. Her guilt was inherited by her descendants, and in the battle between the flesh and the spirit, woman was on the side of the flesh. Honorius of Autun (d. about 1156) was a prolific and popular theologian who spent some time in England. He wrote that women should be veiled i) because women were snares of the devil, ii) some risked pride because of the beauty of their hair; others, shame, because of the ugliness of theirs, iii) as a reminder of the first sin, which had its origin in a woman (d'Alverny p. 26). Peter the Painter, a poet writing in the early twelfth century, saw women as predatory. Following Jerome's example, he listed the numerous victims of women in the Bible: Samson, David, Solomon, Naboth, Joseph; and then the victims known from pagan antiquity' (d'Alverny p. 37). The theologian Peter Lombard (d. Paris 1160) wrote that Eve's sin was greater than Adam's (d'Alverny p. 31). Alan of Lille (Alanus de Insulis, d. Cîteaux 1202), the poet, theologian, and preacher, who lived and taught for a time in Paris, argued that Eve was more to blame for the fall than Adam (ibid.). And in spite of her capabilities, even Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179), the German scientist, musician, visionary poet and dramatist, accepted that woman was the weaker sex, a 'weak and infirm dwelling', 'infirmum et debile habitaculum'. Hildegard denied, however, that women were more libidinous than men (d'Alverny p. 32).¹² Finally, the theologian and exegete Peter Comestor (b. Troyes c. 1100, d. Paris c. 1180), wrote:

Animal enim inquietum est mulier, apta jurgiis et contentionibus, seminandis discordiis accomoda. Prima etiam fuit auctrix discordiae

inter hominem et Deum. Naturaliter etiam maior lucta est inter carnem et spiritum mulieris quam viri; quanto enim caro ejus infirmior et spiritus minus promptus, tanto pugna difficilior, et desperationi proximior, victoria commendabilior.

Woman is an unquiet animal, given to quarrels and sowing discord. Hadn't the first woman provoked disagreement between man and God? The battle between the flesh and the spirit is naturally harder in woman than in man, for her body is weaker and her spirit less quick. The battle is therefore more difficult and discouragement nearer; victory is dignified by greater admiration. (*Sermo* 33, PL 198.1805; cf. d'Alverny p. 37)

As this last quotation indicates, the value of virtuous women was recognised, and such women were praised; nevertheless they were regarded as exceptional - and, no matter how exceptional and praiseworthy, they still belonged to the weaker sex (d'Alverny pp. 28 & 38). One of these women, admired for her learning, and praised for her conduct as abbess, was Heloise (c. 1100-1163), and her situation is worth looking at in a little more detail.

Heloise had been seventeen or eighteen years of age when Abelard came into her uncle's house in Paris as her tutor.¹³ Abelard (1079-1142) was in his late thirties, and held a reputation as a brilliant scholar and teacher. A great part of Heloise's attraction for Abelard had been, according to his account of their affair in his *Historia Calamitatum*, her reputation for learning:

Per faciem non esset infima, per habundantiam litterarum erat suprema. Nam quo bonum hoc litteratorie scilicet scientie in mulieribus est rarius, eo amplius puellam commendabat et in toto regno nominatissimam fecerat.

In looks she did not rank lowest, while in the extent of her learning, she stood supreme. A gift for letters is so rare in women that it added greatly to her charm and had won her renown throughout the realm. (Monfrin 1959, 71; Radice 1974, 66)¹⁴

Later, in a letter, Abelard urged the nuns of the Paraclete, the monastery which he had placed in her charge, to study Latin, Greek and Hebrew, assuring them that there was no one better fit to guide them in such studies than their abbess, Heloise.¹⁵

It was not only her learning which he praised. Heloise had earned widespread respect for her conduct, over the years, as abbess of the Paraclete. It was not until she read the *Historia Calamitatum* that she had written to Abelard. In this first letter she expressed her pain and sorrow due to the fact that, although she had taken the veil for his sake, and not for love of God, she had received no letter of personal consolation or advice from him. In his reply, Abelard excused himself:

Quod post nostram a saeculo ad Deum conversionem nondum tibi aliquid consolationis vel exhortationis scripserim, non negligentiae meae, sed tuae, de qua semper plurimum confido, prudentiae imputandum est. Non enim eam his indigere credidi, cui abundanter quae necessaria sunt divina gratia impertivit, ut tam verbis quam exemplis errantes valeas docere, pusillanimes consolari, tepidos exhortari, sicut et facere jam dudum consuevisti cum sub abbatissa prioratum obtineres.

If since our conversion from the world to God I have not yet written you any word of comfort or advice, it must not be attributed to indifference on my part but to your own good sense, in which I have always had such confidence that I did not think anything was needed; God's grace has bestowed on you all essentials to enable you to instruct the erring, comfort the weak and encourage the fainthearted,

both by word and example, as, indeed, you have been doing since you first held the office of prioress under your abbess. (Letter 3 (2); Radice 1974, 119; PL 178.187)'⁶

Yet Abelard had also expressed his surprise, in the *Historia Calamitatum*, at the long-established custom of allowing abbesses to have charge of women, as abbots had charge of men; and also at the practice to be seen in many places of putting abbesses and nuns over priests:

Sexus infirmior fortioris indiget auxilio, ut semper virum mulieri quasi capud preesse Apostolus statuatur: in cujus etiam rei signo ipsam semper velatum habere capud precipit (I Corinthians 11.5). Unde non mediocriter miror consuetudines has in monasteriis dudum inolevisse, quod quemadmodum viris abbates, ita et feminis abbatisse preponantur, et ejusdem regule professione tam femine quam viri se astringant, in qua tamen pleraque continentur que a feminis tam prelatiis quam subjectis nullatenus possunt adimpleri. In plerisque etiam locis, ordine perturbato naturali, ipsas abbatissas atque moniales clericis quoque ipsis, quibus subest populus, dominari conspiciamus, et tanto facilius eos ad prava desideria inducere posse quanto eis amplius habent preesse, et jugum illud in eos gravissimum exercere.

The weaker sex needs the help of the stronger, so much so that the Apostle lays down that the man must always be over the woman, as her head, and as a sign of this he orders her always to have her head covered. And so I am much surprised that the custom should have been long established in convents of putting abbesses in charge of women just as abbots are set over men, and of binding women by profession according to the same Rule [in which very many things are nevertheless contained]¹⁷ which cannot be carried out by women, whether in authority or subordinate. In several places too, the natural order is overthrown to the extent that we see abbesses and nuns ruling the clergy who have authority over the people, with opportunities of

leading them on to evil desires in proportion to their dominance, holding them as they do beneath a heavy yoke. (Monfrin 1959, 104-05; Radice 1974, 101)

Abelard's criticism here was probably directed at Fontevrault, founded in 1100,¹⁸ where the abbess was the head of her nuns and also of the priests dedicated to their service; although he perhaps also had in mind the Anglo-Saxon joint houses where he referred to the 'customs long established' (see Radice 1974, 101, note). Abelard's apparent inconsistency reflects the standard approach of the time. He recognised that Heloise was deserving of respect and praise: but women were the weaker sex, and it was not appropriate for abbesses to be in authority over priests.

Abelard expressed the view that women were weaker elsewhere in his letters. For example, in a passage emphasising the necessity for solitude, in one of the letters he wrote in response to Heloise's request for a rule suitable for women in monasteries, he wrote:

Vestrae vero infirmitati tanto magis est solitudo necessaria, quanto carnalium tentationum bellis minus hic infestamur, et minus ad corporalia per sensus evagamur.

Solitude is indeed all the more necessary for your woman's frailty, inasmuch as for our part we are less attacked by the conflicts of carnal temptations and less likely to stray towards bodily things. (Letter 8 (7), PL 178.265-66; Radice 1974, 196)

But he wrote in another letter to Heloise, the exceptional woman: 'naturaliter sexu infirmior eras, et fortior continentia', 'You were naturally weaker in sex and stronger in continence', (Letter 5 (4), PL 178.210; Radice 1974, 154).

A letter to Heloise from Peter the Venerable shows how highly he also regarded her, though she was a woman. Peter, a scholar himself, and abbot of Cluny from 1122, wrote to Heloise giving her an account of Abelard's last days.¹⁹ In the letter, Peter expressed his affection and admiration for her:

Reuera enim non nunc primum diligere incipio quam ex multo tempore me dilexisse reminiscor. Necdum plene metas adolescentiae excesseram, necdum in iuueniles annos euaseram, quando nomen non quidem adhuc religionis tuae, sed honestorum tamen et laudabilium studiorum tuorum, michi fama innotuit ... Cumque ab his exercitiis detestanda desidia totus pene torpeat mundus, et ubi subsistere possit pes sapientiae, non dicam apud sexum femineum a quo ex toto explosus est, sed uix apud ipsos uiriles animos inuenire ualeat, tu illo efferendo studio tuo, et mulieres omnes euicisti, et pene uiros uniuersos superasti.

It is not only now that I begin to love you; I can remember having done so for a long time. I had yet not quite passed the bounds of youth and reached early manhood when I knew of your name and your reputation, not yet for religion but for your virtuous and praiseworthy studies ... At a time when nearly the whole world is indifferent and deplorably apathetic towards such occupations and wisdom can scarcely find a foothold not only, I may say, among women who have banished her completely, but even in the minds of men, you have surpassed all women in carrying out your purpose, and have gone further than almost every man. (Constable 1967, I.303-04; Radice 1974, 277-78)

Later, in taking the veil and turning to Christ, Heloise had overcome the serpent (cf. Genesis 3.15), who was always ready to attack women:

Conculcasti ... uetusti anguis ac semper mulieribus insidiantis caput.

Now you trod underfoot ... the head of the serpent, the old enemy who always lies in wait for women. (Constable p. 304; Radice p. 278)

This was all the more remarkable because of her sex:

Et uere singulare miraculum ... a fragilli sexu uinci, et fortissimum archangelum a muliere infirmissima superari. Gignitur tali duello maxima gloria conditori, infertur econuerso summa ignominia decaeptori. Exprobatur ei hoc certamine non solum stultum, sed et super omnia ridiculum fuisse, illum aspirasse ad aequalitatem sublimissimae maiestatis, qui nec breue luctamen ferre praeualet femineae debilitatis. Sustinet caput cuiuslibet uictricis illius, merito talis uictoriae, gemmeam a rege caelorum coronam, ut quanto in transacta pugna carne infirmior, tanto in remuneratione sempiterna appareat gloriosior.

Truly a unique miracle ... for [the enemy] to be overcome by the weaker sex, and the most powerful of archangels to fall before a frail woman! Such combat brings supreme glory to the Creator, but to the Tempter the greatest ignominy. This contest proves [to his shame]²⁰ that it was not only foolish but above all absurd for him to have aspired to equality with the sublime Majesty, when he cannot even sustain a brief conflict with a woman's weakness; while [any and every woman victorious over him]²¹ will justly receive for her brow a jewelled crown from the King of heaven, so that though she was weaker in the flesh, in the battle she fought she will appear the more glorious in her everlasting reward. (Constable p. 304; Radice pp. 278-79)

In view of the attitudes described above, such a combination of sentiments was not very surprising in another man of the twelfth century. But the degree to which the idea of women's weakness and Eve's culpability dominated the century is also reflected by the way in which Heloise's own letters to Abelard express the same views. Heloise referred to woman as the weaker sex:

Quid de fragilitate sexu provideret, cuius maxime debilis et infirma natura cognoscitur?

What [Rule] would [Benedict] provide for the weaker sex whose frailty and infirmity is generally known? (Letter 6 (5), PL 178.214; Radice 1974, 163)

She may have been speaking here primarily of physical weakness. But it was dangerous for men and women to live together:

O quam facilis ad ruinam animarum virorum ac mulierum in unum cohabitatio!

It is all too easy for the souls of men and women to be destroyed if they live together in one place. (Letter 6 (5), PL 178.214; Radice 1974, 160)

Heloise blamed herself for what Abelard had suffered (in particular his castration at the orders of her uncle). She described how women had so often in the past been to blame for the ruin of men, from Eve onwards:

O me miseram in tanti sceleris causa progenitam! O summam in viros summos et consuetam feminarum perniciem! ... Prima statim mulier de paradiso virum captivavit, et quae ei a Domino creata fuerat in auxilium, in summum ei conversa est exitium ... Et callidissimus tentator hoc optime noverat, quod saepius expertus fuerat, virorum videlicet ruinam in uxoribus esse facillimam. Qui denique etiam usque ad nos consuetam extendens malitiam.

What misery for me - born as I was to be the cause of such a crime! [It is] the general lot of women to bring total ruin on great men ... It was the first woman in the beginning who lured man from Paradise, and she who had been created by the Lord as his helpmate became the instrument of his total downfall ... The cunning arch-tempter well knew from repeated experience that men are most easily brought to ruin through their wives, and so he directed his usual malice against us too. (Letter 4 (3), PL 178.195; Radice 1974, 131)

Heloise was doubtless influenced in such views as she here expresses by her own bitter experience. At the same time, she was remarkable for her learning and her courage, and the fact that she did not question her contemporaries' attitudes towards women shows how powerfully these attitudes permeated the thought of the century.

NOTES

1. The 'Conferences' and the 'Institutes' refer to the works of Cassian. Gilson (as the following quotation shows) understands the 'Lives' to refer to the *Vitae Patrum*; as does McCann 1963, 161. Fry, however, comments: 'This could refer to the brief lives contained in the Conferences or to other well-known biographies of monks, such as those of Paul the Hermit, Hilarion and Malchus by Jerome or that of Antony by Athanasius. It probably does not refer to the extensive work known as the *Vitae Patrum*, which was compiled in the course of the sixth century' (1981, 297). Fry does not give his reason for his opinion, but it may be because of the date of the Rule of Benedict (c. 540).

2. Bernard began this series of sermons in about 1135, and continued writing them until his death (see Evans 1983).

3. Robert had founded a double order, under the rule of an abbess, at Fontevrault, in 1100. St Norbert was founder of the Premonstratensians in 1120, which also made provision for women in double houses (Southern 1983, 312-13). On Robert, and the influence of Fontevrault in England in the mid-twelfth century, see Elkins 1988, 57-59; and on the Premonstratensians and their influence on female religious houses in England, see Elkins, pp. 88-89.

4. In references to Bernard's letters, the first number refers to that of the edition of Leclercq & Rochais (which corresponds to the numbering of the PL); the number in brackets refers to that of James.

Letter 116 (119), also to Ermengarde, is similarly affectionate.

5. Compare *Vitis Mystica* 30.104-06 (PL 184.696-97). In this tract, in speaking of the advantages of virginity over married life, an unidentified contemporary of St Bernard referred, as their predecessors had, to the punishments brought upon women by Eve (see above, pp. 132 ff.).
6. The Vulgate has *cogitationes*. Bernard may have been quoting from memory, perhaps substituting *astutias* from II Corinthians 11.3, where it is also used of the devil.
7. For a note on the 'conversi' and their function, see Fry 1981, 129. In England, Gilbert of Sempringham (see below, pp. 340-41) modelled his order on the Cistercian system: on the 'conversae', and on other aspects of the Cistercian customs followed by the Gilbertines, see Elkins 1988, 80-88.
8. James used Knox's translation for biblical quotations (see his p. xvii).
9. The translation has been adapted from *Saint Bernard on the Song of Songs* (1952, 113). The idea that woman was weak was buttressed by Isidore, the influence of whose *Etymologies* was pervasive at this time (d'Alverny 1977, 32). Isidore linked *vir* and *mulier* with notions of strength and weakness (see above, p. 212). Compare also *In Festivitate Omnium Sanctorum* 1.11 (Leclercq & Rochais V.336), where Bernard identified Eve with the flesh and Adam with the spirit.
10. Compare *De Beata Maria Virgine* 10 (PL 184.1020), where Bernard contrasted Eve with Mary: 'Eva spina, infigens omnibus mortem: Maria rosa, reddens salutiferam omnibus sortem'. On Mary as the New Eve in the writings of Anselm and Abelard, as well as Bernard, see d'Alverny 1977, 125-27.
11. cf. *Sir Gawain & the Green Knight*, lines 2416-19. Such a list evidently became a topos.
12. Hildegard served as physician to the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. On Hildegard see further Wilson 1984, 109-30, Waithé vol. II (1989).

13. An account of the course of their lives can be found in Radice 1974.

14. Abelard wrote the *Historia Calamitatum* in about 1132, about thirteen years after their affair had ended, when he was abbot of a remote monastery at St Gildas on the west coast of Brittany, and Heloise was abbess of the Paraclete, near Troyes in Champagne. Heloise's reading of the work prompted her first letter to him. There has been a good deal of controversy over the authenticity of the correspondence, but the consensus now is that the letters are genuine. For a summary of the arguments, and further references to the various discussions, see Brooke 1989, 93-102, and notes.

15. See Ferrante 1980, 13-14. On Heloise's knowledge of these languages see also Radice 1974, 32, 46 & 277. The letter can be found in PL 178.325-26 (letter 9).

16. In references to these letters, the numbers in the PL are given first, followed in brackets by the numbers in Radice's edition. Some adjustments have been made to Radice's translations. These are indicated by square brackets.

17. Omitted in Radice's translation. Presumably Abelard is referring to duties the head of a religious house is required by the Rule to perform, which can only be performed by a priest (such as saying Mass); women, of course, could not be priests.

18. See note 3 above.

19. When Abelard died at the Cluniac priory of St Marcel, Chalon-sur-Saône, in 1142, Peter fulfilled Heloise's request that Abelard's body be taken to the Paraclete for burial there. Peter had apparently effected a reconciliation between Abelard and his opponent Bernard, and he obtained permission from the Pope (Innocent III) for Abelard to spend his retirement at Cluny. Peter had sent Abelard to Chalon for the sake of his health (Radice 1974, 275-83).

20. 'to his shame' added by Radice.

21. Radice translates '(while) she alone victorious (will)'.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN: ENGLAND IN THE TWELFTH
AND EARLY THIRTEENTH CENTURIES

The pattern which has been noted on the continent, of expansion of opportunities for women in religion, followed by a reaction (above, p. 323), was repeated in England during the twelfth century. Elkins's study, *Holy Women of Twelfth-Century England* (1988), shows how, between about 1130 and 1165, there was a multiplication of new communities for women in England. These depended on the support and encouragement of men such as Gilbert of Sempringham who were concerned for the practical and spiritual welfare of the women. Many of the houses were for both men and women. However, - and this was as true of all-female houses as it was of communities of men and women - the authority of women in religious houses of all denominations was severely restricted in comparison with that of the Anglo-Saxon abbesses. Elkins points out that most of the bishops who founded houses for women chose to found priories rather than abbeys, and that this was perhaps 'to emphasize that the female leader was only a prioress, not an imitator of the powerful abbesses of earlier days' (p. 16). In addition, a prior was often installed in authority over the prioress (p. 50). Many small communities of women, which had perhaps originated as hermitages, became priories under the protection of male abbeys. This meant that while they received support, they were also subject to the authority of the abbeys (pp. 45-53).¹ The most numerous of the foundations for women were the Gilbertine houses. The majority of these included men as well as women. Without going into too much detail, it is worth commenting on the Gilbertines and

their experience, because the story of the Gilbertines reflects certain general conditions.

Gilbert of Sempringham (c. 1083-1189) taught boys and girls in his neighbourhood in Lincolnshire. He became a parish priest, and wished to make provision for the young women he had taught, who wanted to undertake the religious life. His order began with the building of dwellings and a cloister for seven women at Sempringham (Lincolnshire) in 1131. In this project he had the support of the Bishop of Lincoln; and in planning the arrangements for the regulation of the life of the women he was advised and also praised by a Cistercian monk, William, the first abbot of Rievaulx. By 1154, the Gilbertines consisted of nine monasteries, which included, as well as nuns, canons, lay brothers and lay sisters (Elkins 1988, 78-81); and by the time of Gilbert's death in 1189, the Gilbertines were the largest single organisation of female religious in England.²

The relationship between the Gilbertines and the Cistercians is instructive. The Gilbertines were modelled on the Cistercians in their organisation (Elkins pp. 80-82). However, Gilbert's attempt, probably in 1147, to affiliate his order with the Cistercians, was rejected, apparently because the latter did not wish to have anything to do with women (pp. 82-83). This, in spite of the support and advice he had received from the English Cistercian house of Rievaulx at the outset. What is also interesting about the Gilbertines is that although they provided for men as well as women, the sexes had always been strictly segregated: the women and men were not allowed to see each other; the nuns' church was separated from the canons' by a wall,

so that the canons would not have to enter the nuns' part of the monastery even to say Mass. Other practical matters, such as the provision of food and other goods, were managed by means of a system of turntable windows (p. 142). Even so, the Gilbertines attracted criticism, and, in spite of the support of several eminent figures who knew and thought highly of them (including Roger, Archbishop of York, and the King, Henry II), the consequence was that after 1165, new monasteries for men and women together (Gilbertine or otherwise), ceased to be popular (p. 117).

Three general points may be made before we turn to those who were writing for women in England: 1) there were a number of influential men in England who wished to support and encourage women in the religious life, and to maintain the contact (albeit with safeguards) which such active support required; 2) disapproval of such contact set in during the latter part of the century; and 3) even at the height of the expansion of religious communities for women, women in religion were generally denied the authority possessed by their Anglo-Saxon predecessors.

The material of the remainder of this chapter is divided as follows: i) Aelred of Rievaulx; ii) *The Ancrene Wisse*; iii) *Hall Meibhad*.

i) Aelred of Rievaulx (1110-1167)

Aelred was one of Bernard's most eminent followers. Ayto and Barratt write that he was 'one of the leading and most influential figures of English Cistercianism ... He left behind him, as well as a distinguished reputation as an active and compassionate churchman

within the confines of his own order and in a wider national context, a corpus of writings that is the finest literary and philosophical product of the Cistercian order in medieval England' (1984, xi).

Aelred's writings show him to have been a man of warmth and kindness. He was certainly much milder in his remarks on women than Bernard was, although he seems to have regarded their abilities with more condescension than Goscelin. One work, the *Speculum Caritatis*, was written between 1140 and 1143 at Bernard's request. It contains a moderate, wise discussion of love, of good and evil, and the place of free will and reason in the choice between true and false love; between 'caritas' on the one hand, and 'cupiditas' or 'concupiscentia' on the other. In general the work is not concerned with women, but there are two passages which reveal something of Aelred's attitude. In a passage which reflects the austere Cistercian disapproval of paintings and sculpture, Aelred lets fall in passing a slightly disparaging remark on representations of various birds and animals as 'womanish pleasures' ('muliebria oblectamenta'):

There is no place at all in monasteries for the sculpture and painting that you find in other places - pictures and carvings, for instance, of cranes and hares, of harts and does, ravens and magpies. These are not the embellishments that Antony and Macarius sought in their desert hermitages; but they are simply [womanish pleasures].³ (*Mirror of Charity* 2, Webb & Walker 1962, 74)⁴

However, a difference between Aelred and Bernard can be seen in a chapter in which he describes the unintended consequences of friendships between men and women. One thing, he writes, can lead to another, 'In some mysterious way, an attraction we feel towards others

will sometimes turn imperceptibly into something else' (*Mirror of Charity* 3, Webb & Walker, p. 119).⁵ An affection which begins as 'reasonable love' (or reasonable friendly feeling: 'affectus rationalis') for an admirable and holy woman can progress unawares to something more destructive:

Let us take for instance the case of someone who hears of some holy nun who has gained great repute. Her fame has become widely known because of her evident sanctity, her faith, her wisdom, her absolute obedience and renunciation of the world. It is most reasonable that we should admire such virtue, and this is indeed precisely what we have already called a 'reasonable love'. But let us suppose that someone has gone to ascertain her holiness for himself, and being much taken by it begins not only to enjoy her conversation and company, but will speak much in her praise to others and will write to her and give her little presents. Reasonable love can thus develop little by little ... and can in time change into something really dangerous. (ibid., pp. 119-20)⁶

Aelred proceeds to speak of the experiences of good and holy men he has known:

I myself have known good and holy men who have had an extreme horror of anything unclean, being most chaste and continent, yet they have fallen in love with young nuns to whom they had originally been attracted because of their virtues. These young women had progressed to a great spiritual maturity, and friendship grew and became so irresistibly delectable that evil somehow managed to work its way into pure affection, causing much sorrow. Friendship can easily degenerate, unfortunately, into carnal lust. (ibid., p. 120)⁷

It could be argued that what Aelred says is not so very different in essence from the passage from St Bernard's letter quoted above (p. 327). Yet Aelred's tone is very different. While describing what

can happen if there is much contact between the sexes, he shows sympathy towards those who find themselves in such situations. He is gentle and compassionate in warning of the possible dangers, and blames no-one.⁸

Aelred's attitude towards women is revealed more fully in *De Institutione Inclusarum* (1160-1162).⁹ This was one of Aelred's most influential works, and the many manuscripts which survive (there are ten dating from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries) attest to its popularity. It greatly influenced the author of the *Ancrene Wisse* (see below, pp. 353 ff.). The *De Institutione Inclusarum* is a treatise in the form of a letter to his sister on how an anchoress should regulate her exterior and interior life. At the end of the work Aelred sums up, in terms of the three sections into which the work is divided, what he has written:

Habes nunc sicut petisti corporales institutiones, quibus inclusa exterioris hominis mores componas; habes formam praescriptam qua interiorem hominem uel purges a uitiis, uel uirtutibus ornes; habes in triplici meditatione quomodo in te Dei dilectionem excites, nutrias et accendas.

You have now what you asked for: instructions for the body, with which the recluse will arrange for the conduct of the exterior life; you have the outline prescribed with which you may cleanse the interior person of vices, and make it fair with virtues; you have in the three-fold meditation how you may rouse the love of God in you, nourish and kindle it. (ch. 33, lines 1528-34)

The first section, that concerned with the practical ordering of her exterior life, was adapted from the Rule of Benedict to suit Aelred's particular female audience.¹⁰

The second section has as its guiding theme the theme of virginity. The three-fold meditation in the final section refers to meditation on the past, present and future.

Section One: Aelred began the first section (chs 1-13) by briefly placing the recluse in the tradition to which she belonged. The ancients had chosen to live apart because of the dangers presented by living in society; and to free themselves for Christ's embrace (ch. 2). He did not elaborate, as Goscelin had done (see above, pp. 304 ff.) on her antecedents and what her 'exile' symbolised. Perhaps this would not have been appropriate in this section, dealing as it did with the practical ordering of her external life. Thus in these chapters he warned the recluse about distractions and encroachments on her tranquillity of mind and spirit. He advised her against keeping animals (ch. 3), giving alms, and teaching children (ch. 4), for all this would distract her from her chosen life of prayer and meditation. This was sound practical advice. But the emphasis he placed on the dangers of 'gossiping old women' suggests perhaps a certain prejudice about women and their weaknesses. Aelred was particularly critical of recluses of his day who let their minds wander and spent their time gossiping: 'You will scarcely find a recluse alone nowadays, before whose window a gossiping old woman or a scandal-mongering woman does not sit' telling stories and describing the face and habits of monks, clerics or other men, and depicting lustful girls, licentious widows and deceitful wives. This would result, he wrote, in laughter, and 'the spread of poison, drunk with delight, through her flesh and limbs. So, when the hour came for them

to part, they would separate well-filled, the old woman with food and the recluse with pleasures. As a consequence the recluse would 'stagger in her psalms as if she were drunk, grope blindly in her reading, waver in her prayers':

Vix aliquam inclusarum huius temporis solam inuenies, ante cuius fenestram non anus garrula uel rumigerula mulier sedeat, quae eam fabulis occupet, rumoribus ac detractionibus pascat, illius uel illius monachi, uel clerici, uel alterius cuiuslibet ordinis uiri formam, uultum moresque describat, illecebrosa quaeque interserat, et puellarum lasciuiam, uiduarum quibus licet quidquid libet libertatem, coniugum in uiris fallendis explendisque uoluptatibus astutiam, depingat. Os interea in risus cachinnosque dissoluitur, et uenenum cum suauitate bibitum, per uiscera membraque diffunditur. Sic cum discedere ab inuicem hora compulerit, inclusa uoluptatibus, anus cibariis onerata recedit. Reddita quieti misera, eas quas auditus induxerat, in corde uersat imagines, et ignem premissa confabulatione conceptum uehementius sua cogitatione succendit. Quasi ebria in psalmis titubat, in lectione caligat, fluctuat in oratione. (ch. 2, lines 23-38)

In recommending the kind of woman she should choose to attend her - 'an old woman who is not a gossip, nor disputatious, nor a wanderer, nor given to telling stories', 'eligatur tibi anus aliqua non garrula, non litigiosa, non uaga, non rumigerula' (ch. 4, lines 104-5) - Aelred is perhaps echoing Jerome's advice in a letter: 'Elige anum deformem' (Letter 128.3; PL 22.1097).¹¹ He was remembering Jerome again when he advised the recluse to keep silence (ch. 5), and wrote:

Felix illa quae nec Martinum admisit,¹² nullum uirorum nec uidere uolens, nec alloqui. Sed quaenam inclusarum hoc sequeretur exemplum? Sufficit illis quae modo sunt si hanc corporalem castitatem

conseruent, si non onusto uentre extrahantur, si non fletus infantis partum prodiderit.¹³

Happy she who did not even admit Martin, not wishing to see any man, nor speak to him. But which recluses follow this example? It is enough for them if they preserve their bodily chastity; if they are not drawn out with a laden womb, if the wailing of a child has not betrayed a birth. (ch. 6, lines 158-63)

It is difficult to determine whether Aelred was simply echoing a tradition - combining the views of Jerome with the instruction of the Rule of Benedict - or whether his comments really reflected the behaviour of recluses of his day and what he thought of them. In chapter 7 Aelred warned that it would be dangerous for the recluse to spend time in the company of a man: the voice of the same man could upset her quietness of heart; neither should she spend much time with women; no more than was required for her practical needs. He pointed out that his sister did not need to be told these things, but that he included them because he was also writing for the guidance of other young girls who wished to follow this way of life. From this section it appears that Aelred thought no worse of women than that they had a tendency to gossip, although he did dwell on this point. He was far less severe about women in general than Bernard or Jerome.

Section Two: In the second section (chs 14-28) Aelred turned to the interior life of the recluse. The guiding theme of the section is virginity. Aelred wrote that the recluse should continually consider 'how precious a treasure she bears in how frail a vessel, and what reward, what glory, what a crown virginity furnishes when preserved;

moreover, what punishment, what confusion, what damnation it brings about if lost':

Cogita semper quam pretiosum thesaurum in quam fragili portes uasculo, et quam mercedem, quam gloriam, quam coronam, uirginitas seruata ministret; quam insuper poenam, quam confusionem, quam damnationem importet amissa, indesinenter animo reuolue. (ch. 14, lines 455-59)

Virginity should be guarded with fear, because if lost it was irrecoverable (ch. 15, lines 477-79). Aelred reminded her that she was the *sponsa Christi*: 'Consider always for whose marriage chamber you are made gay, for whose embrace you are prepared': 'Cogitet sine intermissione ad cuius ornatur thalamum, ad cuius praeparatur amplexum' (ch. 15, lines 480-81). She should contemplate Mary leading the choir of virgins, singing the song which only virgins can sing (ch. 15). If the enemy should trouble her with unchaste thoughts she should let the blessed virgins who had lived before come into her mind. He gave the example of Agnes, as one who had scorned worldly wealth as if it were dung, who had defied a tyrant who threatened her with death, whose virginity had been protected by an angel when she was led to a brothel (ch. 16). He reminded her that chastity could not be kept without great contrition of heart and mortification of the flesh (ch. 17), and that it was better to suffer any bodily affliction than lust (ch. 21). He wrote of the necessity for humility (ch. 23) and the dangers of pride (ch. 24). All this was well-trodden ground in virginity treatises. But there are some points worth noting:

1) Aelred gave examples of two people he had known who had been troubled about their chastity, and these were both monks (chs 18 & 22). This may not be very significant, since Aelred's personal

knowledge would have been more likely to be of the experience of monks than nuns or female solitaries. Still, there were plenty of examples of female unchastity familiar from the writings of Jerome, for example, which Aelred could have drawn upon if he had so wished.

2) When in chapter 24 he wrote that the recluse should not glory in pictures and sculptures under the pretext of devotion, he made no disparaging reference to 'womanish pleasures' as he had in the *Speculum Caritatis* (see above, p. 343): 'These things are for those who, having nothing within in which they may glory, furnish themselves outwardly with things in which they take delight': 'Sint haec illorum qui nihil intus in quo glorientur habentes, exterius sibi comparant in quo delectantur' (ch. 24, lines 694-96).

3) Aelred applied maternal imagery to Christ. The only image the recluse should have in her cell was a crucifix, representing what she should imitate, the passion of Christ. The image, with its arms outstretched, would invite her to his embraces; and from its naked breasts it would pour out the milk of sweetness to comfort her:

Sufficiat tibi in altari tuo Salvatoris in cruce pendentis imago, quae passionem suam tibi repraesentet quam imiteris, expansis brachiis ad suos te inuitet amplexus, in quibus delecteris, nudatis uberibus lac tibi suauitatis infundat quo consoleris. (ch. 26, lines 748-52)¹⁴

The image of Christ as mother will be discussed further below (ch. 15, iii). One can observe of Aelred's use of it here, that it admits into her life in the cell some of the feminine and maternal feelings which the recluse might otherwise be required to suppress.

4) Aelred did not suggest that virginity was of special importance for women. If it pleased the recluse, he wrote, in order to commend to her the excellence of virginity, the images of the Virgin Mother and the virgin disciple (John) could be placed on either side of the cross, so that she could reflect on how pleasing the virginity of both sexes was to Christ:

Et si hoc placet, ad commendandam tibi uirginitatis excellentiam, Virgo Mater in sua et uirgo discipulus in sua iuxta crucem cernatur imagine, ut cogites quam grata sit Christo utriusque sexus uirginitas, quam in Matre et prae caeteris sibi dilecto discipulo consecrauit. (ch. 26, lines 753-57)

5) There is no mention in the section of Eve, of her sin, or of the punishments borne by her descendants, nor did Aelred write in it of the tribulations of marriage. This may have been because he was addressing those who had already chosen the life of a recluse, but that had not prevented earlier writers of virginity treatises from discussing these matters.

Section Three: As Aelred's treatise progressed, and its spirituality deepened, the sex of its recipient became less and less important. In the final section (chs 29-32) he turned to the love of God, and how it could be aroused by meditation on things past, present and future. Among the subjects he listed for meditation were these: she should be with Mary at the Annunciation (ch. 29), she should meditate on the offerings of the three kings, and on the flight into Egypt (ch. 30); she should identify with Mary's sorrow as she sought Christ when he was in the temple at the age of twelve (ch. 31). She should follow Christ to the desert, meditate on his resistance to the temptations,

and imitate this (ch. 31). She should enter the house of the Pharisee, and, like the blessed sinner (Mary Magdalene), wash her Lord's feet with her tears, dry them with her hair, caress them with kisses, and tend them with sweet ointment (ch. 31). In Bethany, with Martha, Mary and Lazarus, she should meditate on how Mary broke an alabaster box of precious ointment and poured it on Christ's head (ch. 31). This should also be the recluse's office:

Break therefore the alabaster box of your heart, and whatever you have of devotion, of love, of desire, of affection, pour it all over the head of your Spouse, worshipping man in God, and God in man.

Frangere igitur alabastrum cordis tui, et quicquid habes deuotionis, quicquid amoris, quicquid desiderii, quicquid affectionis, totum effunde super Sponsi tui caput, adorans in Deo hominem, et in homine Deum. (ch. 31, lines 1043-46)

She should meditate on John; and on Christ: 'running to the breast of his humanity, drink the milk which will nourish you': 'currens ad ubera humanitatis, lac exprime quo nutriaris' (ch. 31, lines 1093-94). She should meditate on the humanity of Christ, and on his suffering, and approach the cross and weep with the virgin mother and the virgin disciple.¹⁵ She should take Christ's body and embrace it with Joseph of Arimathaea, and anoint him, with Nicodemus. Finally she should join the Magdalene at the sepulchre and answer the Lord's greeting.

Aelred's thoughts on meditation led him to move at the end of the chapter from the 'you' he addressed at first, to 'us' in chapter 31: 'Vnde a praeteritorum recordatione ad experientiam praesentium transeamus, ut ex his quoque quantum a nobis sit diligendus Deus, intelligere ualeamus' (lines 1243-45). Then, in chapter 32, he turned

to himself. He lamented, rather as Anselm had done (see above, pp. 317-18), on his own lost chastity (although Aelred seems to be speaking only literally, not metaphorically): 'How miserable am I, who have lost my chastity, how blessed are you, whose virginity divine grace has protected': 'Quam miser ego tunc qui meam pudicitiam perdidī, tam beata tu, cuius uirginitatem gratia diuina protexit' (lines 1278-79). Rather like Anselm, he saw damnation and death as consequences of the loss of virginity:

How often tempted, how often assailed, your chastity was preserved, while I, proceeding gladly into every sin, have heaped together sustenance for the fire with which to be burned, stinking matter with which I should die, sustenance for the worms by which to be gnawed.

Quotiens tentata, quotiens impetita, tua tibi est castitas reseruata, cum ego libens in turpia quaeque progrediens, coaceruavi mihi materiam ignis quo comburerer, materiam foetoris quo necarer, materiam uermium a quibus corroderer. (ch. 32, lines 1279-83)

Thus it seems that Aelred's prejudices against women were fairly superficial. This may have been because he was writing in the English tradition as well as the Cistercian one; or because he was the man he was. Whatever the reason, on the level of spirituality, there seems for him to have been no great difference between the sexes.¹⁶ Central to twelfth-century spirituality was the yearning of the soul for the love of God, and Aelred shared with his sister his experience of how this aspiration might be fulfilled.

11) *The Ancrene Wisse*

Aelred's letter to his sister greatly influenced the *Ancrene Wisse*, particularly in its discussion of the ordering of the exterior

life (see Barratt 1980, 32-56). The work was probably composed between about 1215 and 1221 by a priest who was a member of an Augustinian community. It was addressed originally to three sisters who were living as anchoresses at Limebrook in north Herefordshire (Dobson 1976). The author was a learned man:

All who have studied *Ancrene Wisse* are agreed on its author's erudition and on the width of his reading, especially in the religious literature that was relevant to his theme: in the Bible and the commentaries on it, in Augustine, Gregory the Great, Anselm, and above all in Bernard of Clairvaux and other Cistercian authors. Shepherd⁷ rightly stresses the importance of the author's reading, and its significance as showing how closely he was in touch with the intellectual activity of the twelfth century, of which the most eminent centre was the University of Paris; he was obviously indebted to its biblical scholars and theologians. (Dobson 1976, 144)

The author's reading of Cassian and the *Vitae Patrum* should also be mentioned (Shepherd 1959, xxvii).

The recipients themselves 'were literate, had books both in French and English, and could at least recite Latin psalms, prayers, and versicles' (Dobson 1976, 252); but they were not, perhaps, very learned, since the author did not recommend much reading - he expected far less of them than Goscelin had of Eve - and he wrote for them in English rather than in Latin.

Although the work owes a great debt to Aelred's letter to his sister, it is very different in tone and content and method. It does not attempt to approach the depth of spirituality of Aelred's work, and while it is serious and affectionate in its attitude to the anchoresses, it expresses more of the prejudices concerning women

which were characteristic of its day. The author of *Ancrene Wisse* shows a firm belief in the inferiority of women, and a marked sense of the dangers inherent in contact between men and women.

In advising the anchoresses how to behave, the *Ancrene Wisse* author, like Aelred, warned them against talking at their windows. His advice was practical and wise: if a priest came to her window and she had to receive him,

hercnið hise wordes ant haldeð ow al stille. þet hwen he parteð from ow: þet he ne cunne ower god: ne ower uuel nowðer. ne ne cunne ow nowðer lastin ne preisn. (AW fol. 15b/24-27)¹⁹

He pointed out that conversation with a man could be misinterpreted by others:

Wið uten witnesse of wummon oðer of wepmon þe ow mahe iheren ne speoke 3e wið namon ofte ne longe ... for þi þe treowe is ofte mistrowet. ant te saclese bilohen. as iosep i Genesy.¹⁹ (AW fol. 17a/2-9)

But there were other arguments against permitting women to talk freely. He implied later that whereas men could engage in 'holy conversation' together, when women talk it is only to chatter:

Hweate is halí speche as seint Anselme seið. Heo grint greet þe chafleð. þe twa cheken beoð þe twa grindel stanes. þe tunge is þe cleappe. (AW fol. 17b/14-17)

An anchoress should not presume to show off her learning:

Sum is se wel ilearet oðer se wis iwordet. þet ha walde he wiste hit þe sit ant spekeð toward hire. ant 3elt him word a3ein word. ant forwurðeð meistre þe schulde beon ancre. ant leareð him þet is icumen hire forte learen. walde bi hire tale beon sone wið wise icuððet ant icnawen. (AW fol. 15b/27 - fol. 16a/4)

As a woman she was forbidden to preach to or advise any man:

Ne preachi 3e to namon. ne mon ne easki ow cunsail ne ne telle ow.
readeð wummen ane. Seint pawel forbeot wummen to preachin. Mulieres
non permitto docere.²⁰ (AW fol. 17b/24-27)

These comments reveal a much more deeply rooted sense of the inferiority of women than do Aelred's remarks on gossiping women.²¹ Aelred had written that the recluse should neither gossip nor teach, but because these would distract her from her meditations and prayers, not because women should not teach. Aelred had felt that gossiping could lead the recluse to sin (see above, pp. 346-48), but the author of *Ancrene Wisse* went further than this, and pointed out that by talking too much Eve had given the devil the opportunity to destroy her. It was not just sin for the recluse, but it had been Eve's sin:

Eue heold i parais long tale wið þe neddre. talde him al þe lesceun
pet godd hefde ired hire. ant Adam of þe eappel. ant swa þe feond þurh
hire word understod anan riht hire wacnesse. ant ifond wei toward hire
of hire forlorenesse. (AW fol. 16a/9-13)

It is at this point that the author brings in the Eve/Mary antithesis:

Vre leafdi seinte Marie dude al on oþer wise. Ne talde ha þen engel
na tale. ah easkede him scheortliche þing pet ha ne cuðe. 3e mine
leoue sustren folhið ure leafdi. ant nawt te cakele eue. (ibid. 13-16)

He stated a little later:

Vre deorewurðe leafdi seinte Marie þe ah to alle wummen to beo
forbisne. wes of se lutel speche. pet nohwer in hali writ ne finde we
pet ha spec bute fowr siðen. (AW fol. 19b/4-7)

The *Ancrene Wisse* author was not especially concerned with Mary as a model because of her virginity. But he did seem anxious about

the women's vulnerability to sexual sin. When he warned them about the dangers of looking, he again reminded the anchoresses of Eve: 'Of eue ure alde moder is iwwiten on alre earst in hire sunne nom²² in3ong of hire ehsihðe' (AW fol. 13b/11-12). The sin to which sight led Eve and to which he feared it would lead the anchoresses, was lust:

Eue biheold o þe forboden eappel. ant seh hine feier ant feng to delitin iþe bihaldunge. ant toc hire lust þer toward. ant nom ant et þrof. ant 3ef hire lauerd. low hu hali writ spekeð. ant hu inwardliche hit teleð hu sunne bigon. þus eode sihðe²³ bluoren ant makede wei to uuel lust. ant com þe dede prefter þet al moncun ifeleð. þes eappel leoue suster bitacneð alle þe þing þet lust falleð to ant delit of sunne. Hwen þu bihaldest te mon. þu art in eue point. þu lokest o þe eappel. (AW fol. 13b/15-24)

Danger lay not only in looking, but in being seen. The anchoresses were to take warning from the examples of Dinah and Bathsheba, who had caused men to sin.

Dyna ... as it teleð i Genesy.²⁴ eode ut to bihalden uncuðe wummen. 3et ne seið hit nawt þet ha biheold wepmen. Ant hwet come wenest tu of þet bihaldunge? ha leas hire meidenhad ant wes imaket hore. prefter of þet ilke werren trowðen to brokene of hehe patriarches. ant a muchel burh. forbearnd. ant te king ant his sune ant te burhmen islein ... Al pullich þe hali gast lette witten o boc forte warni wummen of hare fol ehnen. ant nim þer of 3eme þet tis uuel of dyna com nawt of þet ha seh sichen emores sune þet ha sunegede wið. ah dude of þet ha lette him leggen ehnen on hire.

Alswa Bersabee²⁵ þurh þet ha unwreah hire idauibes sihðe. ha dude him sunegin on hire se hali king as he wes ant godes prophete ... þes þurh an ehe wurp to a wummon as ha wesch hire. lette ut his heorte ant for3et him seoluen. swa þet he dude preo utnume heaued ant deadliche sunnen o Bersabees spusbruche. þe leafdi þet he lokede on. treisun ant monslaht on his treowe cniht. (AW fol. 14a/17 - fol. 14b/20)

Thus the anchoresses should not allow themselves to be seen:

Nulle ich þet nan iseo ow bute he habbe of ower meistre spetiale leaue. for alle þe þreo sunnen þet ich spec of least. ant al þet uuel of dina þet ich spec of herre. al com nawt for þi þet te wummen lokeden cangliche o wepmen. ah²⁶ [for heo vn wri3en heom in monnes echsiððe ant duden hwar þurch ha machten fallen in sunne.] (AW fol. 14b/24-28; Dobson 1972, fol. 23v/21 - fol. 24/2)

This sense of danger in any contact between men and women - even in the mere sight of a person of the opposite sex - is reminiscent of some of the desert fathers and of St Bernard (see above, p. 327). The anchoresses should be aware of their responsibility, since although neither Bathsheba nor Dinah had intended any sin, they were still responsible for the consequences of their having been seen:

forþi wes ihaten on godes la3e þet put were iwri3en eauer. ant 3ef ani were vnwri3en ant beast feolle þerin he þe unwreah þe put. hit schulde 3elden. þis is a swiðe dredful word to wummon þet schaweð hire to wepmones echne. heo is bitacned bi þeo þet vnwrið þe put. þe put is hire feire neb. hire hwite swire. hire lichte echnen. hond 3ef ha halt forð in his ech3esiððe 3et beoð hire word put bute habeon þe bet iset. Al þet þe fea3eð hire. hwet se hit eauer beo þurch hwat machte sonre fol luue awacnin al vre lauerd put cleopeð ... þe dom is ful strong to þeo þe þe put vn lideð. For heo schal 3elde þe best þet þrin bið ifallen. ha is witi of his deað biforen vre lauerd ant schal for his saule onsweren an domes dei. (Dobson 1972, fol. 24/2 - fol. 24v/4)

The anchoresses were thus grimly reminded of their responsibility.

Elsewhere the author again expressed his horror at the idea that the anchoresses should do anything that might lead to the sin of lust:

Godd hit wat as me were mucche deale leouere þet ich isehe ow alle þreo mine leoue sustren wummen me leouest hongin on a gibet. forte wiðbuhe sunne. þen ich sehe an of ow 3eouen anlepi cos eani mon on eorðe swa

as ich meane. Ich am stille of þet mare. nawt ane monglin honden. ah putten hond utward bute hit beo for nede; is wohunge efter godes grome. ant tollunge of his eorre. hire seolf bihalden hire ahne hwite honden. deð hearm moni ancre. þe haueð ham to feire as þeo þe beoð foridlet. ha schulden schrapien euche dei þe eorðe up of hare put þet ha schulen²⁷ rotien in. (AW fol. 31b/14-24)

The sense of his particular horror at sexual sin in women is reinforced in his discussion of confession. When he described how a woman should confess, he wrote:

Schrift schal beo naket. þet is naketlice imaket. nawt bisamplet feire. ne hendeliche ismaket. ah schulen þe wordes beon ischapet²⁸ efter þe werkes ... Sire ha seið þe wummon ich habbe ihaued leofmon. oðer ich habbe ibeon ha seið fol of me seoluen. þis nis nawt naket schrift. bi-clute þu hit nawt. do awei þe totagges. Vnwrih þe ant sei. Sire godes are ich am a ful stod meare, a stinkinde hore. (AW fol. 86a/15-26)

Moreover, whatever sin she had to confess, it was made worse by the fact that she was a woman:

Sire ich am a wummon ant schulde bi rihte beo mare scheomeful to habben ispeken as ich spec.. oðer idon as ich dude. for þi mi sunne is mare þen of a wepmon. for hit bicom me wurse. (AW fol. 86b/8-12)

Perhaps it is a little unfair to isolate these elements in a work which contains much more.²⁹ Nevertheless these views are in many respects closer to those of some of the desert fathers and to St Bernard than to those expressed in England before and soon after the Conquest. They are clearly present alongside the writer's affectionate concern for the recipients of his work, and his serious

effort to provide them with guidance which was also entertaining and pleasurable to read.

iii) *Hali Meibhad*

Hali Meibhad is close to the Katherine Group and *Ancrene Wisse* in date and place of origin (see HM pp. xlii-xliii).³⁰ It was written perhaps slightly later than *Ancrene Wisse*, 'as an "Epistel of meidenhad meidene froure", a letter on virginity for the encouragement of a virgin or virgins' (HM p. xlii). Thus it is in the tradition of treatises on virginity written generally by men for women,³¹ such as the letters of Ambrose, Jerome and Aelred (see also HM pp. xxiv-xxv).

Many elements in the work are familiar from these earlier writings: the *sponsa Christi* motif (e.g. HM 2/20-22, 14/20-21, 19/32); the idea of the hierarchy represented by virginity, widowhood and the married state, and their respective rewards (11/12-29); the models for the virgin provided by the Virgin Mary and Christ, as well as those of the virgin saints (7/11-12, 23/2-8, 23/14-16); the reminder that pride was dangerous, and virginity worthless without humility (20/29 - 22/31); the belief that virgins were equal to angels (2/24, 6/5-18, 9/12-14), and that the virgin state was a return to the condition of Adam and Eve in Paradise before the fall (23/11-14).³² What characterises *Hali Meibhad*, apart from the author's use of allegory - which was characteristic also of the period, - and his humour (unusual, and not unwelcome in such a text), is his disgust at the flesh.

The work opens, as had Jerome's Letter 22 to Eustochium, with a quotation from Psalm 44:

'Audi, filia, et uide, et inclina aurem tuam; et obliuiscere populum tuum et domum patris tui (Psalm 44.11)' ... 'Iher me, dohter, bihald ant bei þin eare; ant for3et ti folc ant tines feader hus.' (HM 1/1-5)

This, the author explained, meant that the virgin should scorn the flesh.³³ It is interesting that Goscelin had quoted the same verse to Eve (LC p. 37), but had discussed it in terms of exile, not the flesh. For the *Hali Meðhad* author, 'your people' were 'carnal thoughts', which incited one to carnal filth, marriage and a husband's embrace, and which led one to think of the riches and pleasures enjoyed by married women:

'Þi folc' he cleopeð, Dauð, þe gederunge inwið þe of fleschliche þonkes, þe leaðieð þe ant dreaieð wið hare procunges to flesliche fulðen, to licomliche lustes, ant eggieð þe to brudlac ant to weres cluppunge, ant makieð þe to þenchen hwuch delit were þrin, hwuch eise i þe richedom þet þeos leafdis habbeð, hu muche god mahte of inker streon awakenin ant waxen. (HM 1/16-21)

The author's method was to highlight the advantages of virginity by describing in vivid detail the tribulations of marriage: the misery and the sorrow a wife has because of her husband, the disgusting act which they perform together, the pain and misery of pregnancy, childbirth and the raising of children:

Lutel wat meiden of al þis ilke weane, of wifes wa wið hire were, ne of hare werc se wleateful þe ha wurcheð imeane, ne of þet sar ne of þet sut i þe burðerne of bearn ant his iborenesse, of nurrices wecches, ne of hire wa-siðes of þet fode fostrunge ... (HM 18/32-19/3)

Marriage, the author argued, was a descent from an angelic state into bestiality, servitude and suffering:

Nu þu art iweddēt, ant of se heh se lahe iliht - of englene illicnesse, of Iesu Cristes leofmon, of leafdi in heouene, into flesches fulðe, into beastes liflade, into monnes þeowdom, ant into worldes weane. (HM 12/10-13)

Indeed, it was a descent to a condition lower than beasts, for beasts at least limited themselves to once a year, and many did not take another mate if they lost their first:

Ah leasse þen beastes 3et; for þeos doð hare cunde, bute wit þah ha beon, in a time of þe 3er. Moni halt him to a make, ne nule efter þet lure neauer neomen oþer. Ant mon, þet schulde habbe wit, ant don al þet he dude efter hire wilnunge, folheð þet fulðe in eauereuch time, ant nimeð an efter an, ant moni þet is wurse, monie to gederes. (HM 12/31-13/3)

The author quoted St Paul (I Corinthians 7.8, 25-26, HM 10/9-11), and wrote that marriage was for the weak, to save them from deadly sin; it had been mercifully provided to furnish a soft landing in the fall from the height of virginity. He described in terms of violent physical imagery the disaster of not being caught in the fall by marriage:

For hwa se swa falleð of meidhades menske þet wedlakes heuel bedd nawt ham ne ihente, se ferliche ha driueð dun to þer eorðe þet al ham is tolimet, lið ba ant lire. (HM 10/23-26)

The author presented the misery of a woman who had to endure poverty, childbirth and a hateful husband; or even wealth and a hateful husband. He mentioned the beatings she would have to suffer, and the filthy bedroom activities too loathesome to describe; she might be

driven to poison her husband or to turn for help to witches and forsake Christ (HM 15/15-16/24). He described a farcical situation where everything for a wife goes wrong at once:

Ant hwet 3ef ich easki 3et, þah hit þunche egede, hu þet wif stonde,
þe ihereð hwen ha kimeð in hire bearn schreamen, sið þe cat et te fli-
che ant ed te hude þe hund, hire cake bearnen o þe stan ant hire kelf
suken, þe crohe eornen i þe fur - ant te cheorl chideð? (HM 19/9-13)

But his end was serious, for, he wrote, although what he said was ridiculous, nothing seems ridiculous to the one who experiences it:
'þah hit beo egede i sahe, hit ah, meiden to eggī þe swiðre
perfrommart, for nawi ne þuncheð hit hire egede þet hit fondeð (HM
19/13-15).

The *Hali Meidhad* author did not, however, suggest that women were especially vulnerable to sins of the flesh, only that they were liable to be deluded into believing that a husband and children could provide support and pleasure. Thus he contrasted the servitude of marriage on earth with the freedom found as Christ's spouse, and the support she would receive from her heavenly Lord (HM 2/19-3/10). The author himself clearly viewed sexual activity with the greatest distaste. But he voiced the view, familiar from St Augustine (see above, ch. 1), that it had not always been disgusting and shameful, God had not created it so; Adam and Eve had caused it to be thus through their sin, and harmed our nature:

... þet ilke unhende flesches brune, þet bearninde 3eohðe of þet
licomliche lust biuore þet wleatewile werc, þet bestelich gederunge,
þet scheomelese sompnunge. þet ful of fulðe, stinkinde ant untohe dede
... 3ef þu easkest hwi Godd scheop swuch þing to beonne, ich þe

ondswerie: Godd ne scheop hit neauer such, ah Adam ant Eue turnden hit to beo swuch þurh hare sunne, ant merden ure cunde. (HM 4/25-32)

The author clearly felt deeply the inevitability of the hostility between the flesh and the spirit. In the allegorical terms he employed, the war was waged between God's children and the devil's (HM 7/34 - 8/6):³⁴ Lechery, with the help of carnal will and the senses, attacked virginity (8/7-21). If virginity received a wound from the senses - such as a kiss or an improper touch - she would never recover, and the devil would caper and laugh in his victory, while the angels would look on with sorrow (8/21-25). This was a lively way of giving the usual advice, that virgins who wished to remain so should stay out of sight and avoid temptation.

Although the author was well-read (as Millett's introduction and notes make clear), he did not appear to expect much from his audience either in the way of learning or of spirituality. This perhaps reflects their lack of opportunity rather than a lack (or supposed lack) of capacity, for the author of *Hali Meðhad* did not dwell on women's inferiority, as the *Ancrene Wisse* author did. Neither did he blame Eve more than Adam for the fall; and what is particularly striking, perhaps, in view of the arguments which usually accompanied the reminder of the pains of pregnancy and childbirth, he did not mention that such pains had been part of the punishment to be endured by Eve and her descendants for her sin. The sympathy of the author, indeed, for the misery of a woman 'enslaved' by marriage is such that one wonders whether the author might have been a woman (perhaps one who had had an unfortunate experience of marriage). She would, it

must be said, have had to be (on the present evidence) unusually well-educated for a woman of her time. This, however, is speculation. Whether *Hali Meibhad* was written by a man or a woman, what did concern the author was the old conflict between the flesh and the spirit; and, as was the case with many an ascetic writer, the depth of the author's disgust with the flesh only reflects the strength of his, or her, obsession with it. The voice of the *Hali Meibhad* author is an idiosyncratic one; but in some ways the virginity treatise seems to have come full circle with *Hali Meibhad*.

NOTES

1. There was one powerful abbess, Edith of Godstow, near Oxford (founded in 1138-1139), but she appears to have been exceptional (Elkins 1988, 62-65).
2. Fifteen hundred Gilbertines lived in nine monasteries for both sexes and four for men alone, with the women probably outnumbering the men by about two to one (Elkins 1988, 125, and p. 206, note 2).
3. Webb & Walker translate 'the ornaments of silly women'. Webb & Walker's translation of the *Speculum Caritatis* is rather free, but it has been used in this chapter and in ch. 14 because it is the only one readily available, and gives the general sense adequately. The Latin text can be found in CCCM I.5-161.
4. *Spec. Car.* 2, xxiv.70, CCCM I.136, lines 1294-97.
5. *Spec. Car.* 3, xxviii.66, CCCM I.136, lines 1218-20.
6. *Spec. Car.* 3, xxviii.66, CCCM I.136-37, lines 1221-34.
7. *Spec. Car.* 3, xxviii.67, CCCM I.137, lines 1235-49.
8. Aelred's account of and comments on the episode of the Nun of Watton express a similar understanding and forgiving approach (Elkins 1988, 106-11).

9. CCCM I.637-82. Since there is no modern English translation of the work readily available, I have paraphrased or translated quotations.

10. See Dumont 1961, 13, and the references to the Rule given in the footnotes to the edition cited here (CCCM I). On the central place occupied by the Rule in Cistercian thought and practice, see above, pp. 323-25

11. See also § 3a of the same letter (PL 22.1098). Jerome gave similar advice in Letter 22.17 (PL 22.404).

12. The allusion is to a story of St Martin told by Sulpicius Severus (*Dial.* 2.12, CSEL I.194-95).

13. Pudet dicere, quot quotidie virgines ruant ... Quas nisi tumor uteri, et infantium prodiderit vagitus, ereta cervice, et ludentibus pedibus incedunt:

I cannot bring myself to speak of the many virgins who daily fall ... Unless they are betrayed by swelling wombs or by the crying of infants, they walk abroad with tripping feet and heads in the air. (Jerome, Letter 22.13; PL 22.401; Wace & Schaff VI.27).

14. This follows a passage in which Aelred has compared the life of the recluse to the preparation of linen for the altar; a passage in which the austerities she must undergo have been foremost (ch. 26, lines 716-47).

15. The themes of devotion to Christ's humanity and meditation on his suffering during the twelfth century will be discussed below, ch. 14, 11.

16. On Aelred's admiration for the spirituality of the Gilbertine nuns, see Elkins 1988, 99-101.

17. See Shepherd 1959, xxv-xxix.

18. Unless otherwise stated, references are to Tolkien's edition (1962). Contractions have been silently expanded, and MS corrections, as recorded by Tolkien, have been silently adopted.

19. Genesis 39.7-20.

20. I Timothy 2.12.

21. The attitude of the *Ancrene Wisse* author may be compared with that of Jerome, who also took the education of women seriously, but suggested their capacity to learn was greater than their suitability to teach (Letter 107.4; cited by Ferrante 1980, 13).

22. *nom* added, following Tolkien's suggestion in his note to line 12.

23. MS *sunne*. See Tolkien's note to line 19.

24. Genesis 34.

25. II Kings 11.

26. There are two leaves missing in MS CCCC 402 after this point. The remainder of the sentence has been supplied from MS Cotton Cleopatra C. vi (ed. Dobson 1972); as has also the next passage quoted. In quotations from the Cleopatra MS, the revisions noted by Dobson of 'scribe B' (whom Dobson identifies with the author, p. xciii), have been silently incorporated.

27. MS *schulien*. See Tolkien's note to line 24.

28. MS *ischawet*. See Tolkien's note to line 17.

29. Certain other aspects of the work are discussed below, ch. 14.

30. ed. Millett 1982. References for quotations are to her page and line numbers.

31. Since we cannot be certain that HM was written by a man, in references to the author throughout this discussion 'he' stands for 'he or she'. See further pp. 364-65.

32. All these ideas have been discussed in Part I above.

33. Millett points out in her note to these lines (p. 25) that in this he followed Alan of Lille. Alan in turn had based his interpretation on Jerome.

34. This may be compared with the allegory of Reason and Will, and the daughters of God, in *Sawles Warde*, which also forms part of this group of works (Bennett & Smithers 1982, no. 19). There is a useful

brief discussion of *Sawles Warde* in Millet & Wogan-Browne 1990, xxv-xxix.

CHAPTER 14: DEVELOPMENTS IN SPIRITUALITY

Several other developments which can be discerned in the period up to the early thirteenth century require some further comment because they had implications for the Lives of the Katherine Group. The spirituality of the eleventh and twelfth centuries as expressed in the work of Anselm and of the Cistercians also made its mark, as one would expect, on the Lives of the Katherine Group and the related works (the *Ancrene Wisse* and the Wooing Group).¹ As we shall see in the discussion of the individual lives below (chs 16 & 17), *Iuliene* and *Marherete* show a greater interest in emotion, and a marked preoccupation with the flesh and suffering, in comparison with their Old English counterparts. The background to these features will be discussed in this chapter.

We find during this period i) a heightened awareness of the flesh and sinfulness, together with ii) an increase in personal devotion to Christ in his humanity, particularly in his suffering. These two developments are important to an understanding of features of the Lives of the Katherine Group which give them a different character from the Old English Lives: that is, their emotional quality, and the emphasis found in them on the suffering of the saints. Related to this two-fold development was iii) the idea that man, disfigured by sin, was exiled in the 'Land of Unlikeness'.

1) Sin and corruption

The eleventh and twelfth centuries provide evidence of a pervading and profound sense of the sinfulness and corruption, both physical and spiritual, which the sinner felt before God. This has

already been noted in Anselm (above, p. 314), whose Prayers and Meditations provide vivid testimony to this new perception.² Particularly suggestive are the metaphors of disease and corruption, both animal and human, which Anselm employed to express his spiritual condition. These metaphors convey a more emphatic, indeed fulsome, sense of sinfulness, than anything found in the Old English period. In his first 'Meditation', Anselm addresses God and describes himself as 'this useless creeping thing, this foul smelling sinner', in 'tu benignus deus, tu nutris et expectas tuum inutilem vermem et foetentem peccatis'. He then elaborates on the idea of the foul smell: 'The rotting corpse of a dog smells more tolerable [to men]³ than the soul of a sinful man to God, it is less displeasing to men than that other is to God.': 'Quam tolerabilius canis putris foetet hominibus quam anima peccatrix deo! Quam infelicius ista deo quam ille hominibus!'⁴ (PM 221, lines 15-18; Schmitt III.76, lines 14-17). In his first 'Prayer to Mary', Anselm is abject and fearful before her. Here the images are of disease:

tibi sese conatur praesentare miserabilis anima mea, morbis vitiorum languida, vulneribus facinorum scissa, ulceribus flagitiorum putrida ... Sic sordibus et foetore foedatur, ut timeat ne ab ipsa misericors vultus tuus avertatur ... Rogare enim te, domina, desidero, ut miserationis tuae respectu cures plagas et ulcera peccatorum meorum, sed confundor coram te ob foetorem et sordes eorum. Horreo, domina, parere tibi in immunditiis et horroribus meis, ne tu horreas me pro eis, et non possum - vae mihi! - videri sine eis.

I long to come before you in my misery,
sick with the sickness of vice,
in pain from the wounds of crime,
putrid with the ulcers of sin ...

I am so filthy and stinking
that I am afraid you will turn your face from me ...
What I want to ask you, Lady, is
that by a glance from your mercy
you will cure the sickness and ulcers of my sins,
but before you I am confounded
by the smell and foulness of them.
I shudder, Lady, to show you all my foul state,
lest it makes you shudder at the sight of me,
but, alas for me, I cannot be seen any other way.

((Schmitt III.13-14, lines 9-30; PM 107-08, lines 12-52))

These images arise from his sense of the corrupt, and corrupting flesh.⁵

Bernard, writing in the twelfth century, expressed his view of the condition to which desires for things of the flesh (*carnalia*) brought man:

Annon confunderis sursum caput habere, qui sursum cor non habes,
corpore rectus stare, qui corde repis in terra? Annon repere est in
terra, carnem sapere, carnalia desiderare, carnalia quaerere?

Is it not shameful to lift up thy head, thou who dost not lift up thy
heart - to stand erect in body whose desire crawls upon the earth?
For to savour of the flesh, to desire carnality, to run after what is
carnal, is not this to crawl upon the earth? ('De diversis', Sermo
12.2, Leclercq & Rochais VI (1), 128; Gilson 1955, 70)

In English, the works of the Wooing Group (the manuscripts of which date from the early thirteenth century, and which are related to the Katherine Group)⁶ express the speakers' consciousness of the sinfulness which places a barrier between the sinner and God.⁷ In the 'Oreisun of seinte Marie' the speaker, 'a sorry sinful thing' prays to Mary for mercy, protection and help. Where Anselm had used metaphor,

the speaker here uses allegory, although they share the image of being wounded by sins. Here the speaker prays for Mary's help against the soul's enemies, the world, the flesh and the devil, who have wounded the sinner, and will kill her (or his) soul unless Mary will be her (his) physician. The sinner, aware of her (his) guilt, cries out for Mary's mercy:

Ich a sari sunful þing bidde þin are . þet tu beo mi motild a3eines
mine sawle fan . þet ha hire ne bitellen . ah were me ant help me
milzfule meiden . in alle mine neoden . ha habbeð monie wunden o me
nunan ifestnet . þe acwelleð mi sawle bute þu beo mi leche . ich
habbe ofte ibuhen to alle mine þreo fan . to þe feont . ant te þeo
world . ant ti mi flesches sunne . ich cnaue me schuldi . ant crie
lefdi merci . (5-12, Thompson 1958, 19)^e

As with Anselm's metaphors, the use of allegory makes the enemies here and the danger to the soul of sins seem not abstractions but the realities they were for the speaker.

The disgust at the flesh, and the obsession with it, found in *Halī Meiddhad* has already been mentioned above (pp. 360-65). The *Ancrene Wisse* author expressed his estimate of the flesh in his discussion of humility as a remedy for pride: if the anchoress was to be humble, she should remind herself that she was a vessel of filth, destined to be food for worms:

3ef þu wult beon eadmod ... þenç hwet tu hauest of þe seolf ... I þe
licome is fulðe ant unstrengðe. Ne kimeð of þet vetles swuch þing as
þer is in? Of þi flesches fetles kimeð þer smeal of aromaz oðer of
swote basme? Deale drue spritlen beoreð win berien. Breres. rose
blostmen. þi flesch hwet frut bereð hit in alle his openunges. Amid
te menske of þi neb. þet is þe fehereste deal. bitweonen muðes smeçh.

ant neases smeal. ne berest tu as twa priue þurles? Nart tu icumen of
ful slim? nart tu fulðe fetles⁹. ne bist tu wurme fode? (AW fol.
75b/3-14)

11) Devotion to Christ in his humanity and suffering

The revival and development from the eleventh century of the tradition of private prayer to Christ reveals, at the same time, a new devotion to the humanity of Christ, especially in his suffering.¹⁰ This development is found expressed in a variety of ways in different authors and texts. These will be discussed as follows: a) Anselm, b) Bernard, Aelred, and Abelard, c) the Wooing Group and the *Ancrene Wisse*.

a) Anselm

Benignissime, suavissime, serenissime: quando restaurabis mihi quia non vidi illam beatam tue carnis incorruptionem? Quia non sum deosculatus loca vulnerum, fixuras clavorum? Quia non respersi lacrimis gaudii cicatrices testes veri corporis?

Kindest, gentlest, most serene Lord,
will you not make it up to me for not seeing
the blessed incorruption of your flesh,
for not having kissed the place of the wounds
where the nails pierced,
for not having sprinkled with tears of joy
the scars that prove the truth of your body?

(Schmitt III.8, lines 63-66; PM 97, lines 124-30)

Anselm's devotion to Christ's suffering on the cross arose from his understanding of the centrality of the crucifixion in the redemption of mankind. Anselm's fullest and most systematic exposition of his doctrine of redemption was in his *Cur Deus Homo*. A convenient summary

is to be found in his 'Meditation on Human Redemption'.'' In this meditation, Anselm wrote that man could not be restored to his original state unless he received forgiveness for all his sins; but that could not be until he first made entire satisfaction (Schmitt III.86, lines 71-74; PM 232, lines 89-93). God's justice required satisfaction, but man on his own could not repay the debt he owed to God for his sin. Only the sinless son of God, as man, could repay the debt on man's behalf (Schmitt III.87, lines 82-88; PM 233, lines 103-11). Through his voluntary suffering Christ redeemed man by paying to God the debt which man owed (Schmitt III.88, lines 122-23; PM 234, lines 154-55). Thus it was through Christ's suffering and death on the cross that redemption from sin and eternal death was made possible; it was through this that man's relation to God was changed:

Quod quoniam in cruce factum est, per crucem noster Christus nos redemit ... Ecce, anima Christiana, haec est virtus salvationis tuae, haec est causa libertatis tuae, hoc est pretium redemptionis tuae. Captiva eras, sed hoc modo es redempta. Ancilla eras, et sic es liberata.

Because of that which was done on the cross, by the cross our Christ has redeemed us ... See, Christian soul, here is the strength of your salvation, here is the cause of your freedom, here is the price of your redemption. [You were a captive, but in this way you are redeemed.] You were a bond-slave and [thus] you are free. (Schmitt III.88, lines 125-31; PM 234, lines 158-65)

Hence the centrality of Christ's suffering on the cross, and the fullness of Anselm's devotion to his humanity, which in the immediately following lines of the meditation is given a eucharistic focus:

Sic es exul reducta, perdita restitua, et mortua resuscitata. Hoc mandat, o homo, hoc ruminet, hoc sugat, hoc glutiat cor tuum, cum eiusdem redemptoris tui carnem et sanguinem accipit os tuum.

By him you are brought back from exile, lost, you are restored, dead, you are raised. Chew this, bite it, suck it, let your heart swallow it, when your mouth receives the body and blood of your Redeemer. (Schmitt III.88-89, lines 131-34; PM 234, lines 165-69)¹²

b) Bernard, Aelred and Abelard

Bernard's mystical theology was devoted to the means by which the union of the soul with God in love could be realised in this life (Gilson 1955, 21).¹³ For Bernard, therefore, meditation on Christ's humanity and suffering turned on love. Bernard saw love in its two, necessarily related aspects - love for others and love for God. The scriptural text on which he drew was the first Epistle of John, chapter 4:¹⁴ 'We should love God because he first loved us' (I John 4.19). The sign that one had fulfilled this precept was the love one bore one's neighbour (I John 4.7-8). Thus through love one was enabled to approach God (I John 4.12). How was this love to be achieved? Meditation on the humanity of Christ taught one to love others, because it taught humility, mercy and compassion: 'In this humiliated God we behold humility; in this Mercy we behold mercy; this "Passion by compassion" teaches us to have compassion' (Gilson 1955, 79).¹⁵ Meditation on the humanity of Christ also reminded one that the incarnation

was one of the consequences of man's transgression, so that love for the Person of Christ is bound up with the history of a fall which need not, and should not have happened ... meditation on the Passion, and on the Resurrection that crowns it, from the very fact that it elicits a

more ardent outpouring of love, is accompanied by an expansion of charity that prepares the soul to receive the visitation of the Word' (Gilson, pp. 80-81).

Bernard's teaching on love influenced *Sawles Warde*: Liues Luue described the blessed in heaven:

Ha luuieð God wiðute met, for þet ha understondeð hu he haueð bi ham idon þurh his muchele godlec ant hwet ha ahen his deorewurðe milce to gelden, and euchan luueð oðer ase muchel as himseoluen. (337-40, Bennett & Smithers 1982, 258)

The influence of Bernard on the *Ancrene Wisse* is commented on by Geoffrey Shepherd: the author 'knows intimately a variety of Bernard's writings, and quotes from them more accurately than is his wont with other writers. He knows, too, some of the esoteric formulas of Cistercian piety' (1959, xxviii).¹⁶ Dobson, too, notes 'the obvious and pervasive debt of *Ancrene Wisse* to the writings of St Bernard and his followers' (1976, 47).

Aelred, like Bernard, turned to meditation on the humanity of Christ because it inspired love.¹⁷ But what Aelred focused on particularly was the idea of a shared humanity. Meditation on Christ's humanity - the kindness of his words, his compassion for sinners, the wretched and the sick, his love for those who hated him even while they spat on him and caused him to suffer - enabled man to overcome what was corrupting in his own humanity. Christ's love as expressed in his humanity showed what was possible for man in his.

We do injury to ourselves by indulging in the vices that corrupt our flesh, but these we can learn to shun if we will only consider the human flesh which our Saviour took, when he became man, for love of us. 'The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us' (John 8.14). We can

eschew the pleasures of the flesh if we are in the habit of thinking on Our Lord in every facet of His humanity ... and in order that we be not overcome by [the corrupting pleasures of the flesh], the remedy is to turn all our love of the flesh to the flesh of Our Blessed Lord. Finally, in order to reach the state of perfect love for our fellow man, we must take even our enemies to our hearts. But we cannot remain in this perfect state unless we think always of the patience of Our Blessed Lord and Saviour in His sufferings. (Webb & Walker 1962, 98-91)¹⁸

Abelard placed a similar emphasis on love (and he too quoted 1 John 4): Christ's incarnation was an example of love, and his passion redeemed man by awakening love.

Nobis ... videtur quod in hoc justificati sumus in sanguine Christi, et Deo reconciliati, quod per hanc singularem gratiam nobis exhibitam, quod Filius suus nostram suscepit naturam, et in ipsos nos tam verbo quam exemplo instituendo usque ad mortem perstitit, nos sibi amplius per amorem astrict, ... Redemptio itaque nostra est illa summa in nobis per passionem Christi dilectio, quae non solum a servitute peccati liberat, sed veram nobis filiorum Dei libertatem acquirit, ut amore ejus potius quam timore cuncta impleamus.

It seems to us that this is the way in which we have been justified in the blood of Christ, and reconciled to God: that by this singular favour shown to us (that his Son took our nature, and persevered until death, providing us with both teaching and example) he bound us more fully to himself by love ... And so our redemption is that great love awoken in us by the passion of Christ, which not only frees us from the slavery of sin, but acquires for us the true liberty of the sons of God, that we may fulfill all things more by love of him than by fear (1 John 4.18).¹⁹

c) The Wooing Group and *Ancrene Wisse*

In the expressions of devotion to Christ of the Wooing Group, we find both love and suffering as important themes. 'Þe Wohunge of ure Lauerd', for example, begins: 'Iesu swete iesu. mi druð. mi derling. mi drihtin. mi healend mi huniter. mi haliwei ...' (lines 1-3, Thompson 1958, 20); and the prayer has as a 'refrain' the words 'A iesu swete iesu leue þet te luue of þe beo al mi likinge' (e.g. lines 55-57, 117-19, 158-59). The language of love familiar from the Song of Songs is further enriched by the influence of that of courtly love,²⁰ as the speaker addresses Christ:

Ah hwa ne mej luue þe luueliche iesu? for inwið þe ane arn alle þe pinges igedered þet eauer muhen maken ani mon luuewurði to oðer ... Þu art lufsum on leor. þu art al schene . al engles lif is ti neb to bihalden. for þi leor is swa unimete lufsum ant lusti on to loken ... Þu art swa schene ant swa hwit. þet te sunne were dosk 3if hit to þi blisfule bleo mihte beo euenet. (lines 9-52, Thompson, pp. 20-21)²¹

Then the speaker moves on to meditate on the details of Christ's suffering; for example, on how he was bound 'swa hetelifaste þet te blod wrang ut at tine finger neiles' (lines 467-69, p. 32). In this meditation, the speaker is also mindful of the reason for such suffering; on how Christ was 'for mi luue wið cnotti swepes swungen swa þet ti luueliche lich mihte beo to torn ant to rent . ant al þi blisfule bodi streamed on a Girre blod' (lines 476-81), p. 33).²² The speaker is moved to ask, quoting Psalm 115.12, 'How can I repay you?', and answers, 'by suffering with you':

nu mai i seggen wið þe salmewrihte. Quid retribuam domino pro omnibus quae retribuit mihi. Lauerd hwat mai i 3elde þe for al þet tu haues 3iuen me . Hwat mai [i]²³ pole for þe for al þet tu poledes for me?

Ah me bihoueð þæt tu beo eað to paie . a wrecche bodi ant a wac bere
ich ouer eorðe . ant tat swuch as hit is haue 3iuen ant 3iue wile to
þi seruise . Mi bodi henge wið þi bodi neiled o rode . sperred
querfaste wið inne fowr wahes ant henge i wile wið þe ant neauer mare
of mi rode cume til þæt i dele. For þenne schal i lepen fra rode in
to reste . fra wa to wele ant to eche blisse. A . iesu swa swet hit
is wið þe to henge . forhwen þæt iseo o þe þæt henges me bi side. þe
mucheale swetnesse of þe. reaues me fele of pine. (580-602, Thompson,
pp. 35-36)

The only adequate response of the speaker to the love which Christ
manifested in his suffering, is to suffer with Christ.

This theme is also found in another prayer of the group. In the
'Ureisun of God almihti' the speaker contemplates Christ, whose arms
are outstretched on the cross as for an embrace. This image, in which
the arms outstretched in suffering on the cross are seen also as
expression of Christ's love for the humanity for whose sake he endured
such suffering, is particularly poignant and powerful.²⁴ The speaker
understands that to receive the embrace and share the joy of the lord,
one must share also in his suffering; one must suffer with the lord if
one is to follow in his steps, through pain and sorrow, to joy and
happiness:

hwil nam ich ipin ermes so istreihte. ant ispred on rode? ant weneð ei
to beon bi clupped bitweonen þine blisfulle ermes in heouene. bute he
worpe er him her. bi tweonen þine rewðful ermes oðe rode? Nai soðes
nai. ne wene hit neuer nomon . þuorh þis lowe cluppinge . me mot come
to þe hefe. þæt wile bi cluppen þe þer swuch. ase þu ert þer louerd of
leoue . he mot cluppen þe er her swuch ase þu makedest þe her .
wrecche. for us wrecches . ðæt is to seggen. hwoa so euer wile habben
lot wip þe of þine blisse. he mot delen wið þe. of þine pine on eorðe.
nis he nout treowe ifere þæt nule nout scotten iþe lure. ase iþe

bi3ete. he mot scotten efne after his euene. ƿet wule beon ƿin felawe.
liuliende louerd. he mot folewen ƿine steopes. ƿuruh sor. ant ƿurh
seoruwe. to ðe wununge . of weole: ant of eche wunne. (57-76;
Thompson, pp. 6-7)²⁵

In the following passage, however, the prayer moves on from the theme of participation in Christ's suffering to that of the crucifixion as a remedy for sin. The speaker finds himself unable to return Christ's embrace: 'A swete iesu. hwi mid ermes of luue ne cluppe ich ƿe?' (lines 77-78, Thompson, p. 7). His own sins act as a wall between him and Christ: 'Mine sunnen beoð wal bi tweone me ant ƿe' (line 90, Thompson, p. 7). Sins actually make the sinner hostile (*iueied*) towards God: 'Mine sunnen habbeð grimliche iwursed me . ant iueied me toward ƿe luueliche louerd' (lines 92-93, p. 7). Together with these images of separation and hostility, we find those of the filth and foulness which prevent the sinner from approaching God: 'ant ƿet is lutel wunder . forso ich ham wið hore horie fenliche ifuled: ƿet ich ne mei. ne ne der lufsum Godd: cumen iƿin eihsihƿe' (93-96, Thompson, p. 7).²⁶ Meditation on the crucifixion produces a tension here: the sinner is reminded of the distance between himself and God. The resolution lies in the crucifixion itself, since Christ's blood washed away mankind's sins: the blood from the five wounds washes away the sins of the sinner's five senses, Christ's wounds heal the wounds of the sinner's soul, his death deadens the desires of the flesh and the bodily lusts of the sinner:

Min heouenliche leche. ðet makedest us of ƿi seolf so mihti medicine ...
hit beo mi bote. 3if min uuel is muchel: ƿe mihte ƿer of. is more. ase
wis ase a drope of ƿine deorewurðe blode. muhte weaschen awei alle
folkes fulðe: ase wis liues louerd ƿeo ilke fif wellen of ƿine

blisfule bodie sprungen. ant striken dun strundes of blode. weasch mine filf wittes. of alle blodie sunnen. of al þet ich habbe misiseien mid eien ant mid min earen iherd. wið muðe ispeken. oðer i-smauht ant wið noese ismelled. wið eni lim mis iueld. ant wið fleschs isuneged. þine wunden helen þe wunden of mine soule. þi deað. a deadie in me flesches licunge. ant licamliche lustes. (106-21, Thompson, p. 8)²⁷

In the devotion to Christ in his humanity and his suffering in the *Ancrene Wisse* we find parallels to the motifs of the prayers of the Wooing Group, and also treatments of other aspects of the crucifixion. Janet Grayson writes in her conclusion to her study of the work:

It has always been the Passion, always Christ from the beginning. There is no phase or detail of the crucifixion so small that it cannot be found somewhere in the Rule; or so profound that it cannot be explicated by images and exempla. Yet in this inclining our author is not exceptional; in his dwelling on Christ's humanity he has illustrious precedents in the Bernardine literature that swept his age with enthusiasm. (1974, 226)

Two observations made by Linda Georgianna in her study of the *Ancrene Wisse* are also relevant here:

The emphasis upon Christ's human suffering gives rise ... not only to a more emotional and tender religious atmosphere, but also to an increased interest in human feeling itself. (Georgianna 1981, 2)

On the anchoresses to whom the *Ancrene Wisse* is addressed she writes:

the anchoress is not a corpse whose senses are deadened, but very much a living woman, struggling with herself as well as the outer world. Her sanctity must arise, like that of all other Christians, out of her struggle. (p. 54)

In the *Ancrene Wisse* the centrality of the devotion to the passion is established in Part One, the section on Devotions: the author instructed the anchoresses to kneel before their crucifix in their morning devotions and pray in memory of God's five wounds: 'falleð o cneon to ower crucifix wið þeose fif gretunges ine munegunge of godes fif wunden' (AW fol. 5a/13-14). At midday, he wrote, the anchoress should meditate as much as she was able on God's cross and on his grievous pain: 'þenche o godes rode. as muchel as ha eauer con mest oðer mei. ant of his derue pine' (AW fol. 8b/25-27). Throughout the work, when the author turned, as he did again and again, to the crucifixion, he focussed especially on Christ's wounds and on his suffering.

As in the examples from the Wooing Group, the idea of shared suffering is also found in the *Ancrene Wisse*. At the beginning of Part Six, the section on penance, the author wrote:

as seinte pawel seið. Si compatimur: conregnabimus²⁸ As 3e scottið wið him of his pine on eorðe: 3e schule scotti wið him of his blisse in heouene. (AW fol. 94a/18-21)²⁹

This passage closely parallels that quoted above from 'On Ureisun of ure Louerde' (pp. 379-80): note the use of the verb *scotten* in both.

But the author used Christ's suffering in a variety of ways throughout the work. Sometimes it was to remind the anchoress of how little she suffered in comparison. She would, for example, endure such unpleasant domestic smells as sweat and mould with patience, if she considered how much God himself had suffered from the smell of corpses rotting around him on Mount Calvary:

Hwa se pohte hu godd seolf wes i pis wit ideruet. ha walde pe derf
prof puldeliche polien. I pe munt of caluarie per ure lauerd hongede.
wes pe cwalm stowe. per leien ofte licores irotet buuen eorðe. ant
stunken swiðe stronge. he as he hongede mahte habben hare breað. wið
al his oðer wa. riht amidden his nease. (AW fol. 28a/5-11)

Similarly, in Part Four, the section on temptations, the author urged
the anchoresses to meditate, in their sufferings, on the sufferings
endured by the ruler of the world for his servants. He described
these sufferings - the mockery, the scourging, the blood, the
'poisonous' drink Christ was given when he thirsted. The author
referred his readers to the earlier passages (one of them just quoted,
above) in his work in which he had told them of how Christ had
suffered in all his five senses. If they compared their sufferings
with his, they would see how little they suffered; especially if they
considered that Christ was innocent, and did not suffer for any fault
in himself. If they suffered, they had deserved worse, and all that
they suffered was because of themselves:

Ouer alle opre pohtes in alle ower passiuns pencheð eauer inwardsliche
up o godes pinen. pet te worldes wealdent walde for his prealles
polien swucche schendlakes. hokeres. buffez. Spatlunge.
Blindfeallunge. pornene crununge. pet set him i pe heaued swa. pet te
blodi strundes striken adun ant leaueden dun to per eorðe. his swete
bodi ibunden naket to pe hearde pilar ant ibeate swa. pet tet
deorewurðe blod ron on euche halve. pet attri drunch pet me him 3ef þa
him þurste o rode ... turneð þruppe per ich spec. hu he wes ipinet in
alle his fif wittes. ant eueneð al ower wa. secness ant oðerhwet. woh
of word oðer of werc. ant al pet mon mei polien. to pet tet he polede.
ant 3e schulen lihtliche iseon hu lutel hit reacheð. nomeliche 3ef 3e
pencheð pet he wes al ladles ant pet he droh al pis nawt for him

seoluen. for he ne agulte neauer. 3ef 3e polieð wa. 3e habbeð wurse ofseruet. ant al þet 3e polieð al is for ow seoluen. (AW fol. 50a/28 - fol. 50b/18)

The symbol of the crucifixion, the cross, was also a weapon with which to beat the devil. Later on in Part Four the author advised the anchoress how to fight the temptation of lechery: when the devil, whose 'teð beoð attrie as of a wed dogge', (alluding to Psalm 21.21, which the writer goes on to quote) came 'snakerinde wið his blod flehen of stinkinde þohtes' she should beat him with her cross: 'liðere to him luðerliche mid te hali rode steaf stronge bac dundes' (AW fol. 78b/28 - fol. 79a/12). When the devil attempted to buy her soul for a momentary pleasure, she should remember the price God paid for it with his blood and death on the cross:

Hwen he for se liht wurð. for þe licunge of alust ane hwile stucche chapeð þi sawle godes deore bune þet he bohte mid his blod. ant mid his deorewurðe deað o þe deore rode. aa bihald hire wurð þet he paide for hire (AW fol. 79a/26 - fol. 79b/1)

She should make the sign of the cross with the crucifix, and pray, and seek protection in Christ's wounds. The author emphasised the pain, caused by the bluntness of the nails, which Christ endured for love of her in order to provide a hiding place for her in his wounds:

nempne ofte iesu. cleope his passiunes help. halse bi his pine. bi his deorewurðe blod. bi his deað o rode. flih to his wunden. Muchel he luuede us þe lette makien swucche þurles in him forte huden us in. Creop in ham wið þi þoht. ne beoð ha al opene? ant wið his deorewurðe blod biblodde þin heort. Ingrederere in petram abscondere fossa humo³⁰ Ga in to þe stan seið þe prophete. ant hud te i þe deoluen eorðe. þet is i þe wunden of ure lauwerdes flesch þe wes as idoluen wið þe dulle nelles as he i þe sawter long uore seiðe. Foderunt manus meas ant

pedes meos³¹ þet is. ha duluen me baðe þe vet ant te honden. ne seide he nawt þurleden. for efter þis leattre as ure meistres seggeð. swa weren þe neiles dulle. þet ha duluen his flesch ant tobreken þe ban mare þen þurleden. to pinin him sarre. He him seolf cleopeð þe toward teose wunden. Columba mea in foraminibus petre. in cauernis macerie.³² Mi culure he seið cum hud te i mine limen þurles. i þe hole of mi side. Muche luue he cudde to his leoue culure þet he swuch hudles madede. (AW fol. 79b/9-26)

Thus from the devotions with which she began the day, the anchoress could continue to turn at every point, in her every need, to the central event which informed all aspects of her life.

iii) The image of God and the Land of Unlikeness

Bernard saw man, disfigured by sin, exiled in the Land of Unlikeness:

Man is an exile. He no longer inhabits the land of his birth ... As God made him, he was a noble creature - 'nobilis creatura' - and he was so because God had created him to His own image. Disfigured by original sin, man has in fact exiled himself from the Land of Likeness to enter into the Land of Unlikeness: Regio dissimilitudinis.³³ (Gilson 1955, 45)

The lost likeness could be restored, according to Bernard, by humility. Perfect humility had been shown by Christ in becoming man, and so this is a further reason why meditation on the humanity of Christ in his suffering and humiliation occupied a central place in Cistercian - and twelfth century - mysticism (Gilson 1955, 77-79; see also above, pp. 378-79). In the *Speculum Caritatis* Aelred wrote that pride had corrupted the image of God in man. Humility and love could restore it, but the soul must place itself completely in God's hands

(Webb & Walker 1962, 11; *Spec. Car.* 1, viii.24-25, CCCM I.22-23). In contexts in which virginity was the main concern, the idea was developed that the likeness could be restored (or preserved) through virginity. The two strands (the image of the Land of Unlikeness and the idea of the restoration or preservation of the likeness of God in man through virginity) come together in the following passage from *Hali Meðhad*:

i þis worlt þet is icleopet 'lond of unlicnesse' [meiðhades mihtel
edhalt hire burde in licnesse of heouenlich cunde, þah ha beo utlahe
prof ant i licome of lam. (HM 6/15-17)

It may have been the tradition of devotion to Christ in his (perfect) humanity, together with the influence of the phrase 'conformes fieri imaginis Filii Sui' (Romans 8.29), which led to the particular emphasis found in the *Life of Christina of Markyate*: that virginity is the means by which the image of Christ (rather than the image of God in which man had been created) could be restored in man. Christina was an English recluse of the twelfth century, whose *Life* was written in Latin by a monk of St Albans, apparently a contemporary.³⁴ Christina was born in Huntingdon between 1096 and 1098. She made a vow of virginity at St Albans in about 1111 or 1112. She was forced by her parents to marry, but refused to consummate the marriage, and spent her wedding night telling her husband the story of St Cecilia and her husband Valerian (§ 10, Talbot, pp. 50-51). Christina eventually escaped from husband and parents, went into hiding, and became a recluse. In the *Life*, Christina is described as offering a penny after Mass and praying:

Domine Deus clemens et omnipotens. suscipe tu per manum sacerdotis tui meam oblationem. Tibi namque in resignatione mei ipsius denarium istum offero. Dignare queso candorem et integritatem virginitatis conferre michi quo reformes in me ymaginem filii tui (Romans 8.29).

O Lord God, merciful and all powerful, receive my oblation through the hands of Thy priest. For to Thee as a surrender of myself I offer this penny. Grant me, I beseech Thee, purity and inviolable virginity whereby Thou mayest renew in me the image of Thy Son. (§ 4, Talbot, pp. 40-41)

NOTES

1. Dobson writes that the Katherine Group, the *Ancrene Wisse* and the Wooing Group 'must have originated in a single community (Dobson 1976, 166-67, and p. 167 note 1). Thompson discusses the relationships (1958, xiii-xvi), as does d'Ardenne (1961, xliii).
2. Shepherd writes: '[The *Ancrene Wisse* author] knew and used the influential *Book of Prayers and Meditations*, collected during the twelfth century under Anselm's name. The temper of heart and mind cultivated in the Archbishop's circle at Canterbury in the early years of the twelfth century ... lived long in the religion of the English ... [The *Ancrene Wisse*] owes more to Anselmian piety than the half-dozen quotations might suggest' (1959, xxviii).
3. Ward omits 'to men' in her translation. On her translations and my use of them, see above, p. 322, note 40.
4. Note that *anima*, 'soul', is feminine; compare the following quotation (*mea, languida*, etc., and see further below, ch. 15, ii).
5. See also Anselm's 'Prayer to St Stephen', in which he describes how his soul is oppressed by the weight of the flesh (Schmitt III.54, lines 123-36; PM 181-82, lines 253-77).
6. See note 1 above.
7. See further pp. 380-81.

8. In quotations from the Wooing Group, abbreviations for 'ant' and 'pet' have been silently expanded.

9. Tolkien's suggested emendation of MS *fette*. Salu adopts the same emendation in her translation: see Salu's note, 1955, 123, in which she also comments on the expression 'food for worms'.

10. Benedicta Ward discusses the tradition of private prayer to Christ in her introduction to Anselm's *Prayers and Meditations* (1973, 38-39).

11. This Meditation was composed in 1099 as a devotional summary of *Cur Deus Homo* (Southern 1963a, 36).

12. The Meditation continues with further emotional expressions of Anselm's devotion: see Schmitt III.89-90, lines 150-83; PM 235-36, lines 189-234. For a fuller account of the centrality of the crucifixion in the doctrine of redemption in the tenth to the twelfth centuries, with particular reference to Anselm's arguments in his 'Meditation on Human Redemption' and in *Cur Deus Homo*, see Pelikan 1978, 140-143, and Southern 1963a, 100-01.

13. See further below, ch. 15, ii.

14. See Gilson's account, 1955, 22-24. What follows summarises Gilson.

15. For Bernard, there was a profound connection between humility and love (or 'charity', in Gilson's discussion.):

Charity is the 'common will' ('voluntas communis') as opposed to the 'proper will' ('voluntas propria'); ... the will common to man and God. It reigns therefore in the heart when our will desires what God's will desires. What does a man do when he practises humility? He proves that he knows his misery and judges it; he judges himself as God judges him' (Gilson, p. 72).

Since to unite one's judgement with God's judgement is to unite one's will with God's will, 'humility is already charity' (Gilson, p. 73).

16. In his note to his p. 20 line 2, Shepherd cites Bernard, on love, and also William of Thierry, a twelfth century devotional writer (p. 53).

17. For an example of Aelred's devotion to Christ in his humanity and suffering, see the final section of Aelred's *De Institutione Inclusarum*, in which Aelred wrote that in her meditation on things past, present and future, his sister should meditate on the humanity of Christ, and on his suffering (see above, p. 352).

18. *Spec. Car.* 3, v.13-16, CCCM I.111-13, lines 250-314. On the translation, see above, p. 365, note 4.

19. 'Expositio in Pauli ad Romanos' 2, PL 178.836; quoted by Georgianna 1981, 92; translation by Morris (1972, 144).

20. For some comments, in relation to the Harley Lyrics, on the ways in which secular and religious lyrics influenced one another, see Brook 1968, 16-17. The use of the language of secular love in religious contexts is discussed briefly below, p. 399 ff.

21. See also 'Ureisun of God Almihti' lines 1-12, Thompson p. 5.

22. See also 'On Lofsong of ure Louerde', especially lines 1-60 (Thompson, pp. 10-12).

23. Not in MS: see Thompson's note to line 584 (p. 50).

24. Christ is likened to a mother who opens her arms to embrace her beloved child (lines 50-54, Thompson p. 6). On the image of Christ as mother see below, ch. 15, iii. Thompson notes parallels to this and other passages in AW (referring to Day's edition of the Nero MS, 1952).

25. Compare 'On Ureisun of ure Louerde' (an incomplete version of 'On Ureisun of God almihti'), lines 49-63, Thompson, pp. 2-3.

26. The parallel passage in 'On Ureisun of ure Lauerd' is at lines 74-79, Thompson, p. 3.

27. cf 'On Ureisun of ure Lauerd', 53-99, Thompson, pp. 2-4; and 'On Lofsong of ure Louerde', 39-61, Thompson, pp. 11-12.

28. II Timothy 2.12.

29. Shepherd, in his note to his p. 3, line 9, suggests there may be a reminiscence of Bernard here (1959, 31)

30. Isaiah 2.10.

31. Psalm 21.17.

32. Canticle 2.14.

33. Millett points out that Bernard's phrase 'regio dissimilitudinis' (from which the phrase 'lond of unlicnesse' in the passage from HM quoted below is derived), is drawn in its turn from Augustine's *Confessions*; and that the ultimate source is neo-Platonic (HM, p. 32). It may be compared with the idea of the two cities, also developed by Augustine: see Millett 1982, xxvi-xxviii. It is symptomatic, incidentally, of the greater interest in emotions found in this period, that Augustine's *Confessions* overtook the *City of God* in popularity during the twelfth century. See, for example, Knowles' comments on Aelred's use of the *Confessions*, (1963, 25); and Shepherd 1959, xxvii.

34. The Life is edited and translated by Talbot, 1959. Talbot writes that the monk of St Albans, 'whoever he was, was close to Christina' (p. 6). The work was probably 'intended primarily as a work of edification for the nuns' at Markyate, the priory (about 9 miles north-west of St Alban's) which Christina founded (pp. 3 & 15). On her dates and career, see Talbot, pp. 14 ff. The St Albans Psalter (now in Hildesheim) was assembled for Christina c. 1120-30 (Kauffmann 1975, no. 29, Alexander & Kauffmann 1984, p. 93, no. 17). Christina is discussed further below, pp. 394-96.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN: FEMININE IMAGERY

A question arises, more insistently in the mind of the reader of the early Middle English lives than in the case of the lives of female saints in Old English: how was it that writers who held in many ways such a low opinion of women, as they did in this period, produced at the same time lives of saints which celebrated female sanctity? This has been partly answered already in the discussion of virginity above: such saints were made exceptional as females by virtue of their virginity.¹ Furthermore, and more straightforwardly, female saints were no doubt regarded as appropriate models for the increasing numbers of female religious.² There were, moreover, important developments in the interpretation and in the use of feminine imagery which took place during the period leading up to the Katherine Group. Since the saints' lives of the Katherine Group project particular feminine images, those of female sanctity, these developments would seem to merit examination. Perceptions of the feminine were influenced, and expressed, by: i) the flowering of the cult of the Virgin Mary; ii) new emphases in allegorical interpretations of the Song of Songs; and iii) the development of the image of Christ as mother.

1) The flowering of the cult of the Virgin Mary

During the twelfth century the cult of the Virgin Mary reached new heights.³ The reasons for the increased devotion to her at this time are not altogether clear.⁴ But one factor seems to have been the gulf felt at this time to exist between the miserable sinner and God;⁵ a gulf which could be bridged with the aid of the pure, blessed,

Virgin mother of God. Anselm's third 'Prayer to St Mary' provides one of the fullest expressions of this new depth of need and devotion:

MARIA, tu illa magna MARIA, tu illa maior beatarum MARIARUM, tu illa maxima feminarum: te, domina magna et valde magna, te vult cor meum amare, te cupit os meum laudare, te desiderat venerari mens mea, te affectat exorare anima mea, quia tuitioni tuae se commendat tota substantia mea ... Regina angelorum, domina mundi, mater eius qui mundat mundum, confiteor quia cor meum nimis est immundum, ut merito erubescat in tam mundam intendere nec digne possit tam mundam intendendo contingere ... Quid enim digne dicam matri creatoris et salvatoris mei, per cuius sanctitatem peccata mea purgantur, per cuius integritatem mihi incorruptibilitas donatur, per cuius virginitatem anima mea adamatur a domino suo et desponsatur deo suo? Quid, inquam, digne referam genitrici dei et domini mei per cuius foecunditatem captivus sum redemptus, per cuius partum de morte aeterna sum exemptus, per cuius prolem perditus sum restitutus et de exilio miseriae in patriam beatitudinis reductus?

Mary, great Mary,
most blessed of all Marys,
greatest among all women,
great Lady, great beyond measure,
I long to love you with all my heart,
I want to praise you with my lips,
I desire to venerate you in my understanding,
I love to pray to you from my deepest being,
I commit myself wholly to your protection ...
Queen of angels, Lady of the world,
Mother of him who cleanses the world,
I confess that my heart is unclean,
[and it rightly blushes] to turn towards such cleanness,
[nor can it worthily reach such cleanness
by turning to it] ...
[What] can I worthily [say to]
the mother of the Creator and Saviour,

by whose sanctity my sins are purged,
by whose integrity incorruptibility is given me,
by whose virginity my soul [is loved by her Lord]
and is married to [her] God.

What, [I say], can I worthily [reply to] the mother of my Lord
and God

by whose fruitfulness I am redeemed from captivity,
by whose childbearing
I am [freed] from eternal death,
by whose offspring I who was lost am restored,
and led back from my exile [of misery]
to my homeland [of blessedness].

(Schmitt III.18-19, lines 1-38; PM 115-17, lines 1-64)⁶

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries the title of Mary as 'mediatrix' achieved widespread acceptance. 'It was a means of summarising what had come to be seen as her two-fold function' (Pelikan 1978, 165). Christ had descended to mankind in the incarnation through Mary, and it was 'through (her) we have access to the Son ... so that through (her) he who through (her) was given to us might take us up to himself':

Per te accessum habeamus ad Filium ... ut per te suscipiat nos qui per te datus est nobis (Bernard, 'In Adventu' 2.5, Leclercq & Rochais IV.174; Pelikan 1978, 165)⁷

The devotion to the Virgin of Bernard and the Cistercians was profound. The Cistercian order 'was dedicated to the Virgin, her image appeared on the seals of its abbeys, its members wore white in honour of her purity, sang the antiphon *Salve Regina* at vespers, and began the custom of building a special lady chapel in their churches' (Warner 1976, 131). Through the Cistercian influence the cult of

Mary, 'with its character of personal intensity, was - carried all over Europe' (ibid.). Although in general the Cistercians, like most monks, wanted as little as possible to do with womankind,⁹ Mary was the unique exception.⁹

The extent of the devotion to the Virgin can be seen in England, in works produced for, about, and perhaps, it has been argued (in the case of the Wooing Group) by women.¹⁰ Among the works of the Wooing Group, there are two devotional pieces addressed to Mary: 'On Lofsong of ure Lefdi', and 'Þe Oreisun of Seinte Marie' (Thompson 1958, 16-19). 'On Ureisun of ure louerde' and 'On Ureisun of God almihti' also approach their conclusions with addresses to Mary (Thompson, pp. 1-9). The *Ancrene Wisse* contains a long section on prayers to Mary in the section on Devotions (AW, fol. 9a/29 - fol. 11a/18).¹¹ In *Sawles Warde* Liues Luue described Mary enthroned in heaven, and related how he had seen her praying to her son for those who served her, and how he gladly granted all that she asked:

Ich iseh on heh ouer alle heouenliche wordes þe eadi meiden his moder, Marie inempnet, sitten in a trone se swiðe briht wið 3immes istirret, ant hire wlite se weoleful þet euch eorðlich liht is þeoster þera3eines. Þear Ich iseh as ha bit hire deorewurðe sune se 3eornliche ant se inwardliche for þeo þet hire seruið, ant he hire 3etteð bliðeliche al þet ha bisecheð. (273-78, Bennett & Smithers 1982, 256)¹²

A saint's life in which Mary played a more intense and personal role than she did in earlier Lives was the *Life of Christina of Markyate*.¹³ According to the Life, Christina had been afforded the special protection of the Virgin from before her birth. When her

mother was pregnant, a dove flew from the monastery of Our Lady (probably the Augustinian priory of St Mary's, Huntingdon) between the feasts of the Assumption and the Nativity of the Virgin, and remained with her mother a week, taking shelter in the sleeve of her tunic (§ 1, Talbot 1959, 34-35).

[This] was evidently meant to convey that the child would be filled with the Holy Spirit who hovered over Jesus in the form of a dove ... and that she would be taught by the example and strengthened by the protection of Blessed Mary, ever a virgin, and be holy in mind and body.

Monstratum est igitur tali presagio. quicquid illud erat quod intus latebat replendum fore spiritu sancto qui super dominum ihesum in specie columbe apparuit ... Nec non beate marie semper virginis et erudiendum exemplo et communiendum presidio ut esset sanctum corpore et spiritu (§ 2, pp. 34-35)

When her parents wished her to marry, they prevented her from continuing to visit the monastery of Our Lady

because it became apparent that whenever she paid a visit there she came back confirmed and strengthened in her resolution.

prohiberent eam ab ingressu monasterii beate Dei genitricis semper virginis eo quod videbatur illis. quociens id intrabat soliditatis aliquid suis pristinis viribus contribuere. (§ 8, pp. 46-47).

Christina received support and encouragement at various times from visions of the Virgin.¹⁴ On one occasion, Christina had been made ill and driven almost to despair because of her desire, instigated by the devil, for a cleric with whom she had formed a friendship. She was at last enabled to overcome the temptation through an experience in which she identified with Mary as Christ's mother; Christ came to

her in the guise of a small child, and remained with her for a whole day:

so the maiden took Him in her hands, gave thanks, and pressed Him to her bosom. And with immeasurable delight she held Him at one moment to her virginal breast, at another she felt His presence within her even through the barrier of her flesh.

accipiens itaque virgo puerum in manibus: gracias agens astrinxit sibi ad pectus. Et inestimabili delectacione nunc et virginali illum in suo tenebat sinu nunc [et]¹⁵ intra se immo per ipsam cratem¹⁶ pectoris apprehendebat intuitu. (§ 45, pp. 118-19)¹⁷

This complete identification with the Virgin - emotional, spiritual, and physical - freed Christina from fleshly desires thenceforth.

11) The Song of Songs

The Song of Songs was 'the book which was most read, and most frequently commented on in the medieval cloister', and commentaries on it, 'particularly St Bernard's, were very widely read in the twelfth century, in monasteries of all observances' (Leclercq 1978, 106). At this period two developments took place in the significance attributed to the bride in allegorical interpretations of the Song. The first was one manifestation of the flowering of devotion to Mary. The Song had long been interpreted as symbolising the union between the Lord and Israel (Rowley 1937, 338; Warner 1976, 124-125), between God and his church (since Origen; see Rowley 346-47; and above, p. 125), and between Christ and the consecrated virgin (Butler 1967, 110; Warner, 126-27, Brown 1989, 274; and p. 126 above); but Ambrose in the fourth century had already suggested an identification of the bride with the Virgin Mary (Rowley, 342, Musurillo 1962, 130, Leclercq 1979, 38).

This interpretation was revived and received particular emphasis in the twelfth century, especially among the Cistercians.¹⁹ This allegorical identification with Mary reinforced the association of the bride of the Song with virginity, that of Mary and of all holy virgins (Leclercq 1979, 40).

Also in the twelfth century, Origen's other, hitherto rather neglected interpretation was revived: the Song expressed the relationship between the soul and the Word. The sinless soul was the virgin bride of Christ. Since the grammatical gender of the word for soul in both Greek (*psyche*) and Latin (*anima*) is feminine (regardless of the sex of the person whose soul it is), the nuptial imagery could be interpreted as expressing the yearning of the soul in either sex for the love of God.²⁰ The feminine gender of the word for soul allowed the continuation of this allegorical identification in English, since (insofar as grammatical gender still survived at this date), early Middle English *sawle* was also feminine.²⁰ The interpretation was common from Anselm onwards (see above, p. 318, & p. 322, note 40), although Bernard perhaps did most to popularise it, through his sermons on the Song of Songs (Butler 1967, 110-19, Leclercq 1979, 50-51).

The turning of attention towards the relationship between the individual soul and God was characteristic of the more emotional approach and greater personal devotion which we find in the period. A word should be said in this connection about the influence of secular love poetry. The literature of courtly love, with the refinement of its forms, and the sophistication of its analysis of feeling,

permeated the literary consciousness of the period; so that we find in religious texts (such as those of the Wooing Group and the Lives of the Katherine Group), which express the relationship of love between God and his spouse, a confluence of the language of the Song of Songs with that of the poetry of secular love.

Nuptial imagery from the Song of Songs is found several times in the *Ancrene Wisse*; in most cases the author wishes the anchoress herself to identify with the spouse of the Song;²¹ but he does also refer to the bride as both the church and as the soul: 'iesu cristes luue toward his deore spuse. þet is hali chirche. oðer cleane sawle. passeð alle' (AW fol.107b/1-2). His comment on Canticle 1.1 is derived from Bernard's interpretation of the verse, that the kiss is the expression of the union between the soul and Christ:²²

[tu] schuldest ipin heorte bur biseche me cosses [seið ure lauerd]. as mi leofmon þet seið to me i þet luue boc. Osculetur me osculo oris sui. þet is. Cusse me mi leofmon wið þe coss of his muð muðene swetest. þis coss leoue sustren is a swetness ant a delit of heorte swa unimete swete. þet euch worldes sauur is bitter þer to3eines. Ah ure lauerd wið þis coss ne cusseð na sawle. þe luueð ei þing buten him ant te ilke þinges for him þe helpeð him to habben. (AW fol. 27a/12-20)

One of the most interesting uses of the bridal image in the *Ancrene Wisse* is in a passage in which the author describes how Christ's love for the soul surpasses all earthly love. Christ's love can restore virginity (that is, a state of sinlessness), to his spouse, the soul, even if she has 'committed adultery with the devil': however seriously she has sinned, when his beloved comes back to him,

he makes her a virgin anew. Finally, the author identifies the two qualities which make the soul a virgin:

Fowr heaued luuen me ifind i þis world: bitweone gode iferen. bitweone mon ant wummon. bi wif ant hire child. bitweone licome ant sawle. þe luue þet iesu crist haueð to his deore leofmon: ouergeað þeos fowre. passeð ham alle ... for þah þe sawle his spuse forhori hire wið þe feond under heaued sunne. feole 3eres ant dahes: his mearci is hire eauer 3arow hwen ha wule cumen ham: ant leten þen deouel ... Ne beo neauer his leof forhoret mid se monie deadliche sunnen : sone se ha kimeð to him a3ein: he makeð hire neowe meiden ... Gode werkes ant treowe bileaue. þeose twa þinges beoð meiðhad isawle. (AW fol. 106b/2 - fol. 107a/2)²³

The language of the Song of Songs pervades the works of the Wooling Group. In the opening section of 'Þe Wohunge of ure Lauerd', for example, the feminine speaker addresses her lover in an intense personal outpouring of love for him, which suggests that it is the soul who addresses him (1-79, Thompson 1958, 20-22). However, as regards the use of the nuptial imagery in the group as a whole, as Thompson rightly comments, 'the mystical marriage is symbolical; but whether, in any particular instance, the *himmelsbraut* is a particular woman, or man (the soul in either sex being feminine), or humanity as a whole, or Holy Church, or the world, or any complex of these, is often very difficult to decide' (pp. xxii-xxiii).

Before we leave this part of the discussion, something should be said about the use of this kind of imagery, which originated in the Song of Songs and other 'nuptial' scriptural texts;²⁴ medieval writers, as we have seen, made use of the imagery in their own works (it was not just a matter of interpretations of the scriptural texts).

There is something of a paradox in the use of feminine and erotic imagery in an ascetic context, where the tendency was to want to exclude the female and the erotic. There is perhaps no single explanation, but various possibilities will be considered here briefly.

a) In a post-Freudian age a Freudian interpretation immediately suggests itself, and should be mentioned if only to be dismissed: that the phenomenon was evidence of sublimation of sexual desires. This seems to be the basis for Leclercq's (rather subtle) explanation of Bernard's use of such language. Leclercq argues that Bernard effects

a sublimation of a basic human impulse, that of love ... he uses a genuine language of human love made familiar to his monks through courtly literature, if by no other means. But by using biblical language to express the human impulses and emotions he transports human love to a higher plane, where the figures in the human drama become transformed into symbols of God and his beloved people, or of the human soul beloved by God and with whom the monks could readily identify. By the words of the inspired texts the emotions of the hearers are purified of their carnal elements, and the strong emotive power channelled into motivation for service of Christ in love. (1979, 103)

Erich Fromm, however, in his study of the psychology of love, points out what he regarded as Freud's error

in seeing in love exclusively the expression - or sublimation - of the sexual instinct, rather than recognising that the sexual desire is one manifestation of the need for love and union. (Fromm 1975, 35)

Moreover, while it is possible to understand a channelling, a re-directing of emotion such as Leclercq describes, there remains a sense

of incongruity in the idea that erotic language could 'purify the emotions of the hearers of their carnal elements'.

b) There is another passage in Fromm's study which is pertinent to our concern here with the soul's expression of longing for God:

Our need to love lies in the experience of separateness and the resulting need to overcome the anxiety of separateness by the experience of union. The religious form of love, that which is called the love of God, is, psychologically speaking, not different. It springs from the need to overcome separateness and to achieve union. (1975, 56-57)

If the need to love God is understood as a manifestation of the basic human need to love, it is easier to understand how the language of secular love may justly and effectively be used in the context of religious love; even though the two kinds of love belong to realms of experience which are otherwise generally regarded as so very different.²⁵

c) Elizabeth Williams has put forward an interesting suggestion as to why men used the feminine when speaking of themselves: 'If woman is weak in relation to man, man is also weak in relation to God ... what better image can there be for the human soul than the womanly one - frail, susceptible and doomed to suffer, yet with the way of security open to it if it will only submit to the abiding protection of the love of God who seeks it with a lover's passion?' (Fell 1984, 192-93).²⁶ This, however, does not altogether account for the presence of the erotic.

d) Perhaps the most likely explanation (as well, possibly, as the most obvious one), lies in the traditional habit of reading every text

in symbolic terms. The association of the bride of the Song firstly with Israel, then with the Church and with the Virgin (see above, p. 396), had depended on a dissociation of the nuptial image from any literal reference. Thus the bride in these allegorical interpretations was connected with particular, selected images of the feminine: with virginity and with motherhood; or with a combination of the two in the case of the image of the Church as a pure bride and mother, or that of Mary as Virgin Mother. The Song of Songs had almost always been read by commentators purely allegorically,²⁷ with ideal images of the feminine separated from literal references to the female.

iii) Christ as Mother

It is perhaps this same process of dissociation which allowed the imagery of motherhood to be applied to Christ and other male figures. This imagery was common from Anselm onwards. In Anselm's 'Prayer to St Paul', Paul is addressed as 'sweet nurse, sweet mother', 'dulcis nutrix, dulcis mater' (PM 152, line 362; Schmitt III.39, line 179); and Christ is addressed as mother: his death is seen as a childbirth, for his death gives life:

Et tu, Iesu, ... nonne et tu mater? ... Desiderio enim gignendi filios ad vitam mortem gustasti, et moriens genuisti.

And you, Jesus, are you not also a mother? ... For, longing to bear sons into life, you tasted of death, [and dying gave birth]. (Schmitt III.40, lines 197-203; PM 153, lines 397-410).

St Paul and Christ are both fathers and mothers, with both paternal and maternal aspects:

Patres per auctoritatem, matres per benignitatem. Patres per tuitionem, matres per miserationem.

Fathers by your authority, mothers by your kindness. Fathers by your [protection], mothers by your mercy. (Schmitt III.40, lines 207-08; PM 154, lines 423-24)

Aelred asks his sister, in her meditation on the events leading up to the crucifixion, to run to the breasts of Christ's humanity and drink the milk which will nourish her (*De Inst. Incl.* ch. 31, lines 1093-94, CCCM I.668; see above, p. 352). Ayto & Barratt point out that Aelred also refers to 'the maternal breasts of Christ' and 'the milk of consolation' which the soul may find there, in the *Speculum Caritatis* 2, xix.59 (CCCM I.94, lines 1091-93; Ayto & Barratt 1984, note to line 819). Compare a further use of the idea of milk, alongside blood, in Aelred's letter to his sister: at the crucifixion, when Christ's side is pierced and blood and water flow from the wound, Aelred tells his sister to consume them, for the blood has become wine to intoxicate her, and the water has become milk to nourish her. This dense passage refers also to Cant. 5.1: 'I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk':

Tunc unus ex militibus lancea latus eius aperuit, et exiuit sanguis et aqua (John 19.34). Festina, ne tardaueris, comede fauum cum melle tuo, bibe uinum tuum cum lacte tuo. Sanguis tibi in uinum uertitur ut inebrieris, in lac aqua mutatur ut nutriaris. (ch. 31, lines 1186-90, CCCM I.671)

The milk here seems also to take on a eucharistic significance, since, in the eucharist, the body and blood of Christ gave spiritual nourishment.²⁸

In 'On Ureisun of ure Louerde' Christ on the cross is likened to a mother: 'he openep swa þe moder hire earmes hire leoue child forto cluppen' (43-44; Thompson 1958, 2).²⁹ Here, and in the case of Aelred, the image seems to be a means of approaching Christ in his love and his humanity, so that the soul could be led to the love of God.

The most comprehensive studies of the image to date are those of Caroline Bynum (1982 & 1986).³⁰ Bynum observes that in twelfth century Cistercian writing

references to God as mother usually occur ... as part of a general picture of the believer as child or beginner, totally dependent on a loving and tender God ... thus the most frequent meaning of mother-Jesus is compassion, nurturing, and union.

This, she writes,

appears to contrast with other medieval uses of the theme. Anselm of Canterbury's strong emphasis on Christ's sacrifice (the mother who dies in giving birth to the soul), which is frequently found in later writers, is not very prominent in twelfth century Cistercians. (Bynum 1982, 150-51)

Bynum also identifies another tradition in the use of maternal imagery:

The use of maternal language that we find in twelfth and thirteenth century scholastic writers (e.g. Peter Lombard, Abelard, Thomas and Bonaventure) ... seems to convey a different meaning and be part of a somewhat different tradition. In these texts much of the maternal imagery refers to Christ as the Wisdom of God or to the Holy Spirit; it speaks primarily of God as creator of life or illuminator of knowledge. (1982, 151)

Bynum discusses the use of the feminine by twelfth century monks, and writes in her conclusion:

The female (or woman) and the feminine are not the same. The former is a person of one gender; the latter may be an aspect of a person of either gender. Thus the attitudes of a man toward the feminine (as distinct from women) may reflect not so much his attitudes toward his mother, his sister, females in the community, what attracts him sexually, and so forth, as his sense of the feminine aspects of himself. (1982, 167-68)

One should add to this psychological analysis that due weight should also be given to the symbolic and allegorical modes of thought which informed devotional literature; the exegetical tradition enabled maternal imagery, associated with the ideal motherhood of the Virgin and the Church, and with Wisdom, to be applied to Christ.

It is against this background of changed attitudes towards women, and new concerns in spirituality and its expression, that the saints' lives of the Katherine Group must be read. Although these lives continue to demonstrate the qualities and powers traditionally associated with virginity, they also express in various ways the developments which have been described above.

NOTES

1. See ch. 5 above.
2. See p. 340 above. On the audience of the Katherine Group and related works see Dobson 1976, 158, 167-68. Dobson also suggests that

the three sisters for whom the *Ancrene Wisse* was primarily written were themselves christened Katherine, Margaret and Juliana (p. 138).

3. Pelikan 1978, 160-173, Graef 1963, and Warner 1976, ch. 8.

4. Pelikan 1978, 160.

5. See above, p. 369 ff.

6. On the translation, see above, p. 322, note 40.

7. On Mary as mediatrix in AW see Grayson 1974, 21-22.

8. See above, ch. 12, & p. 341.

9. Compare the attitude noted by Musurillo in the Benedictine, Bernard of Cluny, who was writing in the mid-twelfth century. Bernard wrote a collection of Marian pieces called the 'Mariale' (a word formed like the Latin 'Missale') on Mary ... Mary represents the divine quality of mercy, interceding for the sinner against the austere justice of the eternal Father ... [This was a] welcome note in the poetry of the man who wrote in 'On Contempt of the World', "Women are beasts; their sins are like the sands" (Musurillo 1962, 139-40).

10. See Thompson 1958, xxiv; although Dobson dismisses the suggestion that the Wooing Group may have been written by a woman as 'merely fanciful' (1976, 154, note 3). In the absence of conclusive evidence either way, perhaps an open mind should be kept on the issue. Elizabeth Williams writes that 'one inevitably thinks of [the poet] as male, though there is no reason why he should be' (Fell 1984, 192).

11. Grayson discusses the devotions to Mary in her Ch. 1 (1974, 17-30).

12. For an account of the development of the image of Mary as queen in western art and hymnody in the twelfth century, see Warner 1976, ch. 7, especially pp. 113-16.

13. On Christina see above, pp. 386-87, & p. 390, note 34.

14. e.g. § 42, pp. 108-11, § 49, pp. 124-25.

15. Not in Talbot. See note 17 below.

16. Talbot 'cratam'.

17. The section of the manuscript (MS Cotton Tiberius E I) containing this passage is damaged. Talbot's restorations have not been indicated here. My emendations to his printed text are noted.

18. For the part played by the liturgy in this process, see Leclercq 1979, 37-40. The interpretation was not, as Warner assumes (1976, 128-31), one of those developed by Bernard in his sermons on the Song of Songs.

19. Perhaps the fact that the soul had already been personified in Greek (as in the legend of Cupid and Psyche) influenced Origen in his identification of the bride of the Song with the soul. Grammatical gender may account, at least in part, for a number of other female personifications: e.g. *ecclesia* is a feminine noun in Latin and in Greek; so too are a large number of nouns for abstracts often personified in allegories, e.g. *sapientia* (Greek *sophia*, Hebrew *hokmā*); *prudentia* (& Greek *sophrosyne*); *philosophia* (Latin & Greek; and cf. the tenth-century Anglo-Saxon drawing of Philosophy as a very imposing female figure holding a book and a sceptre, which forms the frontispiece of a MS of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*: Trinity College, Cambridge, MS O.3.7; *Golden Age of Anglo-Saxon Art* no. 33). 'Faith', 'hope' and 'charity' are all also feminine nouns in both Latin and Greek. An important factor in the development of such personifications must be that in a language with grammatical gender a feminine noun must be referred to, subsequent to its first appearance, by a feminine pronoun; furthermore, if one wished to personify a noun of feminine gender, one would presumably have little choice but to personify it as female. The habit of female personification, particularly where the personification is a traditional one, seems to linger even when a language no longer retains grammatical gender (cf. Modern English 'Nature').

20. From OE *sawol*, fem.; see d'Ardenne 1961, 230.

21. e.g. AW fol. 12b/25-27 (cf. Canticle 1.5-6); fol. 23b/16-22 (cf. Canticle 2.14); fol. 25b/15 ff (cf. Canticle 2.10, 14).

22. 'The "kisses of his mouth" become, in Bernard's sermon, the special symbol of the moment of ecstatic union' (Warner 1976, 129). See also Leclercq 1979, 51.

23. The author's figurative use of the ideas of sexual sin and virginity may be compared with the passage from Anselm quoted above, pp. 317-18.

In the same section of AW (Part Seven, the section on Love), we also find the story of Christ the lover knight who woos the lady (who does not return his love): the soul, besieged by devils. Grayson (1974) discusses this fully in her Chapter Seven; see especially pp. 173-79, & 193-94.

24. See above, p. 125.

25. The fact that the association of erotic imagery with religious meanings is found in other cultures also, in Islam (Sufism), Hinduism, and even in some forms of Buddhism, suggests that the association of the two may well be a natural step.

26. Caroline Bynum has made a similar suggestion (1986, 268).

27. The fact that the Song of Songs formed part of holy writ precluded a literal reading of it. Leclercq points to just one exception in the middle ages, a French rabbi of the thirteenth century (1979, 30). One can also compare the tradition of personifying abstract qualities as female, such as Philosophy (as in Boethius), or Wisdom (in the Wisdom books of the OT), or by Prudentius in his *Psychomachia*. See note 19 above.

28. Bynum 1986, 263, for a similar argument.

29. See also 'On Ureison of God Almihti' 50-54, Thompson p. 6; and AW fol. 62b/6-12.

30. On the twelfth century in particular, see Bynum 1982, 111-62. Bynum notes that maternal imagery was also popular with the Cistercians to describe both the Virgin and the Church (1982, 147).

PART IV: THE LIVES OF THE KATHERINE GROUP

CHAPTER SIXTEEN: *SEINTE IULIENE*

Although the story of *Seinte Iuliene* is the same as that told by Cynewulf, its effect is quite different: it is less formal, and its appeal is less abstract than that of the Old English. This is due to the influence of some of the concerns, discussed above, which distinguish the spirituality, devotional practices, and emotional temper of the period in which this version was produced from that in which Cynewulf's *Juliana* was written. With these concerns in mind, *Seinte Iuliene* will be discussed under the following headings: i) Emotion and identification; ii) Humour; iii) Suffering; iv) Love and the *sponsa Christi* motif; v) Juliana as a model for the audience of *Seinte Iuliene*.

1) Emotion and identification

The saint and her opponents are presented on a more sympathetic and human level than they are in Cynewulf's version. *Seinte Iuliene* invites a greater emotional engagement through a closer examination of motive, and even the occasional use of humour (see section ii below) - an approach rather different from that of Cynewulf's more symbolic presentation of the opposing viewpoints. The effect of the sympathetic presentation of the saint is to encourage the audience to identify with her and to share her experience of need and suffering. At the same time the more sympathetic presentation of her opponents acknowledges the reality, and even some of the attraction, of sinful-

ness, with which it is perhaps all too easy for the audience to identify.

The story is preceded by a prayer of intercession which incidentally explains the purpose of its translation from the Latin and its telling: it is 'wið þon þet teos hali leafdi in heouene luule us þe mare, ant þurh þis lihinde lif leade us to þet eche þurh hire eadi erndunge þet Crist is swiðe icweme' (p. 3).¹ Although prayers for intercession were a feature of devotion throughout the Middle Ages, the placing of such a prayer here gives the need for the help of the saint a certain emphasis. The prayer also involves the audience at the outset of the story.²

In the course of the telling of the story the audience is encouraged to identify with the saint - rather as the individual was encouraged to identify with Christ, in meditation on all aspects of his life and death (see above, p. 373 ff.). This identification is encouraged both through the presentation of the situations in which the saint finds herself, and in the emotional response elicited by a closer attention to motive and feeling than is found in Cynewulf's version.

The initial conflict faced by the saint is a standard motif in the Lives of virgin martyrs; but the (then relatively recent) experience of Christina of Markyate (see above, pp. 386-87) reminds us that such a situation need not have been remote from some of the audience of *Seinte Iuliane*.³ Like Christina, Juliana finds a suitor forced upon her against her will. She goes to the church, rather as Christina went to the monastery (see above, p. 395), for support:

[ha] eode to chirche euche daheðes dei to leornin godes lare, biddinde
 3eorne wið reowfule reames þet he wissede hire o hwuche wise ha mahte
 witen hire meiðhad from monnes man unwemmet. (p. 7)

The saint here shows more emotion and need ('biddinde 3eorne wið
 reowfuk reames') than she does in Cynewulf's version, where her visits
 to the church are not mentioned.⁴ The Latin writes of the visits, but
 without the degree of emotion expressed by the Early Middle English:
 'per singulos dies uacans orationi concurrebat ad ecclesiam. ut
 diuinos apices intelligeret' (p. 4). Similarly, whereas Cynewulf
 omits the prayer of the Latin when Juliana is shut into prison, this
 version gives her a lengthy prayer. As is frequently the case with
 prayers within saints' lives, this one is instructive, for it
 recapitulates various episodes of Christian history. Juliana speaks
 of occasions in Old Testament history when God has helped those who
 needed him (Daniel among the lions, the three young men in the
 furnace, and the people of Israel fleeing from Egypt). Her prayer
 expresses her own need, as she prays in the darkness of the prison for
 the strengthening of her faith, and for help and guidance (pp. 27-29):

Heo, as ha prinne wes, i þeosternesse hire ane, feng to cleopien to
 Crist ant bidde þeos bone: 'Lauerd, godd almihti, mi murhðe ant mi
 mede ... þu sist al hu ich am bisteabet ant bistonden, festne mi
 bileaue. Riht me ant read me, for al mi trust is on þe. Steor me ant
 streng me, for al mi strengðe is of þe ... ' (p. 27)⁵

Again in contrast to the Latin, Juliana is also given a motive
 for her initial response to Eleusius. Her demand that he should
 attain high rank before she will approach (*neolechin*) him is made in
 order to give herself more time, 'for to werien hire wið him summe

hwile' (p. 7). This suggests a natural human impulse to postpone the conflict, rather than the fickleness or prevarication unbefitting the saint which is the effect of the less analytical Latin:

Eleusius uero sponsus eius nuptiarum compleri festiuitatem cupiebat. Illa autem dicebat ad eum. Dignitatem prefecture dum ministraueris: nullo modo possum tibi coniungi. Hec audiens eleusius ... (pp. 4-6)⁶

When she voices her rejection of Eleusius on the grounds that she is wedded to another, her father Affricanus rebukes her with an appeal to her filial duty:

Me hwet is he, þes were þet tu art to iweddēt, þet tu hauest wiðute me se forð þi luue ilenēt, þet tu letest lutel of al þet tu schuldest luuiēn? (p. 13)⁷

Eleusius makes the same kind of appeal to her:

Ant loke alswa þe lahen as al þet cun, þet tu art of icumen ant akennēt, on leueð ant luueð! Hwi leauest tu ham þe ane, ant wurðeð ha þe se laðe? (p. 19)⁸

These arguments would no doubt be familiar to any daughter in a similar position. Later, when she prays in prison, Juliana expresses her isolation - her family, and those who should be her friends are her enemies (we may recall Christina again):

Mi feader ant mi moder, for þi þet ich nule þe forsaken, habbeð forsake me, ant al mi nestfalde cun þet schulde beo me best freond, beoð me meast feondes. (p. 27)⁹

A different kind of addition to the Latin serves to give Juliana's rejection of her suitor depth and force. This is the rich

description of the procession in a grandly decorated chariot through the streets when Eleusius has achieved the rank demanded by Juliana:

Al þe cure wes ouertild þet he wes itohen on wið purpres ant pelles,
wið ciclatuns ant cendals ant deorewurðe claðes, as þe þet se heh
þing hefde to heden ant se riche refschiþe to rihten ant to readen.
(p. 7)

These details convey a more vivid sense of what Juliana is rejecting on the grounds of her faith than the rather distant wealthy heathen man of rank of the Old English.

As well as the more sympathetic presentation of Juliana as a person, not just a symbol, *Seinte Iuliane* also takes a more human interest in Eleusius and his position. Cynewulf had established the fact of Eleusius' desire for Juliana (lines 26-28; see above, p. 166). This version describes his feeling, - which is like that of a lover from the secular literature of courtly love:

felde him iwundet inwið in his heorte wið þe flan þe of luue fleoð,
swa þet him þuhte þet ne mahte he nanes-weis wiðute þe lechnunge of
hire luue libben. (p. 5)

When Juliana is brought before him, he is moved by her beauty:

As he biseh ant biheold hire lufsume leor, lilies ilicnesse ant rudi
ase rose, ant under hire nebscheft al se freoliche ischapet, weorp a
sic as a wiht þet sare were iwundet - his heorte feng to heaten, ant
his mearl mealten; þe rawen rahten of luue þurh euch lið of his limes
- ant inwið bearnde of brune swa ant cwakede as of calde, þet him
þuhte in his þonc þet ne bede he i þe worlt nanes cunnes blisse bute
hire bodi ane, to wealden hire wið wil efter þet he walde.
(pp. 17-19)

Some of his symptoms, however, are those of lust, a desire to possess her body.¹⁰

It is no surprise after this that his anger should also affect him physically: 'þe reue feng to rudnin i grome of great heorte' (p. 23); 'feng his neb to rudnin ant tendrin ut of teone' (p. 25).¹¹ When towards the end Juliana remains unhurt by the fire prepared for her because the flames are quenched by an angel, the description of Eleusius reduced in his anger to the likeness of a beast is more detailed than those of Cynewulf or the Latin:

þe reue seh hit acwenct ant bigon to cwakien, se grundliche him gromede, ant set te balefule beast, as eauer ei iburst bar þet grunde his tuskes, ant feng on to feamin ant gristbeatien grisliche up o þis meoke meiden. (p. 61)¹²

This may be compared with the description of the effects of anger in the *Ancrene Wisse*: 'Wreaððe ... reaueð mon his wit ant changeð al his chere. ant forschuppeð him from mon' in to beastes cunde' (fol. 32b/24-26). The anchoress prone to anger is likened to a pelican (fol. 32a/19 ff) and a she-wolf (fol. 32b/26-27); an angry man to a wolf, lion or unicorn (fol. 32b/27). Among the beasts which represent the seven deadly sins is 'þe Unicorne of wreaððe' (fol. 54a/14). The description of Eleusius in his anger expresses the reality of the effects on him of his emotions. Furthermore, the beast is not an unspecified wild animal as in Cynewulf nor a mythical or allegorical creature like the pelican or unicorn of the *Ancrene Wisse*, but an everyday animal, a boar.

11) Humour

The less formal and abstract methods of this version can also be seen in its humour, of which there is little to be found in the Old English Lives. The humour here is at the expense of the devil.¹³ The first occasion is when Juliana drags him out of prison with her, he begs for mercy, saying that he has been told that Christians are supposed to be merciful. However, she pays no attention to this, and as she drags him along he becomes an object of scorn to the merchants in the market place. Juliana grows rather tetchy and impatient with his howling and tosses him into a pit of filth before she faces Eleusius:

'Mi leoue leafdi Iulienne, ne make þu me nawi men to hutung ne to hokere! þu hauest ido me wa inoh, þah þu ne do me wurse ... Ne beoð cristene men, 3ef hit is soð þet me seið, merclæbe ant milzfule? Ant tu art bute reowðe. Haue merci of me for þe lauerdes luue, þi luuewurðe leofmon, leafdi, i þe bidde.' Ant heo leac him eauer endelong þe cheping chapmen to hutung, and heo leiden to him, sum wið stan, sum wið ban, ant sleatten on him hundes, ant leiden to wið honden. As he wes imaket tus earmest alre þinge, ant berde as þe ful wiht, þet ter fluhe monie, se þet eadi wummon wergede sumhwet ant reat him wið þe rakeþehe unrudeliche swiðe, ant weorp him forð from hire awei into a put of fulðe. (pp. 45-47)

The public humiliation suffered by the devil is, however, instructive as well as comic. The suggestion that a Christian should be merciful towards the devil who tempts her to sin is treated with the contempt it deserves - thus irony is an element in the comedy, since the audience shares with Juliana a better understanding of the situation than the devil. Juliana responds to temptation as the Christian

should - by seeking help and guidance from God; and having recognised the temptation, she fights it. This follows the same pattern as the advice given to the anchoresses in the *Ancrene Wisse* (fols 79a-79b); (see above, pp. 384-85).¹⁴

Again, as Juliana is led to her place of execution, the devil reappears to incite her executioners. But she has only to open her eyes and look at him to cause him to quail and retreat:

As ha stutte i þet stude þer þe forðemde schulden deað drehen, þa com þe ilke Belial þet ha hefde ibeaten feorren-to bihinden ant bigon to 3eien: 'A! Stalewurðe men, ne spearie 3e hire nawiht! Ha haueð us alle scheome idon ... doð hire billue to-deað buten abade!' Iulienne þe eadie openede hire ehnen ant biheold towart him, as he þus seide; ant tet Belial blencte, ant breid him a3einwart bihinden hare schuldren, as for a schoten arewe. (pp. 63-65)

Her earlier treatment of him is sufficient to make him fearful for himself at the prospect of a further encounter. This suggests that initial bold resistance of temptation strengthens one in the fight against the devil. Instruction and comedy are here combined.

iii) Suffering

The practice of meditation on the crucifixion resulted in manifestations in other contexts of a greater awareness of that event and of physical suffering in general. Juliana's explanation to her father of her refusal to marry Eleusius includes a reference to the crucifixion not present either in the Old English or the Latin:

'Me hwet is he, þes were þet tu art to iweddēt?' ... 'Þet is Ihesu, godes sune, þet for te alesen moncun þet schulde beon forloren al lette lif o rod^e_λ. (p. 13) ¹⁵

The effects of meditation on Christ's pain and suffering, with the associated ideas (that one should share in Christ's suffering, and that such meditation would arouse compassion and love), can be seen throughout *Seinte Iulene*. Juliana's torments are described in some detail. Eleusius orders her to be stripped and beaten:

het his heaðene men strupen hire steort-naket, ant strecchen o þer eorðe, ant hwil þet eauer six men mahten idrehen, beaten hire beare bodi, þet ha al were bigoten of þe blode ... Þer wes sorhe to seon on hire freoliche flesch hu ha ferdren þer-wið. Ah heo hit al þuldeliche þolede for drihtin.¹⁶ (p. 23)¹⁷

On the wheel:

ha bigon to breoken al as þet isteledde irn strac hire in oueral, from þe top to þe tan, aa as hit turnde, tolimede hire ant leac lið ba ant lire; bursten hire banes ant þet meari bearst ut, imenget wið blode. Þer me mahte iseon alre sorhene meast, þe i þet stude stode. (pp. 51-53)

'Þer wes sorh to seon' and 'þer me mahte seon' encourage the audience to visualise the scene and share the pity of the spectators. Like meditation on the crucifixion, these passages arouse compassion (see above, pp. 375-76).

Juliana explains her willingness to suffer. Faced with threats of torments, she had said: 'Swa mucche ... ich beo him þe leouere se ich derfre þing for his luue drehe' (p. 15; see above, pp. 378-80). The more suffering they inflict on her, she says, the greater will be her glory:

eauer se 3e nu her mearreð me mare, se mi crune schal beon brihttre ba ant fehere; for þi ich chulle bliðeliche ant wið bliðe heorte drehen

eaueſ-euch derf for mi leofmones luue, þe lufsume lauerd, ant ſofte me bið euch ſar in his ſeruiſe. (p. 17)

This was a common idea. It is also found, even more strikingly expressed, in the *Ancrene Wiſſe*:

Al þet te unwreaſte ant te uuele deð for uuel; al is þe gode to god ... let him ant þet gleadlice breide þi crune ... Ant tu ſegge ... bi hond þe miſdeð þe. ant bi þe muð alſwa þe ewt miſſeið þe. Ibleſcet beo þi muð ſei. for þu makeſt lome þrof to timbri mi crune. (AW fol. 33b/19 - fol. 34a/1)

The example of Juliana's ſuffering on the wheel, followed by her healing by an angel, and her prayer, inſpire many who wiſneſs them to conuerſion; and they too tell the reeve that they are prepared to ſuffer, as ſhe has:

Do nu deadlice on us al þet tu do maht; make us, reue, anan-riht miſliche pinen; ontend fur ant feche hweol; greiðe al þet tu conſt grimliche biþenchen; forðe al þi feader wil, þeſ feondes of helle. (p. 59)

Juliana wiſhed to ſuffer for Chriſt. Thoſe who have been converted after wiſneſſing her ſuffering wiſh to ſhare in Juliana's ſuffering. The audience, with the deuotional training provided by meditation on Chriſt's ſuffering, is implicitly encouraged to identify with both.

The Chriſtian approach to ſuffering is conſtrasted with that of Juliana's opponenſts. Eleuſius is afraid to ſuffer: if he abandons his religion as Juliana aſks, he will loſe his poſition and die: '3ef me ſwa biluuede, hit were ſone iſeid þe keiſer ant icud to þe kinge, ant he me walde warpen ut of mine wike ant demen me to deað' (p. 21). His apparently reaſonable and practical view is ſeen for what it is by

contrast with Juliana's. Juliana is prepared to suffer, and does, without complaint, even gladly. She makes the devil suffer, too; but unlike her (p. 23), he cries out.

[Ha] grap a great raketehe þet ha wes wið ibunden, ant bond bihinden his rug ba twa his honden, þet him wrong euch neil ant blakede of þe blode; ant duste him ruglunge adun riht to þer eorðe, ant stondinde o þe steorue, nom hire ahne bondes, ant bigon to beaten þen belial of helle. Ant he bigon to rarin reowliche, to 3uren ant to 3eien, ant heo leide on se luðerliche þet wa wes him o liue. (pp. 41-43)

The devil's sufferings are described in the same grim detail as Juliana's, inviting the same visualisation on the part of the audience, and the same (perhaps rather sadistic) feelings of satisfaction as his humiliation (pp. 415-16 above).

iv) Love and the *sponsa Christi* motif

Seint Iulienne also reflects the concerns of its period in its emphasis on love. We find, too, a correspondingly greater use of the *sponsa Christi* motif (the expression of the loving relationship between Christ and his bride) than in Cynewulf's version.¹⁸ The centrality of love is established at the outset in the preliminary prayer, with its references to the love of the audience and speaker for God, and the love which the audience hopes to find in the saint, which will lead to the eternal life with Christ:

In ure lauwerdes luue þe feader is of frumscheft/ ant i þe deore wurðmunt of his deorewurðe sune ... alle leawede men þe understonden ne mahen latines ledene liðeð ant lusteð þe liflade of a meiden þet is of latin iturnd to englische leode, wið þon þet teos hali leafdi in heouene luuie us þe mare, and þurh þis lihinde lif leade us to þet eche þurh hire eadi erndunge þet Crist is swiðe icweme. (p. 3)

This concern with love in the prefatory prayer provides a foundation for the use of the *sponsa Christi* motif, and a base for subsequent references to love. When Juliana rejects Eleusius' proposal, she speaks of another lover:

Ich chulle þet he wite hit ful wel, ant tu eke mid al, ich am to an
iweddēt þet ich chulle treowliche to halden ant wiðute leas luuien,
þet is unlich him ant all worltliche men. Ne nulle ich neauer mare
him lihen ne leauen for weole ne for wunne, for wa ne for wontreaðe
þet 3e me mahen wurchen. (p. 13)

This is an addition; there is no mention of the idea at this point in either the Old English or the Latin.¹⁹ Mention is made on several other occasions of Christ as Juliana's beloved, and the saint as his bride, for example: 'Iuliene þe eadie, Ihesu Cristes leofmon' (p. 9); '[þe worldes wealdent] wiste him unwemmet his brud of þe bres þet wes wallinde' (p. 27). Juliana, as we have seen, is prepared to suffer for Christ's love, and this will make her more beloved: 'Swa mucche ... ich beo him þe leouere se ich derfre þing for his luue drehe' (p. 15); 'ich chulle bliðeliche ant wið bliðe heorte drehen eauer-euch derf for mi leofmones luue, þe lufsume lauerd, ant softe me bið euch sar in his seruise' (p. 17). The devil has unsuccessfully attacked her love:

ich wende iwis to leade þe into þine ealdrene lahen, ant makie to
leauen þe luue of þi lauerd, ant feng on to fondin þe, ah ich am
aueallet. (p. 37)

The idea of love is not mentioned in the parallel passages in the Old English (352 ff.) or the Latin (p. 36). These references to love allow for ironic contrasts with Eleusius' 'love', for which he is not

prepared to suffer (see above, p. 418); and the devil's for his 'luuewurðe feader':

we moten, leafdi, buhen swiðe ant beien to ure luuewurðe feader ant wurchen alle his willes' (p. 37).

v) Juliana as a model for the audience of *Seinte Iulene*

Finally, as well as these emotional and devotional concerns characteristic of the period, there are two points to be made concerning the Juliana of this version as a model for the audience of this period:

a) There is a hint of the attitudes towards women which have been observed in the *Ancrene Wisse* and elsewhere. The received view was that Eve was the more to blame for the fall.²⁰ There is no mention of this in the Latin version (p. 52), but the author of *Seinte Iulene* thought it important enough for it to be added to the account given in the source:²¹ Juliana offers a prayer of thanks after she has been restored from her torments by the angel, in which she summarises some of the principal events of Christian history. One of these events was the fall, and Juliana states that man transgressed through Eve's prompting:

he forgulte him anan þurh þe eggunge of Eue ant wes iput sone ut of paraise selhðen. (p. 53)

The audience of *Seinte Iulene* would have been familiar with the idea that Eve was culpable, and with the notions of women's weakness and inferiority which generally accompanied this view. The knowledge that

these views held sway in this period gives the devil's complaint about his treatment at the hands of the saint a special force:

ne neauer a et tis dei nes ich  us inhondlet. O  e mihte of mei had,
as  u art lwepnet to weorrin a ein us! (p. 45)

Juliana is exceptional; but at the same time, she provides a model of what is possible for women, especially if they are virgins, in the fight against the devil, temptation and sin. This brings us to the second and last point:

b) The devil's complaint is primarily against the power of virginity. Virginity is the central theme of this version of the Life, as it had been in Cynewulf's (and as it was in most stories of virgin martyrs). It is not necessary to repeat what has already been said about virginity and saints earlier in this study (see especially chs 3 & 4). What should be noted here is the way in which the Juliana of this version differs in the model she provides from that of the saint as presented by Cynewulf. As we have seen, this version is very different from that of Cynewulf, and reflects the interests and preoccupations of the day. Thus, while the example of virginity presented here represents a long-established and continuing ideal, it is also in some ways distinct from that of the Old English, in as much as the model provided by the saint in *Seinte Iulene* is one which encourages personal engagement in struggle and suffering, in order to achieve the union with Christ which Juliana is shown to have attained.

NOTES

1. Quotations are from d'Ardenne's emended text based on Bodley 34 (d'Ardenne 1961). Latin quotations are from the text in d'Ardenne's edition.
2. Compare Cynewulf's very personal prayer, which concludes his poem.
3. There are a number of entries introduced into the calendar of the St Albans Psalter 'some time not long after 1155', which reflect an interest in female saints. Three of these (one of whom was Juliana) 'were involved in situations with their husbands and importunate suitors which have a remarkable likeness to those found in the *Life of Christina of Markyate*' (Pächt, Dodwell, Wormald 1960, 26). Talbot comments on this (1959, 26).
4. Lines 28-31; see above, p 171.
5. Her reference later in this prayer to the crossing of the Red Sea and the destruction of the enemies there (p. 29) anticipates the end of the story, when Sophie takes her body to safety in Campania, and Eleusius and his companions are destroyed in their attempt to follow (pp. 69-71). For a note on the eschatological interpretation of the crossing of the Red Sea, see above, pp. 186-87, note 18.
6. Cynewulf's Juliana does not make this demand. See Woolf 1966, lines 42 ff.
7. This is in neither the Latin nor in Cynewulf.
8. Again, not in Latin nor Cynewulf.
9. There has in fact been no mention of her mother. Mothers, indeed have little part to play in the lives of virgin saints. They are not generally seen as oppressors in the way that fathers and suitors are; and where virginity is eulogised, real motherhood, as opposed to the extraordinary and symbolic motherhood of the Virgin and the Church, and, at this period, of Christ, does not appear to have been seen as an appropriate focus of attention.

10. It is ironic, too, that he should be affected by her complexion, likened to lilies and roses, since, while these comparisons occur in the literature of courtly love, in stories of virgin martyrs they traditionally symbolised virginity and martyrdom. Price comments on the passage which describes Eleusius falling in love (pp. 17-19): 'Eleusius's desire is in fact of a kind that the truly *cortois* would find abhorrent: it transforms his *domina* into an object without taking account of her will and wishes' (1986, 42).

11. Compare Juliana's prayer in which she asks that the reeve should blush - the redness this time due to shame: 'Wurch 3et swucche wundres, for þi deorewurðe nome, þet te reue rudni ant scheomie wið his schucke' (p. 57).

12. The Latin states: 'Prefectus uero fremebat contra ipsam sicut fera maligna' (60/277-78). In Cynewulf's version he 'gristbitade, wedde on gewitte swa wilde deor' (596-97); and see above, p. 170, & pp. 185-86, note 11. Eleusius in his anger goes beyond Bernard's 'beasts of burden': 'Verumtamen qui ad imaginem et similitudinem Dei creatus es, si perdidisti similitudinem, similis factus iumentis' ('De diversis', Sermo 12.2; Leclercq & Rochais III (1), 123).

13. For parallels in the *South English Legendary* and in drama see McAlindon 1963.

14. In Cynewulf's version the devil pleads with the saint, but not on the grounds that Christians should be merciful. Then Juliana lets him go (lines 534 ff).

15. In Juliana's prayer of thanks after she has been released from the wheel she includes a reference to Christ's suffering: '[þu] þoledest pine ant passiun' (p. 57). The Latin has more simply 'in carne crucifixus es' (p. 56). There is a lacuna in the Old English at this point.

16. Christ was also scourged: Matthew 27.26, and parallels. This was a favourite scene in pictorial representations of the Passion (see Schiller 1971, II.66 ff., 'The Flagellation of Christ'), and no doubt in meditations on the Passion also.

17. For further tortures see p. 25.
18. See above, ch. 15, 11.
19. Compare lines 108 ff. of the Old English; and the Latin, pp. 12-14.
20. See AW fol. 13b, and above, ch. 12.
21. This part of the story is missing from the Old English because of the lacuna in the MS (after line 558 in Woolf's edition).

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: *SEINTE MARHERETE*

The story of *Seinte Marherete* is in outline much the same as that of the Old English version edited by Cockayne (1861; see Appendix, p. 485). There are, however, interesting differences in emphasis. Although the preservation of the story of Margaret remains one of the concerns of the Life (see pp. 427-30 below), it does not receive the attention given it in the Old English (see above, ch. 9). Instead, there is a far greater emphasis on virginity (see Mack 1958, xxx-xxxi). At a period when attitudes to women in general were often less than positive, and the idea of their weakness a common one, those who chose to live as virgins were accorded particular respect. *Seinte Marherete*, like the other Lives of the Katherine Group, expresses this. Thus the devil is able to protest that he has been overcome by a virgin (or 'maiden', in contrast to 'man') - an exceptional woman, who has escaped from the bonds in which the devil holds her race (presumably the human race):

mine wepnen, wumme, allunge aren awarpen. 3et were hit þurh a mon -
ah is þurh a meiden. Þis 3et me þuncheð wurst, þet al þet cun þet tu
art icumen ant ikennet of, beoð alle in ure bondes, ant tu art
edbroken ham. (36/26-30)¹

The theme of the ancient and continuing conflict between good and evil which is the subject of all saints' lives is here adapted for a particular kind of audience at a particular time (see above, p. 354, and Millet & Wogan-Browne 1990, xxiii). The most important features of *Seinte Marherete*, and the major differences between it and the Old English lives, will be discussed in this chapter as follows:

- i) Virginity, ii) The *sponsa Christi* motif, iii) Suffering,

iv) Prayers, v) Descriptions. The differences between this and earlier versions are not just matters of taste; the changes are functional as well as aesthetic, and they reflect the instructive purpose of the Life. They reinforce the lessons of the other works of the Katherine Group and the *Ancrene Wisse*; and they tend towards the encouragement of a close engagement of the audience with the Life at various levels.

i) Virginity

As in all the versions the narrator addresses his audience before the story begins: all who have ears and hearing, those who are widowed and those who are married, but here, especially, virgins, 'te meidnes nomeliche' (4/8-9).² He establishes the primacy of virginity as the virtue³ dearest to the lord, 'meiðhad, þet him his mihte leouest' (4/10-11), and touches on the rewards to be shared by virgins in heaven - a familiar theme, but treated at greater length here than in either the Latin or the Old English:

Hercneð, alle þe earen ant herunge habbeð: widewen wið þa iweddede, ant te meidnes nomeliche, lusten swiðe [3eornliche]⁴ hu ha schulen luuien þe liulende lauerd ant libben i meiðhad, þet him his mihte leouest; swa þet ha moten, þurh þet eadie meiden þe we munneð to-dei wið meiðhades menske, þet seli meidnes song singen, wið þis meiden ant wið þet heouenliche hird, echeliche in heouene. (4/7-14)⁵

Throughout this story about a virgin, addressed especially to virgins, it is Margaret's virginity which is under attack; from Olibrius at first because he desires her, and the devil because of what her virginity represents.⁶

Virginity, as we have seen (above, ch. 3), is not a matter of the body only. When Margaret is approached by Olibrius she recognises that her faith, body, and soul are threatened, and that it is the devil who threatens her, for virginity, beloved of God, is hateful to him:

Hald, hehe lauerd, min heorte, ich biseche þe, in treowe bileue: ant biwite mi bodi, þet is al bitaht to þe, from ulche fulþen; þet neauer mi sawle ne isuled beo in sunne, þurh þet licomes lust, þet luttle while likeð. Lauerd, lustu to me. Ich habbe a deore 3imstan, ant ich hit habbe i3eue þe, mi meiðhad i mene, blostme brihtest i bodi þe hit bereð and biwit wel; ne let tu neauer þe [unwiht]⁷ warpen hit i wurðinc, for hit is þe leof, ant him þinge lopest. Ant weorreð ant warpeð euer þertoward, wið willes, wið werkes, wið alles cunes wrenches. (6/24-8/3)⁸

Margaret's comment on the consequences to the soul of 'þet licomes lust, þet luttle while likeð' is reminiscent of the passage in the *Ancrene Wisse* where the author states how the devil 'for þe licunge of alust ane hwile stucche chapeð þi sawle' (and he goes on to say that this would make her the 'deofles hore') (AW fol. 79a/26-27, 79b/4; see above, p. 384). *Seinte Marherete* dramatises the temptations warned against by the *Ancrene Wisse* author. The temptations of the world and the flesh offered by Olibrius - if she will be his wife or concubine, he will 'freohin [hire] wið gersum ant wið golde' (6/15) - are also temptations of the devil, and threaten her soul.

The lesson for the audience is reinforced later by the devil's confession, which is greatly expanded from the Latin, and also much longer than that of the Old English. In the course of his confession the devil admits his responsibility for attacks on virgins, and acknowledges the importance of not losing one's virginity by

submitting to him; he also mentions the ideal of female virginity, the Virgin Mary:⁹

penchen hit is þurh me þet hare lust leadeð ham to wurchen to wundre:
penchen 3ef ha beieð me, to hu bitter beast ha buheð, ant hwas luue ha
forleteð; hu lufsum þing ha leoseð, þet is meiðhad, meidenes menske,
ant te luue of þe luueliche lauerd of heouene ant of þe lufsume cwen,
englene leafdi. (34/6-11)

To have the devil himself confessing his mode of attack would reinforce a sense of the truth of warnings concerning the dangers of lust commonly addressed to virgins in other works such as the *Ancrene Wisse*.¹⁰

Virginity is also powerful. This devil has already said that he had sent his brother to Margaret in the form of a dragon to swallow her and harm the power (or virtue)¹¹ of her virginity, so that she would no longer be remembered:

þu hauest grimliche ibroht mi broðer to grunde, ant islein þen
sleheste deouel of helle, þe ich o drake liche sende to forswolhe þe,
ant merren wið his muchele mein þe mihte of þi meiðhad, ant makien þet
tu nere na mare imong moncun imuneget on eorðe. (28/1-5)¹²

Margaret's virginity is powerful not just on her own account but as an example to others, which is why its preservation is so important. When Margaret prays for protection of her virginity as she is being tortured, she recognises her function: if she finds protection, all virgins will see that they too can trust in God when they are surrounded by evil and temptation:

Helle-hundes, lauerd, habbet bitrummet me, and hare read þet heaneð me
haueð al bi-set me ... Send me þi sonde i culurene heowe, þe cume me to
helpe, þet ich mi meiðhad mote wite to þe unwemmet ... ant cuð þi mahte

on me, al-mihtl godd, þet ich him [þe awariede wiht] ouercume mahe,
swa þet alle meidnes eauer mare þurh me þe mare trusten on þe.
(16/7-21)¹³

The devil explains (as he does not in either the Latin or Old English versions) why virgins are a particular target. His words play on *iboren*, 'born', and *iborhen*, 'saved': Christ was born of a virgin, and mankind was saved through the power (or virtue) of virginity:

[we] beoð aa wakere to wurchen al þet wa þet we eauer mahe moncun, ant
mest rihtwise men ant meidnes as þu art. For Iesu Crist, godes bern,
wes of meiden iboren; ant þurh þe mihte of meiðhad wes moncun iborhen.
(38/28-32)

Thus the audience is reminded of what virginity represents; that it is therefore threatened by the devil and his temptations; that God protects his virgins as he did Margaret.

ii) Sponsa Christi

In addition to this increased emphasis on virginity, and greater discussion of it, in *Seinte Marherete*, more is made of the idea of Christ as lover than in the Old English or the Latin. This reflects a general trend in the period.¹⁴ It can be seen in the first exchange between Margaret and Olibrius, when Olibrius asks Margaret which God she worships. In her reply in all the versions Margaret speaks of the virginity which Christ has preserved, but in *Seinte Marherete* she also speaks of Christ as her lover:

Inuoco et adoro Deum omnipotentem, et Iesum Christum filium eius, qui
uirginitatem meam usque in presens inuiolatam et illesam custodiuit.
(130/12-14)

Ic gebidde on ealmihtigne god. ⁊ on his sunu hælend crist. se þe minne mægþhad unbesmiten geheold oþ þysne ⁊weardan dæg. (Cockayne 1861, 41)

Ic lufige god ælmihtigne, cwæð hi, and on him ic geleafa, þe is fæder and sunu and halig gast, þone þe minne mægþhad fægre and wel gehealdon hæfð. (Assmann 1889, 172/82-85)

'Ich hehe,' quoð ha 'heh-feader, healent in heouene, ant his deorwurðe sune, Iesu Crist hatte; ant him ich habbe, meiden, mi meiðhad iʒettet, ant luue to leofmon ant leue ase lauerd.' (8/24-27)

This enables a contrast to be made between the lover Margaret has chosen and Olibrius, who says he will have her for his beloved and wife if she will believe in his gods: '3if þu wult leue me, þu schalt beon mi leofmon ant min iweddede wif' (12/3-4). As his wife she will share all he possesses: '[þu schalt] welden ase lefdi al þet ich i wald hah ant am of lauerd' (12/4-5). By keeping her faith and virginity, and her fidelity to her lover Christ, Margaret earns her place as his bride in his kingdom: before she is martyred, the dove which appears in answer to her prayers calls her, as her bridegroom:

Cum nu, for ich kepe þe, brud, to þi brudgume. Cum, leof, to þi lif, for ich copni þi cume: brihtest bur abitd te. Leof, hihe þe to me. Cum nu to mi kinedom. Leaf þet leode se lah, ant tu schalt wealde wið me al þet ich i wald ah. (48/28-32)¹⁵

iii) Suffering

There is in *Seinte Marherete* a greater emphasis on suffering than in the Old English or Latin versions. When Margaret dedicates herself and her virginity to Christ (as she does in the other versions), here she also expresses a desire to suffer:

[ha] 3irnde ant walde 3eorne, 3ef godes wil were, þet ha moste beon an of þe moni moder-bern þet swa muchel drehen for drihtin (6/2-4).

Faced with the prospect of torture and death Margaret says:

Drihtin deide for us, þe deorwurðe lauerd, ant ne drede ich na deð for to drehen for him. (12/10-12)

We have seen the idea of suffering in return for Christ's suffering expressed elsewhere at this time (see above, pp. 378-80; 382).

When the women tempt her to save her body by accepting Olibrius, Margaret says her body suffers for the sake of her soul:

3ef mi lich is toloken, mi sawle schal resten wið þe rihtwise: sorhe ant licomes sar is sawulene heale. (14/20-21)

Although she also says this in the other versions, the torture and burning she later undergoes at Olibrius' command is described (as it is not in the other versions) in precise and painful detail:

'Strupeð hire steort-naked, ant heoueð hire on heh up swa þet ha hongl to mede of hire hokeres, ant ontendeð hire bodl wið bearninde teaperes.' Þe driueles unduhtie swa duden sone, þet te hude snawhwit swartede as hit snercte, ant bearst on to bleinin as hit aras oueral; ant hire leofliche lich reschte of þe lefe, swa þet alle remden þet on hire softe siden sehen þet rewðe. (42/11-17)¹⁶

To a modern reader, the suffering of a saint described in this way might seem extravagant, unreal, and even unnecessary (as it might also have done to Ælfric). But to an audience trained to dwell on the reality of Christ's suffering, and to identify with it,¹⁷ the suffering of a saint would be seen to be deserving of the same kind of

attention as Christ's suffering, and of description in the same kind of detail.¹⁸

iv) Prayer

The prayers of the saint are important in all the versions, as they are in any saint's life. But Margaret's prayers in *Sainte Marherete* are longer and more elaborate than in the other versions. The recipients of the *Ancrene Wisse* (like all religious) were expected to spend a good deal of time in prayer, and encouraged to pray for help and support when they needed it: as Margaret does. She prays for help against Olibrius (6/17 ff.); for strength and support when she is tortured (12/22 ff., 16/7 ff., 18/25 ff.); when faced with the dragon (22/11 ff.); when she is thrown into a vessel of water she prays for the Holy Spirit to come to her in the form of a dove (44/5-6). The author of the *Ancrene Wisse* enjoined the anchoresses to defend themselves against the enemy with the crucifix (see above, p. 384) as well as with prayers. Margaret does not have a crucifix, but her prayers are sometimes accompanied by the making of the sign of the cross (18/22-23, 24/7), and she crosses herself before she faces Olibrius in their final confrontation (40/27). The power of the cross as a weapon appears most vividly and graphically when it is used against the dragon:

þe rode taken redliche arudde hire, þet ha wes wið iwepnet, ant warð
his bone sone, swa þet his bodi to-bearst o-midhepes otwa. (24/14-16)

The second devil protests at the effect of her prayers on him, as powerful against him as the cross against his brother the dragon:

ne pine þu me na mare wið þe eadie beoden þet tu bideð se ofte; for
ha bindeð me swiðe sare mid alle, ant makieð me se unstrong, þet ich
ne fele wið me nanes cunnes strengðe ... þu cwencst ant a-cwaldest him
wið þe hali rode, ant me þu makest to steoruen wið þe strengðe of pine
beoden. (26/32-28/7)¹⁹

Margaret's prayers, however, are not only a defence against her
enemies. They are expressions of faith, devotion and praise as well
as need. When she is first imprisoned, she prays:

Deor-wurðe drihtin, þah pine domes dearne beon, alle ha beoð duhtie.
Alle heouenliche þing, ant heorðliche bape, buheð þe ant beieð. þu
art hope ant help to alle þet te herieð. þu art foster ant feader to
helplese children. þu art weddede weole, ant widewene warant, ant
meidenes mede. þu art wunne of þe world, Iesu Crist, kinebern; godd
ikennet of godd, as liht is of leome. (18/25-31)

The action of the story is often suspended as Margaret stops to pray.
When the dragon appears her long prayer (much longer in this than in
any of the other versions) reminds the audience of God's work of
creation and might; of the obedience of all creation, excepting only
man in his perversity; and of the harrowing of hell - of which, her
audience no doubt realises, her story is a re-enactment, or
imitation:²⁰

þu wrahtest ant wealdest alle worldliche þing. þeo þet te heieð ant
herieð in heouene, ant alle þe þinges þe eardið on eorðe: þe fisches
þe i þe flodes fleoteð wið finnes, þe flihimde fuheles þe fleoð bi þe
lufte, ant al þet iwraht is, wurchað þet ti wil is ant halt pine
heastes bute mon ane ... þe windes, þe wederes, þe wudes, ant te
weattres, buheð þe ant beið. Feondes habbeð fearlac, ant engles, of
þin eie. þe wurmes ant te wilde deor, þet o þis wald wunieð, libbet
efter þe lahe þet tu ham hauest iloket, luuewende luerd; ant tu loke
to me ant help me, þin hondiwer, for al min hope is o þe. þu

herhedest helle ant ouercome ase kempe þe acursede gast þe fundeð to
for-do me. (22/14-31)

In the intense and concentrated conflict in which Margaret the individual is engaged, this pause for prayer allows also a pause for thought, an opportunity for reflection on the existence of a creation and a history beyond this individual conflict. Her prayer of thanks after the dragon has been defeated has a similar effect: it is not just a prayer of thanks, it becomes a hymn of praise which goes beyond her personal situation. And again, the drama is suspended while she prays, for although she sees the second devil appear immediately after the destruction of the dragon, the struggle waits to be renewed while she prays (24/26-28).

Within the story, Margaret's prayers provide examples of how and when one should pray. They furnish evidence of the efficacy of prayer, and of the damage inflicted on the devil simply by the act of prayer. But at the same time, if one remembers that the *Life* was read aloud, the reading itself becomes an act of devotion, particularly at the times when the saint is praying. Thus Margaret's prayers become the prayers also of the reader and the audience, both when she praises God, and when she seeks help and protection.

v) Descriptions

Mack writes in her introduction:

In one feature in particular, his power of vivid description, the author is far superior to his Latin model. This is seen at its best in his account of the dragon, where he has missed no chance of

deepening the grotesqueness and horror of the original picture.
(p. xxx)

The dragon of the Latin and Old English versions is already a compelling creature (see above, p. 235). In *Seinte Marherete*, as in the Latin and Old English versions, various aspects of the description connect the dragon with Olibrius: the hirsute masculinity of the creature, with 'his lockes ant his longe berd' (20/23) and their golden colour (Olibrius had offered to free Margaret with gold, 6/15). The dragon's teeth like iron, 'his grisliche teð semden of swart irn' (20/24-25), his tongue like a sharp sword, 'semde as þah a scharp sweord of his muð scheate' (20/30-31), and his swallowing of Margaret (22/2, 24/5), remind us of Olibrius' threats, 'mi swerd schal forswelten ant for-swolhen þi flesch' (12/1-2) and of the torture he inflicts on her, 'het ... wið sweord scharpe ant ewles of irne hire freoliche flesch to-ronden ant to-renden' (16/5-6). But the description goes beyond the functional, as in these precise linguistic echoes, and the author seems to take pleasure in elaborating it further. The dragon becomes a folk-tale-like creature:

His twa ehnen steareden steappre þen þe steoren ant ten ðimstanes, brade ase bascins, in his ihernde heued on eider half on his heh hokede nease. (20/25-27)²¹

The author also gives more attention to the description of the second devil; it is not enough that he is 'like a black man':

þa seh ha hwer set an unsehen unwiht, mucche deale blackre þen eauer eani blamon, se grislich, se ladlich, þet ne mahte hit na mon redliche areachen. (24/21-23)²²

These descriptions suggest a profound appeal to the imagination shared with the folk-tale - something not found generally, or to this degree, in the Old English lives which survive. *Seinte Marherete*, with its emphasis on virginity, suffering and prayer, and with its vivid descriptions, seems to demand a very personal, emotional, and imaginative engagement with it on the part of its audience.

NOTES

1. References are to page and line numbers of Mack's edition. Quotations are given from the text of MS Bodley 34 [B], which 'gives on the whole a more reliable version than R [BL MS Royal 17A xxviii]' (Mack, xiv). Abbreviations for 'ant' have been silently expanded. Latin quotations are from the text printed by Mack.

2. *widewen*, *iwedded*, and *meidnes* can all refer to either sex.

3. *Mihte* here seems to mean 'virtue' rather than 'power', the meaning more commonly attributed to it (see the glossaries of Mack, Millett 1982, Millett & Wogan-Browne 1990). D'Ardenne (1961) gives 'might, power, strength [OE *miht*]', but not 'virtue'. Compare Lat. *virtus* (Lewis & Short, s.v., IB & IIB). For OE *miht* = 'virtue' see BT Sup. s.v. 'meaht' VII.

There is no equivalent sentiment in the Latin at this point. There are other occasions where 'power' seems the more appropriate translation: see p. 429.

4. MS B *3eorliche* (which Mack retains); R *3eorne* (Mack 5/9).

5. Compare the OE 'Margaret' (p. 231, and p. 243, note 8 above); and Mack 128/16-19.

6. Olibrius is described by the narrator as 'a child of the devil', 'þe ueondes an foster' (6/6). Margaret says to him 'þu wurchest ... þine feader werkes' (14/27-28). Compare the allegory in HM (above, p. 364).

7. MS B 'unwhit' (retained by Mack); R 'unhwiht'.

8. The Latin, again, is much briefer:

Fac me laetari semper in te, Domine Iesu Christe, et semper te laudare. Et ne permittas animam meam contaminari, ne polluantur fides mea. Non coinquinetur corpus meum, nec etiam immutetur scientia mea. Non proiciatur margarita mea in lutum, nec minuatur sensus meus a turpitudine iniqua, et insipientia diaboli. (129/22-28)

Compare the Old English versions: 'ne læt þu næfre mine sawle ne min lichoma. wyrþan besmitan' (Cockayne 1861, 40); 'gemiltse me, þæt min sawle ne seo awæmmod þurh þisum hæðenum mannum. And ic þe wille biddan, þæt deofle mine sawle ne beswican, ne mine treowðe fram þe ahwerfan, ne minne clæne lichaman gefylan' (Assmann 1889, 172/62-65).

In her note to 6/29ff Mack points out the use of the image of virginity as a flower in *Hali Meðhad*, and cites Bernard's exposition of the symbol. On images of treasure and flowers in virginity literature, see Millett & Wogan-Browne 1990, 154, note to 48/1-3 of that edition. The *margarita*, 'pearl', of the Latin is also the saint's name. The play on the name is lost in the English, where *margarita* is represented by the more general word *3imstan*.) Latin *margarita* as a personal name had clearly been borrowed into English by this date, but not apparently as a common noun (cf. later ME *margyrye*, 'pearl', e.g. in *Pearl* ed. Gordon 1953, pp. xxvii-xxviii).

Margaret also prays for the protection of her virginity at other critical points: 16/18-21, part of which is quoted below; and in prison, 20/11-12.

9. On devotion to the Virgin at this period, see above, pp. 392-96.

10. The devil's account of the way he tempts a pure man and pure woman to sin is also an addition (32/6 ff). The warning it provides on the dangers of contact between men and women, however apparently innocent and pure at first, is one often found in other works of instruction to women, as in the *Ancrene Wisse*, and in Aelred's letter to his sister and in his *Speculum Caritatis* (see above, pp. 343-44;

347-48; 355). Compare also the experience of Christina of Markyate (above, p. 395, & pp. 210-11, note 8).

11. See note 3 above.

12. Compare Cockayne 1861, 44.

13. The parallel passage in the Latin is at 132/8-21; and in the Old English, Cockayne 1861, 45. There is no equivalent in the Old English Assmann text.

14. See Mack, xii-xiii, and above, p. 397 ff; and compare *Seinte Iulienne*, pp. 419-21 above.

15. Her divine lover is described and addressed at 18/25-27 & 44/9. At 10/23-28 there is a sensuous description of his power and beauty. At 14/17 the women advise Margaret to love Olibrius.

16. Compare Cockayne 1861, 46; Assmann 1889, 178/279-82; Mack 138/13-15. See also Mack 46/4-5.

17. See above, ch. 14, ii.

18. For a different view of the effect of violence in these Lives, see Millett and Wogan-Browne 1990, xxii.

19. Compare the second devil's comments on the power of the cross, 28/5-6, 30/25-30.

20. Millett & Wogan-Browne note similarities between Christ's passion and Margaret's (1990, xxiii).

21. Compare the three dogs in Hans Andersen's 'The Tinder Box'.

22. 'uidit alium demonem sedentem uelut hominem nigrum' (Mack, 134/18-19); 'gesæh heo ... ænne deofol sittend swilc an sweartne man' (Cockayne 1861, 43); the other Old English version describes him as ugly as well as black, and explains the moral significance of his appearance: 'hi operne deofol sittan geseah, sweart and unfæger, swa him gecynde wæs' (Assmann 1889, 176/207-08).

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN: *SEINTE KATERINE*

Katherine is a virgin martyr, and there are in her Life certain standard motifs common to stories of virgin martyrs: Katherine is beautiful, young, steadfast in faith (23-25) and virginity (49-50, 846).¹ She is also an orphan (27) and a Christian in an overwhelmingly heathen city. She arms herself with her faith, the cross and the Holy Spirit (67-70) before she confronts the emperor, and fortifies herself with the sign of the cross before she is to face the philosophers (269-70). She has the comfort and support of angels: the archangel Michael brings light into the darkness of the prison (248); angels tend her wounds (585 ff.), and (with Christ) feed her (662 ff.); in answer to her prayer an angel saves her from the wheel prepared to torment her by destroying it (726 ff.). She is martyred, and miracles take place at and after her death (899 ff). Her enemy is an idol-worshipper and persecutor of Christians (12 ff), and he is described as '*pes feondes an foster*', '*this child of the devil*' (271).² His primary emotion is anger (138, 496, 695, 773-74), although he is also obtuse (190-91), impatient (276), and prone to dejection (735-37). He is powerful and violent, promising her rewards if she will turn her will to his, and threatening her with torments if she will not (144-47). However, there are certain features of the Life and the presentation of the saint which distinguish Katherine, in some ways, from other virgin martyrs, and in particular from the other two saints of the Katherine Group.³ The effect of these features, it will be suggested, is to focus attention on Katherine as an allusive and symbolic figure, rather than as an individual and a woman.

The first unusual aspect of Katherine's story is that although Katherine is a female saint, and, like other virgin martyrs, the virgin bride of Christ, her virginity is never actually threatened, at least on a literal level; nor does she undergo the sexual tortures which are a common experience of female virgin martyrs. The effect is to draw attention away from her literal, physical, virginity and femininity, and to encourage the audience to look towards their symbolic significance.

Secondly, *Seinte Katerine* was written in a milieu in which the received opinion was that women should not display their learning, nor presume to teach (see above, pp. 355-56). Yet, among the usual epithets reserved for a female virgin saint ('milde, meoke meiden', 37), Katherine is also, more exceptionally, described as an 'icuret clergesse', 'a distinguished (female) scholar' (26) and, from the emperor's viewpoint, a 'modi motild', 'an arrogant wrangling woman', 152-53). Many saints teach and convert unbelievers by means of their words as well as their deeds and example, but Katherine is unusual in that she is learned, and preaching is her principal activity. We must therefore ask what the fact that Katherine is a female preacher may have indicated to an audience accustomed to being told that women should not teach. Again, it may be that her preaching is intended to be understood for its symbolic or allusive significance, rather than in literal terms.

The third distinctive characteristic of the saint is partly a consequence of the two features noted above: unlike the other two saints of the Katherine Group, the effect of the presentation of Saint

Katherine is not such as to invite sympathy or emotional or physical identification with her. St Katherine, indeed, is as uncongenial a figure as many have found Cynewulf's Juliana to be.⁴ The features mentioned here which characterise the saint combine to convey the impression that Katherine is intended to be seen as an almost purely symbolic figure. Some suggestions will be made concerning what the figure of the saint may suggest, allude to, or symbolise beyond herself.⁵

There are two other important areas of interest in the Life which will be discussed in this chapter, and which are closely connected with the identifications which will be suggested. One is the central theme of the Life, which is wisdom: the wisdom of God, represented by Katherine, confronts first the folly of the idol-worshipping emperor, and then the 'wisdom of the world' as represented by the philosophers. The other is an event, Katherine's martyrdom. The significance of the miracles which take place at St Katherine's death will be discussed in relation to the concerns and methods of the Life. The discussion is divided as follows: i) Katherine as representative of the Church; ii) Wisdom in the Old Testament; iii) Katherine's speeches to the emperor; iv) Katherine's likeness to the apostles; wisdom in St Paul; v) the miracles.

i) Katherine as representative of the Church

There are several ways in which the figure of Katherine appears to recall the function, attributes, and experiences of the Church: in her teaching; in the scriptural authority with which she speaks; as a female figure; as the virgin bride of Christ; and as one who is

persecuted but who overcomes her enemies. These will be discussed in turn, although it is the combination of the various aspects, rather than any one on its own, which suggests that Katherine may be intended to represent the Church.

One of the functions of the Church was to teach. What Christ had communicated to the apostles, he commanded them to go forth and preach: 'Going, therefore, teach ye all nations' (Matthew 28,19); 'Go ye into the whole world, and ... preach the gospel to every creature' (Mark 16.15).⁶ The Church had received Christ's teachings from the apostles, and had continued to hand them on (Pelikan 1971, 116). The New Catholic Encyclopaedia, referring to Matthew 28.19, states 'it is the role of the apostolic⁷ Church as Christ's mandatary ... to introduce men into the [Christian] life' (NCE s.v. 'Church II, New Testament, p. 685). This is also Katherine's role: she communicates the teachings of the Church by means of her speeches to the emperor and to the philosophers,⁸ and she converts many through her preaching: the philosophers (490-91); the queen, and the commander of the soldiers, Porphirus (584-85; Porphirus in turn converts two hundred soldiers, 659-61).

Katherine's extensive quotation of the scriptures may suggest another attribute of the Church. Pelikan writes, quoting Beatus of Liébana:⁹

As Christ in the days of his flesh had taught the crowds from the bark of Peter, so now ... 'to the present day he teaches the nations from the authority of the Church'. This authority was correlated closely with the authority of Scripture ... The entire authority of the Gospels

proclaimed what all the statements of the apostles affirmed, and this was also what ... the Roman church declared. (Pelikan 1978, 43-44)

From the scriptural basis of Katherine's teaching derives the authority with which she preaches, and which she shares with the Church (as well as with the apostles and other saints): her lengthy discourses and expositions are dense with scriptural allusion and quotation, and she summarises the central events of Christian history. Some examples will be given here, although no doubt others could be found. In lines 83-91, she echoes Romans 1.18-25, on the foolishness of idolatry (quoted below, p. 453). In lines 177-79 she echoes I Corinthians 1.19 (where St Paul was paraphrasing Isaiah 29.14) to the emperor, 'Perdam sapientiam sapientum'^o et intellectum intelligentium reprobabo, Ich chulle fordo þe wisdom of þeos wise worldmen, ... ant awarpen þe wit of þeose world-witti'. This introduces the theme which will be elaborated later in her speech to the philosophers. She quotes the verse again there (325-27) (see below, p. 459). In lines 180-87 she quotes Psalm 113B.3-8, arguing with the support of scriptural and prophetic authority ('Ich herde eft þeos word of an oðer witege', 179-80), against the idol-worship of the emperor. In her prayer in prison she quotes Christ's promise to his apostles in Luke 21.12-15 (quoted below, p. 456). Towards the end of the Life, when the philosophers, preparing to be martyred, ask Katherine to baptise them (507-09), Katherine reassures them, telling them that the flowing of their blood will be their baptism (510-12); and she refers to the event recorded in Acts 2.3-4, when the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles at Pentecost: 'ant tis ferliche fur

schal lihten in ow þe halwende lei of þe Halī Gast, þe i furene tungen
ontende þe apostles' (512-14).¹¹

The Church was commonly personified as female, in the scriptures, in literature, and in art (see above, ch. 5). It has already been noted that attention is not drawn to Katherine's physical femininity; and also that the audience of *Seinte Katerine* would have been familiar with the idea that women should not teach. Much, however, is made in *Seinte Katerine* of the fact that the fifty most learned scholars of the kingdom (149-50, 194-97) are rendered speechless in debate by a woman: it would have been shameful enough, says the emperor, if one of them had been overcome by fifty women or more; but fifty of them have been out-argued by one woman:

Me, 3ef fifti wimmen, and þah þer ma weren, hefden wið wordes ower an
awarpen, nere hit schendlac inoh ant schir scheome to alle þet 3elpeð
of lare? Nu is alre scheomene meast, þet anlepi meiden wið hire anes
muð haueð swa biteuelet, itemet, ant itelet alle - italde bi tale fif
siðe tene, icudde ant icorene ant of feorrene ifat - þet al 3e beoð
blodles, bikimet, ut of ow seoluen. (467-73)

The philosophers are dumbfounded, and are converted to St Katherine's faith by her arguments. Katherine, a female and a vehicle of divine instruction, who converts the unbelievers through her preaching may be compared with representations in art of the Church as a female figure, sometimes depicted speaking or preaching, and sometimes holding a book.¹²

Another familiar representation of the Church was as the virgin bride of Christ.¹³ Virginity, when attributed to the Church, signified her purity of faith and doctrine. Purity of faith was also,

as we have seen, a requirement in the individual Christian virgin, a spiritual counterpart of bodily virginity.¹⁴ Katherine is not required to defend her bodily virginity. The emphasis, from the start, is on her steadfast faith. We are told that Katherine was 'feier ant freolich o wlite ant o westum^{ah} 3et - pet is mare wurð - steaðeluest wiðinnen of treowe bileaue' (24-25); that 'euer ha hefde on hali writ ehnen oðer heorte, oftest ba togederes'^{39 -} (40); that (a comment which anticipates her debate with the philosophers and its outcome), 'Modi meistres ant feole fondeden hire ofte, o swiðe feole halue, forte underneomen hire, ah nes þear nan pet mahte neauer eanes wrenchen hire, wið al his crefti crokes, ut of þe wele; ah ... al ha icneowen ham crauant ant ouercumen' (42-47). It is against this background that Katherine's virginity is mentioned, immediately before the conflict of faith begins when Katherine hears the clamour of the idol-worship outside: 'hwil ha wiste hire, ant þohte a to witen hire, meiden i meiðhad, as ha set in a bur of hire burde-boldes ha iherde a swuch nurð towart te aweariede maumetes temple ... ' (49-51). We are thus encouraged to think of the spiritual significance of her virginity: like that of the Church, her virginity resides in her faith.

We are several times reminded of the bridal image. Katherine speaks of Christ as her beloved: 'mi leofmon' (176); in the sensuous terms characteristic of the period, 'swete softe Iesu, alre smelle swotest' (228); as her lord as well as her beloved, 'mi lauert ant mi leofmon' (324)⁻²⁵. Christ addresses her as 'mi leofmon' (673-74). In contrast with the usual experience of the saints in virgin martyr

stories, St Katherine has no earthly suitor, and her heavenly lover is not compared with any other. In Katherine's virginity and in her fidelity to her spouse, the emphasis is on the true faith, the 'rihte bileaue' (553) which binds her to her beloved:

ne mei me nowðer teone ne tintreohe, turnen from mi leofmones luue þæt
ich on leue. He haueð iweddēt him to mi meiðhad wið þe ring of rihte
bileaue. (551-53)

Like the Church, Katherine is the virgin bride who remains faithful to her beloved.

This is not to suggest that this imagery is used simply or always in order to recall the Church in the person of Katherine. The primary ideas relating to Katherine as virgin and bride in Katherine's speech before her martyrdom, and in the event which follows, seem to be concerned more with Katherine as an individual virgin and bride; we find here a reference to the rewards, among the company of virgins (889), which virgins would receive in heaven: a notion familiar from treatises on virginity (e.g. *Hali Meðhad*; see above, p. 360, & Millett & Wogan-Browne 1990, xvii):

Ich iseo Iesu Crist, þe cleopeð me ant copneð, þe is mi lauere ant mi
luue, mi lif ant mi leofmon, mi wunne ant min iweddēt, mi murhðe ant
mi mede ant meidene crune. (859-61)

Her vision is realised, for before she is executed, immediately she has finished praying, a voice comes 'sighing from heaven' and calls his beloved bride to eternal joy in heaven, to receive her crown from the host of virgins:

Nefde ha bute ibede swa þæt ter ne com a steuene sihinde from heouene,
'Cum, mi leoue leofmon, cum nu min iweddēt, leouest an wummon! Low,

þe 3ete of eche lif abit te al iopenet, þe wununge of euch wunne kepeð
ant copneð þi cume. Low, al þet meidene mot ant tet hird of heouene
kimeð her a3ein þe wið kempene crune. (885-90)

There is one more aspect of the Church which may be recalled in Katherine's story. Wittig has pointed out that biblical women were frequently allegorised as representing the Church; furthermore, suffering women were regarded as portraying the early, struggling church.¹⁵ Wittig argues that such interpretations could also be applied to saints. If we accept this, then in a similar way the attacks on Katherine of the heathen emperor and philosophers may also suggest the attempts of the unbelievers to stifle the Church (compare lines 551-53, quoted above, p. 447). We are told near the beginning of the Life that when the emperor Maxence began to rule in Alexandria, he 'bigon anan ase wed wulf to weorrin hali chirche' (12-13). His persecution becomes focused upon Katherine when she comes forward to speak, as it were, for the Church. The ultimate victory of the Church may be seen to be prefigured by the conversion, through Katherine's preaching and example, of many unbelievers (see above, p. 443).

ii) Wisdom in the Old Testament

There are elements in Katherine that recall the figure of Wisdom, personified as a preacher in various passages of the first nine chapters of Proverbs:

Wisdom [Vulgate: *Sapientia*] preacheth abroad, she uttereth her voice in the streets: At the head of multitudes she crieth out, in the entrance of the gates of the city she uttereth her words. (Proverbs 1.20-21; see also 8.1-14)¹⁶

Wisdom rebukes those whom she addresses for their foolishness in not heeding her:

O children how long will you love childishness, and fools covet those things which are hurtful to themselves, and the unwise hate knowledge? Turn ye at my reproof: behold I will utter my spirit to you and will show you my words. (Proverbs 1.22-23; see also 8.32-9.6)

Katherine, too, goes forth publicly to rebuke the emperor. When she hears the clamour of the Christians forced by the emperor to take part in idol-worship:

[ha] wende hire piderwart. Ifont ter swiðe feole, 3einde ant 3urinde ... [Ha] com leapinde forð ... ant bigon to 3eien ludere steauene ...'. (57-73)

She reproves the emperor for he should know better. The content of her speeches - which are concerned with God's wisdom and the emperor's folly - will be discussed below (p. 452 ff.). The point to be made here is that the manner in which she confronts him is reminiscent of Wisdom personified in the passages quoted.

Later, as the crowds gather to hear the debate between Katherine and the fifty philosophers, we are reminded again of the figure of Wisdom preaching to the multitudes in the passages quoted above: 'Comen alle strikinde, strengeste swiðest, of eauer euch strete forte here þis strif' (272-73). But whereas Wisdom in Proverbs goes forth to preach (as Katherine does at the beginning of her story, lines 57-73, quoted above), here, Katherine is brought before the gathering. The situation, however, is reminiscent of Proverbs, and one may compare Katherine's task of instructing her audience in wisdom with Proverbs 8.4-9: 'Unto you, O men, I call ... All the words of my mouth

are ... plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge'. In the immediately following verse of Proverbs, Wisdom says 'Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold' (Proverbs 8.10; cf. Proverbs 8.11,18-19, & 3.13-14). Reminded, as I have suggested we have been, of Wisdom personified and preaching, Katherine's first words to the philosophers may also allude to these words spoken by Wisdom: 'Nu 3e alles to strif beoð isturet hidere, for te beon wið gold ant gersum igrette' (295-96).

Wisdom is also represented in Proverbs and other Old Testament Wisdom books as one who was with God before the creation (Proverbs 8.22-31, Ecclesiasticus 24.3-12, Wisdom 7.25-26). She is 'a celestial figure who assists God in creation; she is the manifestation of divine thought, depicted in veiled erotic language' (Crenshaw 1987, 404). The importance for *Seinte Katerine* of this aspect of Wisdom, however, lies in its Christian interpretation. The sequence of thought in John 1.1-18 follows the pattern of the description of Wisdom in the passages just cited.¹⁷ Christ, the Word of God, is also the Wisdom of God. It has also been pointed out that the translation of the Johannine *logos* by *sermo* ('speech' or 'discourse')

seems to have been widespread in early Christianity: Christ was the preaching of God.¹⁸ [This] suggests the teaching that, through his presence in the preached word, Christ the personal Word gave instruction to the church and conferred the power to believe and obey that instruction.¹⁹ (Pelikan 1971, 161)

Christ, then, both was, and preached, the wisdom of God. He is called 'the wisdom of God', 'sapientia Dei' by St Paul (I Corinthians 1.24).²⁰ The identification of Christ with the wisdom of God is

reflected in *Seinte Katerine* when the saint addresses Christ as God's wisdom, 'Crist ... þi feadres wisdom' (228-29); and she says that Christ, her lord and her beloved 'is soð wit ant wisdom' (322). If Katherine is herself identified with wisdom, her life may perhaps also be regarded as an *imitatio Christi* with regard to this aspect of Christ.

There are two further identifications of Wisdom in the Old Testament which may be alluded to in *Seinte Katerine*. Wisdom was identified with the law given to Moses and to Israel (Ecclesiasticus 24.32-33; compare also Deuteronomy 4.6).²¹ The pagan Emperor, whose laws are not, of course, those of Israel says 'our laws, our faith and our religion had a legitimate origin', 'ure lahen, ure bileaue, ant ure lei hefde lahet sprung' (115-16).²² These are the laws the philosophers reject when, later, they announce to the emperor that they have been converted to Christianity: 'we leaueð þi lahe ant al þi bileaue ant turneð alle to Crist' (491-92). There may be references here to Wisdom identified with the law, although the idea is not elaborated.²³

Wisdom in the Old Testament was also courted as a spouse by Pseudo-Solomon (Wisdom 8.2; cf Ecclesiasticus 51.21). One should note also in this connection that the Old Testament figures of Wisdom and Solomon - in a nuptial relationship as well as individually - were regarded, respectively, as prefigurations of the Church and of Christ.²⁴ Passages in *Seinte Katerine* which refer to Katherine as *sponsa Christi* have been cited above (pp. 446-47). It is possible that if there are allusions to the Old Testament personified Wisdom

intended in *Seinte Katerine*, as suggested above, then the presentation of Katherine as *sponsa Christi* may allude to Wisdom as spouse as well as to the Church in the same capacity. The figure of Katherine as *sponsa Christi* would thus encompass the individual virgin, Katherine; the Church as virgin bride of Christ; and Wisdom personified in the Old Testament, a prefiguration of the Church.

iii) Katherine's speeches to the emperor

The possibility that the figure of Katherine may be intended to recall aspects of Wisdom in the Old Testament is given support by the fact that the central theme of Katherine's speeches to the emperor is wisdom. There are in her speeches allusions to the theme as it occurs in various passages of scripture, both in the Wisdom books and elsewhere.²⁵

The main purport of Katherine's speeches to the emperor is that he is lacking in wisdom in his worship of idols. She confronts him by telling him that he should give the tribute he pays to devils to God, who created him and all the world, and rules all creation through his wisdom:

Gretunge, keiser, walde wel bicume þe for þin hehnesse, 3ef þu þis ilke 3eld þet tu dest to deouelen, þet fordeð þe baðe i licome ant i sawle, ant alle þe hit driueð - 3ef þu hit 3ulde ant 3eue to his wurðemunt þe scheop þe ant al þe world, ant welt þurh his wisdom al þet ischapen is. (74-78)

There is nothing, she says, which angers God more, than that man, created by God, and endowed with understanding and wisdom, should behave thus:

ne nis na þing hwerþurh monnes muchele meadschipe wreaðeð him wið²⁶
mare þen þet te schafte of mon, þet he schop ant 3ef schad ba of god
ant of ufel þurh wit ant þurh wisdom, schal wurðe se uorð ut of his
witte þurh þe awariede gast þet he 3elt þe wurðemunt to unwitelese
þing, þet te feont wuneð in, þet he ahte to Gode, ant herieð ant
hersumeð seheliche schaftes, blodles ant banles ant leomen bute liue,
as he schulde his ant heoren ant alre þinge schuppent, þet is Godd
unsehelich. (83-91)

The closest scriptural parallel to this seems to be Romans 1.18-25:

'the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness ...
[those men] are inexcusable. Because that, when they knew God, they
have not glorified him as God, or given thanks; but became vain in
their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened. For professing
themselves to be wise, they became fools. And they changed the glory
of the incorruptible God into the likeness of the image of a
corruptible man, and of birds, and of fourfooted beasts, and of
creeping things ... [and] worshipped and served the creature rather
than the Creator'.

This explains Katherine's own anger, otherwise unusual in such a
saint, at the behaviour of the worshippers (55-56). Her speech to the
emperor, as she continues it, may be compared with passages from the
book of Wisdom; for example in its references to the man-made images
of stone, and gold and silver, representing the sun and moon, wind and
water, which were worshipped as gods; although idolatry is of course
often condemned elsewhere in the scriptures:

þe feont, þe findeð euch uuel, bimong alle his crokinde creftes wið
neauer an ne kecheð he creftiluker cang men, ne leadeð to unbileau,
þen þet he makeð men, þet ahten to wite wel þet ha beoð bi3etene,
iborene, ant ibroht forð þurh þe heouenliche feader, to makie swucche
maumez of treo oðer of stan oðer - þurh mare meadschipe - of gold oðer
of seoluer, ant 3eouen ham misliche nomen, of sunne oðer of mone, of

wind ant wude ant weattres, ant hersumeð ant wurðgið as þah ha godes weren. (91-99)

But all men are vain, in whom there is not the knowledge of God: and who by these good things that are seen, could not understand him that is, neither by attending to the works have acknowledged who was the workman: But have imagined either the fire, or the wind, or the swift air, or the circle of the stars, or the great water, or the sun and moon, to be gods that rule the world ... But unhappy are they, and their hope is among the dead, who have called gods the work of the hands of men, gold and silver, the inventions of art, and the resemblances of beasts, or an unprofitable stone the work of an ancient hand. (Wisdom 13.1-2, 10; see also Wisdom 15.14-15)

The emperor in his folly accuses her of foolishness 'al þæt 3e seggeð is se sutel sotschipe þæt hit na wis mon, ah witlese hit weneð' (116-17). Her belief (which he conveniently summarises) is, he says, madness:

Me, hwet is mare meadschipe þæn forte leuen on him, ant seggen he is Godes sune, þe þe Giws demden ant heaðene ahongeden, ant þæt he wes akennet of Marie, a meiden, buten monnes man ant iboren of hire bute bruche of hire body, deide ant wes iburiet, ant herhede helle, ant aras of deað ant steah into heouene, ant shal eft o domesdei cumen ba te demen þe cwiþe ant te deade? (117-23)²⁷

Katherine tells the emperor what she thinks of his defence of his heathenism (123-28):

Alle ich izeo þine sahen sotliche isette ... Stille beo þu þenne ant stew swuche wordes, for ha beoð al witlese ant windi of wisdom. (130-37)

The emperor summons the philosophers to prove that 'nis bute dusilec al þæt ha driueð', 'all that she argues (or 'practises') is nothing but folly' (155). He tells her that her eloquent speech would bear

witness to understanding and wisdom, if she did not misunderstand and scorn his religion:

ti sputi speche walde of wisdom ant of wit beore þe witanesse 3ef þu ne misnome onont ure maumez, þet tu se muchel misseist ant ure godes hokerest þe þu schuldest, as we doð, heien ant herien. (164-67)

The emperor's folly lies in his heathenism, and his inability (or unwillingness) to understand and accept the wisdom of God. The themes of wisdom and folly are to be further explored in the Life in Katherine's speeches to the philosophers (see below, p. 456 ff.).²⁸

iv) Katherine's likeness to the apostles; wisdom in St Paul

Certain events and passages in *Seinte Katerine* draw attention to parallels between Katherine and the apostles. Before Katherine goes forth to confront the emperor over his idol-worship, she prays for 'help ant hap ant wisdom' (66). Then she arms herself with her faith:

wepnede hire wið soðe bileaue, ant wrat on hire breoste ant biforen hire teð ant te tunge of hire muð þe halī rode-taken, ant com leapinde forð, al itent of þe lei of þe halī gast. (67-70).

This last phrase recalls the event which took place at Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles: 'And there appeared to them parted tongues as it were of fire ... and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost' (Acts 2.3-4).²⁹ Later, when Katherine is imprisoned in readiness for her debate, her situation is comparable to that prophesied by Christ to his apostles: 'They will lay their hands upon you, and persecute you, delivering you up ... into prisons, dragging you before kings and governors, for my name's sake' (Luke 21.12-13; cf. Matthew 10.17-18). Katherine herself quotes Christ's promise, which

followed this prophecy, in her prayer in prison before she is to face the philosophers (Luke 21.12-15; cf Matthew 10.18-19):

Hwene 3e stondeð bluore kinges ant eorles, ne þenche 3e neauer hwæt
ne hu 3e schulen seggen, for ich chulle 3eouen ow ba tunge ant tale,
þæt an ne schal of alle ower wiðerwines witen hwæt he warpe a word
a3ein ow. (235-39)

Katherine includes herself amongst those to whom Christ made his promise: 'lauert, wune wið me ant halt þæt tu behete us' (239).

The apostle, however, whom Katherine most closely resembles is St Paul - the apostle *par excellence*. Katherine's preaching forms a most important (and lengthy) part of *Seinte Katerine*. Her preaching to and conversion of non-Jewish unbelievers may be intended to recall, as well as the Church, as suggested above (pp. 442-48), St Paul, as Apostle of the Gentiles (cf. Galatians 2.7). A more precise parallel to St Paul is suggested by the content of Katherine's speech to the philosophers, for in this speech Katherine closely echoes and demonstrates St Paul's teaching on wisdom in his first letter to the Corinthians.

Kurt Rudolph writes that in his dispute with the community in Corinth

Paul conceives the momentous idea that Christian wisdom represented by the Redeemer, is foolishness to the world, this wisdom being the cross that as a sign of the 'weakness of God' (I Corinthians 1.25) is the very sign of his 'strength'. God has destroyed the 'wisdom of the wise' and turned it into 'foolishness' (I Corinthians 1.18-22, 2.6-8). In the presence of the true wisdom of God, which has been revealed in Christ, the traditional wisdom of this world has been reduced to naught, but at the same time it has also been fulfilled. Those who

believe in Christ possess 'the power of God and the wisdom of God' (I Corinthians 1.24, 1.30, 2.10-12, 3.18). (1987, 398)

It may be useful to quote some of the relevant verses from the letter here:

1.17: For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not in wisdom of speech, lest the cross of Christ should be made void. 18: For the word of the cross, to them indeed that perish, is foolishness; but to them that are saved, that is, to us, it is the power of God. 19: For it is written: 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the prudence of the prudent I will reject' (Isaiah 29.14). 20: 'Where is the wise? ... Where is the disputer of this world?' (Isaiah 33.18). Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? 21: For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world, by wisdom, knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of our preaching, to save them that believe. 22: For ... the Greeks seek after wisdom: 23: But we preach Christ crucified, ... unto the Gentiles foolishness: 24: But unto them that are called, ... Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. 25: For the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men ... 3.18: Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. 19: For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.

We have already been prepared for the appearance in Katherine's speech to the philosophers of these Pauline ideas in the course of her encounter with the emperor (see lines 116-17, 130-37, 155, 164-67, quoted above, pp. 454-55); and by her prayer to Christ in prison: 'awelt þurh þi wisdom hare worldliche wit, ant þurh þi muchele mihte meistre ham swa þet ha beon mid alle istewet ant stille' (243-44). The 'wisdom of the wise' (I Corinthians 1.19), the 'wisdom of the

world' (I Corinthians 1.20), is represented by her adversaries, the fifty philosophers. They have been described as

fifti scolmeistres, of alle þe creftes þe clearc ah to cunnen ant in alle wittes of worldliche wisdomes wisest o worlde. (194-96)

In the course of her speech to the philosophers, Katherine confronts the wisdom of the world with the wisdom of God and shows the former to be foolishness. She does this both with reference to St Paul's own teachings, and to doctrine taught elsewhere in the scriptures and by tradition.³⁰

At the beginning of the speech Katherine contrasts the 'witlease lei' of the philosophers with the 'liffule leaue' of Holy Church, and pours scorn on the 'glistinde wordes' of the books of the philosophers. Her rejection of the fine (but empty) words of the philosophers is perhaps suggested by Paul's words in I Corinthians 2.1, though greatly elaborated: 'And I, ... when I came to you, came not in loftiness of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of Christ':

'Ich,' quoð þet meiden, 'sone se ich awei weorp ower witlese lei ant leornede ant luuede þe liffule leaue of hali chirche, þe ich ichosen habbe, ich aweorp wið alle þe glistinde wordes þe beoð in ower bokes, þe beoð wiðuten godlec ant empti wiðinnen, þet 3e beoð wið toswollen - nawt wið wit ah wið wint of ane wlonke wordes, þe þuncheð se greate ant beoð godlese þah ant beare of euch bliss, þah 3e blissin ow þrof'. (308-14)

She dismisses Homer, Aristotle, Aesculapius, Galen, Philistion and Plato, in all of whose works she is learned (315-18), as 'ful of idel 3elp ant empti of þet eadl ant liffule lare' (320);³¹ so that she has

forsaken them and turned to Christ who is true understanding and wisdom and salvation:

al ich forsake her ant cweðe ham al sker³² up, ant segge þet ich ne con ne ne cnawe na creft bute of an þet is soð wit ant wisdom ant heore eche heale þet him riht leueð, þet is, Iesu Crist mi lauert ant mi leofmon, þe seide, as ich seide ear ant 3et wule seggen, 'Perdam sapientiam sapientum et intellectum et cetera,' 'Ich chulle fordon þe wisdom of þeos wise worldmen ant awarpen þe wit of þeose world-witti'. (321-27)

The words which Katherine attributes to Christ are those of Isaiah quoted by St Paul in I Corinthians 1.19.³³

Katherine proceeds to fulfil this promise, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise', with her account of salvation history, from the temptation and fall of Adam and Eve (330-31), through the incarnation (333-39) and crucifixion (343), and in her exposition of the divinity and humanity of Christ (344-46). This is all the doctrine, she says, that she now learns, and it will strengthen her against them: 'þes is al þe lare þet ich nu leorni, þes is þe i þis strif schal strenge me a3ein ow' (347-48). In answer to their objections (352-59), she calls the philosophers foolish, 'dusi' (361), and expounds the paradox of God's 'weakness'. She tells them to:

leaf þi lease wit þet tu wlenchest te in ant liht to ure lare, þet tu mahe stihen to understonden in him Godes muchele strengðe - ant na monnes mihte - þurh his wundri werkes ant wurðful in eorðe; for nultu nawt tenne þet tu schuldest heien heanen ne heatien na mare, þet is, i soð Godd monnes unmihte, þet he neodeles nom ūpon himseoluen us forto sauuin ant makien us stronge þurh his unstrengðe. (372-78)

Katherine may here be recalling I Corinthians 2.5, 'That your faith might not stand on the wisdom of man, but on the power of God'; and 1.25 (quoted above, p. 457), and 1.27, 'the weak things of the world hath God chosen, that he may confound the strong'.

God raised the dead in his divinity, and suffered in his humanity:

Ʒu seist he ne mahte nawt Godd ba beon ant mon. Ah 3ef he nere soð Godd ant undeadlich himself, hu mahte he leanen lif to Ʒe deade? Ant 3ef he nere soð mon, hu mahte he drehen Ʒet he droh ant deien se derflliche? (396-400)

By dying, Christ overcame death:

deað ne akeaste nawt Crist, ah Crist ouercom deað ant sloh hire in himseoluen. (412-13)

'The wise ruler ... devised it so very well' that the devil was overthrown through meekness and skill, not mere strength:

Ʒe witti wealdent ant te rihtwise Godd bireadde hit se swiðe wel Ʒet he Ʒet ouercom mon were akeast Ʒurh mon wið meokelec ant liste, nawt wið luðer strengðe. (450-53)³⁴

Some of these doctrines, we have seen, are found in I Corinthians 1-3; some may derive from passages elsewhere in St Paul's letters.³⁵ Others - such as that of Christ's dual nature, simultaneously God and man - are standard Christian doctrine.³⁶ All that Katherine preaches, however, may be regarded as expressive of the 'wisdom of God'. Katherine has explained in some detail the paradoxes involved in the folly of the cross, which Paul was preaching, and by so doing she

herself has 'destroyed the wisdom of the wise' and turned it into 'foolishness'.³⁷ Her discourse leaves the philosopher speechless:

euchan biheold oþer as ha bidweolet weren, þet nan ne seide nawiht, ah seten stille as stan - cwich ne cweð þer neauer an. (458-60)

Katherine is one of those who have 'the power of God, and the wisdom of God' (I Corinthians 1.23-24).³⁸

The audience would be aware, from St Paul's teachings, from other passages of scripture, and from the Life itself, of how Katherine's victory was made possible. The reference to Christ's promise to his apostles has already been noted (above, p. 456). The promise was reaffirmed to Katherine after her prayer in prison when the archangel Michael appeared to her, and reassured her that Christ

bihat te þet he wule i þi muð healden flowinde weattres of wittie wordes þe schule þe flit of þine fan swifteliche auellen; ant swuch wunder ham schal punchen of þi wisdom þet ha wulleð alle wende to Criste. (255-58)

Katherine's victory over the philosophers can be seen both as an answer to her prayer, and as a fulfilment of Christ's promises to his apostles and to her.

We also find the idea that Katherine received her inspiration and wisdom through the Holy Spirit. Paul wrote that God's wisdom was revealed through the Spirit; the Spirit enabled one to know the mind of God (I Corinthians 2.9-16),³⁹ and that wisdom and knowledge were gifts of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 12.8).⁴⁰ The audience has already been told that Katherine received her learning (or instruction)⁴¹ through the Holy Spirit:

Hire feader hefde lset hire earliche to lare, ant heo þurh þe halli
gast undernom hit se wel þet nan nes hire euening. (40-42)⁴²

When Katherine speaks, the philosophers recognise the source of her
inspiration. They are left speechless because their wisdom is not
inspired as hers is. When the emperor, furious, rebukes them, saying:
'Nabbe 3e teð ba ant tunge to sturien?' (464-65), the philosophers
admit they have never encountered such learning before; no human can
speak as she does - it is a heavenly spirit in her. This perhaps
recalls I Corinthians 2.13, 'Which things also we speak, not in the
learned words of human wisdom; but in the doctrine of the Spirit'; and
Acts 6.10, 'And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit
that spoke':

neauer, aðet tes dei, ne funde we nohwer nan swa deop ilearet þet he
durste sputi wið us ... [ahl in hire ne moteð na mon; for nawt nis hit
monlich mot þet ha mealeð, ne nawt nis heo þet haueð us atomet, ah is
an heouenlich gast in hire swa a3ein us þet we ne cunnen - ant tah we
cuðen, ne nullen ne ne durren - warpen na word a3ein to weorri ne te
wreaððin him þet ha wreaððeð on. For sone se ha Crist cleopede, ant
his nome nempnede ant te muchele mihtes of his hehnesse, ant schawde
seoððen suteliche þe deopschipe ant te derne run of his deað o rode,
al wat awei ure worldliche wit, swa we weren adredde of his
drihtnesse. (478-90)

v) The miracles

Two miracles take place at Katherine's death:

þe an of þe twa wes þet ter sprong ut, mid te dunt, milc imenget wið
blod, to beoren hire witnesse of hire hwite meiðhad. Þe oðer wes þet
te engles lihten of heouene ant heuen hire on heh up, ant beren forð
hire bodi ant biburieden hit i þe munt of Synai, þer Moyses fatte þe
lahe et ure Lauerd. (900-04)

To take the second miracle first: it would be fitting, since Wisdom was identified with the law in the Old Testament (see above, p. 451), that the body of Katherine, the figure of Wisdom, should be taken to Mount Sinai where Moses received the law.⁴³

The miracle of the milk is a little more complicated. The author explains the milk as a sign of the saint's virginity (this is already in the Latin, 1135-36), although milk is unusual as a symbol of virginity. It may simply have been the colour of milk which made it an appropriate symbol of Katherine's 'hwhite meidhad' (901). The combination of colours in the fact that it is 'milk mingled with blood' which 'sprang out' may also possibly suggest, like lilies and roses, virginity and martyrdom. However, there are some further comments which may be made concerning the miracle.

Katherine's martyrdom may be intended to recall that of St Paul, as described in the apocryphal Acts of Paul and in the popular elaboration of these Acts, the *Passio Sancti Pauli Apostoli*:⁴⁴

When the executioner struck off his head, milk spurted upon the soldier's clothing. And when they saw it, the soldier and all who stood by were amazed, and glorified God who had given Paul such glory. (Acts of Paul, 11.5, Hennecke 1963, II.386; James 1953, 296)

Similar miracles are also recorded of other martyrs.⁴⁵ But the tradition of Paul's martyrdom was well known, and since Katherine's teaching recalls that of St Paul, it is possible that her martyrdom is also intended to recall his.⁴⁶

The miracle (in both the Acts of Paul and *Passio* and in *Seinte Katerine*) may also allude to St Paul's words in I Corinthians 3.2, 'I

gave you milk to drink'. Paul was using milk as a symbol of nourishment in the Christian faith. Both St Paul and St Katherine could be said to have 'nourished' the heathen by means of their teaching.⁴⁷ However, it seems important to point out - though here we are on more speculative ground - that milk appears to have had further, potentially fruitful, symbolic connotations, which are not referred to in *Seinte Katerine*, possibly because to have drawn attention to them would have also drawn attention to Katherine's physical, rather than her symbolic femininity.

It has been argued above that the figure of Katherine may represent the Church, portrayed as female, and the virgin bride of Christ. The Church was also commonly represented as a mother.⁴⁸ For example, Hincmar (Archbishop of Reims from 845) used the image, apparently also recalling St Paul's words, just quoted, and Ephesians 4.13. He wrote of the Church of Rome as mother and teacher, and one who had 'given birth to us in faith, fed us with catholic milk, nourished us with breasts full of heaven until we were ready for solid food, and led us by her orthodox discipline to perfect manhood' ('On Predestination' 4, Pelikan 1978, 48). In art, from at least the thirteenth century, the Church is sometimes found represented as a woman suckling. It is interesting that similar images have also been interpreted as representing wisdom (Warner 1985, 182).⁴⁹ This brings us back to a point made earlier in the chapter: although virgin martyrs often undergo sexual tortures, (including that of having their breasts cut off),⁵⁰ Katherine does not. In *Seinte Katerine*, such a torture is, in fact, inflicted on a Christian woman, but it is

displaced from the person of the saint and reserved instead for the Queen: she has her breasts torn off before she is martyred (794-96). Katherine's breasts are not mentioned, and the miraculous milk flows from the wound in her neck.

The reason why attention is not drawn to Katherine's physical femininity may be that the main interests in Katherine as female were symbolic ones. Little attempt is made to encourage identification with her on an emotional or human level, and she is not shown to suffer as saints Margaret and Juliana of the Katherine Group suffer (see above, chs. 16 & 17).⁵¹ Indeed, the effect of the presentation of the saint is rather to discourage sympathy with her. Her femininity is important insofar as it alludes to the scriptural and traditional personifications of Wisdom and the Church. A wish to avoid allusion to Katherine's physical femininity may explain why the miracle of the milk is connected by the writer of the Life with virginity, rather than related to the Church (or to wisdom) as mother; and why Katherine does not find her virginity literally threatened, or have to undergo sexual tortures. This can be seen as another example of the way in which certain aspects of the feminine were detached from their literal references (see above, ch. 15). And it may also be noted that Katherine would otherwise be in conflict with the view commonly expressed (and based, indeed, on St Paul), that women should not teach.

NOTES

1. References to *Seinte Katerine* are to line numbers of d'Ardenne & Dobson's edited text based on MS Bodley 34 (1981); references to the Latin version are to line numbers of their edition of the full 'Vulgate' version in the same volume.
2. cf. Olibrius in *Seinte Marherete*: 'þe ueondes an foster', Mack 1958, 6/6.
3. Millett and Wogan-Browne comment on the three Katherine group Lives: 'Each is a reinforcement of the others, with exactly the same type of saint selected in each case and strong similarities of treatment in structure, themes and style ... Though there is some thematic variation between the Lives, [their] shared design and purpose make it possible for a single Life to give a good idea of all three' (1990, xx1). The similarities are undoubted, but there are greater differences between Katherine and the other two saints than Millett and Wogan-Browne suggest.
4. Dobson comments in the introduction to the Life 'it is hard to see how anyone could have stopped her talking except by the emperor's ultimate way, off with her head. He should have done it much sooner' (d'Ardenne & Dobson 1981, p. xxvi).
5. This approach draws on the work of Wittig 1975 & Calder 1981, on Cynewulf's *Juliana*; Hill 1969 & Earl 1980 on *Andreas*; Hill 1971 on *Elene*; and Earl 1975, on 'Typology and Iconographic Style in English Medieval Hagiography'.
6. Katherine's likeness to the apostles is discussed on pp. 455-56.
7. The Church was defined in the Nicene Creed (325) as 'one, holy, catholic and apostolic'. The 'apostolicity' of the Church rested in the continuity of its teachings with that of the apostles; for the teaching of the apostles, like that of the Old Testament prophets, and of the scriptures as a whole, was divinely inspired. See Pelikan 1971, 112-15.
8. The content of these speeches is discussed on pp. 452-55, 456-61.

9. A Spanish monk and writer, d. 798. His work was well-known (Alcuin, for example, mentioned him). He wrote a famous commentary on the Apocalypse which remained influential for a long time: there are 30 manuscripts extant from the ninth to the thirteenth centuries (see NCE, s.v. 'Beatus of Liébana').

10. *sapientum* in all the MSS of *Seinte Katerine*; *sapientum* in Corinthians & in the Latin text, line 238.

11. The significance of the reference in this context is that Pentecost was one of the two main Church festivals when baptisms took place (the other was Easter).

12. An early example of the Church portrayed in this way can be seen in details of a mosaic erected between 422 and 432 over the inner portal of the Church of St Sabina in Rome. Here, we find two female figures, identified by the inscriptions beneath them as 'Ecclesia ex Circumcisione' and 'Ecclesia ex Gentibus'. Each holds a book in her left hand; the right hand of each is raised in what has been interpreted as a gesture of speech or instruction. (Schiller 1976, 39, and figs 93 & 94; also illustrated in NCE s.v. 'Church I', figs 1 & 2). Campbell has discussed a related idea: the Virgin Mary was often identified with the Church, and Campbell has argued in the case of two eleventh century drawings which depict Mary holding a book that the Virgin represents the Church as the repository of the Scriptures (1974, 38).

13. See chapter 5 above for a discussion of the scriptural bases and development of this image.

14. The idea that virginity symbolises purity of faith, both in the Church and in the individual virgin, has been discussed above, ch. 3.

15. He cites Alcuin's interpretation of the woman in John 16.21 as the Church suffering in the world during the time of persecution; and commentaries by Bede, pseudo-Alcuin and Haymo, which explain that the woman of Apocalypse 12 represents the Church 'persecuted ceaselessly, but in vain' (1975, 50-51).

16. On this personification see Camp 1985, esp. pp. 73-74.

17. See NCE s.v. 'Wisdom in Paul, John and James' (p. 973).
18. A visual counterpart to this idea can be seen in a miniature from a manuscript written at Cîteaux in the early twelfth century (Bible of Saint-Bénigne, Dijon: Dijon, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 2, fol. 442v). The initial I at the opening of St John's Gospel contains 'a miniature of God the Father enthroned, with a portrait of the Son ... in his lap: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God." ... Both have the right hand raised to denote speech ... both hold the Book in the left hand' (Schiller 1971, 6, and Fig. 1).
19. Pelikan reminds us that the scriptures could convert a reader, as in Augustine's *Confessions* (8.12.29, CSEL 33.194-95) and Sulpicius Severus' *Life of Martin of Tours* (9.5.7, SC 133.272) (Pelikan 1971, 162).
20. Compare the OE *Christ I*, lines 239-40: 'Ðu eart seo Snyttro þe þas sidan gesceaft, mid þi Waldende, worhtes ealle' (Cook 1900, 10). See also Cook's notes on the lines (p. 101), in which he quotes Ælfric's identifications of the Word and the Son with Wisdom; and see also Burlin (1968, 133): he comments on exegetical identifications of Christ with Wisdom in the Scriptures, and on *Christ I* 239-40 (1968, 133).
21. 'For Sirach, the law has become the ... consummate embodiment of wisdom' (Davis 1984, 16)
22. In a sentence in the Latin, not translated in *Sainte Katerine*, the emperor goes on to speak of Roman justice, religion, and law: 'Romani namque principes, iustitia semper et religione mortales omnes preeuntes, totum in leges suas orbem redegerunt' (lines 150-52).
23. See also below, p. 463.
24. Schiller discusses expressions in art from about 1200 of these identifications (1971, 23).
25. Wittig (1975, 51), cites Frère's study of liturgical texts (1935) which includes manuscripts dating from the tenth to the twelfth centuries, and points out that the sapiential books were drawn upon quite heavily for readings on the common of virgins and martyrs. This

suggests that the audience of Lives of virgins and martyrs may have readily made connections between these stories and the wisdom books. It should be pointed out, however, that the particular passages from Proverbs and Wisdom which are quoted in this chapter are not themselves among those used for reading in the texts Frère edits.

26. On this construction, see d'Ardenne & Dobson's note to line 84, *wid*.

27. The emperor's summary follows the Apostles' Creed quite closely (cf. d'Ardenne & Dobson's note to lines 119-20, p. 215).

28. *Sapientia* (trans. St John, 1923), a play by Hrotsvit of Gandersheim (10th century) provides some interesting correspondences with *Seinte Katerine*, particularly in connection with Wisdom personified, and the dramatisation of the conflict between the wisdom of God and the folly of idol-worshippers. *Sapientia*, the principal character in the play, embodies Christian wisdom, and she is presented in the manner of a saint during the persecutions. She and her daughters, Faith, Hope, and Charity, (the theological virtues born of wisdom), are brought before the emperor Hadrian because *Sapientia* has been preaching and converting the people of the country to Christianity. She refuses to worship Hadrian's gods, and she lectures him, bewildering him with her learning, particularly her knowledge of the Boethian science of numbers. (The work of Boethius dominated the Quadrivium, the mathematical four of the seven liberal arts; and to some extent the Trivium, since his work formed the basis of the study of logic, one of the subjects of the Trivium. On the relationship between wisdom and learning, see further note 40 below). Each daughter in turn refuses to abandon her belief. Faith exclaims at the emperor's lack of wisdom in attempting to persuade her to worship his gods. She and her sisters are martyred. *Sapientia* herself dies after praying at their burial that she might be taken to Christ.

For an account of what is known of Hrotsvit, and bibliography, see Wilson 1984, 30-63, and Waithe vol. II (1989). Hrotsvit's work was known and copied in Germany in the eleventh and twelfth centuries (Wilson, pp. 40-41). Further investigation of the matter is outside

the scope of this study, but one wonders whether Hrotsvit may have been influenced by the story of St Katherine. On wisdom in the work of Hildegard of Bingen, see Newman 1987.

29. Katherine herself refers to this passage of the Acts later; quoted above, pp. 444-45.

30. Leclercq comments on the monastic concern with the theme of worldly wisdom contrasted with Christian wisdom: 'In the monastic middle ages ... there are, in effect, two ways of living according to reason. Either one lives according to worldly wisdom, as taught by the pagan philosophers ... or one lives according to Christian wisdom which is not of this world but already of the world to come' (1978, 128).

31. One may compare this with a passage from John of Salisbury's 'Policraticus' (completed in 1156), which is included by M.R. James in his collection of texts recording the Acts of Paul because it preserves a record of an apocryphal speech of St Paul. The concerns expressed in it are those which appear in the sections of Paul's letter to the Corinthians on foolishness and wisdom, and which appear also in *Seinte Katerine*; but St Paul is here said to have referred in addition to the philosophers, rather as Katherine does, a reference not in the canonical Acts and Epistles:

That excellent preacher [Paul] strove so to impress on their minds Jesus Christ and him crucified, that he might show by the example of heathens how the release of many came about through the shame of the cross ... As, then, he proclaimed the shame of the cross in such a way as gradually to purge away the foolishness of the heathen, little by little he raised the word of faith and the language of his preaching, up to the Word of God, the wisdom of God, and the very throne of the divine majesty ... The ingenuities of an Aristotle, the subtleties of a Chrysippus, the gins of all the philosophers were defeated by the rising of one who had been dead. (James 1953, 299)

The 'rising of one who had been dead' refers to a miracle performed by the apostle Peter. James notes (p. 299) that 'this last sentence is borrowed from Jerome' (Letter 57.12, to Pammachius; Wace & Schaff

VI.118). Jerome had not been writing of wisdom: 'the great holiness [of the lives of the apostles] ... made up for much plainness of speech. They confuted the syllogisms of Aristotle and the perverse ingenuities of Chrysippus by raising the dead'. We do not know whether Jerome's sentence was borrowed by John of Salisbury, or whether it was already in his source. The listing of philosophers, as in *Seinte Katerine* and John of Salisbury, seems a natural elaboration of St Paul's words in Corinthians.

32. On *sker* see d'Ardenne's note to 321.

33. Katherine has already quoted the verse (lines 177-79, see above, p. 444). On the previous occasion, she spoke of 'mi leofmon ... þe þeos word seide þurh an of his witegen (176).

34. The reference to *liste*, 'skill', or 'cunning' (452) may be compared with the phrase from Fortunatus's hymn, 'Pange lingua', 'ars ut artem falleret', quoted in *Piers Plowman* B XVIII 161a (and cf. 'gile is bigiled', 361a). For further information on the history of this feature of theories of the redemption, see Woolf 1958, 137-53, esp. pp. 142-44.

35. Compare, for example, lines 375-78, with Philipians 2.6-11; 412-13 with II Timothy 1.10; 450-53 with I Corinthians 15.21 & Hebrews 2.14-15.

36. See note 34 above.

37. Wittig has discussed the wisdom of Cynewulf's Juliana in similar terms: her apparent folly is shown to be wisdom (1975, 53-54). See also Hill's discussion of Cynewulf's Elene (1971, 166-174).

38. Possibly, as ^a woman, by nature weak, Katherine may also have been seen as 'one of the weak things of the world (whom) God has chosen, that he may confound the strong' (I Corinthians 1.27).

39. Katherine's prophetic powers also indicate her knowledge of the mind of God (583-85).

40. Wisdom was elsewhere described as one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 11.1), and it could also encompass learning (see note 42 below). The gifts of the Holy Spirit received particular

attention during the twelfth century (see, for example, the miniature illustrating the Tree of Jesse in the Lambeth Bible, of c. 1150: Kauffmann 1975, no. 70, ill. 195). Dodwell points out that the subject was discussed by, among others, Anselm, Abelard and Bernard (1961, xx-xxi). Dodwell also comments that 'according to Theophilus' account, the gifts were not simply positive qualities for good, but also a negative defence against evil' (pp. xxi-xxii). Katherine appears to receive the gift of wisdom from the Holy Spirit, and she uses it against evil.

41. cf. BT Sup. s.v. 'lar', esp. the examples from Hml. S. (Ælfric's Lives of Saints), s.v. 'lar' II.

42. Wisdom and learning were regarded as related: the seven pillars of wisdom of Proverbs 9 were frequently equated in the middle ages with the seven liberal arts (Curtius 1979, 41). Alcuin, for example, in his interpretation of Proverbs 9.1, identified the House of Wisdom as the House of Learning, and the seven pillars with the seven liberal arts (Warner 1985, 181). The student in the early middle ages was not regarded as ready to study theology until competence in the seven liberal arts had been attained. Sapientia, in Hrotsvit's play, reflects this idea (see note 28 above).

43. This may also be a happy consequence of the wish of the monks at the monastery at Sinai to encourage pilgrims by claiming to have discovered Katherine's remains there. Réau writes of the miracle:

Ce dernier trait, d'origine monastique, a été inventé par les moines du monastère qui prétendaient avoir retrouvé ses ossements et voulaient attirer ainsi plus de pèlerins vers la montagne déjà sanctifiée par l'apparition d'Iahvé à Moïse. (Réau 1958, 263)

44. The *Passio*, ascribed to Linus, was a more elaborate version, with added incidents, of the apocryphal Acts, and included the miracle of the milk (Eleen 1982, 101-02; see Hennecke 1963, II.575). Eleen gives evidence of its popularity in Northern France: readings from the *Passio* formed part of the liturgy used at Chartres, where they are found in lectionaries from the tenth century onwards. The thirteenth-century window at Chartres dedicated to St Paul illustrates scenes

from the *Passio*, including the execution (Eleen p. 102 & fig. 36); so too do the thirteenth-century windows at Rouen and Sens (Eleen p. 25 & figs 69 & 76). Eleen lists manuscripts dating from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries, from England and the Continent, which depict the execution of Paul - sometimes at the moment before the execution, sometimes during or after decapitation (p. 22). The story of Paul's execution was therefore well-known, although it is not possible to distinguish milk and blood in these representations, either in the manuscripts or the windows. It would be interesting to know whether such apocryphal accounts were also included in English liturgies. See also note 46 below. With regard to the association of the miracle with virginity, it may also be relevant to point out that virginity is thematically important in the Acts of Paul. See the blessings which occur in the episode of Paul and Thecla (§ 5, Hennecke 1963, II.354; James 1953, 273; and see Hennecke's comments on p. 350).

45. St Paul is not mentioned by Loomis, but he lists 'a number of martyrs, not only women, but men, [who] emitted milk instead of blood from their wounds' (1948, 79 and note 29, p. 189).

46. It may be worth noting that St Paul's execution had been among the scenes used in manuscripts from at least the ninth century to illustrate his Epistles. (Narrative scenes concerning Paul from the canonical Acts and from apocryphal accounts were associated with the Epistles because the doctrinal content of the Epistles made them otherwise difficult to illustrate). The ninth-century example is the historiated initial P at the beginning of Romans in the Moutier-Grandval Bible (London, BL Add. MS 10546, fol. 411v; Eleen 1982, 16 & 101). A later example is found in a manuscript of the twelfth century, possibly produced at Winchester. This has in its opening initial a picture of St Paul teaching, at the top; in the centre he is being lowered down the walls of Damascus in a basket (Acts 9.25; II Corinthians 11.33); and below he is about to be beheaded (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Auct. D. I. 13, fol. 1; Alexander & Kauffmann 1984, no. 60).

47. I am grateful to Professor Christine Fell for this suggestion. In connection with the milk and the blood which flow from Katherine's

wounds, compare the passage from Aelred's letter to his sister (quoted above, p. 403): in this passage also the milk is part of a mixture of blood (wine) and water (milk); again they flow from a wound; and the milk is said to be for nourishment.

48. See above, p. 125 ff.

49. According to Witkowski, the two ideas are suggested in one image in a thirteenth century window in the cathedral of Saint-Etienne in Bourges: a crowned female figure is depicted, with bare breasts, her arms outstretched, holding a crown above the heads of each of the two men who kneel before her. Witkowski interprets the image as follows: 'Les deux mamelles son les deux Testaments où l'Eglise triomphante puise le lait céleste dont elle alimente ses enfants. C'est encore l'image de la Sagesse éternelle, dont les mamelles nourrissent les âmes chrétiennes de la parole divine' (1908, 195, and fig. 237). He does not, however, give the bases for his interpretations.

We may compare two passages in Hrotsvit's play *Sapientia* (on which see note 28 above). The first is when Sapientia and her daughters are imprisoned: she says to them 'This I pray ... that you may stand firm in the faith which I instilled into you while you were infants at my breast ... I gave you milk. I nourished and cherished you, that I might wed you to a heavenly bridegroom' (St John 1923, 142). The second is the episode recounting the torture undergone by Sapientia's daughter Faith. The emperor orders her nipples to be cut off. When his order is carried out, streams of milk gush from her wounds instead of blood (St John 1923, 145).

50. For example, St Agatha; and compare the torture of Faith, (note 49 above).

51. The wheel constructed for her was designed as an instrument of dreadful torture (700-09); but an angel destroys it before Katherine can be attached to it (726-30).

APPENDIX: TEXTS, MANUSCRIPTS, STUDIES

A: THE OLD ENGLISH LIVES

Table of Manuscripts relating to LS

- G: Gloucester Cathedral, MS 35 (Ker 117). 11th century. Fragments from bindings (the 'Gloucester Framents').
- J: British Library, MS Cotton Julius E vii (Ker 162). Early 11th century. The principal MS for LS.
- O: British Library, MS Cotton Otho B x (Ker 177A). First half of 11th century. A volume of lives of saints. Badly damaged in Cotton Library fire of 1731.
- R: British Library, MS Royal 8 c. vii (Ker 260). Early 11th century. Fragments of Ælfric's Lives of St Agnes & St Agatha.
- U: Cambridge, University Library, MS Il. I. 33 (Ker 18). Second half of 12th century. A collection of homilies and lives of saints.
- V: British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius D xvii, fols 4-92 (Ker 222). Mid-11th century. Homilies for saints' days; included twenty from LS. Seriously damaged in fire of 1731.

References are to present foliations, as recorded by Ker.

Information about manuscripts containing lives other than those in LS (i.e. Juliana & Margaret) is given in the entries for those lives below.

ÆTHELTHRYTH: June 23. Married twice and remained a virgin; became abbess of Ely, where she died c. 679 (see Plummer 1896 II.234-40).

Text: 'Natale Sancte Ældryðe Virginis', LS 20 (Skeat I.432-41); ed. from MS J, fols 94v-96v (Ker 162, art. 26). Skeat collates this text with MS U, fols 34v-36v (Ker 18, art. 4); and with MS O, fol. '193' (Ker 177A, art 23). The copy in MS V, fol '230' (Ker 222, art. 54) is lost.

Author: Ælfric.

The Story: Ælfric gives an account of the virtues, death and miracles of the saint.

Source: Bede, HE 4.19 (BHL 2632). See LS 20.24; and Ott, pp. 46-47.

AGATHA: Feb. 5. Virgin Martyr, d. Sicily c. 251 under the Decian persecution.

Text: 'Natale Sancte Agathe Virginis', LS 8 (Skeat I.194-209); ed. from MS J, fols 50r-53r (Ker 162, art. 12). Herzfeld (1892, 151-52) collates the fragments in R (Ker 260) with Skeat's edition. The copy in MS V, fol. '217' (Ker 222, art. 49) is lost.

Author: Ælfric.

The Story: Ælfric describes Agatha's resistance to the blandishments and threats of her persecutors; her suffering and martyrdom.

Source: A Latin text similar to that published in AASS Feb. 1.621-24 (BHL 133). See Ott, pp. 29-31. Also in the Cotton-Corpus Legendary. Zettel notes that the latter provides closer textual correspondences to Ælfric than the printed text (1982, 31-32; on the Legendary see below, pp. 478-79).

Other accounts: Aldhelm, *De Virginitate* ch. 41, & *Carmen de Virginitate* 1736-77. Not in the OEM (from which most of the entries for Feb. have been lost).

Studies: 1) Farrar (1973) discusses Agatha, Agnes & Lucy, and argues that 'elements of something akin to allegory are present', and that these virgin martyrs represent chastity (p. 86). He writes of the life of a saint as an *imitatio Christi*; and of hagiography as providing a model for its audience to follow (pp. 86-87). 2) Moloney (1980) edits Ælfric's text. She comments briefly on the theme of virginity in the lives of Agatha, Lucy & Cecilia (p. 167).

AGNES: Jan. 21. Virgin Martyr, d. Rome at age of 12 or 13 in c. 304, in Diocletian persecution.

Text: 'Natale Sancte Agnetis Virginis', LS 7 (Skeat I.170-87); ed. from MS J, fols 44r-48r (Ker 162, art. 10); collated by Skeat with MS O, fol. '48' (Ker 177A, art. 7). Herzfeld (1892, 151-52) collates the

fragments in MS R (Ker 260) with Skeat's edition. The copy in MS V, fol. '211v' (Ker 222, art. 47) is lost.

Author: Ælfric.

The story: Agnes rejects a heathen suitor, and is then taken to a brothel where she is miraculously protected. She survives other torments unharmed and is eventually martyred.

Source: A text similar to that in PL 17.735-742 (BHL 156), attributed to Ambrose. See Ott, pp. 24-26. The version is also found in the Cotton-Corpus Legendary (Zettel 1979, 16).

Other accounts: Aldhelm *De Virginitate* ch. 45; *Carmen de Virginitate* 1925-74. OEM Jan 21.

Studies: 1) Bethurum (1932). 2) Farrar (1973: see above, 'Agatha: Studies'. 3) Moloney (1980) edits Ælfric's Life. She comments on Ælfric's elaboration of the theme of Christ the bridegroom (p. 166).

CECILIA: Nov. 22. Virgin Martyr, d. Rome in 2nd or 3rd century.

Text: 'Passio Sanctae Cecillie Virginis', LS 34 (Skeat II.356-77); ed. from MS J, fols 213v-219r (Ker 162, art. 45); collated by Skeat with MS V, fol. '123' (Ker 222, art. 25).

Author: Ælfric.

The story: Cecilia converts her pagan husband Valerian on their wedding night; they convert Valerian's brother Tibertius. They each convert many before they are martyred.

Source: A text similar to 'Passio Sanctae Caeciliae: Acta et passio beatissimae martyris Caeciliae Valeriani et Tiburtii' (BHL 1495), ed. Delehaye 1936, 194-220. See Moloney 1980, 139, 156-57. Also in the Cotton-Corpus Legendary (Zettel 1979, 31). The Latin is longer and more diffuse than Ælfric's version, e.g. in the matter of geographical detail, and some characters and speeches (such as the speeches of the brothers: Delehaye, p. 209). Ælfric concentrates more on Cecilia. His excisions are not, however, entirely seamless, and the life is not as neatly structured as his other lives of women saints.

Other accounts: Aldhelm, *De Virginitate* ch. 40; *Carmen de Virginitate* 1710-35. OEM Nov. 22.

Studies: Moloney (1980) edits Ælfric's Life. She comments on the differences between Ælfric's version and the Latin (pp. 139, 156-57).

EUGENIA: Dec. 25. Virgin Martyr, said to have died in Rome during Valerian's rule, c. 257. (See Delehaye 1936, 182; Butler IV.612).

Text: 'Natale Sancte Eugenie Virginis', LS 2 (Skeat I.24-51); ed. from MS J, fols 9v-15v (Ker 162, art 5). Skeat gives some variant readings from MS O, fol '55' (Ker 177A, art. 9).

Author: Ælfric.

The story: Eugenia disguises herself as a man and enters a monastery. She is later elected abbot. A woman accuses her of attempted seduction. Eugenia reveals herself at her trial. She converts many, and miraculously survives various torments before she is martyred.

Source: The relevant Latin texts extant are:

a) 'Vita sanctae Eugeniae, virginis ac martyris, auctore incerto', De vitis patrum liber primus, PL 73.605-24; also printed in PL 21.1105-22 (BHL 2666) [VP].

It has been argued that this version is an expanded and more popular version of (b) below (see Delehaye 1936, 175-78, and Butler IV.612):

b) 'Passio sanctorum Eugeniae, Prothi et Hiacynti martyrum', Mombricitus II.391-98 (BHL 2667) [Mombricitus].

c) The version of the 'Passio S. Eugeniae, Virginis' (BHL 2666-2667), found in three of the extant manuscripts of the 'Cotton-Corpus Legendary', a compilation of hagiographic texts which survives in five copies, in varying degrees of completeness. (For an account of the Legendary see Zettel 1982, 17-32; on the manuscripts and their contents see Zettel 1979, 9-39. The manuscripts were first identified by Levison, 1920). The three manuscripts which contain the 'Passio Eugeniae' are:

1) Cambridge, Corpus Christi Library, MS 9, pp. 410-426 [C]

This manuscript forms the third part of the earliest and most complete

copy of the Cotton-Corpus Legendary extant (Parts 1 & 2 are in the British Library, MS Cotton Nero E 1, parts 1 & 2). The copy was written at Worcester c. 1060 (Zettel 1979, 10, & 1982, 19 and note).

2) Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 354, fols 176r-186v [F]

This was 'written in England, perhaps in the west country, in the latter half of the twelfth century' (Zettel 1982, 20).

3) Hereford, Cathedral Library, MS P 7 vi, fols 205b-213a [H]

This manuscript was written at Hereford c. 1150 (Zettel 1982, 20 and note 2)

A copy of the Cotton-Corpus version from British Library, Additional MS 25600, fols 51-66, is printed in Fábrega Grau, 1955, 83-98 [FG]. On this manuscript (which was written in Spain in 919) see E.M. Thompson 1884, 65.

Ott, whose work on St Eugenia was based on an examination of the VP and Mombricitus versions, took the VP to be Ælfric's source (1892, 8-10). Ott noted, however, that there were passages in Ælfric's version for which there are no parallels in the VP version. Zettel has pointed out that the Mombricitus account 'supplies close parallels for almost all the passages absent from the VP version, but is itself unsatisfactory in several other sections, most of which are adequately provided for by the other version' (1979, 62). Zettel's study (1979, 110-21, 249-50) shows that the Cotton-Corpus version incorporates material from both the VP and Mombricitus texts, 'thereby furnishing a single and very close source for the whole of the Old English translation' (1979, 62). It is not certain, however, that this version was Ælfric's precise source, although his source must have been very similar in content. For convenience of reference, the text published by Fábrega Grau is quoted in the discussion of the Life of St Eugenia in chapter 7; variants are noted from the Cotton-Corpus manuscripts; and reference is made to the VP and Mombricitus versions as appropriate.

Other Accounts: Aldhelm, *De Virginitate* ch. 44; *Carmen de Virginitate* 1883-1924. OEM December 25 (and see Cross's discussion of the sources for the entry, 1982b).

The story - that of a young woman who disguises herself as a man in order to avoid discovery so that she can lead a holy life - has many parallels. Delehayé writes of 'the recurring story of the devout woman who retires to a monastery disguised as a man; then she is accused of misconduct, and found to be innocent after her death ... The heroine is sometimes called Marina, sometimes Pelagia, or Eugenia or Euphrosyne or Theodora or Margaret or Apollinaria' (1962, 51; see further pp. 151-54). Anson also provides a considerable list: '[In the deserts of Egypt] there supposedly lived no less than six transvestite virgins, all from the middle of the fifth to the start of the sixth century: Anastasia, Apollonaria, Athanasia, Euphrosyne, Hilaria, Theodora. To these may be added Matrunda, slightly later (c. 650), and Eugenia, whose legend has an early setting; and Pelagia and Marina' (1974, 12).

Studies

- 1) Delehayé (1936, 171-86; 1962). See above, 'Other Accounts'.
- 2) Anson (1974) examines the story of Eugenia in the VP version (pp. 20-28). He also discusses the story of Thecla, as told in the apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla (Hennecke 1963, II.353-64; James 1953, 272-81), and other saints who dress as men. He dismisses the theory that stories of transvestite saints were related to pagan cults such as that of the bisexual Aphrodite of Cyprus (p. 4). He also takes issue with Marie Delcourt, who 'found that again and again the assumption of male disguise signaled for the heroines of the various legends a violent rupture with a former mode of existence made in the service of an ideal of androgynous perfection. She concluded that the theme had therefore probably arisen in the ambience of the earliest Christian asceticism, colored as it was by competing gnostic beliefs' (p. 5). Anson objects that 'she seeks to explain [the legends] in terms of the heroine's psychology'. He writes that these legends are 'with the exception of Thecla products of a monastic culture written by monks for monks' (p. 5). Anson suggests instead a psychological interpretation based on this fact: 'In a male society dedicated to celibacy as the highest virtue and so not surprisingly given to excesses of anti-feminism, the fantasy of a holy woman disguised among

their number represented a psychological opportunity to neutralize the threat of female temptation' (p. 5). 3) Tandy (1978) examines Ælfric's version. He discusses characterisation (p. 189); and location, geographical and moral: Eugenia journeys from the heathen city of Alexandria (in which the pagans are fixed) towards a moral goal, not given a geographical location, where the Christians are singing (pp. 192-98). 4) Moloney (1980) edits Ælfric's *Life*. She discusses differences between Ælfric's version and the Latin (VP) version (pp. 137, 165-66). She draws particular attention to propaganda for monasticism in the Latin, reduced by Ælfric (p. 142). 5) Magennis (1986), discusses briefly Ælfric's 'fundamental reshaping' (p. 322) of his source (referring to the VP version), his levelling of it 'to a clear and uniform style', his 'studied unsensationalism' (p. 324). 6) Szarmach (1990) discusses Ælfric's version and comments on the Latin (VP version). He concludes that 'it is Galatians 3.28 and its complex view of sexuality that is operating in the deep structure of Ælfric's *Life*. Eugenia has un-womanned herself, Protus and Jacintus are un-manned, and these three sexless saints anticipate on earth the state in heaven' (p. 155).

EUPHROSYNE: Jan. 1. Virgin. Early 5th century. Lived as a monk in a monastery in Alexandria.

Text: 'Natale Sancte Eufrosinae' Virginis. LS 33 (Skeat II.334-55), ed. from MS J, fols 207r-13v (Ker 162, art. 44). Skeat collates the fragments from MS O (Ker 177A, art. 10). See his notes, II.453-54.

Author: Unknown.

The story: The OE relates how Euphrosyne disguises herself as a man and lives as a monk in a monastery in Alexandria in order to escape discovery by her father, who wishes her to marry. She reveals herself to her father on her deathbed.

Source: PL 73.643-52 (BHL 2723). See Magennis's entry in *Sources*, p. 6. The OE follows the Latin closely.

Other accounts: Euphrosyne is not mentioned in the OEM or by Aldhelm. There are various accounts in Greek and Latin of holy women who

entered monasteries disguised as men, although the only other such life extant in OE is that of St Eugenia (see above).

Studies: 1) Delehaye (1962, 51, 151-54); see 'Eugenia: Other accounts' above. 2) Anson (1974) discusses the structure and what he considers to be the implications of the story (as printed in AASS Feb. II.535-44): 'her flight from home amounts to a return to her real heavenly father [and] ... through his loss the parent becomes as a child, just as Christ commanded of those who would enter his kingdom ... [In the deathbed meeting] the two are at once reunited with and parted from each other, each entering into a new relation with God' (p. 16). On her disguise and beauty Anson writes: 'when her femininity tempts the flock of exiled souls and they demand her expulsion from the convent as a devil, Euphrosyne for a moment becomes the incarnation of the most hidden desires and guilt of her community. And when she undergoes her confinement with positive joy, there is at least the suggestion that she has taken upon herself the sins of her brothers' (p. 17). 3) Magennis (1986) comments on the OE treatment of the source (p. 342).

JULIANA: Feb. 16. Virgin Martyr, d. at Nicomedia between 305 and 311 in the Diocletian persecution. (See Calder 1981, 75).

Text: *Juliana*, ed. Woolf 1966 from Exeter Cathedral MS 3501 (the Exeter Book; Ker 116), folios 65v-76r. Second half of the tenth century. There are two lacunae in the text, after fols 69v and 73v (which end at lines 288 & 558 in Woolf). Each lacuna probably represents the loss of one leaf, with 65-70 lines of poetry on each (see Woolf, p. 1).

Author: Cynewulf. 'Cynewulf was undoubtedly a literate man who lived in the first half of the ninth century, a cleric, whose native dialect was Anglian (probably West Mercian)' (Greenfield & Calder 1986, 164; see also Anderson 1983, 23).

The story: Cynewulf's poem describes Juliana's rejection of marriage and idol-worship; the torments she suffers; her miracles and martyrdom.

Source: The precise source is not known, but Cynewulf appears to have used a Latin Life similar to that published in AASS Feb. II.875-878, *Acta Auctore Anonymo* (BHL 4523). (See Calder 1981, 75). This is a text edited from 11 manuscripts by Bolland. On the possible date of the *Acta* - perhaps first half of the 6th century - see Woolf, p. 11. For a list of MSS of English provenance of the Latin text, references to editions of specific MSS, and references to studies of the Latin in relation to the OE and other vernacular versions, see Whatley (*Sources*, pp. 13-15). Anderson surveys the various discussions of the *Acta* as a possible source for Cynewulf (1983, 195 note 5).

Other Accounts: The Martyrology ascribed to Bede, PL 94.843 (quoted by Woolf, p. 12). This 'contains an epitome of Juliana's life which parallels the events chronicled in both the *Acta* and Cynewulf's poem' (Calder 1981, 75). Whatley notes that 'the lack of an entry for Juliana in the OEM ... is doubtless due to the loss of most of the February saints' (*Sources*, p. 14). Juliana is not mentioned by Aldhelm.

Translations: Gordon 1954, 165-80.

Studies: 1) Wittig (1975). Perhaps the most important contribution in the area of figural studies of the poem: 'The poem's force arises from something other than convincing mimesis - from the connection of Juliana with central and potent Christian events, of which she is the imitator, embodiment and new exemplar' (p. 38). 2) Campbell (1974) and 3) Earl (1975) also discuss figural narrative. 4) Calder (1973), discusses the ritual aspect of the poem, describing it as 'not character-revealing but theme-revealing' (p. 359). 5) Calder (1981) observes on the differing modes employed by Cynewulf and the *Acta*: 'Cynewulf impresses upon his readers the diagrammatic spiritual allegory that Juliana's martyrdom embodies; the anonymous author of the *Acta* concerns himself with the need for Christians to follow a quotidian liturgy' (p. 99). 6) Anderson (1983) reads the poem in terms of apostolic mission: Juliana was 'a martyred saint who, like the apostles, kept faith in times of adversity' (p. 23). 7) Bzdyl (1985) argues that Juliana rejects the world, the flesh and the devil, associated by medieval exegetes with the avarice, gluttony & pride

which led to Adam's loss of Eden (pp. 170-71). 8) Bjork (1985) discusses the implications of the use of rhetoric (ch. 20). 9) Price (1986) compares Cynewulf's presentation of Eleusius & Juliana with the Katherine Group and South English Legendary versions. 10) Chance (1986) expands on the figural readings: Juliana is a *miles Christi*, allegorically a type of Christ; anagogically she is the church militant; on the moral level, tropologically, she represents the chaste soul. On these three levels, Chance argues (p. 52), she is also a type of the Virgin. 11) Olsen (1990) discusses some of the changes Cynewulf made to the Latin (pp. 223, 228). She also suggests that although typological readings have been of value, 'they have gone too far; they dehumanize the heroines' (p. 224). Olsen herself focuses on Cynewulf's emphasis on Juliana's speech, her 'verbal action', and argues that there is a likeness between Juliana and 'Old Norse women who act verbally' (p. 227). Olsen concludes that Juliana is 'an active woman whose indomitable will and assertive speech make her an example of female autonomy' (p. 230).

LUCY: Dec. 13. Sicilian Virgin Martyr, d. in the Diocletian persecution at Syracuse in 304.

Text: 'De Sancta Lucia Virgine' [MS 'Virgo'], LS 9 (Skeat I.210-19); ed. from MS J, fols 53r-55r (Ker 162, art. 13). There also existed a copy now lost, in MS V, fol. '220' (Ker 222, art. 50).

Author: Ælfric.

The story: Lucy rejects a heathen suitor; attempts to take her to a brothel fail. Further miracles take place before her martyrdom.

The source: A text similar to 'Historia S. Luciae Virginis et Mar.', Surius 1525, VI.892-94 (BHL 4992). Also in the Cotton-Corpus Legendary (Zettel 1979, 33). Zettel comments, however, that inferior readings are present in the latter text (1982, 31, note 2). Ælfric follows the Latin quite closely, making only minor abridgements (see Ott, pp. 31-34).

Other accounts: Aldhelm, *De Virginitate* ch. 42; *Carmen de Virginitate* 1779-1841. OEM Dec. 13.

Studies: 1) Bethurum 1932. 2) Farrar 1973 (see above, 'Agatha: Studies'). 3) Moloney (1980) edits Ælfric's Life. She discusses the theme of virginity (pp. 167-69)

MARGARET: July 20. Virgin Martyr, Antioch. Said to have d. in the Diocletian persecution c. 304 (see further Mack 1958, ix).

Text: Two versions of the legend of Margaret, both in prose, survive in OE. A third (also prose), was lost when the manuscript, MS O, was badly damaged in the fire of 1731 (Ker no. 177C). The incipit and explicit, copied by Wanley (Ker p. 228), suggest that it was similar to the version printed by Cockayne (no. 1 below).

The two surviving texts are:

1) 'Passio Scae Margaretæ Virginis', ed. Cockayne 1861, 39-49 from British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius A iii, fols 73v-77v (Ker 186, art. 15). The MS dates from the mid-11th century, and the text is one of several items bound together (including the *Rule of Benedict*, the *Regularis Concordia*, and Ælfric's Colloquy, all glossed in OE). The present foliation differs from that of Cockayne, who gives fols 71v-75v in his edition. Ker comments that 'some of the OE pieces are very corrupt'; this is the case with our text, which contains many mistakes and corrections (see Cockayne's notes, pp. 80-87). Cockayne prints the MS corrections in his notes, not in the text. There are, in addition, some mistakes and inconsistencies of transcription in the printed text (see ch. 9 above, and notes).

2) 'Passio Beatae Margaretæ Virginis et Martyris' ed. Assmann 1889, 170-80 from Cambridge, Corpus Christi Library MS 303, pp. 99-107 (Ker 57, art. 23). The MS dates from the early 12th century. This version of the story is (like the homilies on SS Giles and Nicholas also in the MS) known only from this MS.

While the two versions differ in many particulars (see Gerould 1924, 546), they are variations of the same story.

Author: Unknown. The narrator gives his name as Theotimus.

The story: In the Latin and OE versions of her legend, Margaret rejects the advances of the heathen Olibrius. She is imprisoned, and

destroys a dragon and a devil. She miraculously survives torments, and is martyred.

Sources: 1) The source of the version in Cockayne seems to have been something like the Latin text in British Library, MS Harley 5327, 'Passio Beatae Margaretae' ed. Assmann 1889, 208-20 (see Gerould 1924, 546). This is similar to that printed by Mombricitus in *Sanctuarium* (II.190-96), and that of the 'Cotton-Corpus Legendary', British Library, MS Cotton Nero E II, pt. 2, fols 162v-165r. See Mack 1958, xxiv-xxv. Ker writes of this OE version that it is 'a translation of a life of St Margaret like but not identical with BHL no. 5303' (p. 245).

2) Gerould examined the texts listed in the BHL and concluded that none of them was the source of the Assmann version. He surmised that the latter was based on a recension of the 'Passio' in some respects fuller, and possibly earlier, than any of those now surviving in Latin (p. 547).

Other Accounts: Margaret does not appear in the OEM; nor is she mentioned by Aldhelm. Her story may be compared with that of Daniel, in Daniel 14. cf Aldhelm's account of Daniel and the dragon: *De Virginitate* ch. 21; *Carmen de Virginitate* 324-66.

Studies: 1) Gerould (1924, 525-56) discusses the relationship of the source to the text. 2) Mack's introduction to *Seinte Marherete* (1958) contains discussion of the legend and MSS (ix-xxii)

MARY OF EGYPT: April 2. Penitent and ascetic, said to have lived in the 5th century.

Text: 'De Transitu Mariae Aegyptiace', LS 23B (Skeat II.2-53). Skeat comments: 'The homily is in many places very corrupt, and no complete copy of it is known' (II.446). There are three manuscripts, which Skeat collates:

1) MS J, fols 122v-136r (Ker 162, art. 31). Although the Life of Mary of Egypt is not by Ælfric, Skeat prints it with those which are 'because although it does not belong to the set, it belongs to the MS,

into which it was thrust by the scribe who wrote it' (Skeat II.446). There is a gap in the text between Skeat's lines 246-317.

2) MS G, fols 4r-6v (Ker 117, art. 2). The fragments are printed by Earle (1861, 102-12). Skeat collates them with lines 219-92, 428-97, 770-806. He prints lines 248-92 from this MS because it fills part of the gap in MS J.

3) MS O (Ker 177A, art. 12). Skeat notes 'MS O is so imperfect as to be nearly useless; however, it supplies some various readings in lines 318-401 and 485-527; and it is worth notice that these readings are frequently more correct than those in [MS J]' (II.446).

Since none of the MSS provides a text after line 292, Skeat prints the Latin as lines 293-317.

Author: The author of the OE life is unknown.

The story: Mary relates the story of her life to the monk, Zosimus, who is led to her in the desert.

Source: 'Vita Sanctae Mariae Aegyptiacae, Meretricis', *De Vitis Patrum* I, PL 73.671-690 (BHL 5415); also in the Cotton-Corpus Legendary (Zettel 1979, 18; and see Magennis 1985 & 1986, and *Sources*, p. 15). This is a ninth century Latin translation attributed to Paul the Deacon, Bishop of Naples, and dedicated to Charles the Bald. It is a fairly accurate translation (Walker 1972, IX) of the oldest known version of the story. This was written in Greek (PG 87.3697-3725), probably by Sophronius, 'a Palestinian monk who was Patriarch of Jerusalem from 634 until his death in 638' (Walker 1972, VII; see also Dembowski 1977, 13). The OE follows the Latin quite closely (see *Sources*, pp. 15-16).

Other Accounts: The OE is the earliest known vernacular version. The story became popular, and later medieval accounts exist in Anglo-Norman, French, Spanish & Italian as well as English (South English Legendary) (Walker 1972, X-XI). Mary's story may be compared with those of Mary Magdalen (OEM July 22), Pelagia (OEM Oct. 19) and Thaïs. Ward translates into English the Latin Lives of Mary of Egypt, Pelagia and Thaïs (1987, 35-56, 66-75, 83-84).

Studies 1) Baker (1916). Includes brief comments on the Greek, Latin and OE versions (145-47). 2) Walker (1972). An edition of a fourteenth century Spanish prose version of the story, but with a useful account of the Greek, Latin, and vernacular treatments. The story 'achieved considerable popularity in the Middle Ages, probably because, like other colourful legends of repentant trollops (such as Mary Magdalen and Thaïs), it successfully combines the perennially interesting theme of sexuality with the theme of extravagant asceticism' (VII). Walker suggests possible literary sources for Mary's story (VIII). 3) Dembowski (1977). Contains some discussion of Sophronius and the date of his version (p. 13). 4) Magennis (1985) discusses the Latin versions. 5) Magennis (1986) comments on the style of translation, 'less assured than that of Ælfric, pedestrian and lacking in fluency'; and on the manuscripts: 'the translation is not well served by the peculiarly corrupt state of the text in [J]. This MS has a large lacuna (247-317), a passage copied twice (671-82), and a host of other places where scribal omissions and other errors render the sense unintelligible or misleading'. He gives instances of places where G & O help to resolve difficulties and weaknesses in J. 6) Chase (1986) argues the necessity of recognising 'the radical connection of a text with its culture', and discusses instances of variations in the Greek, Latin & OE versions of the story. 7) Ward (1987a) discusses symbols in the story, e.g. the loaf of bread, Mary's walking on the water, the lion (p. 33). Ward translates the Latin (pp. 35-56). In a chapter on Mary Magdalen she discusses the significance of the prostitute as representative of sinful mankind (pp. 14-21); and in her account of Pelagia, she discusses the freedom from gender offered by monastic life; not a rejection of femininity, she argues, but an assertion of it, for all souls are feminine before God (pp. 63-66). 8) Elliott (1987) discusses the structure, method and purpose of the Lives of the desert saints.

B: THE LIVES OF THE KATHERINE GROUP²

Table of Manuscripts³

- B: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 34. Dated about 1220-25.
Contains versions of SJ, SM, SK; HM; *Sawles Warde*.
- R: British Library, MS Royal 17 A xxvii. Dated about 1220-30.
Contains versions of SJ, SM, SK; *Sawles Warde*; the beginning of *þe Oreisun of Seinte Marie*.
- T: British Library, MS Cotton Titus D xviii. Second quarter of the 13th century. Contains a version of SK; a text of the AW; HM; *þe Wohunge of ure Lauerd*.

For an account of the manuscripts see d'Ardenne & Dobson 1981, xliii-liii.

JULIANA (See also above, pp. 482 ff.)

Text: *þe Liflade ant te passiun of Seinte Iulienne*, ed. d'Ardenne, 1961. D'Ardenne prints diplomatic editions of the two manuscripts which contain the legend, and an emended text based on MS B. The two manuscripts are:

- 1) MS B, fols 36v-52r. A leaf is missing between folios 40 and 41.
- 2) MS R, fols 56r-70r.

D'Ardenne discusses the linguistic character of B & R (pp. xxix-xxxv). She shows that the language in the two is very similar (p. xxx), although there is greater uniformity in the language of B. This is due, she suggests, to the uniformity of the language of the source of B, and to the familiarity of the scribe with the language (p. xxxiii).

D'Ardenne also compares the versions of B & R (pp. xxix-xl). The two have a common origin, but R is considerably shorter. D'Ardenne suggests that this is due not to simple abbreviation in the case of the version in R, but partly to the comparative brevity of its source, and partly to the expansion and alliterative enrichment of the version in B (p. xxix).

Date: SJ was probably written between about 1190 and 1205 (Dobson 1976, 166; d'Ardenne & Dobson 1981, xxix).

Author: Unknown. The works of the KG are linked with the AW and the Wooing Group by language, themes, and by the manuscripts in which they are found. Dobson (1976) has argued that the author of AW was connected with a house of Augustinian canons at Wigmore in Herefordshire. However 'it is uncertain whether the author of [AW] also wrote any or all of these other works' (Millett & Wogan-Browne 1990, xii). For discussions of the authorship of the texts of the KG see d'Ardenne 1961, xl-xliii; Dobson 1976, 13, 138, 144; Barratt 1980, 32; Millett 1982, xviii-xxii.

The story: In outline the same as that of Cynewulf (see above, p. 482).

Source: The precise source is not known (d'Ardenne 1961, xxii-xxiv). D'Ardenne prints the text from Oxford, MS Bodley 285 (BHL 4523), observing that 'it is not the direct source of the early ME version, but it is more closely connected with it than any other Latin version yet discovered' (p. xxiv). The source of the KG version appears to belong to the same legendary tradition as Cynewulf's source (pp. xxii-xxiv).

Other accounts: D'Ardenne lists Greek and Latin versions (1961, xix-xx); and medieval vernacular versions (pp. xx-xxii). On the OE version see above, pp. 482 ff.

Other editions: Cockayne 1872.

Studies: 1) The editors of the modern EETS editions of the three lives of the KG discuss the MSS, sources, language, style and legends (Mack 1958, d'Ardenne 1961, d'Ardenne & Dobson 1981). 2) Bethurum (1935). 3) Wilson (1968). 4) Dobson (1976) discusses the origins and background of AW and KG. On the dialect of these works, see his ch. 3. 5) Price (1986), commenting on the lives of the KG, writes that the distinctive preoccupation of SJ is 'with the love of God as the guarantee of volitional wholeness' (p. 39). She compares SJ with the Latin (MS Bodley 285, as printed by d'Ardenne); with the South English Legendary version; and with Cynewulf's version. She argues

that the saint as presented in the KG version 'is a specially powerful instance of the virgin protagonist as the bearer and incarnation of a human integrity that defies transience and mortality' (p. 53).

KATHARINE Nov. 25. Virgin Martyr, said to have died in the 4th century. The date of her death is sometimes given as 307, but there is no evidence that she existed (d'Ardenne & Dobson 1981, xiii). Her body is said to have been discovered at Mount Sinai in about 800 (ibid., p. xiv) by the monks of the monastery there (see Réau 1958, 263, quoted above, p. 472, note 43).

Text: *Sainte Katerine*, ed. d'Ardenne & Dobson, 1981, from the three manuscripts in which it is found:

- 1) MS B, fols 1-18. There are three leaves missing between fols 7 and 8 (lines 325-460 in d'Ardenne & Dobson).
- 2) MS R, fols 11-37.
- 3) MS T, fols 133v-147v.

The editors print an emended text based on B, and diplomatic texts of R and T. The three texts of the life are 'texts of a single version and differ only because of scribal error or substitution' (d'Ardenne & Dobson, p. xxix).

Date: SK is dated between 1200 and 1210 (d'Ardenne & Dobson, p. xxxix).

Author: Unknown. See above, p. 490.

The story: Katherine is a learned Christian living in a pagan city. She rebukes the emperor for his idol-worship. He summons 50 philosophers to debate with her. She converts the philosophers, as well as the queen and many others. A wheel prepared to torture her is shattered by an angel. She is beheaded.

The source: The precise text of the source is not known (d'Ardenne & Dobson, p. xxvi), but SK is based on the Latin 'Vulgate' version (BHL 1663), written perhaps in the mid-eleventh century, and of which the earliest extant copies date from the eleventh or early twelfth centuries (d'Ardenne & Dobson, p. xvii). D'Ardenne & Dobson have

collated 18 copies of the 'Vulgate' and four of the 'Shorter' versions (see their pp. xxvi & 132-35), and print a critical edition of the full 'Vulgate' version, italicising the passages in the Latin which are not represented in English (pp. 144-203). They discuss the KG version's treatment of the Latin (pp. xxxiv-xxxviii). They point out that like the 'Vulgate' versions, the KG version is concerned with the saint's martyrdom and the events which lead up to it; not her *vita* (which would have included the account of the 'mystic marriage' familiar from later accounts and representations in art): 'the incipit in the Bodleian MS of the early Middle English version says correctly "Her biginneð þe *Martyrdom* of Sancte Katerine", in contrast to the incipits of *Seinte Margarete* and *Seinte Iulene*, which speak of 'þe liflade ant te passiun' of the saint' (p. xv).

Other accounts: According to Einkenkel (1884, viii; see also d'Ardenne & Dobson, p. xiv), a Greek account of the martyr Aikaterina was included in a collection of legends compiled for the emperor Basil I (d. 886); such an account is found in the tenth-century *Menologium* of Basil II (Beatie 1977); and an early tenth century Greek version was produced by Simeon Metaphrastes (d'Ardenne & Dobson, p. xiv; Einkenkel 1884, viii). D'Ardenne & Dobson cite G. B. Bronzini's study of the Greek and Latin versions of the *passio* (p. xiv). Beatie (1977) surveys the early development of the legend. There is an Anglo-Norman version by Clemence of Barking, c. 1163-1170 (ed. McBain, 1964).

Einkenkel suggested a connection with the story of the pagan philosopher Hypatia (1884, xi-xii). D'Ardenne & Dobson do not mention her, but the parallel with Hypatia is a compelling one. Hypatia (c. 375-415)⁴ was renowned as a mathematician and philosopher, the acknowledged head of the neo-Platonic school of philosophy in Alexandria. She was remarkable, as a woman, for achieving widespread recognition of her intellectual abilities, and was known as the greatest philosopher of her day. She also appears to have been known for her beauty, modesty and eloquence. She was also influential: Orestes, the prefect of the city, often sought her advice on philosophical and political issues. She was, however, a pagan philosopher in a Christian city, and the manner of her death embodies

the tensions which existed in Alexandria between Greek learning and philosophy and the Christian religion and political empire. According to a contemporary account, Hypatia was murdered by a group of Nitrian monks, apparently at the instigation of Cyril, bishop of Alexandria: she was pulled from her chariot, dragged to a church, stripped, and beaten to death with sharp shells; her body was quartered and then taken out and burned (Waithé 1987, vol. I.172). Thus both Hypatia and St Katherine were women who were remarkable for their scholarship and knowledge of philosophy, and who were 'martyred' - in Alexandria - by those who opposed and felt threatened by their beliefs and influence. Apart from the similarity of the stories, there are two reasons for suggesting that the legend of St Katherine may have been inspired, at least in part, by the history of Hypatia: a) The degree of emphasis given to Katherine's learning is most unusual in stories of virgin martyrs; and b) the story of Hypatia would provide a source for a legend which appears to have no foundation in history. It is possible that the legend of St Katherine is the Christianisation of a powerful story; and even, perhaps, a conscious reply to it.

Other editions: Einkenkel 1884. Included a translation of SK, and a text of the full 'Vulgate' version.

Studies: See above, p. 490, 'Studies'.

MARGARET (See also above, pp. 485 ff.)

Text: *Seinte Marherete Be Meiden ant Martyr*, ed. Mack 1958, from the two manuscripts in which it survives:

1) MS B, fols 18a-36b.

2) MS R, fols 37a-56a.

These are texts of a single version.

Date: Like SJ, probably written in the last decade of the 12th century, or early in the 13th (d'Ardenne & Dobson 1981, xxix).

Author: Unknown. See above, p. 490.

The story: The story is substantially the same as that of the OE version printed by Cockayne (1861). It is summarised by Mack in the

margins of her text. One difference, however, is that in the KG version, Margaret's foster-mother is described as ministering to her in prison - not Theotimus, as in the OE, or Theotimus and the nurse, as in the Latin. See Mack's note to 20/16 ff.

Source: A Latin life (BHL 5303) similar to that used by the author of the OE version edited by Cockayne (1861: see above, p. 485). Mack collates eight Latin texts (Mack, p. xxv) and prints that of British Library, MS Harley 2801 in her Appendix. She discusses the Latin version and the English adaptation in her introduction (pp. xxvi-xxii).

Other accounts: See above, pp. 485-85.

Other Editions: Cockayne 1866.

Translations: Millett & Wogan Browne edit and translate the life (1990).

Studies: 1) On SM see Mack's introduction. 2) On the language and background of the KG as a whole see d'Ardenne 1961, and d'Ardenne & Dobson 1981. 3) Price (1985) discusses the origins, precedents and parallels for the dragon in the scriptures and in hagiography. She comments on the significance of apparitions. 4) Millett & Wogan-Browne (1990) comment on the similarities between SM and the other two KG lives; they survey the history of the legend; they discuss the version's treatment of its source; and its exemplary function (pp. xx-xxv).

NOTES

1. The heading in the MS is 'Eufrasia', although the text has 'Eufrosina' throughout. The Table of Contents (Skeat I.10) lists it as 'eufrosia'; this is clearly closer to 'eufrosina': the 'n' may have been omitted in error. It is possible that the heading to the Life also had 'Eufrosia' at some earlier stage of the text, and that the wrong correction had been made, as there also exists a St Euphrasia (March 13).

2. The term 'Katherine Group' is generally applied collectively to the EME lives of Katherine, Margaret & Juliana, *Hali Meidhad* and *Sawles Warde* (see Millett & Wogan-Browne 1990, xii). See Millett & Wogan-Browne's introduction for further references to studies of the Katherine Group and the associated works.

3. The following abbreviations are used:

AW: *Ancrene Wisse*

HM: *Hali Meidhad*

KG: Katherine Group

SJ: *Seinte Iulene*

SK: *Seinte Katerine*

SM: *Seinte Margarete*

4. For an account, with further references, of Hypatia's life, teaching and works, see Waither 1987, I.169-93.

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