

The Third Gender and Ælfric's Lives of Saints

Rhonda L. McDaniel



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Lives of Saints

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Lives of Saints

Rhonda L. McDaniel

Richard Rawlinson Center Series

MEDIEVAL INSTITUTE PUBLICATIONS
Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo

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**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
are available from the Library of Congress.**

ISBN: 9781580443098

eISBN: 9781580443104

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For Kerry Scott McDaniel
1959–2013

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Acknowledgments

SOMETIMES I THINK THE Acknowledgments of a book like this should be titled “Gratitudes” instead, though even gratitude is too small a word for the profound appreciation and respect I hold toward all those who have encouraged, exhorted, and occasionally prodded me along the way. I want to express my deepest thanks to my *Doktor Vater*, Paul E. Szarmach, and to Timothy C. Graham for their counsel, support, and mentoring through all the the ons and offs of this project. Profound thanks are due as well to Jana Schulman and Elizabeth Teviotdale for welcoming me so generously to the Medieval Institute at Western Michigan University and the Richard Rawlinson Center for Anglo-Saxon Studies and Manuscript Research for a full summer as a visiting scholar, and equal thanks are due to Antonette diPaolo Healey and the staff of the *Dictionary of Old English Project*, The Pontifical Institute for Mediaeval Studies, the Centre for Medieval Studies, and the John P. Robarts Research Library at the University of Toronto for welcoming me several times as a visiting scholar. My own institution, Middle Tennessee State University, has provided generous funding for most of these research trips through the Faculty Research and Creative Activity Committee Grants. Special thanks also are due to Chauncey Wood and Philip E. Phillips who have always believed in me, and to David Lavery (*requiescat in pace*) for his determination to see me publish this book.

The list of people who have cheered me on throughout the writing and revising of this work are too many to name, including colleagues, family, and friends beyond the university. You all listened to me, read for me, fed me, and even cleaned my house when I was too busy to do so. You know who you are and how thankful I am for your support. I will only name here my parents, Thomas J. and Jewel McDaniel, who have always believed I could do more than I ever thought possible.

Introduction: Gender, Memory, and Seeing Things Their Way

Gender in Relationship

It all began with women. Since the 1980s, a significant portion of the scholarship concerning gender across the disciplines in Medieval Studies has focused on women, asking such questions as: What social factors and attitudes framed and formed their lives? Did the influence of patriarchal Christianity always lead to oppression of women? Did early medieval women have a distinctly feminine form of spirituality? These questions provide a sampling of the issues and inquiries that have driven much of the research into the social status, daily lives, and the socially conditioned self-perceptions of women in the Middle Ages, opening up new areas of study and simultaneously providing new venues for interaction between Medieval Studies and Women's Studies.¹

The contributions of these projects to the field of Medieval Studies in general and to Anglo-Saxon Studies in particular have been invaluable both in terms of the new insights they have produced and the amount and fervor of scholarly discussion kindled by their results. In the field of Anglo-Saxon Studies, in particular, the 1980s, 1990s, and the early years of the new millennium saw first a small stream and then a veritable flood of articles and books focused on women in Anglo-Saxon history and in its literary texts, poetry and prose, Latin and Old English, but especially in studies of the works of Ælfric.² Most of these publications take the critical and interpretive stance of some form of feminism (broadly defined), centering their investigations on those aspects of Anglo-Saxon society and literature that address women and women's concerns. These books and articles discuss the topic of gender, but they do so as though gender were a term that mainly applied to women and often conclude that this feminine gender was portrayed in opposition to a normative hegemonic or heroic masculinity not available to women (with the possible exception of a few female virgin saints).³ In Anglo-Saxon Studies, as in so many other areas of

inquiry into women's history and the relationships between the genders, Julia M. H. Smith's observation that "gender history has often been women's history passing under a new name," rings true.⁴ There have been a few notable attempts to address this interpretive isolation, but despite a recent spurt of publications the study of masculinities in the small world of Anglo-Saxon Studies has not yet been able to close the gap with the study of gender as a means of studying women.⁵ In this book I seek in some small part to breach the relative isolation between the two approaches.

In order to accomplish this goal, I take as my starting point Jacqueline Murray's observation that "gender is only meaningful in relational terms,"⁶ and that the study of concepts of either femininity or masculinity in isolation from the other will inevitably result in reinforcing the kind of binary oppositions that so much feminist and gender criticism seeks to fight.⁷ The observation that isolated studies of women or of men unintentionally reinforce a polarized understanding could be applied to many analyses of Anglo-Saxon culture and hagiography that have principally taken the form of outlining and emphasizing the presence of misogynistic views established by the early church fathers or at least of interpreting Anglo-Saxon texts regarding women more or less from within such a framework. The conclusions drawn in these analyses differ depending on certain assumptions about the degree to which such patristic views influenced Anglo-Saxon culture.⁸ As a result, developing a more nuanced perception of the Anglo-Saxons' ideas about gender, especially in monastic environs, needs to return to the conceptions of gender put forward by the early church fathers and incorporated into late antique/early medieval hagiography, in order to determine which of these conceptions were known by and exercised influence on particular writers such as Bede, Aldhelm, or, later, Ælfric in Anglo-Saxon England. To that end, I combine a language and text-based approach to literature with aspects of gender studies, history, and theology in order to complicate and nuance contemporary scholarship on the topic of gender in Anglo-Saxon England. Initially, I focus on reconstructing an approximation of the early monastic conceptions of gender developed in the writings of the Latin Doctors, Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine, and Gregory the Great. While these church fathers were not the only men writing about gender and the practice of chastity, their writings were prolific, and the first three strongly influenced the Latin hagiography produced in the fifth and sixth centuries that the Roman and Irish missionaries carried into Anglo-Saxon England. Both the patristic writings and early Latin hagiography, especially the legends of

the Roman martyrs, influenced early Anglo-Saxon writers and later shaped Ælfric's own understanding of the relationships between the genders and the sexes within and outside the monastery. His translations of the lives of female and male monastic saints for a vernacular audience reveal subtle aspects of Ælfric's own attitudes—some of which might surprise us.

Recognizing Masculinity

But why should the thought that Ælfric and other early medieval figures might have complex or unexpected (from the standpoint of modern assumptions) ideas about gender surprise us? In part, despite the surge in the scholarship of masculinity in recent years, there is still a dearth of scholarship on masculinity in the early medieval period in northern and western Europe in general and in Anglo-Saxon England in particular. Further, as Patricia Simons notes,

Much literary analysis of masculinity relies on the psychoanalytic model of anxiety and thus reinscribes, on materials from earlier periods, the conventional, modern concept of the phallus. Supposedly, masculinity is always self-consciously insecure, reliant on the ever-stable phallus to symbolize ideal patriarchal power. ... “Anxiety” is telling[ly] ascribed to the masculine gender alone without sufficiently explaining why it is not a driving force for women too. “Anxiety” is a symptom of patriarchal power, manifested by a group privileged both in its historical moment and in historians’ interpretations. More importantly, far from offering an explanatory framework particular to any historical period the interpretive device of ‘anxiety’ reinforces the underlying ideological assumption that patriarchal masculinity is always in crisis yet forever triumphantly faces and overcomes every obstacle.⁹

Part of the difficulty with such psychoanalytic models lies not only in the assumption that women do not suffer from anxiety, again preserving a binary opposition between the sexes, but also in the failure of these models to acknowledge any other kinds of motivation or definition for masculinity than the desire to attain or maintain hegemony. The more recent discussion of multiple masculinities complicates the issue, illuminating the often contested and competing nature of masculine identities that were available in the early Middle Ages in the West, including the foreign (to the Anglo-Saxons) and ambiguous category of the eunuch. Most of the currently published scholarship on eunuchs examines the situation of the

eunuch in classical, late Roman, and early Christian contexts and brings to light social conceptions of the eunuch as constituting a third gender that in many cases was widely accepted in Byzantine and, more ambivalently, Roman culture.¹⁰ The Anglo-Saxons had no parallel social or cultural role, however, and the variety of terms used to translate Latin *eunuchus* into Old English illustrates the difficulty that Anglo-Saxon translators had with the concept they encountered in the Latin texts, for they had no native term that could convey the multivalent connotations carried by the term *eunuchus*.¹¹ Even without such a problematic category, by the time of Ælfric, the concept of masculinity seems to have become highly contested among the Anglo-Saxons against the background of renewed Viking invasions, the aftermath of the Benedictine Reform and anti-monastic reaction, and the mercurial reign of Æthelred II *Unræd*. Janet Nelson observes that “In many times and places, gendered difference could be seen as straightforwardly supporting the political order. Sometimes, in circumstances of particular social stress, things were far from straightforward and, for the individuals living through those times, far from comfortable, as gender identity came under pressure, and had to be rethought and redefined.”¹² Ælfric’s *Lives of Saints* itself becomes the arena in which he grapples with various secular and sacred masculinities and femininities as he translates and adapts the legends of male and female saints out of the cultural context of early Latin ascetic hagiography into the late tenth-century cultural context of his vernacular Anglo-Saxon audience. While I doubt that it was Ælfric’s primary intention to try to define gender roles through his translations, his sources and audience force him to address the issue on the way to his larger purpose of teaching and encouraging the nonmonastic men and women of his day in how to be pure and faithful Christians in troublesome times.

Memory and Holy Self-Fashioning

While many scholars have focused on Ælfric’s hagiographies in order to analyze his treatment of (usually feminine) gender and attitudes toward women, the *vitae* of saints are not primarily about gender. The lives translated by Ælfric are foremost stories of conversion—not only in the sense of turning from paganism to Christianity, but also of turning from one defining social *habitus* to another by committing to a life of single-minded devotion that often expressed itself through chastity. Ælfric’s selection of saints, chosen mainly from among the Roman martyrs and

Bede's accounts of early Anglo-Saxon royal converts, all illustrate a process of reorientation from the temporal concerns, desires, and gendered expectations of life shaped within worldly societies to the concerns of the eternal City of God, desire for the "angelic life," and other-gendered expectations formed by participation in a transcendent society shaped and governed by God. The effect of this reorientation of the saint's mind and motivations is dramatic. Just as conversion from one belief system to another involves learning and immersing oneself in a new community and a new way of thinking about deity or deities, so for Christians entering into the practice of chastity requires learning and immersion into a new network of defining relationships and memories—relationships and memories established and internalized not in earthly kingdoms or communities but in the City of God, the transcendent society of heaven itself.¹³ The saint becomes a new person, defined by new relationships, constructed by and constructing with new memories that reorient even the way gender is defined in the saint through the practice of chastity. The effects of such a reorientation are depicted in these hagiographies as profound, causing social unrest, familial disruption, economic shock, and even mental disarray in the lives of the saints' former communities and families.

How does such a reorientation happen? How can the saint deliberately redefine him- or herself to the point of becoming, or at least habitually performing, an entirely new gender? For early medieval Christians, the answer lies in *memory*. I do not mean memory as in the ability to memorize and recall the times tables or information for an examination, but memory as it was understood by classical and early Christian rhetoricians—a means for invention not only of speeches, but of the self and one's own moral character (though most of the Roman martyrs and Bede's royal saints are also skilled teachers and debaters). In his *Confessiones* Augustine exclaims, "Magna uis est memoriae, nescio quid horrendum, deus meus, profunda et infinita multiplicitas; et hoc animus est, et hoc ego ipse sum" [O my God, profound, infinite complexity, what a great faculty memory is, how awesome a mystery! It is the mind, and this is nothing other than my very self].¹⁴ Augustine equates the mind with memory and memory with what he himself is, and he is awed by its remarkable and boundless nature. It is complex, powerful, and beyond his ability fully to comprehend. It is also implicitly and explicitly at work in hagiographies in the formation of the saints to such a degree that Mary Carruthers observes that "prodigious memory is almost a trope of saints' lives," and yet it has received very little attention either in itself or as it might pertain to gender.¹⁵

The importance of the mind and/or memory in the saint's moral and spiritual reconstruction into a citizen of heaven opens the question of whether the lives of saints demonstrate different routes to sanctity for men and women. And what might commitment to an "angelic life" of chastity and virginity mean in terms of gender roles and definitions? What kinds of gender-shaping memories would the early Latin hagiographies create for monastic audiences? What kinds of gender-shaping memories might these legends create for Ælfric's vernacular audiences and does this consideration influence his translations?

"Seeing Things Their Way"

Studying the concepts of gender in the context of a religious culture of the past is a delicate matter that has not always been handled delicately. As Lisa Bitel notes, "Except for some self-identified religious and intellectual historians, too many scholars assume that Christianity was a feature of the medieval background that needs no direct reference in relation to topics of social, political, or economic history. Just as medievalists once could not imagine the importance of gender for the study of politics or trade, most still fail to examine these phenomena through the lens of religious belief and practice."¹⁶ Such an examination is rife with booby traps, for the examination of the impact of religious belief on literary, social, or political history has often swung between what Andrea Sterk and Nina Caputo refer to as the extremes of a totalizing approach that exaggerates the influence of religious ideas and of a marginalizing approach that ignores the impact of religion or reduces religious belief and institutions to invisibility.¹⁷ I seek here to pursue a *tertium quid* that engages seriously with the textual evidence of the power of religious belief and memory to influence behavior and practice while striving for the always incompletely attained goal of objectivity. By addressing religious belief in a way that accepts its presence in the shaping of the intellect, of social structures, and of the experiences of men and women and communities,¹⁸ I desire to illuminate the ways in which early ascetic theories defined femininity, masculinity, a third gender, and other abstract values such as goodness and justice in gender relationships as found in the works of the early church fathers. Ælfric received a tradition of orthodox Christianity that was widely acknowledged by the learned clerics of his day. His conception of Christian orthodoxy—based on the fathers and on the Bible—was for him a universal standard and a comprehensive philosophical structure that molded his understanding

and interpretation of the world, the texts, and the people around him. *Lives of Saints* reflects this belief in and understanding of Christianity as received from the church fathers and shaped by the Benedictine Reform in late Anglo-Saxon England—a belief and understanding that the evidence of the time in history and the text shows to have been considered both good and just, precisely because Ælfric (and presumably his audiences) believed in the goodness and justness of God.¹⁹ In examining the concepts of gender expressed by the Latin Doctors and in Ælfric's translations my goal, in the words of Quenton Skinner, is “not of course to enter into the thought-processes of long-dead thinkers; it is simply to use the ordinary techniques of historical [and literary] enquiry to grasp their concepts, to follow their distinctions, to appreciate their beliefs and, so far as possible, to see things their way.”²⁰ Revisionist criticism has its purposes in the twenty-first century, but part of the value of any study in the humanities lies in the encounter and exploration of ideas and perspectives different from one's own. Within this humanistic framework, understanding the attitudes of medieval authors such as Ælfric and describing them in reference to their own historical context rather than our own moment in time takes priority.²¹ Indeed, such an understanding is necessary if there is to be comparison, contrast, and any meaningful dialogue about the differences between the perspectives of the past and twenty-first-century views of gender. It is not always easy or comfortable to grant the reasonable nature of ideas and concepts vastly different from those considered normative in the twenty-first-century social and cultural context in the West but the goal is worthwhile, especially if it enables us to attain a more complete and accurate understanding of Ælfric's conceptions of gender within his own historical and religious framework and of how those conceptions may have influenced his audience.

In addition to the interpretive hazards discussed above, there looms the shadow of the passionate theological debates contributing to the modern “tortured battle to bring feminism and Christianity together.”²² Hagiography and the views of the Latin Doctors are often drawn into these theological discussions and the views of feminist theologians likewise get drawn into literary examinations of hagiographical texts, but the goals of contemporary feminist theologians and those of historical inquiry into the beliefs and practices reflected in medieval texts do not always accord. For example, many feminist theological reinterpretations cited by literary scholars have been largely influenced by the foundational scholarship of Elaine Pagels and Rosemary Radford Ruether, among others, and are

often concerned with constructing a spirituality for women in the present day by deconstructing patristic writings from late antiquity. Usually they do not seek to understand how women within early Western medieval Christianity could see their place within that tradition as just and good but rather assert, in Ruether's words, that "classical justifications of women's subordination as due to natural inferiority, subordination in the order of creation, and punishment for sin are *assumed* to be false ideologies constructed to justify injustice. The domination of men over women is sinful, and patriarchy is a sinful social system."²³ The problem inherent in applying Ruether's view or similar views to the historical or literary analysis of texts that address the beliefs of past cultures is that, by assuming injustice, one excludes the possibility of a different interpretation and rules out *a priori* any possible interpretation of late antique and early medieval orthodox Christianity other than the modern perspective stated above. Within such an interpretive framework, the writings of Augustine, Alcuin, Ælfric, and others have no option but to be instruments of male anxiety and domination; the belief and devotion of medieval female audiences is then ejected from the realm of choice and agency and reduced to helpless complicity in their own subjugation. Such conclusions follow logically from such assumptions about the church fathers (and medieval Christianity) as stated above, but they oversimplify a complex situation and do little justice to the intelligence and beliefs both of the writers and of the audiences in question, men and women alike. The writers of early hagiography firmly root their perspectives in patristic theologies and operate on different hermeneutical grounds from current feminist theological discussions. My purpose here is not to enter into the twenty-first-century "struggle" between Christianity and feminism, but rather to provide an historically contextual basis for understanding Ælfric's translations of saints' lives in their tenth-century Anglo-Saxon milieu. As a result, I rarely refer to feminist theological interpretations and mainly use feminist theologians only to establish the early background for the discussion on the Latin Doctors. My goal is not to enter modern theological debates but to conduct an analysis that situates the early medieval discussions and representations of gender in their own historical, religious, and cultural contexts.

This sort of study of the religious context of the *Lives of Saints* brings its own set of difficulties specifically within literary circles because such a project may remind too many of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century methodology of positivism or of the later twentieth-century method of patristic exegesis, both of which have passed into disfavor for

good reasons.²⁴ When the writings of the church fathers form the basis of the ideas found in the saints' lives, however, hagiographical scholarship should be able to say so and demonstrate the influence of patristic theories without being confused with Robertsonian exegetical criticism. Another cause for discomfort is that admitting the medieval Christian belief system into any hypothetical construction that aims at understanding a past culture and its people means dealing with that belief system by its own definitions at that time in history, thus necessitating a discussion of early medieval theology.²⁵ Such an approach when applied to medieval works always runs the risk of being misconstrued as a Christian apologetic instead of an attempt to interpret past works within the beliefs that shaped the view of reality in that time and place. But the goal of understanding, however limited, incomplete, and prone to correction that understanding ultimately may be, is reached not solely through the application of modern paradigms that analyze in terms of twenty-first-century sociocultural theories or postmodern ideologies or theologies, but also by suspending disagreement or disbelief long enough to construct an understanding of the writings from *within* the text's own framework of belief. In pursuing such a goal, however, I try to remain aware that the reconstructed framework is only approximate and that my own assumptions may be impinging on my interpretation of the past in unknown ways. The problem in constructing past frameworks of belief "is not that we cannot learn what [past readers] learned but that we must develop the ability to think as if we had forgotten what has been learned since."²⁶ None can do so perfectly, but my goal remains to lay a foundation of the early medieval concepts of gender as they appear in treatises and hagiographical works that will allow readers from the twenty-first century somewhat to understand, if not appreciate, the way those ideas could be considered good, just, and worthy of emulation by Ælfric and devout Anglo-Saxons at the end of the tenth-century.

Roman Martyrs and Anglo-Saxon Saints

The Anglo-Saxon scholar Bede was the first to call Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine, and Gregory the Great the Doctors of the Church and the designation has taken root and remained in use in the Western church since. These early fathers have long been considered the most influential in the West and are credited (or blamed) for having done the most to shape Western ideas about gender and especially about women during the Middle Ages.²⁷ The idea of misogyny in the church shaped by the early

fathers has come to be treated as a given, something everybody knows, and has served to evoke an impression of the early fathers and later monks and bishops as men riddled with subconscious resentment and anxiety over the sexual power of women or as men who feared that their own hegemonic, masculine cultural power and social dominance might be jeopardized if women were allowed out of the home and the cloister.²⁸ The four Latin Doctors, especially Jerome and Augustine, receive so much attention from scholars (both medieval and modern) because much of the Western Christian doctrine of asceticism was hammered out, distilled, or transmitted through their writings. Both churchmen and churchwomen in the early European Middle Ages actively participated in inspiring, preserving, and transmitting the works of the Latin Doctors, whose influence eventually reached every principal city and wilderness outpost of medieval Western Christianity.²⁹ Jerome, Ambrose, and Augustine all wrote treatises in support of the practice of virginity and chastity for men and women, revising the earlier theological foundations and shaping, along with John Cassian, the perception and practice of monasticism in the West. The hagiographers of the fifth and sixth centuries took up the themes and theologies found in their works and those of other supporters and wove them into their narratives of the heroic asceticism of the desert fathers and the valiant deaths of the Roman martyrs. How, then, would their thoughts and ideas have been received by early medieval Christians beyond the former Roman Empire, especially in Anglo-Saxon England?

The image of the Christian saint confronting the secular tyrant and his military forces held a vivid place in the imaginations of these Latin hagiographers during the rise of Christian monastic observance in the West. The *passiones* of the Roman martyrs in particular formed a staple of early Latin hagiographical literature, constituting a subgenre all of its own favored by those who pursued ascetic or monastic practice. In these legends, the secular tyrant was often the emperor himself and, according to Matthew Kuefler, “the emperor acted as focus and *exemplum* for Roman masculinity generally”³⁰ and so set the tone in the minds of the hagiographers for those officials who ruled locally in his behalf in the legends. Within the context of the events described in the *passiones* of the Roman martyrs, the emperor’s masculinity would have been the dominant, or hegemonic, masculinity, defined by Julia M. H. Smith as “a dynamic masculinity which lacks fixed content but is rather the culturally specific legitimization of the dominant form of masculinity within any particular gender order, by which femininities and other masculinities are marginal-

ised or subordinated.”³¹ The pagan emperors and their military aides in the *passiones* are what Clare A. Lees calls the “‘hegemonic’ males—the kings, princes, lawmakers, and so forth,”³² and often exemplify disordered, bestial behavior that illustrates the outworking of what the hagiographers considered to be their disordered, unbelieving minds. The depiction of the hegemonic male in the confrontation between the Christian saint and pagan tyrant worked to establish a new kind of gender for practitioners of the Christian faith, a gender based not upon earthly political, legal, sexual, or military power, but upon moral virtue defined by steadfast belief in, love of, and loyalty to Christ and the ability to reproduce spiritually by means of example and teaching. This new gender was open to males and females who deliberately shunned secular displays of wealth, force, and dominance through physical weapons, militarism, law, and sexual intercourse in order to show spiritual and moral fortitude demonstrated through steadfast loyalty to Christ as a citizen of his transcendent kingdom in the face of earthly trial, temptation, torture, and martyrdom.³³

Such were the examples in the passions of the Roman martyrs that came with the Roman mission to the Anglo-Saxons at the end of the sixth century. Michael Lapidge asserts that “if we wish to understand the spirituality of Anglo-Saxon England, and before it that of sixth-century Rome, there is no more informative vehicle than the *passiones* of the Roman martyrs.”³⁴ These legends show the hegemonic masculinity of rulers and warriors in contention and confrontation with a new third gender of Christian virtue, reflecting what Peter Brown has shown to be the slow and grudging acceptance of monastic vocation as the performance of a viable gender.³⁵ According to D. M. Hadley, the moral milieu inhabited by both secular and ecclesiastical men at this time “was one constructed and disseminated largely by ecclesiastical authors through the medium of text, and it is apparent that there was resistance to the views of appropriate masculine behavior presented in those texts, both within the Church and among the laity.”³⁶ The development and acceptance of a new kind of gender was no easy thing, but text and memory were crucial to its accomplishment.

What then was the role and significance of text and memory in constructing genders in Anglo-Saxon culture at the end of the tenth century? As Mary Carruthers points out, a text could bind a community together, for “The Latin word *textus* comes from the verb meaning ‘to weave’ and it is in the institutionalizing of a story through *memoria* that textualizing occurs. Literary works become institutions as they weave a community together by providing it with shared experience and a certain kind

of language, the language of stories that can be experienced over and over again through time and as occasion suggests.”³⁷ The *passiones* of the Roman martyrs entered Anglo-Saxon society as mainly monastic texts, cooperating with Scripture to construct and shape a new kind of monastic gender that was performed within its own circumscribed subculture, but in his hagiographical works Ælfric releases these legends from enclosure within monastery walls to address the complexities of the last decade of the tenth century by giving his lay patrons and other members of Anglo-Saxon society the memory of the exemplary stories of saints honored by the monks and nuns. Ælfric translated and adapted the works in *Lives of Saints* against the backdrop of renewed Viking attacks, confusion in the military defense of Æthelræd *Unræd*'s kingdom, and potential treachery and collaboration with the Vikings by one of the king's *ealdormen*.³⁸ Mechthild Gretsch observes that “after forty years of peace, [the Viking attacks] must have come as a tremendous shock to the men and women of Ælfric's generation, a shock that was soon to develop into an endless nightmare.”³⁹ In this time of increasing danger and chaos, Ælfric claims to produce *Lives of Saints* at the request of his patrons, but as a pastor he probably also means the collection as a way of instructing and imparting courage even to the people beyond his immediate care, perhaps even the king and his *witan*, in the midst of uncertainty and constant threat. In the process, he often withholds definition of the third gender of his saints while seeming also implicitly to defy certain expected cultural definitions of gender. Ælfric's very refusal to define the gender that his saints perform, however, opens up a space for his audience—a space in which men and women might choose this new gender even without a monastic profession and so define themselves in a new context like their examples, the saints. Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe has defined agency as “an improvisation within conflicting structures” and if this definition is applied to Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*, we can observe how he creates a place within the memories of his audience in which they might improvise and define themselves in relationship to the saint and to God.⁴⁰

* * *

The project carried out in the following chapters entails the reinvention (in the medieval sense of finding again) of the interpretive context that Ælfric and his religious audiences might have brought to their reading and hearing of saint's lives, especially to their understandings and interpretations of women, men, and gender. Reinvention, however, should not

be confused with an apologetic for the late patristic and early medieval beliefs outlined below, nor should it be perceived as an argument for a return to such beliefs in the present, for neither is my aim. Instead, by analyzing the ideas about gender put forward by the four Latin Doctors and noting the presence of their concepts in early Latin hagiography and so (among other ways) appearing to Ælfric and his vernacular audience, I aim to build a basis upon which to offer an historically and theologically situated reading of gender in a selection of the lives of holy men and women translated in Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*.

In chapter 1, each of the four Latin Doctors receives an individual exploration of his writings on virginity, Creation and Fall, the soul, and memory. The segment on Jerome examines *Adversus Jovinianum* in the context of several other works and letters to see how he constructs the idea of an ascetic third gender. Ambrose of Milan wrote at the same time as Jerome and each knew some of the other's works in defense of the practice of chastity, but the segment on Ambrose looks principally at his *Exameron*, *De virginibus*, and a range of other works to construct his views about gender and the practice of virginity. As Augustine's first teacher in the Christian faith, Ambrose leaves traces of influence upon Augustine's thought. The next segment, however, explores how Augustine developed his own psychology of gender grounded in his understanding of Creation and Fall and his psychology of memory, as well. The segment on Gregory the Great demonstrates the crucial synthesizing role that Gregory played in communicating the views of the earlier fathers to early medieval audiences, including audiences in Anglo-Saxon England. Throughout this first chapter I cross-reference in the endnotes where the ideas under discussion may be found in the works of the other Latin Doctors and in relevant works of Bede, Aldhelm, and Ælfric himself. This seems to me to be the most efficient way to indicate broadly held ideas and their presence in Anglo-Saxon England without constantly breaking the flow of my argument to discuss whether the patristic ideas were or may have been known to the Anglo-Saxons. These cross-references are not exhaustive and do not include all of the works of the Anglo-Saxon authors, but are meant to be suggestive of Ælfric's potential for exposure to such concepts or to show that he actually knew them or ideas parallel to them. Further, when each patristic work is first quoted, I include in an endnote whether the work was cited by Anglo-Saxon authors (as indicated in Michael Lapidge's *Anglo-Saxon Library* and in *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici*) and the manuscript evidence that indicates the presence of that work in Anglo-Saxon England up to

Ælfric's time based upon Gneuss and Lapidge's *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*. I do this knowing that many will be interested in how the patristic ideas under discussion may have been known to Ælfric, but with the awareness that the evidence of the surviving manuscripts is frustratingly incomplete and the evidence of citations limited by the purpose and audience of the work in which they were used, as well as by how little such brief excerpts can tell us about the source(s) from which they were taken. Ælfric may well have read rather more on the topic of virginity and the third gender than he would ever have considered mentioning in his *Catholic Homilies* or *Lives of Saints*.

Moving the focus of study to Anglo-Saxon England, chapter 2 outlines the transmission and movement of the works of the Latin Doctors to the island kingdoms and into the hands of Aldhelm, Bede, and Alcuin. Though the works of these scholars do not receive treatment in depth, I provide some brief examples of how some of the ideas about gender discussed in chapter 1 inform their works and are passed along to Ælfric in the tenth century.

The last five chapters explore Ælfric's treatment of the concepts of gender and the third gender by comparing his translations of selected saints' lives in Old English to the closest known Latin texts, always bearing in mind that we do not have Ælfric's exact Latin source for most of these lives. This selection includes all of Ælfric's lives of female saints, five of whom are among the Roman martyrs (Eugenia, Agnes, Agatha, Lucy, and Cecilia, whose life is really a double life with Valerian) and the remaining one an Anglo-Saxon queen (Æthelthryth). It also includes a comparable selection of male lives of Roman martyrs (Alban, Sebastian, George, and Abdon and Sennes) and Anglo-Saxon kings (Oswald and Edmund). Finally, there is one double life of the Roman martyrs (Chrysanthus and Daria). The chapters are arranged not according to the dates of the *Sanctorale*, but rather to bring male and female lives into relationship to each other as I explore various themes of gender and virginity that were established in chapter 1, so that neither masculinity, femininity, nor the monastic third gender appears in isolation. Chapter 3 brings the *passiones* of Eugenia and Alban together, to see what Ælfric does with concepts of the third gender (metagender), femininity, and masculinity presented in the Latin texts. The legends of Agnes, Sebastian, and George provide the material for comparing Ælfric's handling of the ideas of brides and soldiers of Christ in chapter 4. In chapter 5 my analysis reflects upon Ælfric's treatment of material and spiritual bodies in the stories of Agatha, Lucia, and

Abdon and Sennes. Material and spiritual rulership informs the examination of the lives of the Anglo-Saxon royal saints Æthelthryth, Oswald, and Edmund in chapter 6, and then in chapter 7, the spiritual marriages of Cecilia with Valerian and Chrysanthus with Daria round out the treatment of saints' *passiones*. Finally, the conclusion offers a few reflections on what has been discussed and offers some ideas for future research.

NOTES

¹ Bennett, "Medievalism and Feminism," 7–29.

² See, for example, Fell, *Women in Anglo-Saxon England*; Damico, *Beowulf's Wealhtheow*; Chance, *Woman as Hero*; Damico and Olsen, *New Readings on Women*; Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*; Lees, *Tradition and Belief*; Ælfric, *Women Saints' Lives*, trans. Donovan; Dockery-Miller, *Motherhood and Mothering*; Foot, *Veiled Women*; Horner, *Discourse of Enclosure*; Lees and Overing, *Double Agents*; Klein, *Ruling Women*; Gulley, *Displacement*.

³ See Damico, *Beowulf's Wealhtheow*, 27; Chance, *Woman as Hero*, 53, 58.

⁴ Smith, Introduction to *Gender in the Early Medieval World*, ed. Brubaker and Smith, 7.

⁵ See Szarmach, ed., *Holy Men and Holy Women*, though the articles on male saints do not specifically explore concepts of masculinity; Frantzen, *Before the Closet*. While Frantzen's book does address issues of masculinity, its focus is not on masculinities per se, but on finding evidence for same-sex love in Anglo-Saxon and other texts. See also Lees, *Medieval Masculinities*, though this collection is not specifically about masculinity in Anglo-Saxon England. There are scatterings of articles on Anglo-Saxon masculinities in Cullum and Lewis, *Holiness and Masculinity*; McWilliams, *Saints and Scholars*; and Pasternack and Weston, *Sex and Sexuality*, but no concentrated, book-length treatment of the topic.

⁶ Murray, Introduction to *Conflicted Identities*, x

⁷ Fenster, "Preface: Why Men?" 10.

⁸ Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*, 6.

⁹ Simons, *Sex of Men*, 17.

¹⁰ See Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*.

¹¹ Lendinara, *Glosses and Glossaries*, 45–46 and 66.

¹² Nelson "Monks, Secular Men and Masculinity," 123.

¹³ Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*, 44.

¹⁴ Augustine, *Confessionum*, 10.17.26; Augustine, *The Confessions*, 10.17.26.

¹⁵ Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 14.

¹⁶ Bitel, Introduction to *Gender and Christianity*, ed. Bitel and Lifshitz, 6.

¹⁷ Sterk and Caputo, Introduction to *Faithful Narratives*, 6.

¹⁸ Ibid., 11.

¹⁹ See, for example, Ælfric's comments in "Natiuitas Domini nostri Iesu Christi," in *Lives of Saints*, edited by Skeat (*LS*) 1.88–96.

²⁰ Chapman, Coffey, and Gregory, *Seeing Things Their Way*, 2, qtd. from Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, 3.

²¹ Frantzen, *Before the Closet*, 20.

²² Coakley, *Powers and Submissions*, 11 and 3.

²³ My emphasis. Ruether, *Women and Redemption*, 8. See also Pagels, *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent* and *The Gnostic Gospels*.

²⁴ See O'Brien O'Keffe, *Reading Old English Texts*, 1–8.

²⁵ Szarmach, "Ælfric and the Problem of Women," 572 and Kitchen, *Saints' Lives*, 12. Also White, *How Should We Talk About Religion?*, 7.

²⁶ Jackson, *Historical Criticism*, 71.

²⁷ See, for instance, Salisbury, "Gendered Sexuality," 81–102.

²⁸ See, for example, Klein, "Ælfric's Sources," 116; Salisbury, *Church Fathers, Independent Virgins*, 5; Power, *Veiled Desire*, 238–39; Pulsiano, "Blessed Bodies," 14; and Barr, "The Vulgate Genesis," 122.

²⁹ See Bischoff, "Die Kölner Nonnenhandschriften," 17–35; Cloke, "This Female Man of God" 16; and McKitterick, "Nuns' Scriptoria," in *Books, Scribes, and Learning*, 7.1–35. (This book is a Variorum collection of reprints and therefore does not have consecutive pagination.) McKitterick says of the nuns' scriptorium at Chelles: "The quality of the texts copied is high; these scribes were competent, and understood what they were copying. The implications of the high quality of the texts, all main-line patristic writings or authoritative texts of the Christian church, are that we are dealing with well-educated scribes, who are as well-equipped intellectually as any other copyists we can identify from the eighth and ninth centuries." "Women and Literacy," in *Books, Scribes and Learning*, 13.4. From Eugippius' prologue to his collection of excerpts from the major works of Augustine, we know that Proba kept an extensive collection of Augustine's works, which she allowed Eugippius to use to make his compilation. Eugippius, *Eugippii Excerpta*, 1. Also see Hurst, introduction to *Bede the Venerable*, 8; Gorman, "The Manuscript Traditions," 389.

³⁰ Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 90.

³¹ Smith, Introduction to *Gender in the Early Medieval World*, ed. Brubaker and Smith, 6.

³² Lees, Introduction to *Medieval Masculinities*, 15.

³³ For discussions of early medieval views on violence and Christianity, see, for example, Nelson, "The Church's Military Service," 15–30; for Ælfric's views in particular see Earl, "Violence and Non-Violence," 125–49; Maginnis, "Warrior Saints," 27–51; Damon, *Soldier Saints and Holy Warriors*, 192–246 and 264–74; Whatley, "Hagiography and Violence," 217–38; and Halbrooks, "Ælfric, the Maccabees," 263–84.

³⁴ Lapidge, "Roman Martyrs," 115.

³⁵ Peter Brown, *Body and Society*, 429–32.

³⁶ Hadley, Introduction to *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, 4.

³⁷ Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 13–14.

³⁸ For the events of the reign of Æthelred II *Unræd*, see Ashdown, *English and Norse Documents*; Keynes, *Diplomas of King Æthelred*; Lavelle, *Aethelred II*; Williams, *Æthelred the Unready*; and Howard, *Reign of Æthelred II*.

³⁹ Gretsch, *Ælfric and the Cult of Saints*, 57.

⁴⁰ O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Stealing Obedience*, 53.

Chapter One

The Latin Doctors and the Concept of Metagender

MOST DISCUSSIONS CONCERNING GENDER in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages discuss the topic in terms of a linear continuum with masculinity at one end, femininity at the other. Within the context of the Greco-Roman culture of the eastern Mediterranean, one finds ample evidence of this continuum of masculinity and femininity used as metaphors for moral strength (manly) and moral weakness (womanish). Those who occupied the exact middle of the continuum, eunuchs, held a unique place in late Roman society, often attaining positions of trust and influence but also drawing ferocious criticism, especially from the Latin authors in the western part of the empire.¹ Rome had long had laws against the practices necessary to make eunuchs—the crushing or surgical removal of the testicles—but eunuchs were continually imported from the east and were attested in all parts of the empire.² Their more or less common presence provided late Roman society with an example of the ambiguous midpoint of the continuum between masculinity and femininity, a sort of third gender that apparently did not settle easily into the Roman equation between morality and gender, as noted by Mathew Kuefler:

Writers of the later empire devised a whole new language for the intermediate gender status of the eunuch. According to the author of the *Historia Augusta*, the Roman emperor Severus Alexander (ruled 222–235) is said to have referred to eunuchs as a “third sex” or “third type of human being” (*tertium genus hominum*). Julian called Eusebius, the eunuch advisor to his predecessor, an androgyne (*androgynos*). The poet Claudius Mamertinus elegantly described eunuchs as “exiles from the society of the human race, belonging neither to one sex nor the other.” More rancorously, the poet Claudian called the eunuch Eutropius, a consul under Arcadius (ruled 395–408), “you whom the male sex has discarded and the female will not adopt.”³

Just at the time when such antipathy was being leveled against eunuchs in high political and social circles in the Latin west, the Christian communities were importing concepts of monasticism from the east, especially the practice of virginity for men as well as women. The monastic ideal of virginity was rooted in the intersection of Stoic and Neoplatonic philosophy with Jewish and early Gnostic Christian interpretations of the Fall of humanity into sin as the fall of spiritual beings into mortal, sexual bodies. The New Testament passage in Galatians 3:26–28, “omnes enim filii Dei estis per fidem in Christo Iesu quicumque enim in Christo baptizati estis Christum induitis non est Iudeus neque Graecus non est servus neque liber non est masculus neque femina omnes enim vos unum estis in Christo Iesu” [You are all truly children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Whoever certainly has been baptized into Christ, you are clothed with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female: you are all truly one in Christ Jesus], when interpreted in light of the earlier view about Creation and Fall, led to the idea that the gender distinctions represented by bodily sex were negated through baptism into the transcendent Body of Christ and by the practice of chastity. As a result, those who vowed themselves to chastity were no longer constrained by gender distinctions and roles.⁴ The same late Roman cultural perspectives that looked askance at eunuchs, however, also gave these ideas and the Christian monastic concepts of virginity that sprang from them a tepid regard: “Augustine in Africa, Martin in Gaul, Paulinas of Nola and Ambrose in Italy, Priscillian in Spain, had by their prowess and reputation sanctified asceticism in the eyes of a section of the population. But the movement had not fully captured the loyalty of the leaders of society as a whole. Not only the unsympathetic pagans but sporadic Christian opinion denounced the monks as irresponsible and bizarre wretches.”⁵ Since monks and virgins committed themselves to lives of chastity, thus making themselves eunuchs in practice if not in fact, they also did not fit into late Roman conceptions of masculinity or femininity. Instead of downplaying this aspect of Christian behavior, however, many leaders and bishops of the late Roman and early medieval church emphasized and idealized this commitment to virginity and chastity as the sign of greatest devotion to God—a kind of bloodless martyrdom that made one a citizen of the transcendent kingdom of heaven while still living in the temporal empire in this world. One of the most forceful proponents of this view in the West, St. Jerome, directly addressed the implications of the practice of chastity on gender in a number of works.

Jerome

Without doubt, Jerome's most (in)famous work that addresses the topic of gender is *Adversus Jovinianum* 'Against Jovinian,' a polemical treatise that enlarges upon the dangers of marriage and exalts virginity and the practice of fasting.⁶ Written in order to oppose the teaching of a monk named Jovinianus that marriage possessed equal dignity and merit with virginity, *Adversus Jovinianum* became Jerome's hammer, his "opportunity to pulverize all his opponent's propositions."⁷ John Oppel notes that, because of its hyperbolic rhetoric and enormous influence on later misogynist texts, "Virtually all discussions of the pros and cons of marriage from late antiquity to the early Reformation take Jerome's [*Against Jovinian*] as their point of departure. If the Middle Ages was hostile to marriage, as is sometimes asserted, and bitterly antiwomen, some of this—or, at least, some of these tendencies insofar as they *are* characteristically 'medieval'—can be attributed to the influence of Jerome's work. ... The two themes of *Against Jovinian* are sex and women, and Jerome appears to be against them both."⁸ *Adversus Jovinianum*, however, is not so much antiwomen as it is antimarriage. Jerome passes over many opportunities to deal harshly with women in general, demonstrates that virginity was honored even among the pagans, and praises faithful wives. Ultimately he says, however, that "uxores sitas in bonorum malorumque confinio" [wives stand on the border line of good and ill] because no one can tell whether he will marry a good or a bad woman, and therefore wise men seldom marry.⁹ He did not say that therefore wise men have no traffic with women—if he did he would have had to condemn himself—but that marriage brings many distractions that interfere with single-minded service to Christ.¹⁰ Jerome uses every rhetorical weapon in his considerable arsenal to convince his audience that marriage, while honorable and allowed by God, is an uncertain, enslaving, and spiritually stunting state for both men and women *in comparison to the freedom of virginity*. Because of Jerome's vituperative rhetoric against marriage, however, Andrew Cain observes that "the Christian senator Pammachius was so embarrassed by [Jerome's] incendiary tract *Against Jovinian* that he tried frantically to withdraw copies of it from circulation in Rome in the early 390s."¹¹ Augustine soon wrote *De bono coniugali* in order to present a more positive view of marriage in contrast to Jerome's work.

Jerome's ambivalence toward marriage springs from his perspective on the Fall of humanity and his understanding that "In hominem, et vir-

et femina continetur: ... Legamus principium Geneseos, et inveniemus Adam, hoc est, hominem, tam virum quam feminam nuncupari” [the word *man* comprehends both male and female. ... Let us read the beginning of Genesis, and we shall find Adam, that is *man*, called both male and female].¹² For Jerome, Adam’s existence in Paradise manifested no sexual differentiation. When Adam ate the fruit, all humanity ate with him, male and female alike. Both the guilty act and the consequences belong to “us” in Jerome’s thought, equally to all men and women.¹³ He continually works from the perspective that sexually differentiated bodies were a result of the Fall and thus neither male nor female bodies could reflect the *imago Dei*.¹⁴ Rather, the soul of Adam could have existed as somehow both male and female prior to partaking of the forbidden fruit. In the work as a whole, Jerome makes the case for a parallel between fasting and virginity, noting that while Adam abstained from the forbidden fruit he lived a virgin in Paradise, but after eating the fruit and being exiled from Paradise, Adam married. Jerome specifically associates the coverings of skins mentioned in Genesis with sexualized bodies and marriage in his letters to Pacatula and Eustochium. In these letters Adam receives the full weight of responsibility for sin and the sign of the Fall is the “skin of matrimony.”¹⁵ For both Adam and Eve, the expulsion from the “paradise of virginity” and equation of the animal skins God provided to cover their nakedness with sexually differentiated bodies bound together in marriage signified their mutual loss and curse. The condition of Eve after the Fall and the curse is that of wife and mother, subject to the husband from which sin had distinguished her.

In *Adversus Jovinianum* the one place in which Jerome says much of anything at all about Eve is in the context of quoting Jovinian’s appeal to I Timothy 2:13–15 in support of marriage. In the biblical passage, the Apostle reminds his readers that Eve was formed second and was the one who was beguiled and fell into sin, but that she will be saved through childbearing. Jerome seems most concerned that married women, who are “in conditionem Evaē” [in the condition of Eve], not feel oppressed for he says that marriage places women into the ancient condition of Eve (cursed by being placed under the rule of their husbands) but that the Apostle refers to childbirth as a way for women to escape this condition as long as they raise their children to know and love Christ.¹⁶ Jerome interprets Paul as saying that the children should be raised to live in chastity and on the basis of this point interprets the passage to support the superiority of virginity by saying that Paul meant that married women would be saved

by bearing virgins (in the ascetic sense) for Christ.¹⁷ Jerome explains this passage not so much in order to say that women should stay home and bear children if they want to be saved—he would far rather they became chaste and devoted to the study of holy books—but in order to turn the biblical passage to his own ascetic ends of supporting the superiority of virginity.

Yet, Jerome does try to make marriage look as dangerous and unattractive to his male readers as possible. He addresses the issue from a male perspective and writes scathingly of marriage in a way that addresses the concerns of men. The charge brought against him by his detractors was of denigrating marriage and of placing female virgins in a place of higher rank than married men.¹⁸ The original audience of *Adversus Jovinianum* accused Jerome of misogamy and upsetting Roman social rankings, demonstrating that his conception of participation in a transcendent society with a different moral referent truly challenged the culturally defined gender roles even among the Christians of late Roman society. His point in all of his writings, however, is consistent and in agreement with the other Doctors: marriage binds both men and women to the world with its temporal cares and distractions in such a way that they cannot devote themselves to prayer and to a life of single-minded devotion to God.¹⁹ In fact, Jerome even argues in *Adversus Helvidium* that when women turn from the earthly cares of motherhood and fulfillment of their wifely duties to a life of chastity and prayer, they no longer live under the curse of submission to a husband that God laid upon Eve and her female descendants after the Fall.²⁰ Similarly, he writes in “Letter XXII, Ad Eustochium”:

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

[I would not have you subject to that sentence whereby condemnation has been passed upon mankind. When God says to Eve, “In pain and in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children,” say to yourself, “That is a law for a married woman, not for me.” And when He continues, “Thy desire shall be to thy husband,” say again: “Let her desire be to her husband who has not Christ for her spouse.” And when, last of all, He says, “Thou shalt surely die,” once more say, “Marriage indeed must end in death; but the life on which I have resolved is independent of sex.]²¹

The reason Jerome considers marriage to be an undesirable state is not because he is anxious about women but because the worldly duties of marriage distract both men and women from pursuing a life devoted to prayer, and marriage itself is the curse of women's subjection to men. The vow to chastity deliberately rejects both sexual behavior and the gender roles imposed by the Genesis curse *and* by late Roman society upon both sexes. Jerome also urges Eustochia, whom he addresses in the neuter gender as "Eustochium" in order to show that she is no longer female or male now that she has committed herself to virginity, explicitly to reject God's sentence upon Eve from Genesis 3:16. By not participating in the marital relationship and the procreative activities that were the objects of the curse, Eustochium could signal her entrance into the prelapsarian condition, the "life of paradise," by refusing the curse itself and the subordination to a man that came with it. The virgin, Jerome explains, is no longer called a woman because she is no longer subject to the trials and bondage of marriage and the social roles associated with the feminine gender, but has begun to live what Jerome refers to as the "angelic life" on earth. She has not chosen either earthly gender, but something greater: a transcendent *metagender* defined by the deliberate choice to participate in the transcendent society of heaven through virginity.²²

Nor are these the only times that Jerome describes the angelic equality that comes to women when they turn from a life focused on earthly matters. In his comments on the letter to the Ephesians contained in *In epistolas Pauli*, Jerome writes:

quamdiu mulier partui servit et liberis, hanc habet ad virum
differentiam, quam corpus ad animam. Sin autem Christo magis
voluerit servire quam saeculo, mulier esse cessabit, et dicetur vir,
quia omnes in perfectum virum cupimus occurrere.

[However long a woman is devoted to childbearing and children, she possesses a difference to man, just as the body (possesses a difference) to the soul. If, however, she wishes to be devoted to Christ more than to the world, she will cease to be a woman and be called a man, because we all desire to hasten to meet into the perfect man.]²³

The process of childbearing is the focal point of difference between women and men in this passage. If the woman refuses marriage and procreation, she refuses that difference. She has that choice. The *virum perfectum* "perfect man or manliness" to which Jerome refers is found in Ephesians 4:13,

and refers to the goal towards which all who serve Christ, both male and female, should strive: to be equipped and built up into perfect spiritual strength, the fullness of Christ.²⁴ For women who have refused marriage and childbearing, Jerome's comment above could be read: "If, however, she wishes to be devoted to Christ more than to the world, she will cease to be frail-minded and be called strong-minded, because we all desire to hasten to meet into the perfect strong-mindedness." Thus, when a woman ceases to serve others (husband and children) in the temporal flesh and single-mindedly serves Christ alone, she can attain mature spiritual discretion in all its fullness, just as any chaste man can, because she has rejected those things that differentiate her from men. Since only those who fulfill the duties and purposes of marriage are called "woman," those who devote themselves to chastity for the sake of Christ become something else, become "manly" in the sense that included both male and female prior to the Fall. Here we begin to see the nature of gender distinctions in Jerome's thought and the intractability of the language with which he must express it. He is not saying that women must physically become men, nor is he suggesting that a woman has to deny her bodily sex or her essential self when she devotes herself to Christ; in fact, he specifically argues against such a view when he insists that men and women will be "resurgentes in proprio sexu" [rising from the dead in our own sex] and therefore he cannot deny the nature of the bodily sexes.²⁵ Rather, a woman ceases to "be woman" figuratively inasmuch as she no longer concerns herself with material things (such as family) that entice the frail minds of women and men alike, but strong-mindedly pursues spiritual perfection in Christ. In this example from Jerome's commentary on Ephesians, gender is a metaphor for developing moral and mental strength, holding to the orthodox doctrines of the church, and coming to the unity of faith. Jerome writes that

Quorum cum fuerit secura possession, parvuli esse cessantes, et mensuram interioris hominis recipients (quae mensura plenitudinis, mensura Christi est), perfecti viri vocabulum sortiemur: ita tame nut ad consummatam aetatem plenitudinis Christi, omnis credentium turba perveniat.

[Once we possess these things securely and cease to be infants and receive the "measure" of the inner person, which "measure" is the "measure of the fullness of Christ", we will obtain the designation "perfect person." The goal, therefore, is that the whole multitude of believers might reach the complete "age of the fullness of Christ."]²⁶

Ronald E. Heine's translation accurately reflects Jerome's conception of a perfection available to both men and women, but the Latin for "perfect person" is *virum perfectum* (perfect man). While the translation reflects Jerome's sense of each believer becoming a perfect person by attaining his or her God-oriented, prelapsarian, male/female humanity through obtaining the unity of the faith, it is inaccurate inasmuch as Jerome conceived of the *virum perfectum* as the mystical Body of Christ, the church. For "the saints," those who achieved this state of perfection, "intelligentes charitatem Christi, augebunt in eo omnia quae acceperant semina veritatis, habentes corporis Ecclesiae caput Dominum Jesum." [understanding the love of Christ they will "increase" in him in all the seeds of truth which they have received, having the Lord Jesus as "head" of his Body the church].²⁷ As the Body of Christ, who was biologically male while incarnated in the flesh, the church could be spoken of as masculine; but as the mystical bride of Christ, the church was also spoken of by Jerome and others as feminine and thus capable of the "increase" of bringing forth the offspring of a virtuous life from the seeds of truth. If both views could be held and expounded at the same time, then the mystical Body of Christ seems to be a place where Jerome's ideas about gender become reoriented and redefined because of the masculine/feminine Body's participation in Christ as its "head." Participation in a body that possessed the characteristics of both men and women and functions that were both masculine and feminine, redefined the gender of the believer who turned from the temporally and materially bound relationships of the world as even Ælfric suggests of all believers in *Catholic Homilies (CH)* II 39.38–46. This redefinition was the result of the fundamental reorientation of relationships from those based upon bodily sex to a relationship that went beyond the material world and took its source and meaning from a transcendent being who simultaneously possessed and transcended all of the abstract qualities associated with masculinity and femininity. (Ambrose agrees and actually includes angelic beings in the Body of Christ, as Ælfric appears to do, also.²⁸) Thus, when the Apostle Paul wrote in Galatians that "quicumque enim in Christo baptizati estis Christum induitis non est Iudeus neque Graecus non est servus neque liber non est masculus neque femina omnes enim vos unum estis in Christo Iesu" [Whoever certainly has been baptized into Christ, you are clothed with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female: you are all truly one in Christ Jesus],²⁹ he meant something happened to each convert upon baptism, that old identities were replaced with a new iden-

tity symbolized by being clothed with Christ.³⁰ Jerome explicated these verses in his commentary on Galatians thus:

Cum autem quis semel Christum indutus fuerit, ... omnis diversitas generis, conditionis et corporum aufertur istiusmodi vestimento. ... sed pro qualitate fidei, vel Judaeus, vel Graecus melior, sive deterior est. Servus quoque et liber, non conditione separantur, sed fide, quia potest et servus libero esse melior, et liber servum in fidei qualitate praevertere. Masculus similiter et femina, fortitudine et imbecillitate corporum separantur. Caeterum fides pro mentis devotione censemur, et saepe evenit ut et mulier viro causa salutis fiat, et mulierem vir in religione praecedat. Cum autem ita se res habeat, et tota diversitas generis, conditionis et corporum, Christi baptimate, et indumento illius auferatur, omnes unum sumus in Christo Jesu.

[But when someone has once and for all put on Christ, ... all diversity of race, condition, and body is taken away by such a garment. ... Instead, a “Jew” or “Greek” is better or worse in view of the quality of his faith. Also, “slave” and “free” are not separated by this condition, but by faith, because a “slave” can be better than a “free” and a “free” can outstrip the “slave” by the quality of his faith. Likewise, however much “male” and “female” may be separated by the strength and weakness of their bodies, faith is assessed in view of the devotion of one’s mind, and it often happens that the woman becomes the cause of salvation for the man, and the man excels the woman in religious devotion. Now since this is the reality and the entire distinction between race, condition, and body is removed by Christ’s baptism and being clothed in him, then “we are all one in Christ Jesus.”]³¹

Neither race nor class nor sex would have any meaning once a Christian believer “put on Christ,” but all became one in Christ: of like spiritual substance and ability to advance and excel in faith, to transcend worldly differences. The mystical Body of Christ, therefore, both encompassed and transcended mere masculine and feminine genders and became a third, otherworldly kind of gender that had no parallel in solely human society. Instead of gender, it possessed *metagender*. Participation in the metagendered Body of Christ reoriented the gender of those who devoted themselves to lives of chastity, making them no longer male or female, but angelic.

Such a reorientation of gender identity did not just happen. The convert to virginity had to train the mind and soul, to engage in self-formation deliberately by contrasting their former temporal existence

with their new identity in Christ and violently “forgetting” temporal gender roles and distinctions. Jerome’s own excellent rhetorical education and trained memory provided him with the mental tools to do so for himself and to instruct others how to do so as well. Mary Carruthers observes that

The founders of early monasticism—men like Augustine of Hippo, John Cassian, and Jerome—were formed by this ancient education and helped integrate its emphasis on “invention,” the composition of speech, with the habits of meditation on sacred texts that had been cultivated for centuries in Judaism and then among the desert fathers of early Christianity in Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. These early monks called their meditational practice *mnēmē theou*, “memory of God,” a goal achieved (though never completely) by a set of established practices, including particular postures, murmured pieces of memorized sacred text, and “pictures”—both mental and actual—used to induce a prescribed way of emotionally marked-out stages toward divine *theōria*, or “seeing.”³²

This meditational practice is at the heart of all of the Latin Doctors’ programs for the construction of the new identity that they saw as necessary for the preservation of virginity. This is why Jerome writes his famous letter to Eustochium not in order to persuade her to virginity, but rather in order to instruct her and others in how to practice and keep it once committed to it. He emphasizes memorization not just in this letter, but in many others, for the virgin is the ark of the covenant, and so “custos legis domini. ... super hoc propitiatorio quasi super cherubim sedere uult dominus” [should be the guardian of the law of the Lord. ... For it pleases the Lord to sit in your mind as He once sat on the mercy-seat and the cherubims (lit. the Lord desires to sit upon that mercy-seat as upon the cherubim)].³³ When the mind of the man or woman committed to chastity is occupied with God’s Word, then God himself is enthroned in the mind and there is room for nothing else. This is why Jerome encourages Eustochium to avoid crowds, riches, and the eyes of young men, for “cogitatio uictus spinae sunt fidei” [the “thorns” which choke our faith are the taking thought for our life].³⁴ Taking thought for God rather than for one’s own life according to worldly desires requires will, deliberation, and *intentio*, “the attitudes, aims, and inclinations of the person remembering.”³⁵ The *intentio* must be love, alertness, and holding tightly to God while reading the scriptures and, in turn, such intentional reading will seat God securely in the virgin’s soul through recollection of what has been read.³⁶ Jerome used such means to shape his own identity and encouraged

the same in his students: “quicquid in nobis longo fuit studio congregatum et meditatione diuturna quasi in naturam uersum, hoc illa libauit, hoc didicit atque possedit” [Whatever I had gathered together by long study, and by constant meditation made part of my nature, (Marcella) tasted, she learned and made her own].³⁷ Each person is described as the agent of his or her own identity. Each gathers knowledge, learns it by inscribing it in memory, then meditates upon it so attentively that it shapes the individual’s very habits of thought and identity. This is why memorization, recitation, and study of Scripture held such a central place in Jerome’s conception of sanctity

Because of this reorientation of identity through a transcendent relationship with Christ, Jerome writes, “Et nequaquam sit sexuum ulla diversitas: sed quomodo apud angelos non est vir et mulier: ita et nos, qui similes angelis futuri sumus, jam nunc incipiamus esse quod nobis in coelestibus repromissum est.” [And may there be no diversity of the sexes at all, but as there is no man and woman among the angels, so also let us, who will be like angels, even now begin to be that which has been promised to us in the heavens.]³⁸ The attainment of the “perfect man” that fruitfully “increases” in the soul of men and women alike is the goal of virginity of mind and body: entry into the angelic life. The angelic life turns away from the temporal distractions of spouse and family that divide men from women and turns instead toward God who through the unity of the faith abolishes the divisions of the sexes and unites all believers into the transcendent, metagendered Body of Christ. The goal for Jerome is not for women to “become” men, but for all to become one, neither male nor female but both in Christ.

As a way of showing that he does not mean that women should literally become men and that he does not attach a bodily interpretation to his metaphors of gender, Jerome also puts forth the idea that men, in turning from worldly matters and pursuing a life of chaste devotion to Christ, cease to “be men” and become metaphorical eunuchs, as he comments in the letter “Ad Heliodorum Monachum”: “tu autem perfectum te esse pollicitus es. nam cum derelicta militia castrasti te propter regnum caelorum, quid aliud quam perfectam sectatus es uitam?” [You have already promised to be perfect. For when you forsook the army and made yourself an eunuch for the kingdom of heaven’s sake, you did so that you might follow the perfect life].³⁹ Similarly, in his letter to Eustochium, Jerome states, “alium eunuchum necessitas faciat, me uoluntas.” [Some men may be eunuchs of necessity; I am one by choice].⁴⁰ Jerome clearly states here that men must

set aside those things that define them as virile (marriage, procreation) in order to become “perfect men” and obtain the fullness of Christ. In this case, the image of the “perfect man” is the imperfect, castrated eunuch. Jerome expresses the perfect life for men in terms of metaphorical castration (becoming like a woman?) as a means of depicting men’s rejection of the worldly cares of family and of temporal power. The idea that both men and women lose their gender distinctions when they devote themselves to “the angelic life,” comes from part of Origen’s teaching that is implicated in Jerome’s ideas about women overcoming their sex and men becoming eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Women become “manly,” and men become “womanly” in a way that is considered to be positive, becoming “angelic,” for both.⁴¹

For men, this entailed being like eunuchs, living as men figuratively castrated because they remained unmarried in a late antique culture that placed a high value on the male role of *pater familias*.⁴² The biblical example for this movement from man to eunuch comes from Christ’s comments regarding marriage and divorce in Matthew 19:11–12:

qui dixit non omnes capiunt verbum istud sed quibus datum est
sunt enim eunuchi qui de matris utero sic nati sunt et sunt eunuchi
qui facti sunt ab hominibus et sunt eunuchi qui se ipsos castraverunt
propter regnum caelorum qui potest capere capiat.

[to whom he said, “Not all accept this saying but (those) to whom it has been given: Some certainly are eunuchs who were born thus from the womb of their mother, and some are eunuchs who have been made such by men, and some are eunuchs who have castrated themselves because of the kingdom of heaven. Let him who is able to accept (this teaching) accept (it).”]

Jerome comments upon this Scripture elsewhere in *Adversus Jovinianum* as he argues for male virginity, saying that being of the male sex is of no use if the man refuses to engage in sexual intercourse.⁴³ This refusal involves rejecting late antique definitions of manhood based upon sexual activity and turning to the idea of the *virum perfectum* contrary to the expectations of Roman society. Matthew Kuefler notes that “Roman writers consistently gave to those men who failed to live up to expectations of them as men—unmanly men—a feminine identity, and denied to them the privileges of men. The unmanly man thus became a social woman.”⁴⁴ On this basis, Jerome’s comments to Heliodorus about leaving the army and becoming a eunuch in order to become “perfect” reflect the male equi-

valent to the idea of women “becoming” men in order to attain the *virum perfectum*. Men must give up what defines them as men in Roman society, must become eunuchs (a kind of woman) in order to become perfect.

For Jerome the melding of masculine and feminine genders was a matter of the soul, the essential core of humanity that was without sex and was made to the image of God. The shaping of the soul was a matter of memory, of replacing memories, thoughts, and actions defined by late Roman society with those defined by the transcendent society of heaven. It was never a matter of the body alone, for in addition to teaching that chastity led to a reality beyond sex and binary gender, Jerome joined the other fathers in condemning those who cross-dressed in order to show outwardly the inward spiritual reality of sexlessness. He argues against a bodily interpretation of his comments when he expresses his disgust at women who cut their hair and dress like men and at men who grow their hair long like women’s.⁴⁵ Just as the concept of metagender could not be adequately rendered in human language, neither could it be expressed in male or female bodies.

No one would deny that Jerome was the literary curmudgeon of the late patristic era. In the mind, however, the place where there is no sex, Jerome viewed men and women with an equality startling in late antique culture. He thought most highly of those chaste women and chaste men who devoted themselves to the study of Scripture, for they exemplified his ideal of the life devoted to the mental training and development of the soul necessary for attaining the *virum perfectum*, perfect metagendered humanity in Christ—a humanity that was symbolized for Jerome not by the virile male or the fertile female, but by the sterile eunuch.

Ambrose

Jerome’s robust and rather earthy discourse on the third gender and the pursuit of the *virum perfectum* through a chaste lifestyle of study, prayer, and meditation challenged his late Roman audiences (and sometimes needlessly antagonized them) with a new construction of gender and the self. Jerome based his ascetic vision upon identification with the Person of Christ and the deliberate reorientation of habits and memory formed by voluntary participation in the kingdom of God. Such a radical program of changing identity was not just something Jerome invented, but played a central role in the writings of Ambrose of Milan, as well. As a bishop, Ambrose preached regularly to an audience of the general public

and instructed catechumens in doctrine and morals prior to their baptism into the community of faith.⁴⁶ Ambrose's catechumens, or *competentes*, were mainly adult converts who already had well-established identities within the Roman cultural tradition, yet even these new lay members of the church had to reorient their identities as citizens now to the kingdom of Christ rather than of Rome.⁴⁷ Ambrose understood the process of reorienting one's identity to depend upon anchoring oneself within a new history, creating new memories within the new cultural context, and imitating the examples of model citizens in the new society. Ambrose knew from his own education that, "Romans learned who they were, and how to behave, by studying history and rhetoric. For their part, the historians and rhetors taught and argued by holding up, as examples to imitate or avoid, well-known figures from the Roman past. Imitation and the use of *exempla uirtutis* were fundamental features of classical literature and classical education alike."⁴⁸ Ambrose and other literate Romans shared a common education, an education that provided "a shared means of communication, but above all else it constructed the web of a community or commonality."⁴⁹ Similarly, Christian instruction through sermons, saints' lives, and treatises set out continually to build and induct new converts into the community of Christ's Body, the church. Ambrose's sermons outline the path to follow in the re-formation of identity and the nurture of virtue both in new converts to Christianity and in those who chose a life of asceticism. Both groups had willingly chosen to pursue a new identity, but those who chose the ascetic life would have fewer distractions and more time to devote to the practices of mind that would shape their new identities—practices that would mold and reform memories and the soul itself in pursuit of the virtue it lost in the Fall. Mary Carruthers observes that "desire and will therefore underlie remembering, and just as the mind is always in motion ... so too it always has 'intent,' or emotional content, the 'coloring' so critical in classical rhetoric. ... As much as it is involved with cognition, memory was recognized to be involved also with will and desire."⁵⁰ By choosing to reorient one's desire and memories toward God, a man or woman could begin intentionally to rebuild the *imago Dei* lost through the Fall.

Ambrose provides insight into the mental processes of this reorientation, noting that "Necessarius ad disciplinam bonus sermo omnibus, plenus prudentiae, et mens rationi intenta praecurrit uirtutibus, passiones coercet; docibilis enim uirtus. denique studio et discendo quaeritur, dissimulando amittitur" [Necessary for the training of all men is good

discourse, full of prudence, while the mind given to reason excels in virtue and restrains its passions, for virtue is teachable. Further, one seeks it by study and learning and loses it by neglect.”]⁵¹ For Ambrose, the study of virtue is the means of drawing close to God, for “*imago dei uirtus est*” [the ‘image’ of God is virtue].⁵² Such study must be actively maintained, for virtue, once learned, could be lost if not kept constantly in mind. Those who are mindful of virtue, however, will not only draw closer to Christ, the object of their desire, but also grow more complete as human beings as the *imago Dei* that had been warped beyond recognition through sin begins to be restored through the cultivation of virtue. For Ambrose, the pursuit of the “perfect life” is the pursuit of full humanity as bearers of the *imago Dei*: “*perfecta autem uita non sensibilis ista, sed illa rationabilis secundum tractationem rationis et mentis uiuacitatem. ... nihil itaque aliud quaerit perfectus ille nisi solum et praeclarum bonum.*” [Now the perfect life is not that of the senses, but the life of reason, lived according to management exercised by the reason and natural vigor possessed by the mind. ... And so the man who has been made perfect seeks nothing else but the only and admirable good.]⁵³ The life of reason does not exist in a vacuum. It has a purpose, to seek nothing but the good that is God and so grow ever more like Christ in wisdom and virtue. This mental activity reveals itself not through worldly status, but through virtuous actions that are the end result of memory and meditation. Carruthers notes that “reading was thought to model character through memory: it is the method of ethical and civic modeling of character summed up in the Greek word *paideia*. ... There were also memorizing exercises, notably the recitation, which ‘primarily consists in saying over and over to oneself, either quietly or more loudly, certain sentences which the student wishes to engrave on his memory.’ Thus was moral character molded by means of responses and reflexes inculcated by the ruminative reflection upon ‘domesticated’ texts and stories.”⁵⁴ Jerome provides a small example of this method when he advises Eustochium to say to herself phrases that distinguish her life of virginity from the life of a married woman who lived under the curse of Eve.⁵⁵ Ambrose, however, gives a more detailed example of the method in his treatise *De bono mortis*. While addressing the topic of blessings given by those who are about to die and pointing out how the imminence of death gave unique power to such a blessing, he says, “*Ac per hoc cogitemus semper hunc versiculum et corde teneamus. si quem viderimus pauperem moriturum, sumptu iuvemus: dicat unusquisque nostrum: benedictio morituri in me veniat.*” [On this account let us meditate upon this verse

and hold it in our heart. If we see any poor person on the point of death, let us help him at our expense. Let each person say: “Let the blessing of the person who is about to die come upon me!”]⁵⁶ Ambrose continues to describe how one should actively meditate upon the verse so that it shapes one’s attitudes and leads to actual deeds. One memorizes and repeats the verse, not in a mindless way, but with each repetition exploring every possible way in which a woman or man might seek the blessing of those about to die by first being a blessing to the dying through giving them comfort or caring for their needs. Ambrose also invests the meditation with the emotions of desire for the blessing and of shame at passing up any opportunity to help those who are at the point of death. Through such mental activity each person could shape his or her own character, cultivate virtues such as mercy by deciding how to act in a given situation, maintain a mind alert to opportunities to show compassion, and develop the motivation to act upon those opportunities on every occasion. Each meditation would be an act of the will engaging the memory out of desire to draw close to God, for the life of meditation *is* the life of heaven for those still dwelling in this mortal, earthly realm.⁵⁷

In light of this thought, Ambrose instructs virgins that,

Sed etiam in ipso cubili uolo psalmos cum oratione dominica frequenti contexas uice, uel cum euigilaueris, uel antequam corpus sopor inriget, ... Symbolum quoque specialiter debemus tamquam nostri signaculum cordis antelucanis horis cotidie recensere, quo etiam cum horremus aliquid, animo recurrentum est.

[Even in bed I want you to join psalms with the Lord’s Prayer in frequent alternation, as also when you wake up and before drowsiness floods your body, ... Daily, too, before daybreak, we ought to make a point of going over the Creed, which is as it were the seal of our heart. Even when something frightens us we should have recourse to it in our soul.]⁵⁸

This instruction, too, indicates the creative and self-forming activity of meditation as one gathers verses from the memorized Psalms to amplify and explore all the possibilities of each clause of the Lord’s Prayer. By falling asleep in the midst of such meditation, the virgins might continue to seek God and learn virtue even while they slept just as Ambrose describes the Virgin Mary doing: “cum quiesceret corpus uigilare animus: quae frequenter insomnis aut lecta repetit aut somno interrupta continuat aut disposita gerit aut gerenda pronuntiat” [as her body rested her soul was

alert: often in her sleep she either went over what she had been reading or continued what had been interrupted by sleep or made plans or arranged what had to be done].⁵⁹ The soul continues reflecting and meditating upon what has been stored in memory when the body sleeps, and so men and women must intentionally prepare themselves for the work their souls would do while their bodies slept. Then repetition and reaffirmation of the memorized Creed upon waking begins each day with a statement not just of the identity of the Trinity, but also of the individual believer as she states anew, “Credo,” “I believe.” All of these passages describe the formative exercises that actively use memory to shape identity in relationship to Christ, an identity that Ambrose clearly believes to be equally attainable by both women and men.

Such a self-constructing activity requires the utmost concentration and separation from material concerns or appeals to the bodily senses, for these are means by which temptation might distract the soul from its contemplation of God. And so Ambrose points out the conditions best suited for meditation, saying “denique quando aliquid cogitamus, neminem nobis occurrere, neminem volumus obstrepere auribus nostris atque ita intendimus animo, ut plerumque non videamus praesentia. quin etiam in noctibus sincerius cogitamus et tunc melius quae movent corde meditamur.” [when we are thinking of something, we do not want anyone to appear before us or to raise a din against our ears, and we concentrate in such a way that we generally do not see what is present. Moreover, we think more clearly at night and at that time we meditate better in our hearts upon what is dear to us (lit. what inspires us).]⁶⁰ Minimizing sensory distractions forms an environment conducive to character-shaping meditation and contemplation of “quae movent” [what inspires]. Since the person shuts out visual and auditory input as much as possible, the matters and persons being contemplated must be present in the memory, otherwise there is nothing with which the mind may construct its meditation. For Ambrose, meditation is not a matter of emptying the mind, but of populating it with thoughts and examples intentionally gathered together as seen above in order to construct the virtues he desires to enact and embody.⁶¹ By such mental effort, knowledge of oneself might be obtained and the beauty of virtue in the soul enhanced.

From Ambrose’s perspective, the ability to know oneself is the critical difference between human beings and the beasts, as he notes in his work best known in Anglo-Saxon England, a series of revised homilies called *Exameron*.⁶² The last homily, concerning the sixth day of creation,

begins with a veritable bestiary in its discussion of the remarkable variety of animals and ends with a paean of praise for the beauty and grace of the human body. In between, Ambrose describes the nature of the human soul created to God's own image. He transitions from his depiction of animals to description of human beings by pointing out the fundamental difference between humans and beasts: the ability to know oneself by means of the rational soul. Ambrose introduces the thought by explaining the biblical text from Canticles 1:7, "If thou know not thyself, fairest among women," saying

quae est pulchra in mulieribus nisi anima, quae in utroque sexu praestantiam possidet pulchritudinis? ... huic adtende, dicit Moyses, in qua tu totus es, in qua melior tui portio est. ... non igitur caro ty es. quid enim est caro sine animae gubernaculo, mentis uigore? ... caro amictus est animae, quae se induit quodam corporis uestimento.

[What constitutes the beautiful among women if not the soul, an outstanding attribute in both sexes? ... "Keep thyself," says Moses, in that in which you form a totality—that in which the better part of you consists. ... Thus, you are not flesh alone. What is flesh without the guidance of the soul and the vigor of the mind? ... Like a garment for the body, such is flesh for the soul.]⁶³

This transitional passage in Ambrose's work lays out several ideas that are central to his understanding of the human soul and mind and of the nature of humanity itself. First, he associates true beauty with the soul, not with physical appearance, and holds up women as the example though elsewhere Ambrose applies the point equally to men.⁶⁴ In the passage from *Exameron* Ambrose states unequivocally that both sexes possess the soul and thereafter he makes no distinction between the sexes in his discussion of the soul. The human soul, then, is the same in both men and women and possesses none of the differences that male and female bodies exhibit.⁶⁵ The soul longs for heaven, for the incorruptible, and for the imperishable. Because of these longings the natural tendency of the soul is away from the body. The soul is the better part of human beings because it cannot perish and so deserves the priority of care over the perishable body. Finally, the body is like a garment that the soul will eventually take off.⁶⁶ Just as clothing possesses no will or motion on its own but follows the movements of the wearer, so the body is directed by the soul and motivated by the mind.⁶⁷ Though the body is an integral part of every human being and the

tool for deeds both good and evil, the essential aspect of humanity is not the body, but the soul.⁶⁸

Ambrose structures his exploration of the nature of the soul by looking at Genesis 1:26. In what becomes a short discussion of the Trinity, Ambrose links up ideas already introduced in passage above—principally that God is spirit and as such is incorporeal and invisible.⁶⁹ In terms of essential qualities, spirit and body are opposites and nothing similar to each other. In the same way, the image of God cannot be corporeal because the body is weak and subject to decay. Thus, “*imago dei uirtus est, non infirmitas, imago dei sapientia est, imago dei iustitia est, sed sapientia diuina est et sempiterna iustitia est. imago dei est solus ille qui dixit: ego et pater unum sumus*” [the “image” of God is virtue, not infirmity. The “image” of God is wisdom. (The image of God is justice, but wisdom is divine and justice is eternal.) The “image” of God is He alone who has said: “I and the Father are one”].⁷⁰ Ambrose asserts that Christ *is* both virtue and wisdom. They are not characteristics of him, but rather he is the very essence and substance of both. Christ is virtue, virtue is Christ; Christ is wisdom, wisdom is Christ. As a result, virtue, the moral excellence of God, can only be manifested in humanity in the soul: “*tibi igitur adtende, te ipsum scito, hoc est ... qualem animam ac mentem, unde omnia consilia proficiscuntur, ad quam operum tuorum fructus referuntur. illa est enim plena sapientiae, plena pietatis atque iustitiae, quoniam omnis uirtus a deo est.*” [“Attend to thyself,” therefore, “know thyself.” ... Attend ... to your soul and mind, whence all our deliberations emanate and to which the profit of your works is referred. Here only is the fullness of wisdom, the plenitude of piety and justice of which God speaks—for all virtue comes from God.]⁷¹ Ambrose emphasizes self-knowledge, which can only be attained by the soul knowing itself, and he immediately links thought and action. Judgment and choice both emanate from the rational soul and the visible works of the body, including sinful works, reflect the quality of those mental actions.⁷² The soul that knows itself, therefore, will know it was created to reflect the divine image and will seek with God’s help to cultivate virtue in thought and deed.⁷³ For Ambrose, the beauty of the soul in women and in men is none other than the metagendered image and imprint it bears of God, the source of all virtue and goodness. Adam, however, lost this beauty through his disobedience.⁷⁴ Humanity lost its virtue and became distracted by the pleasures and passions of the body, thus the body became a means of temptation to evil. For Ambrose defines evil not as a thing that positively exists in itself, but rather evil “mentis

atque animi deprauatio a tramite uirtutis deuia, quae incuriosorum animis frequenter obrepit” [is a deviation of mind and soul away from the path of true virtue, a deviation which frequently steals upon the souls of the unaware].⁷⁵ Ambrose teaches his audience that in order to reject evil and pursue virtue they must first be aware and know themselves. Each must examine his own intentions, know her mental disposition, and each must then guard carefully both thoughts and desires.⁷⁶ These intentions, dispositions, thoughts, and desires are what direct the garment of the body. They spring from the source of deliberation and choice, shaped by memory, and bear responsibility for the actions of the whole person, body and soul, leading Ambrose to the conclusion that “tu ipse tibi causa es inprobitatis, tu ipse dux flagitorum tuorum atque incensor criminum” [You yourself are the cause of your wickedness; you yourself are the leader of your own crimes and the instigator of your own misdeeds].⁷⁷ The soul, as the seat of moral excellence and the *imago Dei*, must know what it was made to be and how it has fallen from its heavenly dignity in order to guard itself from sin and pursue virtue.

Ambrose explores the spiritual psychology of temptation and sin in his interpretation of Genesis chapters two and three, named *De paradiso*.⁷⁸ This work reflects a heavy dependence upon the Jewish exegete Philo’s allegorical explanation of the story as Ambrose also interprets the biblical account in moral and spiritual terms of the human soul, mind, and body.⁷⁹ Like Philo, he portrays the soul as a paradise, cultivated by the mind (allegorically represented by the man, Adam) in order to produce the fruits of virtue. The woman dwells there, but does not seem to have much purpose, since the senses of the body (represented allegorically by the woman, Eve) do not cultivate virtues in the soul. Because the mind is housed in a body of flesh, the first humans desire to improve their condition by escaping the flesh and this desire becomes the focus of the devil’s temptation.⁸⁰ The serpent (pleasure) tempts the woman (bodily senses and emotions, *not* the body⁸¹) to sin; she then seduces the man (mind) into eating the forbidden fruit, after which the mind falls into subjection to the bestial passions of the body. In this same allegory, the woman is inferior because she represents the bodily senses (*αἰσθήσις*, *aisthesis*’); the man is superior because he represents the spiritual and immortal mind (*νοῦς*, *nous*’), which is by its nature of a higher order in creation than the physical body.⁸²

Ambrose uses the Roman, gendered metaphors of masculine and feminine to interpret Adam and Eve in his allegorical description of the

psychology of temptation and consent to sin, applying the stereotypes of masculine strength and feminine weakness to the Genesis story in order to explain a mental process rather than make observations about the moral or mental capacities of actual men or women. This allegorical construction indicates that both masculine and feminine traits are present in the soul of each individual, showing that the human soul was created to be a unified, metagendered entity, though that entity has now been fractured through sin. In order to demonstrate in a practical way how that fracture might be mended and made whole through a life of virginity, Ambrose composes his defense of virginity, *De virginibus*.

Ambrose's *De virginibus*, written early in his episcopate around the year 377 and close to the time that he wrote *De paradiso*, seems to have been virtually unknown in Anglo-Saxon England and yet it fundamentally shaped the hagiographical works of Pseudo-Ambrose, whose *vitae* of Agnes and Sebastian were known to Ælfric. Dedicated to Ambrose's sister, Marcellina, the treatise draws its material from sermons on the subject of virginity and, according to Boniface Ramsey, "easily ranks with the greatest writings of the Church Fathers on the topic."⁸³ The second chapter of book one tells the *passio* of St. Agnes, virgin and martyr.⁸⁴ In this brief narrative of Agnes's martyrdom, Ambrose's enthusiastic panegyric opens with the exhortation: "mirentur viri, non desperent paruuli, stupeant nuptiae, imitentur innuptae;" [Let men marvel, let children not despair, let the married be amazed, let the unmarried imitate].⁸⁵ Though using a formulaic expression, Ambrose apparently considered the story of Agnes to be one that men would find admirable and the unmarried (of both sexes) could take as an *exemplum virtutis*.

Ambrose goes out of his way in a short space to point out the power of Agnes's faith, her maturity despite her tender age (twelve years), and the efficacy of her testimony. He applies contrasts calculated to evoke emotion in his audience, pointing out the cruelty that would not spare a child of twelve, then stating concerning Agnes that "immo magna uis fidei, quae etiam ab illa testimonium inuenit aetate;" [great was the power of the faith which bore witness even at that age].⁸⁶ Ambrose opines that young girls of twelve often cry at an angry look or upon sticking themselves with a sewing needle, but then shows that Agnes, though small and physically immature, is stronger than her executioner:

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

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

[With what terror the executioner behaved in order to frighten her, with what flattery he sought to persuade her! ... She stood, she prayed, she bowed her neck. You could see the executioner tremble as if he himself had been condemned, his hand shake, his face grow pale as he feared for another's distress, although the girl did not fear for her own.]⁸⁷

Ambrose does not hesitate to illustrate a reversal of expected gender characteristics between the executioner and Agnes: she conducts herself with manly fortitude; the executioner trembles with girlish fear before her. Though Ambrose does not make overt references to masculine or feminine traits to describe the shift, the implication would not have been lost on his contemporary Roman audience. His audience would certainly have understood the legal issues of sex and age at work in the narrative. Late Roman society forbade both women and children in their minority to testify in court, and Agnes's evidence concerning God flouts the legal practice on both counts, for she testifies as a minor and a female not on behalf of a mere man but on behalf of God himself.⁸⁸ Ambrose emphasizes the fact that Agnes accomplishes this feat because, as a virgin of God, she no longer belongs to the natural order of the material world, for she testifies credibly about God "quia quod ultra naturam est de auctore naturae est" [because what is beyond nature belongs to the author of nature].⁸⁹

Such portrayals of independent female strength and agency certainly challenged late antique social conventions, but Ambrose's attitude toward such behavior did not always conform to the views of late antique Roman society any more than did Jerome's. Ambrose's story of Agnes lauds her independent action (no parents or churchmen figure in her actions) and the assumption of "masculine" characteristics *and* privileges by its young protagonist. Further, Ambrose encourages young girls to act independently of family and social expectations in pursuit of virginity.⁹⁰ The virgin's independent exercise of will and choice lies at the very foundation of the practice of virginity, a point made later by Aldhelm, as well.⁹¹ Virginity must be freely chosen or else it is invalid from the start. And that choice constitutes the first defining act of self-formation into *metagender*.

Ambrose justifies his radical advice by demonstrating that the virginal life removes its practitioners from the temporal realms of human interactions and relationships.⁹² Virgins have entered the transcend-

ent society of God and angelic beings, wherein concepts of gender are constructed along different lines because all beings are defined by their relationship to God rather than to each other.⁹³ Ambrose taught that in temporal marital relationships, the man was to be the head of the woman, and the woman subject to the man. But for virgins, he teaches that Christ is the head; the virgin is no longer subject to mere men as married women are.⁹⁴ This reconstruction of relationships blurs the boundaries of sex and gender that obtain in the temporal world, for God, as a spiritual being, has no sex and yet manifests personal and abstract qualities that are associated in Roman society with both masculine and feminine genders. Even Christ, though biologically male in his incarnation, blurs the boundaries of gender through his virginity and is the source of all virginity according to Ambrose:

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

[Christ is the bridegroom of a virgin and, if it can be said, Christ is the bridegroom of virginal chastity, for virginity is of Christ, but Christ is not of virginity. He is a virgin, then, who married (us); he is a virgin who bore us in his womb; he is a virgin who brought us forth; he is a virgin who nursed us with his own milk. ... Who is this virgin who is watered by the springs of the Trinity, to whom water flows from the rock, who does not lack teats and whose honey pours forth? ... Therefore teats are not lacking to Christ, nor brightness to God, nor a river to the Spirit. For this is the Trinity, Father, Christ and Spirit, which waters its Church.]⁹⁵

This association of Christ with the female body and the functions of child-bearing and breastfeeding serves to illustrate his role and the role of the entire Trinity in the bringing forth and nurturing of believers with spiritual food. This theme appears also in *De Isaac uel anima*, as Ambrose describes the soul like a bride seeking the kisses of her bridegroom, the incarnate Word: “illa osculum poposcit, deus uerbum se ei totus infudit et nudauit ei ubera sua, hoc est dogmata sua et interioris sapientiae disciplinas et unguentorum suorum dulci odore fraglauit” [She sought the kiss,

God the Word poured himself into her wholly and laid bare his breasts to her, that is, his teachings and the laws of wisdom that is within, and was fragrant with the sweet fragrance of his ointments].⁹⁶ The breasts of Christ the Word feed the soul with wisdom and knowledge, nurturing the soul in virtue so that it grows and does not faint in the midst of trials. In this case, the female body represents nurturing, a characteristic associated with feminine gender as well as female sex, yet also associated with Christ in a way that continues to blur the distinctions of sex and gender when later theologians write about the characteristics of Christ.⁹⁷ The nurturing Body of Christ is where human believers and angelic beings are joined together in relationship to Christ as their head, are made into a new and transcendent body that is no longer gendered, but metagendered—a body that holds in itself all the positive attributes of masculinity and femininity and makes them into something greater than the sum of their gendered parts by melding them with the heavenly attributes of the spiritual intelligences and ultimately of Christ himself as the head of the whole body.⁹⁸ The distinguishing characteristic of such a transformation, according to Ambrose, is the increase in virtue to the measure of the *virum perfectum*.⁹⁹ In his explanation of Ephesians 4:13, Ambrose argues that the more perfectly anyone, male or female, lives a life of holiness and virtue, the more that person participates in the fullness of Christ, receives grace, and joins in the life of heaven while still on earth. As with Jerome, Ambrose identifies the *virum perfectum* as exemplifying the strength of virtue and holiness in living the life of Christ.¹⁰⁰ Those who are conformed to Christ in this manner Ambrose identifies as saints.¹⁰¹ In this way and in his narration of saints' lives he contributes to weakening the categorical boundaries of late antique ideas about sex and gender while associating this new idea about the fluidity of gender with specifically Christian character and sainthood.

In the burlesque legend of the virgin of Antioch, Ambrose illustrates how the boundaries between sex and gender become unstable when women and men commit themselves to virginity and enter the angelic society. This virgin (whose story parallels the legend of Didymas and Theodora) becomes caught up in a wave of anti-Christian persecutions because of her professed virginity for the sake of Christ and must choose between making a pagan sacrifice or losing her virginity at a brothel. Ambrose provides the reflections of the young woman through first person narration, allowing the audience to follow the process of the saint's thoughts as she reasons her way through her dilemma and finally decides that "Tolerabilius est mentem uirginem quam carnem habere. Vtrumque

bonum, si liceat. si non liceat, saltem non homini castae, sed deo simus” [It is more tolerable to have a virgin mind than virgin flesh. Both would be good if it were possible. If it is not possible, let us at least be chaste for God and not for man].¹⁰² The saint’s rationale instructs the audience in the importance of both physical and mental purity while also asserting the greater importance of mental virginity and loyalty to Christ rather than to a physical practice. The virgin could preserve her inner mental and spiritual purity through loyalty to Christ even if she lost her physical virginity through rape.¹⁰³

Ambrose then describes how the virgin is removed to a brothel surrounded by eager men. One of the men, a fierce-looking soldier, rushes in but turns out to be a Christian himself and has come to save the virgin. Maintaining the idea of outward appearances that obscure the realities beneath, this soldier suggests “Vestimenta mutemus; conueniunt mihi tua et mea tibi, sed utraque Christo. tua uestis me uerum militem faciet, mea te uirginem” [Let us exchange our clothing; yours fits me and mine fits you, but both fit Christ. Your garb will make me a true soldier; mine will make you a virgin].¹⁰⁴ Ambrose here makes rich use of the symbolism of the act of exchanging clothes. The unnamed soldier clearly states that attiring himself like a woman will make him a true soldier, a true man, not violence or aggression and certainly not sexual conquest of the woman before him. In what may very well be the only instance in patristic literature wherein a male dressing as a woman is depicted in an approving manner, Ambrose suggests that, for the man, becoming more like Christ (attaining the *virum perfectum*) meant figuratively becoming more like a woman by setting aside violence and submitting to martyrdom.¹⁰⁵ By the same token, the donning of male attire would make the young woman a virgin by allowing her to escape the danger of rape. She would thus, with the courage of a soldier, preserve not only her purity of mind but her purity of body as well. Accordingly, the act of changing clothes symbolizes the way to attaining the *virum perfectum* in Christ for both the man and the woman, which the soldier emphasizes when he affirms that both sets of clothing “fit Christ.” With these words Ambrose brings a higher dimension into the comic burlesque of male and female cross-dressing, a dimension that reminds his audience that, as believers and soon-to-be martyrs, both the soldier and the virgin are clothed in Christ and united in his body and so their exchange of clothing for the purposes of preserving the maiden’s virginity and attaining martyrdom is fitting and appropriate of Christ as well. The virgin shows how much of a soldier she herself

has become when she contends with her erstwhile rescuer for the right to be martyred first and wins.¹⁰⁶ The soldier demonstrates how much of a woman he has become when he submits to her will. Both then become martyrs and together attain sainthood.

Such virgin women are not the only women that Ambrose finds admirable, however, for in *De viduis* he claims that courage is characteristic of a good widow, saying that “Haec enim vero est fortitudo, quae naturae usum, sexus infirmitatem mentis deuotione transgreditur” [This is true bravery, which surpasses the usual nature and weakness of the sex by the devotion of the mind].¹⁰⁷ Ambrose deliberately invokes the cardinal virtue of *fortitudo* with its implications of moral excellence as he describes the courage of Judith and speaks directly of the valor of Deborah, the only female judge of the early people of Israel recorded in the Bible:

Haec enim docuit non solum uiri auxilio uiduas non egere, uerum etiam uiris esse subsidio. ... Vidua populos regit, uidua dicit exercitus, uidua duces eligit, uidua bella disponit, mandat triumphos. Non ergo natura est rea culpae nec infirmitati obnoxia: strenuos non sexus, sed uirtus facit.

[For she showed not only that widows have no need of the help of a man, (but also are a help to men). ... A widow, she governs the people; a widow, she leads armies; a widow, she chooses generals; a widow, she determines wars and orders triumphs. So, then, it is not nature which is answerable for the fault or which is liable to weakness. It is not sex, but valour which makes strong.]¹⁰⁸

The idea of the weakness of women’s sex in this context can only refer to the physical weakness of women compared to men. It is a weakness, however, that in no way prevents women devoted to chastity from being mentally or spiritually as strong as any man, or, in the cases of Judith and Deborah, stronger since true strength is a matter of character, not sex. Ambrose uses Deborah’s example to encourage widows to live in chastity and to urge them not to marry again out of fear what may happen to them without the protection and provision of a husband. He urges them to avoid entering again into the marital obligations that are a source of mutual bondage, a loss of liberty for both men and women.¹⁰⁹

Ambrose, like Jerome, teaches that distinctions in sex and gender are transformed by chastity because the believer’s soul is oriented toward Christ instead of toward the masculine and feminine roles that make up reproductive, temporal relationships in the world. Even so, he also

adamantly insists that this interior change does not justify women dressing themselves as men or men growing long hair or dressing like women, devoting an entire letter to the layman Irenaeus on the subject.¹¹⁰ Ambrose associates cross-dressing with pagan practices and a falsification and denial of what he considered to be the natural tendencies of each sex—modesty for one, war for the other. Maintaining the distinction between the sexes in the physical realm becomes for Ambrose a basis for maintaining chastity.¹¹¹ While he did not mention to Irenaeus his belief that chastity led to the angelic life where there was no distinction of sexes, Ambrose clearly objected to cross-dressing as a deceitful degradation of the angelic life that mocked the purity of chastity by glorying in what Ambrose considered to be an unnatural impurity for both men and women.

Unlike Jerome, Ambrose rarely expresses his ideas about men and masculinity directly in his writings on virginity, for most of these works are addressed to female audiences. He does refer at least once to the verse from Matthew about becoming eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven, but he actually uses this verse in his defense of his preaching of female virginity in *De virginitate*.¹¹² In his letter to the priests at Vercelli, however, Ambrose distinguishes between the characteristics of the priest and of the monk, seemingly describing two kinds of chaste masculinity. In this letter Ambrose indicates that the highest kind of Christian life for men is that of the priest or the monk. While each lives a different kind of life, one public and confronting worldly temptation and the other private and fleeing from worldly temptation, both pursue perfection in Christ through denial of the self.¹¹³ Ambrose does not describe one as being more masculine than the other though in a later part of the comparison he does use more military terminology in describing the life of the cleric, who overcomes, triumphs, and has a greater victory than the monk, who avoids, goes into a kind of exile, and keeps guard in a safer situation.¹¹⁴ If it is the natural manner of the male to make war, as Ambrose claims in his letter to Irenaeus,¹¹⁵ then the cleric's would seem to be the more stereotypically masculine form of Christian life, but Ambrose puts both kinds of life on an equal footing and urges the priests of the church at Vercelli to select a bishop who will honor both. He insists that priests especially must live lives of visibly greater virtue than the common populace if they are to instruct the people with integrity and earn their respect. Accordingly, Ambrose encourages priests to follow the same lives of temperance, fasting, and chastity that monks observe.¹¹⁶ He uses the same biblical arguments to spur men toward chaste lives that he uses in his treatises on virginity to appeal to

women, and the life of monks that he describes here parallels the life he advises for virgins.

Across all of his writings, Ambrose consistently portrays the souls of those who pursue a life of chastity and prayer as both brides and soldiers, depicting the life of the soul as both a battle and a romance. Ambrose adds detail to Jerome's sketch of the mental and memorial practices central to building a new identity—an identity that transcends the categories of gender defined by Roman society and allows men and women to enter into the angelic, metagendered life defined by relationship as brides and soldiers of Christ.

Augustine

For Augustine of Hippo, the key to human nature and relationships (including gender) lay in the divine nature of God. He believed that God's changeless nature, loving wisdom, divine freedom, and sovereignty as the creator of humankind entailed a divine right to rule over the affairs of that creation in accord with the Trinity's own purposes for creation as a whole.¹¹⁷ For Augustine, God's just nature, love, and humility made it impossible for the divinity to be guilty of tyranny—indeed, the incarnation of the second Person of the Trinity was “not an act of assertion and authority, but rather a loss of power, and emptying (*kenosis*) of self,” and so was the defining act of divine love and mercy.¹¹⁸ In this context, the rule of God by definition had to be one of justice and goodness. The bishop of Hippo denied that humans possessed any natural capacity for goodness after the Fall, for his understanding of original sin held that every human being from his or her earliest days inherently rebelled against God's just and good order, thus necessitating God's intervention from outside of human affairs if humanity were to be redeemed. Augustine argued for a natural social hierarchy within human relationships, but he did not see coercive relations of men over women as justified. Rather, as stated in *De bono coniugali*, he viewed the social hierarchy of men over women as natural according to the order of creation, not sex, and the fact that woman was said to be created from the side of the man instead of separately from him: “Poterat enim esse in utroque sexu etiam sine tali commixtione alterius regentis, alterius obsequentis amicalis quaedam et germana coniunctio” [for even without such sexual association there could exist a true union of friendship between the two sexes, with the one governing and the other obeying].¹¹⁹ To Augustine, the Fall explained the existence of

coercive relations of men over women (and over other men) as the result of sin, but did not justify them, for in his ideal order of social relationships he made a sharp distinction between benevolent dominion and coercive domination.¹²⁰

Augustine wrote *De bono coniugali* to highlight the goodness of marriage while also commenting on the superiority of virginity in answer to Jovinian's teaching. Though it was written fairly early in Augustine's career (circa 401 CE), it develops ideas about marriage being more than a matter of procreation, as Dyan Elliott notes when she writes that, "Augustine may rightly be considered the architect of spiritual marriage in the West since he was the first to develop a full and coherent theory of marriage that was not dependent on the conjugal debt."¹²¹ It is within this context of marriage being more than just a matter of sex and procreation that Augustine can call marriage a social relationship, the "prima ... naturalis humanae societatis copula" [the first natural link in human society],¹²² and formulate his psychology of gender relationships. As Jacqueline Murray observes, "gender is only meaningful in relational terms," and in Augustine's thought, the relationship between male and female encompassed more than just the bodied, sexual relationship, but also a natural relationship between masculine and feminine gender that rendered male and female into husband and wife, not just man and woman.¹²³ Because his belief in a natural order of relationships was based on the order of creation, Augustine wrote that a subordination similar to that of the woman to the man in marriage would have existed even if God had made a second male to be Adam's helper.¹²⁴ Like Jerome and Ambrose before him, however, Augustine agreed that virginity was superior in virtue to marriage because it freed men and women especially from being constantly dragged from contemplation of the eternal God into living in the temporal realm because of the troubles and burdens of marriage.¹²⁵

Augustine holds that virginity merits a greater reward in the kingdom of heaven than chaste marriage because it participates already in a heavenly, non-fleshly mode of being.¹²⁶ All believers will share in the life of heaven, but only the practitioners of virginity begin to live that angelic life while living within this temporal world. Even as virginity brings to its followers the life that belongs to the angels, however, it also brings responsibilities and, practiced with humility, produces the restraint over one's own self that eradicates the vices and builds virtue in the virgin's life. The life of virginity is an embodied life through which heaven is made manifest

on earth.¹²⁷ Paige Hochschild observes that “personality, for Augustine, includes the whole of embodied life, and it is *this* embodied person that God calls into unity with himself—through purification, integration, and not rejection.”¹²⁸ Augustine calls not, as is often asserted, for a sharply dualistic rejection of the body, but rather for integrated personhood whereby the body is maintained and cared for by the soul in the manner God intended at its creation.¹²⁹ The practice of virginity subdues and controls the impulses and passions of the body for the sake of its own health and the health of the soul, thus restoring an orderly harmony between the two so that the virgin may be free for the pursuit of more important activities.

Nor did Augustine write only of virginity for women, but for men also. He devotes three sections of *De sancta virginitate* to Christ’s teaching from Matthew 19 about those who are eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven.¹³⁰ Augustine makes more of this dominical teaching, using it in combination with Isaiah 56:5 to argue that virgins will receive a greater reward in heaven than those who marry. Like Ambrose, Augustine applies the verse about becoming eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven to both men and women who practice virginity.¹³¹ In Augustine, more than in Ambrose or Jerome, the ideal of virginity is most clearly expressed not through the symbolism of women becoming men or men becoming women, but of both *by choice* becoming a third kind of gender, the closest known analog of which is the eunuch. Yet Augustine pointedly marks the shortcomings of the comparison when he states that even physical eunuchs who would marry if they could do not merit the rewards of voluntary virginity, for such eunuchs, though presumably unable to be anything but virgins in body, are not virgins in their minds and so would not deserve the hundredfold reward for virginity. He distinguishes here between a thoughtless corporeal virginity and the true, spiritual virginity of the essential self, the mind.¹³² By making this argument, Augustine implicitly acknowledges that even the metaphor of becoming a eunuch is not exactly analogous to the state of being that obtains in those who participate through virginity in the angelic way of life. Virgins might be compared to eunuchs in terms of sexual practice, but to Augustine the condition of the physical eunuch signifies something beyond its surface materiality: virginity takes its practitioners beyond a kind of neutral state between masculine and feminine gender into something unfleshly and angelic beyond the binary human sexes and genders. In it, they live already the life other Christians will begin to live only after death.¹³³

While Augustine wrote about the commitment to chastity as the entrance into a heavenly mode of being, he also deplored attempts to blur or erase corporeal sexual distinction in those who undertook a monastic profession in *De opere monachorum*.¹³⁴ Augustine's outrage runs high as he marshals quotations from the Apostle Paul to make his point that becoming a eunuch for the kingdom of God did not mean that men should cease to think of themselves bodily as male, or women as bodily female.¹³⁵ Augustine, then, along with Jerome and Ambrose, actively discouraged the attempt by men or women to set aside the visible signs that signal the bodily sexes while at the same time teaching an inward change of gender to a heavenly mode of being. He advocates not a denial of the body's identity as male or female, but of Roman society's expectations for the gendered and sexual roles associated with both male and female bodies. Entrance into the society of heaven entailed a change in expectations for possessors of both male and female bodies that would result in a different kind of gender identity and therefore a different kind of behavior. Augustine taught that this change takes place in the soul as it is oriented toward Christ through memory. As with the other fathers, Augustine's theology of gender is grounded in his interpretation of the Creation and Fall of human beings recorded in Genesis 1–3. He addresses this topic in many of his works throughout the years, gradually altering his views and developing interpretations of Genesis that went far beyond those articulated by Ambrose or Jerome.¹³⁶ His most extensive and mature treatments of the subject are found in his later works, especially in *De trinitate*, *Confessiones*, *De Genesi ad litteram*, and *De civitate Dei*.

De trinitate is an extended meditation on the nature of the triune Godhead and the analogous trinities of the intelligible world through which humans may come to know and love the divine Trinity. In it, Augustine demonstrates for his readers the richness of thought to which a well-stocked memory and opportunity for meditation and contemplation may lead. In reading through Augustine's *De trinitate* with an eye on gender matters, one finds two separate but related ideas coming to the fore: the use of a feminine allegorical figure and feminine language when referring to Christ as *Sapientia* (the Wisdom of God) in the discussion of the Trinity and the figural construction of the “male” and “female” activities within the rational soul.

The figure of *Sapientia* or Wisdom in Judeo-Christian tradition goes back to the wisdom books of the Old Testament. In the first several chapters of Proverbs, Wisdom is portrayed allegorically as a woman who

claims that, “Dominus possedit me initium viarum suarum antequam quicquam faceret a principio. ... quando praeparabat caelos aderam ... cum eo eram cuncta conponens” [the Lord possessed me at the beginning of his way, Before his works of old. ... When he established the heavens, I was there ... Then I was beside him, as a master workman].¹³⁷ All of the characteristics of Wisdom here and elsewhere in the Old Testament are attributed to Christ by Augustine and other early fathers because the Apostle Paul calls Christ the wisdom and power of God.¹³⁸ What is intriguing is that when Augustine refers to Christ as *Sapientia*, he does so by means of a female figure, as when he says:

Cum autem uenit plenitudo temporis, missa est non ut impletet angelos, nec ut esset angelus nisi in quantum consilium patris annuntiabat quod et ipsius erat, nec ut esset cum hominibus aut in hominibus, hoc enim et antea in patribus et prophetis; sed ut ipsum uerbum caro fieret, id est homo fieret.

[But when the fulness of time came she was sent, not to fill angels nor even to be an angel—except in the sense that she declared the counsel of the Father which was also her own—nor to be with men or in men, since she had already been like this in the patriarchs and prophets; no, it was in order that the Word might become flesh, that is, become man.]¹³⁹

Christ, who was most definitely a biological male in the incarnation, is spoken of by means of a female allegorical figure and Latin nouns and pronouns of the feminine gender. Augustine is not confused about whom he is writing, yet he does not hesitate on more than one occasion to speak of Christ as though he were female in much the same way that Ambrose did, using grammatical gender also to blur social concepts of gender. He does the same thing when referring to Christ as the feminine *Castitas* in *De Genesi ad litteram imperfectus liber*.¹⁴⁰ Christ as *Castitas* is in God (“in deo est” [she is in God]) as the likeness of God “per quam facta sunt omnia” [through which all things were made]. When souls participate in this chastity in God, they become chaste because Christ was chaste; they reflect the image of Christ and are made chaste through participation in the chastity that is in God. Here Augustine combines the ideas of Christ as *Sapientia* and Christ as *Castitas*, blending genders by depicting the Son as female and associating that blending with the practice of chastity itself. Thus, chastity actually becomes the means by which gendered men and

women transcend biological distinctions and participate in the metagendered life of heaven through becoming more like Christ.

In book twelve of *De trinitate*, Augustine rather impatiently reminds his less astute readers that the feminine gender in grammar cannot automatically be taken to mean the female sex, nor should anyone be timid about using the figure of a wife to talk about God.¹⁴¹ His point is to remind his readers that they are looking for analogies—the traces of the likeness of God in known things—in the following exploration of the metaphorical genders within the human psyche, not definitive structures of the value or character of actual men and women.¹⁴² Augustine stolidly affirms in more than one work that the *imago Dei* is not reflected in any body, male or female.¹⁴³ The only way in which the human body, male and female, symbolizes the *imago Dei* is by its upright posture, by which it could look to the heavens, as opposed to the posture of beasts who could only look at the ground.¹⁴⁴ In terms of symbolic gender when used as an analogy for spiritual things, Augustine teaches that one should not be overly fastidious about the exactness of the analogy, for “longe remotissime facta sunt” [they (the likenesses) are made very remote].¹⁴⁵ Augustine’s point is that God is a non-bodied spiritual being and the limited language and material analogies humans use to think and speak about such a Being of necessity must be remote and inexact. At the same time, however, Augustine teaches that all created things bear a likeness to God in some way because he created them and made them good, but again this likeness is remote—a vague impression rather than a portrait.¹⁴⁶ Nevertheless, this vague impression takes its fundamental form from the God who created it, and so both masculine and feminine genders, as well as male and female bodies, bear somehow a dim likeness to the eternal God who created them. Accordingly, God both encompasses and transcends all gender definitions: encompasses because they find their source in the Godhead, transcends because the divine metagender is infinitely more than just the sum of these two earthly genders. Thus could mankind be created male and female in the image of God. Thus could Augustine and other church fathers speak of Christ in feminine terms, of male and female saints in terms of characteristics associated with both genders because both masculine and feminine traits are finite refractions of the metagendered divine.

Yet Augustine does rather tie himself up into logical knots while pursuing his discussion of the “male” and “female” metaphors for activities of the human soul. Kari Elisabeth Børresen points out that “In spite

of possession by both man and woman of a rational asexual soul, there remains a kind of congruity between the male body and the asexual soul. And so the *vir* does not experience, as does the *femina*, a duality between the two elements of his being.”¹⁴⁷ One must ask, however, whether this duality is a limitation constituted and imposed by the Latin language itself and by the rhetorical constructs already familiar to educated audiences in late Roman culture rather than something created or imposed by Augustine or other theologians of the time. Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine, and others clearly found these rhetorical figures useful in allegorical interpretation and polemical diatribes, but Augustine especially seems not just to use the metaphors of male and female, masculine and feminine as he found them already in the culture, but also to redefine them and shape them to a new purpose. By emphasizing the inadequacy of material things and finite human language accurately to manifest or describe the divine, Augustine pushes his audience to think beyond their culturally limited definitions of male, female, masculine, and feminine.

Børresen’s comment, however, points up the passage from *De trinitate* that most troubles Augustine’s critics, the discussion of how woman can be understood *not* to be the image of God:

credo, illius esse quod iam dixi cum de natura humanae mentis agerem, mulierem cum uiro suo esse *imaginem dei* ut una imago sit tota illa substantia; cum autem ad adiutorium distribuitur, quod ad eam ipsam solam attinet non est imago dei; quod autem ad uirum solum attinet *imago dei est tam plena atque integra quam in unum coniuncta muliere.*

[In the same way, I believe, as what I said when I was dealing with the nature of the human mind, namely that the woman with her husband is the image of God in such a way that the whole of the substance is one image, but when she is assigned her function of being an assistant, which is her concern alone, she is not the image of God; whereas in what concerns the man alone he is the image of God as fully and completely as when the woman is joined to him in one whole.]¹⁴⁸

Margaret Farley interprets Augustine to mean that “only the male body was (in its characteristics of activity and power) in the image of God. Hence, women shared in the image fully only in so far as they were corporally joined to men or virginally freed from their bodies.”¹⁴⁹ In order to support her interpretation, however, Farley has taken her understanding

of the male metaphor from outside the context of Augustine's reflections on the Trinity. She interprets "the man" literally and bodily in terms of the greater physical strength and the classical medical concept of male activity in procreation (as opposed to female passivity in receiving into herself the vital essence carried only by men). While it is true that this symbolism of male activity and puissance was common in the late antique era, the ideas of power and activity are not the metaphorical images that Augustine invokes in book twelve of *De trinitate*. Augustine is exclusively concerned with the activity of the rational soul that is defined by its ability to recognize and contemplate the eternal Trinity because it has been created to that same triune image. Hochschild explains that, "If *sapientia* describes the mind in union with the eternal reasons, *scientia* is the demonstration *in actu* of the mind's attention to these same principles. These are not two parts, nor two faculties, of the mind; they are rather two different kinds of activity: the mind as it looks to what is 'higher,' and the mind as it looks to what is 'lower.'"¹⁵⁰ In fact, it is the "female" activity of the mind (*scientia*) that is designated as active because it has charge of all temporal and material matters. And so the "female" action is diverted from the contemplation of God to tend to temporal matters as a helper that allows the mind to multitask, so that the "male" action (*sapientia*) may continue uninterrupted the contemplation of the eternal:

Sed quia sexu corporis distat a uiro, rite potuit in eius corporali uelamento figurari pars illa rationis quae ad temporalia gubernanda deflectitur ut non maneat imago dei nisi ex qua parte mens hominis aeternis rationibus conspiciendis uel consulendis adhaerescit, quam non solum masculos sed etiam feminas habere manifestum est.

[Well, it is only because she differs from the man in the sex of her body that her bodily covering could suitably be used to symbolize that part of the reason which is diverted to the management of temporal things, signifying that the mind of man does not remain the image of God except in the part which adheres to the eternal ideas to contemplate or consult them: and it is clear that females have this as well as males. So in their minds a common nature is to be acknowledged; but in their bodies the distribution of the one mind is symbolized.]¹⁵¹

Herein lies the nature of the "female" action's inferiority: by tending to temporal matters (which are by definition not eternal God), it does not reflect or reflect upon the *imago Dei* and so, being separated from

contemplation by temporal concerns, by itself is not to be considered the image of God because it no longer fixes its attention upon God. Only when it turns away from temporal affairs and focuses its attention as before upon the eternal is unity restored so that it participates in the *imago Dei*. Within Augustine's new definitions of gender according to the attentions of the soul, the most power-focused and ambitious men would also be the most "female" because the domination of *scientia* in their focus on temporal status and wealth distracts *sapientia* from focusing upon God. According to Edmund Hill, "the consequence [of sin] is a disruption of the divinely appointed order by which man is under the dominion of God and exercises dominion over the world; by rejecting the lordship of God, and seeking to be his own master, he finds himself in effect dominated or fascinated by the material world."¹⁵² The converse of this situation also holds, wherein the most studious and contemplative of virgins would be the most "male" because of the reorientation of *scientia* in harmony with the restored exercise of *sapientia* in turning away from worldly concerns and seeking God through prayer and meditation.

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

Up to Augustine's time, the Trinity had been discussed using the inherited philosophical language of substance (essential being) and accident (appearance).¹⁵³ Words of accident describe appearance or changeable traits and words of substance articulate what a thing or person is in terms of essential being: what cannot be changed without changing the very being of the thing itself. The limitations of language became increasingly problematic when grappling with the nature of the unlimited divinity, a point Augustine makes early on in *De doctrina christiana* when he writes "Non enim facile nomen, quod tantae excellentiae conueniat, inueniri potest" [It is not easy, after all, to find any name that will really fit such transcendent majesty].¹⁵⁴ When terms of accident and substance

were used in reference to God, it was believed that God, being immutable, could not truly be said to have accidents, or changeable characteristics, and so accident words (adjectives such as good, wise, just, etc.) always become substance words (nouns) when used in reference to God: “Secundum hoc ergo dicuntur illa simplicia, quae principaliter uereque diuina sunt, quod non aliud est in eis qualitas, aliud substantia” [Accordingly, whatever is authentically and truly divine is said to be simple because its qualities (accidents) and its substance are one and the same].¹⁵⁵ (For example, the statement, “God is just,” does not mean that God possesses the quality of justice, but that God *is* essential justice and every aspect of true justice originates in God.) In one of his most significant contributions to the development of Trinitarian theology, Augustine recognized the need for a language beyond substance and accident; he saw that any discussion of the Trinity also needed the language of relationship, for how else is fatherhood or sonship or the love between them to be understood except in terms of relationship?¹⁵⁶ Accordingly, the persons within the Trinity are distinguished by their relationship to each other, not by any kind of difference in accidents or substance. The characteristics of divinity were possessed equally and eternally by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, so they could not be rightly distinguished by accidents; if Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all God, then they cannot be distinguished by substance. Coequal, coeternal. If it were not for the incarnation the discussion might have ended there.

The incarnation translates God out of the eternal and into the temporal in the person of Jesus Christ, the God-man. As Hochschild notes, “the action of the incarnation describes a marriage and reconciliation of the corporeal and the intelligible.”¹⁵⁷ It joins in one perfect person all the rightly ordered powers of body and soul, making heaven intelligible to earth. It also brings into sharp relief both the relational, personal aspect of God’s nature and the real distinction between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit within the Godhead. The incarnation implied an order, a hierarchy within the coequal members of the Godhead itself, because “they are equal in that they are identical in their essential nature; but they are unequal in that they are given distinct sorts of tasks.”¹⁵⁸ Misunderstanding of this distinction led to the Arian heresy: the idea that Jesus Christ was created and of a like but different substance from the Father and the Holy Spirit because of his humanity. This view was defeated at the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE, but Arianism did not give up easily and orthodox theologians like Augustine still had to explain why Jesus had said that the

Father was greater than he, and why St. Paul had written that Christ would be subject to the Father.¹⁵⁹ Augustine addresses the problem by introducing the language of relationship, so that, while Christ retains all of the qualities and characteristics of divinity, in taking the role of a servant in the incarnation, the Son voluntarily subjects himself to the Father and, becoming like man, introduces gender into the language by which humans discussed the divine relationships.¹⁶⁰ This subjection was not one of nature (for Christ was not inferior in his essence to the other members of the Trinity) and so it was not a matter of domination, but instead of choice, of subordination of the will—of love—within the Godhead and of Christ’s temporal condition (relationship) as the God-man.¹⁶¹

The critical point in this discussion is that Christ loses none of the characteristics of deity by being in subjection to the Father, even though it did mean that he set aside some of the prerogatives and dignities of deity in order to enter the temporal realm by becoming human: “*Est ergo dei filius deo patri natura aequalis, habitu minor*” [So the Son of God is God the Father’s equal by nature, by condition his inferior].¹⁶² Christ’s inferiority and subjection were matters of his condition of incarnation into the temporal creation and of his filial relationship to a heavenly father. They were willingly assumed by him out of love for the Father and for humanity, not as a result of any sort of coercive mastery by God the Father over a somehow lesser divinity or weaker creation, and thus did not exist in violation of justice. The crucial point is that in Augustine’s (and Ælfric’s) understanding of the highest, most perfect reality, the Triune God, essential equality and relational hierarchy were not mutually exclusive of each other because they were based in love and volition, not assertion of power.¹⁶³

In this same way, the representations of gender in Augustine’s psychology of the soul also reflect the *imago Dei* in a more complex way than even Augustine explicitly states, for they reflect the intricate mystery whereby Christ could be considered both equal to the Father and yet subject to the Father without losing anything of his nature as deity. In light of this parallel, the “female” activity of the soul images Christ in a way that the “male” does not, even as the “male” activity images the Father in a way that the “female” does not, but only when the soul is restored to the proper order exemplified in the incarnate Christ. Even as the Son and the Father are one divine substance, distinguished not by nature but by relationship and joined by the love that is the Holy Spirit, so the “female” and the “male” activities are one human substance made to the image of God

in the rational soul, distinguished not by nature but by relationship, and joined by the love that one ought rightly to bear for God, others, and oneself. Augustine believed that such voluntary subordination existed among the very persons of the Godhead without loss of equality, and accordingly he and those such as Bede and Ælfric who accepted, preserved, and transmitted his theology of the Trinity into Anglo-Saxon England and the rest of medieval Europe could consider voluntary subordination as just and good not because of or in the same way as their own cultural contexts, but because this subordination was exemplified within the Godhead itself. The key to the justice of such subordination is the will—it must be voluntary on the part of the one submitting him- or herself to the other, and the other must acknowledge and extend that freedom of volition, for an enforced subjection would be unjust because it was not found in the Godhead.¹⁶⁴

Therefore, when Augustine wrote that “Neque enim et ante peccatum aliter factam fuisse decet credere mulierem, nisi ut uir ei dominaretur et ad eum ipsa seruiendo conuerteretur” [even before her sin woman had been made to be ruled by her husband and to be submissive and subject to him], he did not have in mind a relationship of domination and servitude between husband and wife.¹⁶⁵ In Augustine’s mind the ruling and subject positions in the prelapsarian social relationship between the man and the woman would have been based upon mutual love, reflecting the relationships within the Trinity, rather than a relationship of power and powerlessness. This reflection of the Trinity meant a relationship in which each spouse for love of the other would set aside himself or herself for the sake and good of the other, rather than each looking to his or her own self-interests out of inordinate self-love. Augustine makes this point explicit in *De Genesi ad litteram* when he writes:

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

[There are, then, two loves, of which one is holy, the other unclean; one turned towards the neighbor, the other centered on self; ... one looking to the common good, ... the other bringing the common good under its own power, arrogantly looking to domination; ... one

wishing for its neighbor what it wishes for itself, the other seeking to subject its neighbor to itself; one looking for its neighbor's advantage in ruling its neighbor, the other looking for its own advantage.]¹⁶⁶

Augustine sees self-love that dominates others and seeks its own advantage as an “unclean” love, characteristic of fallen humanity. Thus, what began in Paradise as a relationship in which one ruled for the good of the other and the other submitted for the good of the one, in the image of the relationships within the Trinity, became perverted through sin into a relationship of domination and subjection. Yet, even though subjection to the husband was Eve’s sentence for her disobedience, Augustine clearly states that this punishment was not given to her because of her nature (substance) as woman (nor, by implication, Adam’s as man), but as a result of her sin: “hoc enim uiro potius sententia dei detulit et maritum habere dominum meruit mulieris non natura, sed culpa” [The sentence pronounced by God gave this power to man; and it is not by her nature but rather by her sin that woman deserved to have her husband for a master].¹⁶⁷ Sin twisted the image of the loving relationship within the Trinity that Adam and Eve originally shared in their innocence into the perverted relationship outside of the Trinity of male domination and female subjection.¹⁶⁸ For Augustine, only salvation could bring the cacophony of marital relationships as images of the fallen “male” and “female” activities within the soul back into the harmony of the prelapsarian mutual love that reflected the relationships within the Trinity. Only faith in God’s gracious intervention could restore the “male” and “female” activities of the mind to their pre-Fall unity and so renew, within the individual believer, the harmony of body and soul while reconciling the restored human being to right relationship with God. Where sin caused disorder between body and soul and even between the activities of the soul, faith actively works to put everything back into proper order within the soul and within the whole person by reorienting the individual once again toward God.¹⁶⁹

This restored harmony in living persons reaches its greatest earthly perfection in the souls of those committed to virginity, who from the earliest age turn away from temporal matters as much as possible and devote themselves to the contemplation of God’s perfections. Motivated by love, they seek to spend their lives pursuing the closest possible imitation of Christ’s chastity and virtue. But how are the virgins to do this? Hochschild notes that Augustine outlines in his works “the necessity of faith in guid-

ing the restoration of memory, which in turn is seen as a pedagogy of the right valuation of the spiritual over the material.”¹⁷⁰ For memory is integral to knowing, knowing is integral to loving, and loving is integral to restoring the *imago Dei*. Augustine writes of memory as a “place” in which he meets and constructs himself:

Ibi mihi et ipse occurro meque recolo, quid quando et ubi egerim quoque modo, cum agerem, affectus fuerim. ... Ex eadem copia etiam similitudines rerum uel expertarum uel ex eis, quas expertus sum, creditarum alias atque alias et ipse contexo praeteritis atque ex his etiam futuras actiones et euenta et spes, et haec omnia rursus quasi praesentia meditor, “Faciam hoc et illud” dico apud me in ipso ingenti sinu animi mei pleno tot et tantarum rerum imaginibus, et hoc aut illud sequitur.

[And there I come to meet myself. I recall myself, what I did, when and where I acted in a certain way, and how I felt about so acting. ... Moreover, I can draw on this abundant store to form imaginary pictures which resemble the things I have myself experienced, or believed because my own experience confirmed them, and weave these together with images from the past, and so evoke future actions, occurrences or hopes; and on all these as well I can meditate as though they were present to me. In that same enormous recess of my mind, thronging with so many great images, I say to myself, “That’s what I will do!” And the action I have envisaged follows.]¹⁷¹

Memory, then, is where one meets and considers and comes to know oneself through reflection.¹⁷² It transcends the boundaries of time inasmuch as it can recall the past in the present and in the present it can envision the future. In its crucible, the mind tests and interprets past experiences in light of everything it knows and so directs what it learns to “future actions, occurrences and hopes.” This imaginative construction of the future shapes the behavior of the individual through decisions made as a product of reflection upon the contents of memory as “the action I envisaged follows.” This is the heart of the process of self-knowledge and self-formation, for Augustine cries out, “Magna uis est memoriae, nescio quid horrendum, deus meus, profunda et infinita multiplicitas; et hoc animus est, et hoc ego ipse sum” [O my God, profound, infinite complexity, what a great faculty memory is, how awesome a mystery! It is the mind, and this is nothing other than my very self].¹⁷³ Without memory, who are we? Who can we be? The exhortations of Ambrose to “know

yourself” can only be fulfilled in the mind through the memory,¹⁷⁴ but there is a difference between knowing oneself and deliberately forming oneself. The work of reorienting the soul takes time and intention and requires a powerful motivation—the motivation of love.

At the end of book eight in *De trinitate* Augustine offers this conclusion:

Ita et ipsorum uitam facit a nobis diligi formae illius dilectio secundum quam uixisse creduntur, et illorum uita credita in eandem formam flagrantiorum excitat caritatem ut quanto flagrantius diligimus deum, tanto certius sereniusque uideamus quia in deo conspicimus incommutabilem formam iustitiae secundum quam hominem uiuere oportere iudicamus. ... Quid est autem dilectio uel caritas quam tantopere scriptura diuina laudat et praedicat nisi amor boni? ... Quid est ergo amor nisi quaedam uita duo aliqua copulans uel copulari appetens, amantem scilicet et quod amatur?

[Thus on the one hand love of that form we believe (godly people) lived up to makes us love their life, and on the other belief in their life stirs us to a more blazing charity toward that form; with the result that the more brightly burns our love for God, the more surely and serenely we see him. ... What, then, after all that, is this love or charity which divine scriptures praise and proclaim so much, but love of the good? ... And what is love but a kind of coupling together two things, namely lover and what is being loved?] ¹⁷⁵

Love of the good *is* love of God, for God is the good Augustine refers to, the essence of the goodness in good people. Recognition of the image of the good in the lives and actions of godly people kindles desire for it, and then belief in that good fans desire into flame so that the lover of God seeks the best means to be joined together with the divine goodness, as Gregory the Great also observes.¹⁷⁶ One must know God in order to love him, and memory is the key to knowing God, just as it is to knowing oneself. Augustine observes “Ecce quantum spatiatus sum in memoria mea quaerens te, domine, et non te inueni extra eam” [how widely I have ranged through my memory seeking you, Lord, and I have not found you outside it].¹⁷⁷ But Augustine’s memory was well furnished with the Christian scriptures, and he urges the readers of *De doctrina christiana* who desire to ascend to wisdom to “nosse istos libros ... legendo tamen uel mandare memoriae” [know these books, and ... by reading then to commit them to memory].¹⁷⁸ By filling the memory with the word of God and then stu-

dying and meditating upon that Word, a virgin of either sex might come truly to know and love God and to desire to draw closer and become more like God—thus working to restore the *imago Dei* in the soul that was lost through the Fall.

The work of restoring the *imago Dei* takes a lifetime of turning from temporal concerns to prioritize matters of eternal import. According to Augustine, God calls all Christians to pursue this work but those who choose an ascetic way of life have the advantage of time free of distraction in order to pursue it. In the soul, where there are no distinctions of sex, there are also no distinctions in the characteristics of holiness, for those who devote their lives single-mindedly to drawing closer to God seek him where he may be found, in the treasure-house and temple of memory through meditation and contemplation. In the practice of continence, Augustine says “quippe colligimur et redigimur in unum, a quo in multa defluximus” [the scattered elements of the self are collected and brought back into the unity from which we have slid away into dispersion],¹⁷⁹ and so by the practices of virtue and virginity souls are restored and re-oriented toward God, developing in virtue because growing closer to the source of virtue as they pursue the undivided, unified, metagendered life of God. Along with Augustine, they say to God, “Meminerim tui; intellegam te; diligam te, Auge in me ista donec me reformes ad integrum” [Let me remember you, let me understand you, let me love you. Increase these things in me until you refashion me entirely].¹⁸⁰

Gregory the Great

Separated by time (160–200 years) and culture from Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine, the fourth Latin Doctor, Gregory the Great, holds an intriguing place in the understanding and promulgation of the teachings of the three earlier Doctors in the Western church. By the end of the sixth century, the migrating barbarians had settled upon the remains of the western Roman Empire and begun to convert to catholic Christianity. The coenobitic monasticism promoted by John Cassian had taken root, and the catholic orthodoxy of the first three Latin Doctors was well established. By the time he was elected bishop of Rome, Gregory was thoroughly versed in their writings and in the practice of a monastic life and yet, as John Moorhead observes, his appropriation of particular ideas from his forerunners “is maddeningly difficult to establish.”¹⁸¹ Moorhead further notes that “Gregory’s resolutely synthesizing mind may have been able to

turn whatever he read to his own purposes ... [and] he may well have used the writings of earlier authorities as launching pads for his own thoughts, rather than as bodies of ideas to be engaged with. ... Moreover, the bulk of his works are the fruits of orally delivered teaching in which he would have been relying on what he remembered of his reading.”¹⁸² Gregory’s works reveal not only a knowledge of the classical concepts of memory known, practiced, and encouraged in the other Doctors, but also his own exercise of the creative use of memory for the purposes of self-formation and of understanding others within the context of his roles as monk and bishop. The ideas of Augustine, Jerome, and Ambrose permeate Gregory’s own works, and so he may rightly serve as a measure of how their writings were understood and how their views were developed in his own psychology and theology of gender. Unlike the other Doctors, however, Gregory’s attitudes concerning Creation and Fall, virginity, and the image of God in the human soul are not conveniently expounded in treatises on virginity or the Trinity, nor in a focused exegetical commentary on Genesis. Instead his thoughts and teachings on these topics are spread throughout the corpus of his works and we may look not only to his interpretation of Scripture in works like *Moralia in Job* or the *Homiliae in Euangelium*, but also to his letters, hagiography, and guidelines for rulers in the church in order to find Gregory’s own attitudes and teachings about gender and memory.

Thomas O’Loughlin best describes Gregory’s place in the tradition of commentary on Genesis, saying “While Gregory did not contribute directly to the Genesis tradition, ... not only was he regarded as the most illustrious exegete after Augustine throughout the seventh and eighth centuries, but indeed he was seen ... as a commentator on Genesis in his own right.”¹⁸³ In his comments on Genesis, however, Gregory shows the influence of Augustine and Jerome in shaping his own thought and understanding of the *imago Dei* in humans. In the *Moralia*, Gregory observes that Adam was created male and female before Eve was made.¹⁸⁴ Whether Gregory means by this that Eve existed in Adam as a sort of inactive seed or that her shared essential humanity with Adam meant that she was already present in the same substance as Adam though yet unformed cannot be discerned from this particular passage. Yet Gregory takes his allegorical psychological model of temptation from Ambrose instead when he comments that Eve represents the senses of the flesh.¹⁸⁵ He states his perception of temptation and the Fall in the *Regula pastoralis*:

In primo autem parente didicimus quia tribus modis omnis culpae nequitiam perpetramus, suggestione scilicet, delectatione, consensu. ... Vnde et illic serpens prava suggestit, Eua autem quasi caro se delectationi subdidit, Adam uero uelut spiritus suggestione ac delectatione superatus assensit. Suggestione itaque peccatum agnoscimus, delectatione uincimur, consensu etiam ligamur. Ammonendi sunt igitur qui nequicias cogitationis deflent, ut sollicite considerent in qua peccati mensura ceciderunt, quatinus iuxta ruinae modum quam in semetipsis introrsus sentiunt, etiam mensura lamentationis erigantur, ne si cogitata mala minus cruciant, usque ad perpetranda opera perducant.

[We have learned from the case of our first parents that we commit the evil of every fault in three stages: suggestion, pleasure, and consent. ... In the case mentioned, the serpent suggested something wrong, Eve (whom we may take to be the flesh) gave herself up to the pleasure, and Adam (the spirit), overcome by the suggestion and the pleasure, gave his consent. We come to know sin by suggestion, we are vanquished by pleasure, and we are bound by consent.]¹⁸⁶

As with Ambrose and Augustine, Gregory attaches a figural meaning to the people and events of the Fall and points out the crucial power of pleasure in the process of temptation. His explanation, however, is Ambrosian: sin overpowers the will by fixing the mind upon the desire for sensual pleasure, thereby leading the mind to consent to the act.¹⁸⁷

As with other allegorical interpretations, the tropological and allegorical nature of Gregory's comments about women and men in the *Moralia* clearly do not strive to be complimentary, but neither do they aim to depict men and women in general. Gregory focuses on his perception of a truth beyond the literal characters in the text. The texts of the Bible that Gregory explains and the orthodox doctrines of Christianity shape and direct his interpretations, yet each passage seems to have the potential to supply both positive and negative ideas and examples about gender. Job's wife plays an unattractive and equivocal role in Gregory's exegesis of Job just as she does in the scriptural story. In the biblical book, Satan afflicts Job (and, by extension, his wife) with a series of increasingly personal disasters and torments. At the height of Job's suffering, his wife comes to him and asks why he keeps clinging to his integrity, why does he not just go ahead and curse God and die.¹⁸⁸ Ann Astell demonstrates that Gregory interprets Job's wife's role in the story at this point as parallel to Eve's role in the story of the Fall—she is a source of temptation for

the pleasure of relief from physical suffering.¹⁸⁹ But was she a source or a tool? There is a fine distinction between the two, but it is a distinction that Gregory himself makes. Gregory treats Job's wife circumspectly: at no time does Gregory ever indicate or imply that she is wicked or perverse by nature. Instead, he emphasizes that she was goaded by Satan, was used, like Eve, as the devil's tool in tempting Job through the pleasure of the senses to depart from his devotion and curse God.¹⁹⁰ Gregory does not call the wife wicked, but calls her persuasion wicked.¹⁹¹ This circumspection recalls Ambrose's point in *De paradiso* that what is called Eve's fault indicates the weakness of the senses of the flesh, not inherent wickedness in woman as such.¹⁹² Gregory emphasizes this element in his historical interpretation of Job's response to his wife's advice to give up his simplicity, curse God, and die. Job compares his wife to a "stupid woman," and Gregory explains that:

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

[He says, "If we accept good things from God's hand, why should we not receive evil?" He precedes these words by the following, "You are talking like a stupid woman." The judgment on the moral quality of a woman is not based on a vice inherent in the sex, so he did not, of course, say, "You are talking like the woman you are," but "like a stupid woman." Obviously he wanted to make it clear that her perverse stupidity was accidental, not a natural condition of her sex.]¹⁹³

Gregory uses the biblical text to teach his male audience that women are not by nature stupid or wicked. Job's wife gives wicked advice not because of her sex, but because she is unwittingly being used as a tool for temptation by Satan. Thus, Job's wife not only serves as a parallel to Eve, but also as a representation in the tropological sense of what Gregory calls "fleshly minded" Christians within the church: those who are used by Satan to tempt and try the church, and whose instability allows them to be so used.¹⁹⁴ This comparison illustrates Gregory's own use of the Roman gender stereotypes in the figurative meanings of "man" as strong-minded and discreet and "woman" as wavering or indiscreet that he outlines else-

where in the *Moralia*.¹⁹⁵ Wavering Christians of either sex may be referred to as “women” when they lack stability in their commitment to God, whereas those who stand firm act “like a man.”

Gregory often balances the potentially negative effect of some of his interpretations of women by citing men as parallel examples of the points he is making, examples that show men in the same light as Job’s wife, as when he calls Job himself fickle-minded.¹⁹⁶ Gregory also provides positive interpretations of women that are then illustrated with negative examples of men. That Gregory is so careful to provide such balance suggests that he knew how such interpretations might be inappropriately applied by an unskilled audience to women or men in general, leading him to take steps to prevent such unwarranted generalizations. Gregory further explains how more than one meaning can be appropriately taken from any one person or object in Scripture.¹⁹⁷ Thus for Gregory as for the earlier Latin Doctors, biblical women and men were not just people, but also fluid metaphors that were interpreted in a variety of ways that were not defined by the literal text or the literal sex of the person.¹⁹⁸ Even so, Gregory conceived of the *Moralia* as a work for a specific kind of audience, a learned audience, and he did not think the contents appropriate fare for the general populace.¹⁹⁹

Another work by Gregory that remained popular in monastic circles for many centuries and was translated into Old English as part of the Alfredian translation project is the *Dialogi*.²⁰⁰ Although some scholars have disputed the authorship of the *Dialogi*,²⁰¹ the monks and nuns of the Middle Ages did not question Gregory’s authorship and so the weight of his name joined with the subject matter of saints’ lives helped to shape monastic concepts of gender and of men and women. Gregory comments in the preface that “Et sunt nonnulli quos ad amorem patriae caelestis plus exempla quam praedicamenta succendunt” [the lives of the saints are often more effective than mere instruction for inspiring us to love heaven as our home].²⁰² This comment is paralleled in Gregory’s comments for more general audiences in his preaching, as when he says “Sed quia nonnumquam mentes audientium plus exempla fidelium quam docentium uerba conuertunt” [the example of the faithful often transforms the hearts of listeners more than a teacher’s words] and “Sed quia ad amorem Dei et proximi plerumque corda audientium plus exempla quam uerba excitant” [examples often rouse the hearts of one’s hearers to love of God and neighbor better than words].²⁰³ The language of rousing, inspiring, and trans-

forming indicates Gregory's belief in the motivating power of examples based in narrative.

Among the legends in *Dialogi*, the tale of St. Galla, the bearded woman, amuses us because we usually associate bearded women with carnivals, not with saints. Gregory himself seems aware of the potential humor of the story, for he introduces it by saying that it was told to him "personarum grauium atque fidelium ... relatione" [by the report of serious-minded and reliable people].²⁰⁴ Galla was married as a young girl but became a widow only a year after her marriage. Young and wealthy, she could easily have married again on her own terms, but she chose to devote herself to chastity as a bride of Christ. Her nature was unusually passionate, however, and physicians warned her that if she did not marry again, she would grow a beard. Galla cared nothing for the potential disfigurement, and, entering a convent shortly after her husband's death, grew a beard as had been predicted. Undaunted, she lived a life of prayer and service, happy in the love of her spiritual spouse, and as her death approached, was called to heaven by St. Peter, who told her when she would die and who would die soon after her.

Gregory tells the story of Galla in the fourth book of the *Dialogi*, as he is offering proof for the life of the soul after death. Thus, the brief life is not meant to be a commentary on women or gender, but for that very reason it offers insight, especially in the relationship between Galla's highly passionate nature and the beard. By refusing to be ruled by her passions, Galla endures the disfigurement of a beard, perhaps as a way of symbolizing her "manly" strength of virtue in properly governing her bodily nature.²⁰⁵ In her later years she suffers a further attack on her physical femininity when "cancri ulcere in mamilla percussa est" [she was struck by an ulcer of cancer in her breast].²⁰⁶ At no time, however, does Gregory himself make any reference to manly strength or steadfastness on the part of Galla. Rather he extols her love of Christ and praises her single-mindedness, generous charity, and indefatigable prayer without ever qualifying these virtues as characteristics of a particular gender. It is not just Galla, however, whose story begins to break down gender stereotypes in Gregory's book. Among the first lives of saints that Gregory includes in the *Dialogi* is the story of Equitius, who dreamed one night that "adsistente angelo eunuchizari se uidit" [he saw himself made a eunuch while an angel stood by].²⁰⁷ As with Jerome and Augustine earlier, Equitius (and Gregory, apparently) considered this symbolic castration highly desirable, for it meant that

his soul was no longer subject to the temptations of lust and that he had moved closer to the ideal of the *virum perfectum*.²⁰⁸

The most renowned story in the *Dialogi* is Gregory's celebrated life of St. Benedict in book two where, among other vignettes, we find the story of a rare visit Benedict makes to see his sister, Scholastica, shortly before her death. Gregory tells the story as an example of how Benedict could not always obtain what he desired when, in the story, he wanted to return to his monastery at nightfall. Scholastica, however, desires him to stay the night so that they might continue their conversation on heavenly matters. When Benedict insists upon leaving, Scholastica weeps and prays that God will prevent his departure. In response to her tears and prayer, God sends a storm that prevents Benedict from traveling, and the monk is forced to remain the night with his sister, talking with her to the benefit of both as she had desired. Gregory concludes, "Nec mirum quod plus illo femina, quae diu fratrem uidere cupiebat, in eodem tempore ualuit. Quia enim iuxta Iohannis uocem *Deus caritas est*, iusto ualde iudicio illa plus potuit, quae amplius amauit." [We need not be surprised that in this instance she proved mightier than her brother; she had been looking forward so long to this visit. Do we not read in St. John that God is love? Surely it is no more than right that her influence was greater than his, since hers was the greater love.]²⁰⁹ Gregory had no qualms about portraying the strength of godly women, yet he does not focus his audience's attention on the idea of Benedict being humbled by having his desires thwarted by a woman. Rather, he emphasizes the biblical teaching that love is the central practice of any religious life and shows that, in this most important area of love, Scholastica is stronger than her brother. Since Scholastica's love is greater than Benedict's, God honors her prayer over her brother's wish to return to his monastery.²¹⁰

It seems odd that Gregory does not use Augustine's profound exploration of the nature of the soul in book four of the *Dialogi*, especially since he does refer to the idea that sin causes humankind to fall from a more noble nature into a less noble state in which they are no longer able to contemplate the heavenly things Adam once contemplated. Most of the book is taken up with further stories of holy men and women (including Galla) that are simply intended to prove that the soul exists after death and continues on in anticipation of either eternal reward or eternal punishment. Such an approach may be a matter of Gregory's intended purpose, since the *Dialogi* is not an interpretive work like *Moralia*. Rather, the *Dialogi* is an inspirational work, meant to arouse in its readers a love

of heaven and humility in how they regard themselves.²¹¹ In recounting inspirational examples in *Dialogi*, and also in his *Homiliae in Euangelium*, Gregory demonstrates that narrative can often accomplish what propositional discourse cannot.²¹²

Gregory's *Regula pastoralis* is a guide for the selection, conduct, and instructional responsibilities of "rulers" or bishops in the church and like *Dialogi* was translated into Old English during Alfred's reign. It contains detailed instructions on how to exhort diverse peoples to greater lives of godliness: all must be exhorted in the same truths, but because there is such a diversity of temperament and personality these truths must be presented in different ways—a difficult and challenging job for any preacher/pastor, as Gregory readily acknowledges.²¹³ The book contains a few passages that directly address the differences between men and women, but on the whole Gregory assumes that the strengths and weaknesses of personality and temperament that he discusses are *human*, not belonging exclusively or predominantly to men or to women. He carries this assumption over into his *Homiliae in Euangelium*, which also may be used to illustrate and clarify the occasionally ambiguous wording in the *Regula pastoralis*.

The first of the passages that address the difference between men and women says: "Aliter igitur ammonendi sunt uiri, atque aliter feminae, quia illis grauia, istis uero sunt iniungenda leuiora, ut illos magna exerceant, istas autem lenia demulcendo conuertant" [Men are to be admonished in one way and women in another, because heavier things are to be imposed on the former and lighter on the latter, so that great things may exercise the former and easy ones convert the latter by means of gentleness].²¹⁴ Gregory's use of *exerceant* (drill, exercise, practice) and *lenia* (smooth, soft, mild or gentle) in the second part of the sentence suggests that Gregory had in mind not so much a difference in mental abilities as a difference in psychology: men should be challenged (another meaning of *exerceo* is "harass") and women should be gently won or persuaded.²¹⁵ He gives similar advice in his comments on admonishing the shameless and the sensitive: "Illos namque ab impudentiae uitio non nisi increpatio dura compescit; istos autem plerumque ad melius exhortatio modesta componit" [For nothing less than a harsh rebuke restrains the former from their vice of shamelessness; but gentler encouragement is usually enough to turn the latter in a better direction].²¹⁶ Gregory does not associate shamelessness with men or sensitivity with women, rather he acknowledges two different psychological types—psychological types that seem to reflect characteristics that he might associate with masculinity and femininity, based upon

the similarity of the advice, but that he also does not explicitly align with men or women. Since his advice is addressed to preachers, however, the best way to understand what Gregory means by his statement concerning men and women may be to study his own practice in his *Homiliae in Euangeliū*.

Unlike Gregory's other works, the homilies were preached *ad populum*, to an audience of the general population, during the early years of his pontificate (591–592).²¹⁷ These homilies became very influential in the early Middle Ages, as Thomas N. Hall notes: "By the ninth century, these were the best known and most influential collection of exegetical homilies in the Latin West, abundantly represented in the inventories of monastic libraries, and often named in Carolingian capitularies, conciliar decrees, and episcopal statutes which specify that priests should own a set of Gregory's Gospel homilies."²¹⁸ Further, Ælfric incorporated large portions of many of these homilies in his two series of *Catholic Homilies*. The Gospel homilies not only provide an illustration of Gregory's own practice in preaching, but also give us a context for understanding his advice on how men and women should be encouraged differently. When he contrasts the two sexes in this collection of homilies, Gregory generally does so to the praise and honor of women (especially female saints) and to shame and challenge men to lives of greater love and devotion. In Homily 3 Gregory praises St. Felicity for this purpose, saying "Considerate, fratres carissimi, in femineo corpore uirile pectus. ... Consideremus, fratres, hanc feminam, consideremus nos qui membris corporis uiri sumus, in eius comparatione quid existimabimur. ... De debilitate mentis suae quae tunc erit uiris excusatio, quando haec ostenditur quae cum saeculo sexum uicit?" [Consider, dearly beloved, the manly heart in the woman's body! ... Let us consider this woman, dearly beloved. Let us consider ourselves and what in comparison with her will be thought of us, who in body are men. ... What excuse will men have for the weakness of their hearts when we see this woman who overcame her sex as well as the world?]²¹⁹ Even though Gregory mentions the body of Felicity and the bodies of his male listeners, the manliness that he exalts in this passage is not one of the body and has nothing to do with sex or worldly power, but rather has to do with spiritual strength. In this case, Gregory holds up Felicity as an example of spiritual strength (manliness) that puts Gregory and his fellow men in the body to shame for their fickle weakness, deliberately reversing the ideas of gender and making Felicity a manly (strong) woman, and making himself and other men womanly (weak) in the spiritual sense. In this way Gregory

demonstrates what he means by laying heavier injunctions (the burden of shame) upon men while winningly converting women with the example of a strong and triumphant woman.

Gregory is not the first of the Doctors to speak of a woman overcoming her sex and he uses the phrase again in Homily 14 when speaking of the various inhabitants of the heavenly kingdom.²²⁰ When speaking of women *sexum uicerunt* (overcoming their sex) Gregory, like Ambrose, means that these women overcome the fact that they have less physical strength than men, which puts the women at a disadvantage. Gillian Clark explains the late antique commonplace that women were weak, saying: “What was this weakness? Women, it was thought, were physically hampered by lack of strength and especially by child-bearing.”²²¹ As with most Romans, Gregory thought women possessed inferior physical strength, which made them less likely to endure harsh conditions and also rendered them less physically capable of enforcing rulership over men. The physical strength of men, on the other hand, enabled them to endure harsh treatment and conditions. It also allowed some of them to enforce their rule upon other men as well as women.²²² Therefore, any woman overcomes her sex who rises above her disadvantage either by persevering steadfastly in the face of torture as did Felicity or by ruling effectively over men as in the case of Deborah the judge.

The physical “facts” of male strength and female weakness formed the basis of the figural meanings of “man equals strong-minded” and “woman, frailty of mind” that Gregory sets forth in the *Moralia*.²²³ In the writings of the Doctors and early medieval hagiographers, however, the mind can change genders, so to speak, when reoriented by love for Christ, prayer, and the study of holy books, thus providing the way for women to overcome the physical and cultural disadvantages of their sex through becoming strong-minded in Christ.²²⁴ Since Gregory uses “manly” to refer to the strong-minded, and he uses the term as a description not only of women, but also of men who do not succumb to worldly pleasures, he apparently does not consider corporeal maleness to be the equivalent of “manly” despite the etymology of the Latin term. Rather his statements refer figuratively to the steadfast mind that characterizes the saints and enables both women and men single-mindedly to contemplate and love the eternal God, thus attaining the metagendered *virum perfectum*, instead of falling into the gendering distractions of temporal pleasures.²²⁵

For anything that distracts the mind from contemplation of God divides it, separates it even from itself. In *Regula pastoralis* Gregory mourns

the way in which his duties as bishop keep him from the life of contemplation he so loved as a monk: “fit in exteriorum dispositione sollicita, et sui solummodo ignara, scit multa cogitare, se nesciens. Nam cum plus quam necesse est se exterioribus implicat, quasi occupata in itinere olbiuiscitur quo tendebat” [it (the mind) becomes anxious in the ordering of things that are without, and, ignorant of itself alone, knows how to think of many things, while itself it knows not. For when it implicates itself more than is needful in things that are without, it is as though it were so occupied during a journey as to forget where it was going].²²⁶ For Gregory as for Augustine this separation from God, from self, and from others is the natural state of fallen humanity: those who have left God for pursuit of temporal things lose themselves as their identities become enmeshed in the unstable, changeable, material world that they love more than God.²²⁷ In such a state, they do not even know their own motives or their own true will in matters, for “Nam saepe sibi de se mens ipsa mentitur” [the mind lies to itself about itself].²²⁸ The only solution for a bishop or any other person is to return to oneself through memory and reflection.²²⁹ He demonstrates this process in himself at the end of the *Moralia*, noting that after spending so much time speaking and writing for others he needed to return to himself for the purpose of self-examination and of anchoring himself again in relationship to God.²³⁰ The return to one’s own soul recurs throughout Gregory’s works and resides at the center of his own practice and the practice he recommends publicly to all. Such a turning follows a deliberate act of will, of desire to dwell in the presence of God and thus be restored to unity of soul, mind, and body. This kind of unity with self and with God could only be attained within the soul through contemplation motivated by a burning desire for God. For this purpose, Gregory recommended that all Christian people “Verba Dei quae aure percipitis, mente retinete. Cibus enim mentis est sermo Dei” [Keep in mind the words of God which you hear. The word of God is our mind’s food].²³¹ Memorized Scripture becomes the means and focus of meditation and the key both to knowing oneself and to knowing God. A memory well-stocked with Scripture would be shaped by the words of God and so form an unchanging standard by which to measure one’s own thoughts and deeds. This same treasure-house of scriptural memory also serves as a temple, a “place” in which holy women and men might be joined with God, “Quia uero ei mente inhaerent, atque inhaerendo uel sacrae scripturae” [for they keep their hearts united to God by dwelling continually on the words of holy Scripture] and in so doing possess God within their very souls through

love.²³² All of the importance of memory alluded to by Jerome, recommended by Ambrose, and plumbbed in depth by Augustine comes together in Gregory's examples and exhortations for monastic practitioners and layfolk alike. Gregory makes no distinction in the practice of the life of the soul between men and women, for he is addressing life centered in the part of each human being where bodily differences do not obtain. As the soul draws closer to God, it leaves behind all regard or interest in bodily distinctions, overcoming its changeable fallen nature and the gendering associated with it in order to draw closer to the unchanging *virum perfectum*, the metagendered Christ.²³³ In his thirty-fourth gospel homily, Gregory compares such holy ones with the blazing seraphim around the throne of God, illustrating that in the contemplative, transcendent state engaged through memory, holy men and women leave behind the gender definitions of their material society, knowing and defining themselves only in relationship to the metagendered Christ.²³⁴ In loving and identifying with him, they transcend their own fallen natures and become like Christ and like the seraphim of heaven.

Such women and men cannot remain in that state, however. The demands of the body and of life within time inevitably draw them from contemplation into common activities. The love remains, however, and the memory of desire for God that leads them to lives of virtue. In the *Dialogi*, Gregory states that “Neque enim si talia signa non faciunt, ideo tales non sunt. Vitae namque uera aestimatio in uirtute est operum, non in ostensione signorum” [One cannot conclude that there are no great saints just because no great miracles are worked. The true estimate of life, after all, lies in acts of virtue, not in the display of miracles].²³⁵ Such acts of virtue define the saints in Gregory's opinion, and may be accomplished equally by women and men because virtue exists in the place where there is no sex, the human soul.

NOTES

¹ See especially Claudian, *In Eutropium*, written in 399 CE as a response to the appointment of the eunuch, Eutropius, as consul by the Eastern Roman emperor, Arcadius, instead of the successful western barbarian military commander, Stilicho. *In Eutropium* is one long, harsh invective that aims to defame Eutropius and undermine his political power. The author of the *Historia Augusta* also had no love for eunuchs, nor did Claudio Mamertinus.

² Ranke-Heinemann, *Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven*, 46–47.

³Kuefler, *The Manly Eunuch*, 36.

⁴Based on the “baptismal formula” in St. Paul’s epistle to the Galatians 3:28. See Ruether, *Women and Redemption*, 29–31; Power, *Veiled Desire*, 54; and Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels*, 61.

⁵Chadwick, *John Cassian*, 43.

⁶Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, indicates that *Adversus Jovinianum* is cited by Aldhelm, Bede, and Ælfric (313). Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, indicate no manuscript evidence of this work in Anglo-Saxon England up to Ælfric’s day.

⁷Blamires, *Woman Defamed, Woman Defended*, 63–64.

⁸Oppel, “Saint Jerome and the History of Sex,” 6.

⁹Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum* 1.48 (*PL* 23.293a); Jerome, “Against Jovinianus,” in *St. Jerome: Letters and Selected Works*, trans. Fremantle, 1.48.

¹⁰See also Ambrose, “Epistula 15, Ambrosius Irenaeo Salutem,” in *Sancti Ambrosii Opera, Pars Decima*, §7.

¹¹Cain, “Vox Clamat in Deserto,” 501; see also Peter Brown, *Body and Society*, 377 and Rebenich, *Jerome*, 42.

¹²Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, 1.29 (*PL* 23.262c); Jerome, “Against Jovinianus,” in *St. Jerome: Letters and Selected Works*, trans. Fremantle, 1.29.

¹³Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, 1.29 (*PL* 23.262c–263a); Jerome, “Against Jovinianus,” in *St. Jerome: Letters and Selected Works*, trans. Fremantle, 1.29.

¹⁴Ambrose and Augustine agreed that neither male nor female bodies were in the image of God. See Augustine, *De trinitate*, 12.12; *De doctrina christiana*, 1.20; Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, 6.12. Also see Ambrose, “Exameron,” 6.6.39 and 6.7.42.

¹⁵Jerome, “Epistula 128, Ad Pacatulam” §3; Jerome, “Letter 128 to Pacatula,” in Rebenich, *Jerome*, §3 and Jerome, “Epistula 22, Ad Eustochium” §19; Jerome, “Letter XXII, To Eustochium,” trans. Fremantle, §19. Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, show no manuscript evidence for the letter to Pacatula in Anglo-Saxon England, nor for the famous letter to Eustochium before the late eleventh century, though Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, indicates that Aldhelm and Bede both cite from this letter (181 and 217).

¹⁶Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, 1.27 (*PL* 23.260a–b); Jerome, “Against Jovinianus,” in *St. Jerome: Letters and Selected Works*, trans. Fremantle, 1.27.

¹⁷Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, 1.27 (*PL* 23.260c).

¹⁸Jerome, “Epistula 49 (48 Vall.) Apologeticum ad Pammachium,” §2.

¹⁹Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, 1.13 (*PL* 23.240a–43b). See also Augustine, “De Bono Coniugali,” §[9],13 and [12],14; “De sancta virginitate,” §[16],16; and Ambrose, “Epistula 15, Ambrosius Irenaeo Salutem,” in *Sancti Ambrosii Opera, Pars Decima*, §7.

²⁰Jerome, *Adversus Helvidium* §20 (*PL* 23.214c); Jerome, “Against Helvidius,” *Saint Jerome: Dogmatic and Polemical Works*, trans. Hritz. Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, notes that this work is cited by Bede (313), but Gneuss and

Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, indicate no manuscripts are known to be in Anglo-Saxon England until after Ælfric.

²¹ Jerome, “Epistula 22, Ad Eustochium,” §18; Jerome, “Letter 22, To Eustochium,” trans. Fremantle, §18.

²² Jerome, “Epistula 49 (48),” §14; Jerome, “Letter 48, To Pammachius,” trans. Fremantle, §14. Jerome is actually quoting from Ambrose, *De viduis*. See also Jerome, *Adversus Helvidium*, §20 (*PL* 23.203d); Ambrose, “De virginibus,” in *Sancti Ambrosii Episcopi Mediolanensis Opera*, ed. Gori, 1.8.48 and 1.8.52; Ambrose, *De virginitate liber unus*, 6.27; Augustine, “De sancta virginitate,” §13, in *De Bono Coniugali*.

²³ Jerome, *ad Ephesios* (*PL* 26.533c). My translation. Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, indicates that Bede, Lantfred, and Ælfric quote from the *Commentarius in .iv. epistulas Pauli* (314), and Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, note the eighth-century fragment #829.2 containing a portion of *ad Galatas* as probably of English origin.

²⁴ Cf. Ambrose, “Epistula 13, Ambrosius Irenaeo Salutem,” in *Sancti Ambrosii Opera, Pars Decima*, §10–11.

²⁵ Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, 1.36 (*PL* 23.271b); Jerome, “Against Jovinianus,” in *St. Jerome: Letters and Selected Works*, trans. Fremantle, 1.36.

²⁶ Jerome, *ad Ephesios* (*PL* 26.501b); Jerome, *St. Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians*, in *Commentaries of Origen and Jerome*, trans. Heine, 177.

²⁷ Jerome, *ad Ephesios* (*PL* 26.501c); Jerome, *St. Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians*, in *Commentaries of Origen and Jerome*, trans. Heine, 177. Cf. Ambrose, “De Cain et Abel,” 1.47.

²⁸ Ambrose, “Epistula 16, Ambrosius Irenaeo Salutem,” in *Sancti Ambrosii Opera, Pars Decima*, §13; Ælfric, *CH I* 36.16.

²⁹ Galatians 3:27–28.

³⁰ See Ælfric, *CH I* 39.94–97.

³¹ Jerome, *ad Galatas* (*PL* 26.369b–c); Jerome, *St. Jerome’s Commentaries*, 151. See also Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, 1.35 (*PL* 23.270d); Jerome, “Epistola 77, Ad Oceanum,” §3; Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, 11.42; and Bede, *Collectio*, in *Bedae Venerabilis Opera, Pars II*, ed. Jones, Item 409.

³² Carruthers and Ziolkowski, *Medieval Craft of Memory*, 2.

³³ Jerome, “Epistula 22, Ad Eustochium,” §24; Jerome, “Letter 22, To Eustochium,” trans. Fremantle, §24. Ælfric applies a similar thought to all believers in *CH I* 28.184–86.

³⁴ Jerome, “Epistula 22, Ad Eustochium,” §31; Jerome, “Letter XXII, To Eustochium,” trans. Fremantle, §31. Cf. Ælfric, *CH II* 6.39–43 and 94–97.

³⁵ Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*, 15.

³⁶ Jerome, “Epistula 130, Ad Demetriadem,” §7; Jerome, “Letter 130, To Demetrias,” trans. Fremantle, §7.

³⁷ Jerome, “Epistula 127, Ad Principiam,” §7; Jerome, “Letter 127, To Principia,” in Rebenich, *Jerome*, 125. Cf. Aldhelm, “Prosa de virginitate,” §16.

³⁸ Jerome, *ad Ephesios* (*PL* 26.534b); Jerome, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*, in *The Commentaries of Origen and Jerome*, trans. Heine, 238. Cf. Aldhelm, “Prosa de virginitate,” §18.

³⁹ Jerome, “Epistula 14, Ad Heliodorum,” §6; Jerome, “Letter 14, To Heliodorus,” trans. Freemantle, §6. Though Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, list no copies of this letter, Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, indicates two copies known to have been in Anglo-Saxon centers on the Continent in “Appendix C,” #6 and #81.

⁴⁰ Jerome, “Epistula 22, Ad Eustochium,” §19; Jerome, “Letter 22, To Eustochium,” trans. Freemantle, §19.

⁴¹ Jerome, “Contra Rufinum,” in *S. Hieronymi Presbyteri Opera, Pars III*, 1 ed. Lardet, §29. Cf. Aldhelm, “Prosa de virginitate,” §18. This work is cited by Bede according to Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library* (313), but Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, show no manuscripts in Anglo-Saxon England to Ælfric’s time.

⁴² Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity*, 50–51. Apparently, those who continued to live as *caelibes* (unmarried) were legally classified as such and because the classification was attended by legal penalties regarding inheritance, it carried a social stigma. When Constantine released men from this form of social and legal pressure, he released women as well.

⁴³ Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, 1.36 (*PL* 23.260c–d and 271b); Jerome, “Against Jovinianus,” in *St. Jerome: Letters and Selected Works*, trans. Fremantle, 1.36. See also Ambrose, *De virginitate*, 6.28–29 and Augustine, “De sancta virginitate,” §23, in *De Bono Coniugali*.

⁴⁴ Kuefler, *Manly Eunuch*, 24.

⁴⁵ Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, 1.36 (*PL* 23.261b); Jerome, “Against Jovinianus,” in *St. Jerome: Letters and Selected Works*, trans. Fremantle, 1.36. See also *Contra Rufinum* 1.29 in *S. Hieronymi Presbyteri Opera, Pars III*, 1 ed. Lardet, and “Epistula 22, ad Eustochium,” §27. Cf. Ambrose, “Epistula 15, Ambrosius Irenaeo Salutem,” in *Sancti Ambrosii Opera, Pars Decima*, §2–7 and Augustine, “De opere monachorum,” §32.40.

⁴⁶ Ramsey, *Ambrose*, 49–50 and Colish, *Ambrose's Patriarchs*, 2–3.

⁴⁷ Colish, *Ambrose's Patriarchs*, 18.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴⁹ Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*, 44.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁵¹ Ambrose, “De Iacob et uita beata,” 1.1.1; Ambrose, “Jacob and the Happy Life,” in *Seven Exegetical Works*, trans. McHugh, 1.1.1. Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, finds no citations of this work (277) and the only manuscript in Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, post-dates Ælfric. Aldhelm places a similar emphasis on study, however, in “Prosa de virginitate,” §3–4 and §10, as does Ælfric in *CHI* 18.186–88 and *CHII* 16.55–63.

⁵² Ambrose, “Exameron,” 6.7.41; Ambrose, “Hexameron,” 6.7.41. Gneuss and

Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, #61.5 and #778 were either written in England or may have been in England by Ælfric's time. Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, indicates the work was cited by Bede, Ælfric, and Byrhtferth (280).

⁵³ Ambrose, "De Iacob et uita beata," 1.7.29–7.30; Ambrose, "Jacob and the Happy Life," in *Seven Exegetical Works*, trans. McHugh, 1.7.29–7.30.

⁵⁴ Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*, 105. The quoted material within the quotation comes from Irénée Hausherr, *The Name of Jesus*, trans. C. Cummings (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1978), 175.

⁵⁵ Jerome, "Epistula 22, Ad Eustochium," §18; Jerome, "Letter 22, To Eustochium," trans. Freeman, §18.

⁵⁶ Ambrose, *De Bono Mortis*, 8.36–37; Ambrose, "Death as a Good," trans. McHugh, 8.36–37. Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, finds no citations of this work (276) and the manuscripts in Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, postdate Ælfric.

⁵⁷ Ambrose, *De Bono Mortis*, 3.10; Ambrose, "Death as a Good," trans. McHugh, 3.10. Ambrose is explaining the verse he has quoted from Phil. 3:20: "*nostra autem conversatio in caelis est*" (italics in original).

⁵⁸ Ambrose, "De virginibus," in *Sancti Ambrosii Episcopi Mediolanensis Opera*, ed. Gori, 3.4.19–20; Ambrose, "On Virgins," in *Ambrose*, trans. Ramsey, 3.4.19–20. Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, notes this work was cited by Bede (279), but the manuscripts in Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, postdate Ælfric.

⁵⁹ Ambrose, "De virginibus," ed. Gori, 2.2.8; Ambrose, "On Virgins," in *Ambrose*, trans. Ramsey, 2.2.8.

⁶⁰ Ambrose, *De Bono Mortis*, 3.11; Ambrose, "Death as a Good," trans. McHugh, 3.11.

⁶¹ Cf. Augustine, *Confessionum*, 10.8.14; Augustine, *The Confessions*, 10.8.14.

⁶² Ramsey, *Ambrose*, 56. Despite the apparent popularity of this work on the continent, the evidence for knowledge of *Exameron* or any other of Ambrose's works in later Anglo-Saxon England is slim. See Bankert, Wegmann, and Wright, *Ambrose in Anglo-Saxon England*, 12–17.

⁶³ Ambrose, "Exameron," 6.6.39; Ambrose, "Hexameron," 6.6.39. Cf. Gregory, *Moralia*, 2.52.82.

⁶⁴ Ambrose, "De Iacob et uita beata," 1.8.39; Ambrose, "Jacob and the Happy Life," in *Seven Exegetical Works*, trans. McHugh, 1.8.39.

⁶⁵ Ambrose, "De Cain et Abel," 1.47; Ambrose, "Cain and Abel," 1.47. Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, notes this work was cited by Bede (277), but the manuscripts in Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, postdate Ælfric.

⁶⁶ Cf. Ælfric, *CH I* 14.215.

⁶⁷ Cf. Ambrose, *De Bono Mortis*, 6.25; Ambrose, "Death as a Good," trans. McHugh, 6.25

⁶⁸ Cf. Ambrose, "De Isaac uel anima," 2.5.

⁶⁹ Ambrose, "Exameron," 6.7.40; Ambrose, "Hexameron," 6.7.40.

⁷⁰ Ambrose, “Exameron,” 6.7.41; Ambrose, “Hexameron,” 6.7.41. Cf. Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 11.10 and Augustine, *De trinitate*, 5.1–6.

⁷¹ Ambrose, “Exameron,” 6.7.42; Ambrose, “Hexameron,” 6.7.42.

⁷² Ambrose, “De Iacob et uita beata,” 1.3.10; “Jacob and the Happy Life,” in *Seven Exegetical Works*, trans. McHugh, 1.3.10.

⁷³ Ambrose, “Exameron,” 6.7.42; Ambrose, “Hexameron,” 6.7.42.

⁷⁴ Ambrose, “Exameron,” 6.7.42; Ambrose, “Hexameron,” 6.7.42. Cf. Ælfric, *CH II* 31.76–81.

⁷⁵ Ambrose, “Exameron,” 1.8.31; Ambrose, “Hexameron,” 1.8.31.

⁷⁶ Ambrose, “Exameron,” 1.8.31; Ambrose, “Hexameron,” 1.8.31.

⁷⁷ Ambrose, “Exameron,” 1.8.31; Ambrose, “Hexameron,” 1.8.31.

⁷⁸ Ramsey, *Ambrose*, 56. In “Epistola 45, Ambrosius Sabino,” Ambrose comments that he wrote *De paradiso* “Nondum veteranus sacerdos” [while not yet an experienced bishop]. *Epistula et Acta*, 232, in *Sancti Ambrosii Opera: Pars Decima*, ed. Zelzer; “25. Ambrose to Sabinus,” trans. Beyenka, 126.” [Ambrose’s letters are given a different numbering in Beyenka’s translation.]

⁷⁹ Ambrose does not name Philo, but does allude to a previous author to whom he owes his ideas (whom scholars have identified as Philo) in *De paradiso*, in *Sancti Ambrosii Opera, Pars Prima*, ed. Schenkl, 2.11. See Philo, *De opificio mundi* and *Legum Allegoriae*.

⁸⁰ Ambrose, *De paradiso*, in *Sancti Ambrosii Opera, Pars Prima*, ed. Schenkl, 12.54. Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, notes this work was cited by Bede (278), but the manuscripts in Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, postdate Ælfric.

⁸¹ “in specie serpentis figuram accipiens delectationis, in figura mulieris sensum animi mentisque constituens;” [the figure of the serpent stands for enjoyment and the figure of the woman for the emotions of the mind and heart]. Ambrose, *De paradiso*, in *Sancti Ambrosii Opera, Pars Prima*, ed. Schenkl, 2.11; Ambrose, “Paradise,” 2.11. Ambrose repeats these figural meanings in 15.73.

⁸² Ambrose, *De paradiso*, in *Sancti Ambrosii Opera, Pars Prima*, ed. Schenkl, 2.11 and 11.51. Cf. Gregory, *Règle Pastorale*, 3.29.

⁸³ Ramsey, *Ambrose*, 71.

⁸⁴ Ambrose is credited as the author of the *passio* of St. Agnes that Ælfric includes in *Lives of Saints*, though the actual author has been identified as Pseudo-Ambrose. The version referred to here, however, is not the version of the Life that Ælfric translates but probably a precursor.

⁸⁵ Ambrose, “De virginibus,” ed. Gori, 1.2.5; Ambrose, “On Virginity,” trans. Ramsey, 1.2.5.

⁸⁶ Ambrose, “De virginibus,” ed. Gori, 1.2.7; Ambrose, “On Virginity,” trans. Ramsey, 1.2.7.

⁸⁷ Ambrose, “De virginibus,” ed. Gori, 1.2.9; Ambrose, “On Virginity,” trans. Ramsey, 1.2.9.

⁸⁸ Ambrose, “De virginibus,” ed. Gori, 1.2.8; Ambrose, “On Virginity,” trans. Ramsey, 1.2.8.

⁸⁹ Ambrose, “De virginibus,” ed. Gori, 1.2.8; Ambrose, “On Virginity,” trans. Ramsey, 1.2.8.

⁹⁰ Ambrose, “De virginibus,” ed. Gori, 1.11.62; Ambrose, “On Virginity,” trans. Ramsey, 1.11.62.

⁹¹ Aldhelm, “Prosa de virginitate,” §18.

⁹² Ambrose, “De virginibus,” ed. Gori, 1.8.48; Ambrose, “On Virginity,” trans. Ramsey, 1.8.48. See also Ambrose, *De virginitate liber unus*, 6.27; Ambrose, *On Virginity by St. Ambrose*, 6.27. See also Jerome, “Epistula 49 (48),” §14 and Augustine, “De sancta virginitate,” §13, in *De Bono Coniugali*.

⁹³ Ambrose, “De virginibus,” ed. Gori, 1.8.52; Ambrose, “On Virginity,” trans. Ramsey, 1.8.52. Cf. Augustine, “De sancta virginitate,” §(53) 54; Aldhelm, “Prosa de virginitate,” §18; and Ælfric, *CH I* 36.127–36.

⁹⁴ “ibi enim est praesidium nostrae salutis, ubi Christus, quoniam mulieris caput uir, uirginis Christus.” Ambrose, “De virginibus,” ed. Gori, 2.4.29.

⁹⁵ Ambrose, “De virginibus,” ed. Gori, 1.5.22; Ambrose, “On Virginity,” trans. Ramsey, 1.5.22. Cf. Gregory, *Moralia*, Pref.6.14.

⁹⁶ Ambrose, “De Isaac uel anima,” 3.9; “Isaac or the Soul,” trans. McHugh, 3.9. Cf. Gregory, *Moralia*, 1.21.29.

⁹⁷ Cf. Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption*, 93–97.

⁹⁸ Ambrose, “Epistula 16, Ambrosius Irenaeo Salutem,” §13; Ambrose, “85. Ambrose to Irenaeus,” trans. Beyenka, 479–80. Cf. Ælfric, *CH I* 24.107–08, *CH I* 36.137–39, and *CH II* 40.77–82. Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, notes no citations of this work (279), and the manuscripts in Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, either postdate Ælfric or do not include this letter.

⁹⁹ Ambrose, “Epistula 16, Ambrosius Irenaeo Salutem,” §11; Ambrose, “85. Ambrose to Irenaeus,” trans. Beyenka, 479. Cf. Ambrose, “Epistula 13, Ambrosius Irenaeo Salutem,” §10 and Ambrose, “De Cain et Abel,” 2.2.

¹⁰⁰ Jerome, *ad Ephesios* (*PL* 26.501b).

¹⁰¹ Ambrose, “Exameron,” 6.8.46.

¹⁰² Ambrose, “De virginibus,” ed. Gori, 2.4.24; Ambrose, “On Virginity,” trans. Ramsey, 2.4.24.

¹⁰³ Cf. Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 1.18, quoted by Aldhelm along with verses by Prosper of Aquitaine expressing the same thoughts in “Prosa de virginitate,” §58.

¹⁰⁴ Ambrose, “De virginibus,” ed. Gori, 2.4.29; Ambrose, “On Virginity,” trans. Ramsey, 2.4.29.

¹⁰⁵ See Vern L. Bullough’s comments on male transvestitism in “Transvestites in the Middle Ages,” 1382–84. Bullough points out how male transvestitism was consistently portrayed as undesirable because of the loss of status implied in the act of a man becoming like a woman. He does not, however, address this passage in Ambrose’s *De virginibus*.

¹⁰⁶ Ambrose, “De virginibus,” ed. Gori, 2.4.32.

¹⁰⁷ Ambrose, “De viduis,” ed. Gori, 7.37; Ambrose, “Concerning Widows,” trans. de Romestin, 7.37. Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, indicates no citations of

this work (279) and the manuscripts in Gneuss and Lapidige, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, postdate Ælfric.

¹⁰⁸ Ambrose, “De viduis,” ed. Gori, 8.44; Ambrose, “Concerning Widows,” trans. de Romestin, 8.44. The story of Deborah is found in Judges 4:1–5:31. For Judith, see Ambrose, “De viduis,” ed. Gori, 7.37; Ambrose, “Concerning Widows,” trans. de Romestin, 7.37. See also Ambrose’s comments on Judith’s temperance making her stronger than men in “Epistula 14, Ambrosius Vercellensi ecclesiae,” in *Sancti Ambrosii Opera: Pars Decima*, ed. Zelzer, §29; Ambrose, “59. Ambrose to the Church at Vercelli,” trans. Beyenka, 331.

¹⁰⁹ Ambrose, “De viduis,” ed. Gori, 11.69; Ambrose, “Concerning Widows,” trans. de Romestin, 11.69.

¹¹⁰ Ambrose, “Epistula 15, Ambrosius Irenaeo Salutem,” in *Sancti Ambrosii Opera: Pars Decima*, ed. Zelzer, §2; Ambrose, “78. Ambrose to Irenaeus,” trans. Beyenka, 435. Lapidige, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, notes no citations of this work (279), and the manuscripts in Gneuss and Lapidige, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, either postdate Ælfric or do not include this letter. Cf. Augustine, “De opere monachorum,” §32.40; Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, 1.36 (*PL* 23.261b), *Contra Rufinum* in *S. Hieronymi Presbyteri Opera, Pars III*, 1 ed. Lardet, 1.29, and “Epistula 22, ad Eustochium,” §27.

¹¹¹ Ambrose, “Epistula 15, Ambrosius Irenaeo Salutem,” §7; Ambrose, “78. Ambrose to Irenaeus,” trans. Beyenka, 437.

¹¹² Ambrose, *De virginitate*, 6.28–29. See also Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, 1.36 (*PL* 23.260c–d and 271b) and Augustine, “De sancta virginitate,” §23, in *De Bono Coniugali*.

¹¹³ Ambrose, “Epistula 14, Ambrosius Vercellensi ecclesiae,” §71–72. Lapidige, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, notes no citations of this work (279), but #581 in Gneuss and Lapidige, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, may have been in England by Ælfric’s time.

¹¹⁴ Ambrose, “Epistula 14, Ambrosius Vercellensi ecclesiae,” §74; Ambrose, “59. Ambrose to the Church at Vercelli,” trans. Beyenka, 348–49.

¹¹⁵ Ambrose, “Epistula 15, Ambrosius Irenaeo Salutem,” §5–6; Ambrose, “78. Ambrose to Irenaeus,” trans. Beyenka, 436–37.

¹¹⁶ Ambrose, “Epistula 14, Ambrosius Vercellensi ecclesiae,” §26–35; Ambrose, “59. Ambrose to the Church at Vercelli,” trans. Beyenka, 330–35.

¹¹⁷ Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 22.2; cf. Gregory, *Moralia*, 3.3.4. Lapidige, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, indicates that *De civitate Dei* was cited by Aldhelm, Bede, Lantfred, Ælfric, and Byrhtferth (284). Gneuss and Lapidige, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, #760.3 from the ninth century may have come to England from Francia in the tenth or eleventh centuries.

¹¹⁸ Hochschild, *Memory*, 151.

¹¹⁹ Augustine, *De Bono Coniugali*, §1, p. 2–3. Lapidige, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, notes this work was cited by Bede and Ælfric (284), but no manuscripts are listed in Gneuss and Lapidige, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*.

¹²⁰ Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, 11.15. Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, notes this work was cited by Bede, Ælfric, and Byrhtferth (285), but the manuscripts in Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, postdate Ælfric.

¹²¹ Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage*, 43. The “conjugal debt” or the “marriage debt” is an idea based upon the teaching that spouses of both sexes should consent to sexual relations when either spouse desired them.

¹²² Augustine, *De Bono Coniugali*, §3, p. 6–7 and §1, p. 2–3.

¹²³ Murray, Introduction to *Conflicted Identities*, x.

¹²⁴ Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, 9.5.9.

¹²⁵ Augustine, *De Bono Coniugali*, §[9].13 and [12].14; “De sancta virginitate,” §[16].16, in *De Bono Coniugali*. See also Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, 1.13 (*PL* 23.240a–43b). Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, notes “De sancta virginitate” was cited by Aldhelm, Bede, and Ælfric (287), but there are no manuscripts listed in Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*.

¹²⁶ Augustine, “De sancta virginitate,” §13, in *De Bono Coniugali*.

¹²⁷ Ibid., §(53) 54. Cf. Jerome, “Epistula 49 (48),” §14; Jerome, *Adversus Helvidium*, §20 (*PL* 23.203d); Ambrose, “De virginibus,” ed. Gori, 1.8.52; Aldhelm, “Prosa de virginitate,” §18; and Ælfric, *CH I* 35.36–39 and 36.127–36, 230–32.

¹²⁸ Hochschild, *Memory*, 152.

¹²⁹ Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, 1.24.24. Four paragraphs later (at 1.25.26) Augustine observes, “Praecipiendum etiam, quomodo corpus suum diligat, ut ei ordinare prudenter consulat. Nam quod diligit etiam corpus suum idque saluum habere atque integrum uelit, aequa manifestum est.” [We also need to be instructed how to love our bodies, so as to care for them in an orderly and prudent manner. Because again, it is equally obvious that we do also love our bodies, and wish to have them hale and hearty.] Augustine, *Teaching Christianity*, 1.24.24. Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, notes this work was cited by Bede, Abbo, and Ælfric (285), but the manuscript in Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, postdates Ælfric.

¹³⁰ Augustine, “De sancta virginitate,” §23, in *De Bono Coniugali*.

¹³¹ Ibid., §37, p. 116–19.

¹³² Ibid., §24, p. 96–97. Cf. Aldhelm, “Prosa de virginitate,” §10–11.

¹³³ Cf. Ambrose, “De virginibus,” ed. Gori, 1.8.48; Ambrose, *De virginitate liber unus*, 6.27; Ambrose, *On Virginity by St. Ambrose*, 6.27; and Jerome, “Epistula 49 (48),” §14.

¹³⁴ Augustine, “De opere monachorum,” §32.40; Augustine, “Of the Work of Monks,” in Augustin, ed. Schaff, §40. Cf. Ambrose, “Epistula 15, Ambrosius Irenaeo Salutem”; Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, 1.36 (*PL* 23.261b); Jerome, *Contra Rufinum*, in *S. Hieronymi Presbyteri Opera, Pars III*, 1 ed. Lardet, 1.29; and Jerome “Epistula 22, ad Eustochium,” §27. Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, notes “De opere monachorum” was cited by Bede (287), but there are no manuscripts with it in Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*.

¹³⁵ Augustine, “De opere monachorum,” §32.40; Augustine, “Of the Work of Monks,” §40.

¹³⁶ Burns, “Creation and Fall,” 92.

¹³⁷ Proverbs 8:22, 27a.

¹³⁸ I Corinthians 1:24. Cf. Ælfric *CH I* 15.184–85.

¹³⁹ Augustine, *De trinitate*, 4.27; Augustine, *Trinity*, 4.5.27. See also Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, 1.10–12. Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, notes *De trinitate* was cited by Bede, Alcuin, Ælfric, and Byrhtferth (287). Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, list #255 from the eighth century and #30.7 from the first quarter of the eleventh century.

¹⁴⁰ Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram liber imperfectus*, §16, p. 498; Augustine, “Unfinished Literal Commentary on Genesis,” §57, pp. 147–48.

¹⁴¹ Augustine, *De trinitate*, 12.5; Augustine, *Trinity*, 12.2.5.

¹⁴² van Bavel, “Woman as Image,” 278–79.

¹⁴³ Augustine, *De trinitate*, 12.12. See also Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, 1.20. Cf. Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, 1.29 (*PL* 23.262c–263a), Ambrose, “Exameron,” 6.6.39 and 6.7.42, and Ælfric, *CH I* 20.193–97.

¹⁴⁴ Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, 6.12; Augustine, “The Literal Meaning of Genesis,” 6.12.22. See also Augustine, *De trinitate*, 12.1.

¹⁴⁵ Augustine, *De trinitate*, 12.5. [My translation]. Cf. Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 11.26.

¹⁴⁶ Augustine, *De trinitate*, 11.8; Augustine, *Trinity*, 11.8. Cf. Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 11.26. This idea is also addressed by Augustine in *De natura et origine animae*, 1.17.27 in a passage quoted by Bede, *Collectio*, in *Bedae Venerabilis Opera, Pars II, Opera Exegetica*, ed. Jones, Item 188.

¹⁴⁷ Børresen, *Subordination and Equivalence*, 29.

¹⁴⁸ Augustine, *De trinitate*, 12.10; Augustine, *Trinity*, 12.3.10.

¹⁴⁹ Farley, “Sources of Sexual Inequality,” 167–68. Quoted in van Bavel, “Woman as the Image of God,” 269.

¹⁵⁰ Hochschild, *Memory*, 208.

¹⁵¹ Augustine, *De trinitate*, 12.12; Augustine, *Trinity*, 12.3.12. This passage is quoted by Bede in his *Collectio*, in *Bedae Venerabilis Opera, Pars II, Opera Exegetica*, ed Jones, Item 187.

¹⁵² Edmund Hill, “Forward to Books IX–XIV,” in *Trinity*, 262.

¹⁵³ For a more detailed analysis of Augustine’s addition of relationship words to the development of the theology of the Trinity, see Edmund Hill’s Introduction to *Trinity*, pp. 49–52.

¹⁵⁴ Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, 1.5; Augustine, *Teaching Christianity*, 1.5. Cf. Gregory, *Moralia*, 5.36.66. Ælfric voices the same idea in “De fide catholica,” *CH I*.20.158–74.

¹⁵⁵ Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 11.10; Augustine, *City of God*, 11.10. Cf. Augustine, *De trinitate*, 5.1–6 and Ambrose, “Exameron,” 6.7.41. This thought is paralleled in Ælfric’s comments on the goodness of God in the First Series homily for the Second Sunday after Easter, *CH I*.17.

¹⁵⁶ Augustine, *De trinitate*, 5.6.

¹⁵⁷ Hochschild, *Memory*, 87.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 209.

¹⁵⁹ See John 14:28 and I Corinthians 15:28.

¹⁶⁰ Philippians 2:7.

¹⁶¹ For Augustine's equation of love as will at its most effective, see *De trinitate*, 15.41. Cf. Ælfric, *CH II* 1.27–29.

¹⁶² Italic as in original. Augustine, *De trinitate*, 1.14; Augustine, *Trinity*, 1.3.14. See Philippians 2:6–8. Cf. Gregory, *Moralia*, 3.14.26.

¹⁶³ Ælfric, *CH I* 9.221–43.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Ælfric, *CH II* 35.45–48.

¹⁶⁵ Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, 11.37; Augustine, "The Literal Meaning of Genesis," 11.37. It is clear from Augustine's treatment of this topic in such works as *De bono coniugali* and *De Genesi ad litteram* that he does not immediately associate rule with oppressive domination and subjection with slavery. Within his concept of godly love, it is possible to rule over someone without force and with the effect of making the other's life better, just as it is possible to serve another out of love without that service being abject or coerced.

¹⁶⁶ Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, 11.15; Augustine, *Literal Meaning of Genesis*, 11.15.

¹⁶⁷ Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, 11.37; Augustine, *Literal Meaning of Genesis*, 11.37.50.

¹⁶⁸ Børresen, *Subordination and Equivalence*, 62.

¹⁶⁹ Hochschild, *Memory*, 217.

¹⁷⁰ Hochschild, *Memory*, 108. Cf. Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 9.2.

¹⁷¹ Augustine, *Confessionum*, 10.8.14; Augustine, *The Confessions*, 10.8.14. Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, notes this work was cited by Bede, Alcuin, and Byrhtferth (282), but the manuscripts in Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, postdate Ælfric.

¹⁷² Ælfric also urges such reflection in *CH II* 5.107–9 and other places.

¹⁷³ Augustine, *Confessionum*, 10.17.26; Augustine, *The Confessions*, 10.17.26.

¹⁷⁴ Ambrose, "Exameron," 6.6.39 and 6.7.42.

¹⁷⁵ Augustine, *De trinitate*, 8.15; Augustine, *Trinity*, 8.15. In *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, Gneuss and Lapidge note that Cambridge, University Library, Add. 6220 no. 14 (Gneuss and Lapidge #30.7) is a portion of Augustine's *De trinitate*, 8.9–11 written in England in the beginning of the eleventh century. This portion of the text is not recorded in either the epitome of Eugippius or the collection of Bede, and so may indicate the presence of the complete work in England in Ælfric's time, including the slightly later material of book eight quoted here.

¹⁷⁶ Gregory, "Homilia 38," 373.361–62 and "Homilia 39," 390.270–71 in *Homiliae in Euangelia* ed. Étaix.

¹⁷⁷ Augustine, *Confessionum*, 10.24.35; Augustine, *The Confessions*, 10.24.35.

¹⁷⁸ Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, 2.9.14; Augustine, *Teaching Christianity*, 2.9.14.

¹⁷⁹ Augustine, *Confessionum*, 10.29.40; Augustine, *The Confessions*, 10.29.40.

¹⁸⁰ Augustine, *De trinitate*, 15.51; Augustine, *Trinity*, 15.51.

¹⁸¹ Moorhead, *Gregory the Great*, 31.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 32.

¹⁸³ O'Loughlin, *Teachers and Code-Breakers*, 183.

¹⁸⁴ Gregory, *Moralia*, 32.12.16. Cf. Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, 1.29 (*PL* 23.262c) and Augustine, *De trinitate*, 12.10.

¹⁸⁵ Gregory, *Moralia*, 27.49; Gregory, *Morals*, trans. Bliss, 27.49. Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, notes this work was cited by Aldhelm, Bede, Asser, Lantfred, Ælfric, and Byrhtferth (306). Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, #564, 668.5, #840.5, #858, #865.5, and #946.5 were or may have been available in England by Ælfric's time.

¹⁸⁶ Gregory, *Règle Pastorale*, 3.29; Gregory, *Pastoral Practice*, trans. Leinenweber, 110–11. Cf. Gregory, "Pastoral Rule," in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, trans. Barmby, 61. Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, notes this work was cited by Aldhelm, Bede, Asser, Ælfric, and Byrhtferth (307). Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, #261, #346, #439.6, #590, #684, #771, #800, #833, #894, and #898.5 were or may have been available in England by Ælfric's time.

¹⁸⁷ See Ambrose, *De paradiso*, in *Sancti Ambrosii Opera, Pars Prima*, ed. Schenkl, 2.11, 11.51, and 15.73.

¹⁸⁸ Job 1:1–2:10.

¹⁸⁹ Astell, "Job's Wife," 94.

¹⁹⁰ Gregory, *Moralia*, Praefatio 6.14, and 3.32.62.

¹⁹¹ Gregory, *Moralia*, Praefatio 5.11.

¹⁹² Ambrose, "De Paradiso," in *Sancti Ambrosii Opera, Pars Prima*, ed. Schenkl, 2.11.

¹⁹³ Gregory, *Moralia*, 3.9.16; Gregory, *Moral Reflections*, trans. Kerns, 3.9.16.

¹⁹⁴ Gregory, *Moralia*, Liber 3.21.40; Gregory, *Moral Reflections*, trans. Kerns, 3.21.40.

¹⁹⁵ Gregory, *Moralia*, 11.49.65; Gregory, *Morals*, trans. Bliss, 11.65. (The new translation called *Moral Reflections on the Book of Job* is still in progress. Only books one through ten have been made available at this point.) For another view of this passage from the *Moralia*, see Roy, "Virgin Acts Manfully," 5–6. Regarding the weakness that was associated with women in the late antique era, Gillian Clark observes "Women, it was thought, were physically hampered by lack of strength and especially by child-bearing." Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity*, 56. As Gregory's use of the idea here suggests, this physical weakness was often used as a metaphor for various other kinds of weakness that did not necessarily have anything to do with being female, such as moral weaknesses that could be found in both men and women.

¹⁹⁶ Gregory, *Moralia*, 4. Praefatio 4. See also *Moralia*, 3.20.36–38.

¹⁹⁷ Gregory, *Moralia*, 5.21.41. Cf. Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, 3.25(37).

¹⁹⁸ Gregory, *Moralia*, 5.21.41.

¹⁹⁹ Gregory, *Registrum Epistularum Libri VIII–XIV*, 12.6. Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, does not indicate any citations of Gregory's letters (306). Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, indicate the addition of one of Gregory's epistles to #70 in the tenth or eleventh century in England.

²⁰⁰ Moorhead notes that “[v]arious indications suggest that, despite its apparently popular nature, the [Dialogi] was ... directed towards an elite public.” *Gregory*, 15.

²⁰¹ For a specific challenge to Gregory's authorship of the *Dialogi*, see Francis Clark, *Pseudo-Gregorian Dialogues*, and “*Gregorian*” *Dialogues*. Clark's argument has generally been considered unconvincing: Meyvaert wrote a particularly strong response to the first book in “Enigma,” 335–81. In response to the more recent book, see Kardong, “Who Wrote the Dialogues,” 31–39 and de Vogüé, “Is Gregory the Author,” 309–14.

²⁰² Gregory, *Dialogues*, Praefatio 9; Gregory, *Dialogues*, trans. Zimmerman, Preface. Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, notes this work was cited by Aldhelm, Bede, Asser, Ælfric, and Byrhtferth (304). Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, #208, #510, #667, #715, #856.1, #924, #937.3, and #943.8 were or may have been available in England by Ælfric's time.

²⁰³ Gregory, “Homilia 38,” 373.361–62 and “Homilia 39,” 390.270–71; Gregory, “Homily 38,” 351 and “Homily 39,” 366 in *Forty Gospel Homilies*, trans. Hurst. Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, notes this work was cited by Aldhelm, Bede, Lantfred, Ælfric, and Byrhtferth (305). Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, #42, #255, #379.3, #767, and #804.5 were or may have been available in England by Ælfric's time.

²⁰⁴ Gregory, *Dialogues*, 4.14.1. [My translation]

²⁰⁵ Jo Ann MacNamara interprets the beard as the result of a build up of heat from Galla's unreleased passions in her article, “Chastity as a Third Gender,” 204. For another interpretation, see Frantzen, *Before the Closet*, 76–77.

²⁰⁶ Gregory, *Dialogues*, 4.14.3. [My translation]

²⁰⁷ Gregory, *Dialogues*, 1.4.1; Gregory, *Dialogues*, trans. Zimmerman, 1.4.

²⁰⁸ Cf. *Moralia* 15.18.22. See also Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, 1.36 (*PL* 23.260c–271b).

²⁰⁹ Gregory, *Dialogues*, 2.3.5; Gregory, *Dialogues*, trans. Zimmerman, 2.3. Ælfric included this encounter with Scholastica in *CH II* 11.486–521, but does not include this conclusion about the greatness of Scholastica's love.

²¹⁰ Thomas D. Hill, “*Imago Dei*,” 35–50. Hill goes on to build a case for greater significance in the episode than just the lesson on love stated here, but this lesson would have held a prominent part in any meaning taken from the story.

²¹¹ Gregory, *Dialogues*, Praefatio 9.

²¹² Kardong, “New Look,” 62.

²¹³ Gregory, *Règle Pastorale*, 3.1.

²¹⁴ Gregory, *Règle Pastorale*, 3.2; Gregory, “Regula pastoralis,” in *Gregory the Great*, trans. Moorhead, 96.

²¹⁵ Gregory's next comment is upon the different ways that young and old men are to be exhorted. If his advice to men and women was meant to be parallel to his advice about the young and old, then the *men* would be comparable to the youths, and the women comparable to the elders.

²¹⁶ Gregory, *Règle Pastorale*, 3.7; Gregory, "Regula pastoralis," trans. Moorhead, 103.

²¹⁷ Moorhead, *Gregory*, 15 and Hall, "Early English Manuscripts," 129. Because the homilies on Ezekiel seem to have been largely unknown in Anglo-Saxon England, I limit my discussion of Gregory's Gospel homilies.

²¹⁸ Hall, "Early English Manuscripts," 129.

²¹⁹ Gregory, "Homilia 3," 22.35–36, 24.79–84, 92–96; Gregory, "Homily 1," 6, 8. Hurst arranges the first twenty homilies of his translation in liturgical order rather than following the order found in Latin edition and *PL*.

²²⁰ Gregory, "Homilia 14," 101.122–26; Gregory, "Homily 15," 111. See also Ambrose, "De viduis," in *Sancti Ambrosii Episcopi Mediolanensis Opera*, ed. Gori, 7.37 and 8.44.

²²¹ Clark, *Women in Late Antiquity*, 56. Clark goes on to specify social conditions that emphasized the idea of weakness in women and that opened the way for that weakness to be applied in other areas, such as education, but the only bases of weakness that were understood to be inherent in women were the lack of strength and the matter of bearing children.

²²² Acknowledging this fact that men's superior physical strength enabled them to enforce rule, however, does not necessarily mean endorsement of coercive relations.

²²³ Gregory, *Moralia*, 11.49.65.

²²⁴ Cf. Jerome, *ad Ephesios* (*PL* 26.533c and 501b).

²²⁵ Ælfric uses *werlice* "manly" in the same way in *CH I* 12.112–17.

²²⁶ Gregory, *Règle Pastorale*, 1.4; Gregory, "Pastoral Rule," trans. Barmby, 1.4.

Cf. Gregory, *Moralia*, 1.5.6.

²²⁷ Gregory, *Moralia*, 8.10.19.

²²⁸ Gregory, *Règle Pastorale*, 1.9; Gregory, "Pastoral Rule," trans. Barmby, 1.9.

²²⁹ Gregory, *Règle Pastorale*, 1.9.

²³⁰ Gregory, *Moralia*, 35.20.49.

²³¹ Gregory, "Homilia 15," 105.25–26; Gregory, "Homily 12," 88. Cf. Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, 2.9.14 and Ambrose, "De Isaac uel anima," 3.9. Ælfric devotes considerable time to this idea in his "Sermo de sacrificio in die Pascae," *CH II* 15.

²³² Gregory, *Dialogues*, 2.16.7; Gregory, *Dialogues*, trans. Zimmerman, 2.16. On possessing God, see Gregory's Homily 30. Cf. Ælfric, *CH I* 28.184–91.

²³³ Cf. Ælfric, *CH I* 25.166–69.

²³⁴ Gregory, "Homilia 34," 311.311–17. This passage is translated by Ælfric in *CH I* 24.140–46.

²³⁵ Gregory, *Dialogues*, 1.12.4; Gregory, *Dialogues*, trans. Zimmerman, 1.12.

Chapter Two

Metagender, Gender, and Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*

WHEN AMBROSE, JEROME, AND Augustine were preaching the advantages of the ascetic lifestyle, theorizing a Christian concept of the third gender or metagender, and writing their defenses of virginity, the practice had not yet been widely established or accepted by the general population. The hagiography of the fifth and sixth centuries, however, takes up the concepts found in these three Doctors and weaves them into the warp and woof of the narratives of saints such as Agnes, Sebastian, and Eugenia.¹ By the time of Gregory the Great, coenobitic monasticism both for men and for women had gained some degree of acceptance in the West and both the later Doctor's works and the Latin hagiographers had thoroughly synthesized in their own words the teachings of the earlier theorists of asceticism. The hagiographical works of Pseudo-Ambrose in particular resound with all the various motifs of the theology of virginity and pursuit of the angelic life and would soon arrive along with many of the works of the Latin Doctors to shape the life and practice of new converts to Christianity on the island of Britannia.

The arrival of the Gregorian Mission in Kent in 597 CE inaugurated the joining of two cultures (that of the Roman church and that of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms) that had had little direct official interaction from the time that Rome abandoned its British province in 410 CE until Augustine of Canterbury and his fellow missionaries arrived.² (This is not to say that there was no interaction with Christianity during the interval, for the remnants of the earlier British church had remained active after the collapse of the Roman province, but the interaction seems to have had little effect upon the Anglo-Saxons.³) While the Roman mission gained ground in the southern Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Kent, Irish missionaries were preaching and teaching north of the Humber. The Irish church operated rather independently from Rome, but it still possessed Latin hagiographical works and the writings of Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, and later of Gregory, and these four among others were often cited in Irish

exegetical writings.⁴ The confluence of the three cultures, Irish, Anglo-Saxon, and Roman, proved fruitful and held important ramifications for the future of Christian culture in the West. This intersection of preliterate Anglo-Saxon culture and literate Celtic and Roman Christianity continues to present an interesting set of problems to scholars who try to measure how the arrival of Christianity and the writings of the Latin Doctors may have influenced Anglo-Saxon concepts of gender and what impact those changes may have had on social attitudes towards women and men, especially those in monastic profession.

One distinct result of the arrival of Christianity in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms is the rapid proliferation of monastic foundations. Stacy Klein points out that “during this early stage of England’s Christianization, queens play prominent roles in promoting the church.”⁵ The activity and influence of Anglo-Saxon royal and noble women in the spread of monastic Christianity proved to be significant as many of these women contributed to and participated in monastic learning alongside men on the Continent as well as at home.⁶ The Anglo-Saxon slave-become-queen, Balthild, was instrumental in the re-establishment of the foundation at Chelles in western Francia as a double monastery, which was one of the chosen destinations of several royal women from the island who wanted to pursue a religious education before England established its own monastic culture.⁷ This same double monastery, under the leadership of Abbess Bertila, helped found English monasteries by providing books as well as men and women from its own community.⁸ The relationship between the continental double monasteries and the royal houses of Anglo-Saxon England demonstrates that royal women valued and participated in the life of religious observance and education.⁹ When the opportunity for such was not available in their own lands, these women with the means to do so sought the religious life on the Continent, as did men. Peter Hunter Blair demonstrates that women’s lack of opportunity for religious life and education in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms before the mid-seventh century was not the result of opposition to women’s education from either the church or Anglo-Saxon culture, but rather was because of the tenuous foothold that the church had among the kingdoms at that time.¹⁰ Sarah Foot notes that once the monastic movement caught hold, “The picture of female monasticism that can be constructed from the sources for the period before 900 is one of a vibrant dynamic institution of economic and spiritual significance whose protagonists were evenly spread over most of the Anglo-Saxon areas of Britain.”¹¹ Part of this dynamism can be attrib-

uted to the new opportunities monasticism afforded to royal women, both for deepening their understanding and participation in the new religion and for opening an innovative way to participate in Anglo-Saxon society. Henrietta Leyser observes that “the high profile such women achieve would indeed seem to be explicable only if Christianity was in fact offering a continuation, albeit with significant variations, of roles in which aristocratic women were already well versed.”¹² The responsibilities of running an important household and seeing to its continuing smooth operation fitted noble and royal Anglo-Saxon women to the managerial responsibilities of running monastic foundations.¹³ The diplomatic roles played by royal women also prepared them well for the ruling of monastic foundations, as noted by Carol Neuman de Vegvar: “By supporting the establishment of monastic foundations, Anglo-Saxon kings were able to provide a niche and position of rank for some of their female relatives, from which they might draw upon their diplomatic talents, in an intermediate position between church and state, just as their secular sisters provided the same kind of social and diplomatic bonding within and between kingdoms.”¹⁴ The diplomatic roles expanded to include the local communities also, since the monastic foundations often served the pastoral needs of areas that had few other places of Christian worship in the early conversion period. Thus, the royal abbesses formed a link between the king and the community outside of the social structure of the royal kin group and retainers that parallels the roles of the literary queens Klein examines in that they could “bridge differences between groups of people, social structures, and systems of belief.”¹⁵

The double monastery was the peculiar manifestation of royal female piety in Francia and the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Archbishop Theodore in the seventh century was unsettled by the practice, but not enough to interfere with the custom during his years in Canterbury.¹⁶ The rapid proliferation of monastic establishments mirrored the rapidity with which the new religion gained converts among the noble and royal houses of the Anglo-Saxons and with which the value of literacy and religious education for both men and women rose as a consequence. The role played by certain double monasteries, especially Whitby while under the direction of Abbess Hild, cannot be discounted or ignored.¹⁷ The period of the double monasteries, while influential if not vital for the establishment of the Anglo-Saxon church, did not last beyond the middle of the eighth century. Under the governance of their aristocratic abbesses, these monasteries of both men and women had flourished during the time of

Aldhelm and Bede but were passing out of existence in Alcuin's day in the later eighth century. Looking to factors beyond the plundering of monastic foundations by the Vikings in the ninth century, scholars have put forth a variety of reasons that may have contributed to the demise of the double houses, some political, some ecclesiastical, some more broadly social.¹⁸ In some cases, the legal ramifications of such establishments point to attempts to keep lands donated for certain (female?) religious foundations within the control of aristocratic families rather than the church.¹⁹ On the Continent, the records of church councils and of Merovingian and Carolingian law codes testify to increasing restrictions upon religious women due to the classicizing trend within the Gallic church, but there is some evidence that these restrictions were not accepted into the Anglo-Saxon churches immediately or without question.²⁰

As much as the phenomenon of the double monastery can tell us about broad inclinations within the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms during the conversion period, it cannot give us specific insights into the influence of patristic doctrines and theories among the new converts except to show that these doctrines were not perceived as preventing women from exercising the roles taken on by the Anglo-Saxon abbesses. The position of the double monasteries can tell us even less about preconversion ideas about gender. Since the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms were primarily oral cultures before the Roman missionaries arrived, scholars must extrapolate from the indirect evidence they find in works written or recorded after conversion, whether they use *Beowulf*, Bede, or even the later Icelandic sagas. Many scholars have attempted to sift preconversion ideas about gender out of postconversion texts, but with little agreement about the results. As Stephanie Hollis points out, one of the reasons that the results of such studies have been so varied is because scholars approach their task with widely different assumptions about how influential the teachings of the Anglo-Saxon church were upon Anglo-Saxon society as a whole.²¹ A more productive, if less broadly applicable, approach would be to measure the influence of the Latin Doctors on individuals within the Anglo-Saxon church, individuals who left writings of their own by which we might gauge with some certainty the degree to which the ideas about gender and metagender that were discussed in chapter 1 were known, accepted, and then reproduced in the writings of Anglo-Saxon scholars. Three early Anglo-Saxon authors—Aldhelm, Bede, and Alcuin—form a crucial link in the transmission of the ideas of the Latin Doctors not only into

Anglo-Saxon culture, but also into the rising Carolingian culture on the Continent.

The case of Aldhelm is unusual among the early Anglo-Saxon writers in that many scholars believe that this nobleman did not receive a purely Roman Christian education, but an education also strongly influenced by Irish scholars.²² Although this assessment of Aldhelm's education has been called into question, many think that Aldhelm received part of his education from an Irish scholar, perhaps Maeldubh, at Malmesbury, before traveling to Canterbury to round out his education under Hadrian and Archbishop Theodore.²³ Andy Orchard states that because of his place at the beginning of recorded English history and his influence on later scholarship, "Aldhelm is perhaps the most important figure in the history of Anglo-Latin, indeed of Anglo-Saxon, literature."²⁴ Such a claim gives considerable weight to Aldhelm's works over those of his slightly later contemporary, Bede, yet both men made important, albeit different, contributions to Anglo-Saxon and Continental religious culture and education. Michael Lapidge notes quotations from 119 different Latin works by Aldhelm, including ten works each by Jerome and Augustine and four works by Gregory.²⁵ Bede, on the other hand, quotes from 255 Latin works, including twenty works by Jerome, fifteen by Ambrose, forty-eight by Augustine, six by Gregory, and six by Aldhelm.²⁶ Bede used a far greater range of works from the Latin Doctors and wrote a wider variety of works than Aldhelm. Most of Bede's works focused on the explication of biblical books whereas Aldhelm's works, while often addressing religious topics such as virginity, were more literary than theological.²⁷ Thus, we find that Bede quotes throughout his corpus from some classical works and from a wide range of patristic works, especially the works of the Latin Doctors, but Aldhelm, though he cites the earlier fathers and particularly Jerome, quotes copiously from Christian and classical Latin poets, especially Virgil. The demand for Bede's exegetical works is well attested both in the letters of Anglo-Saxon missionaries on the Continent and by the manuscript evidence that remains from the eighth and ninth centuries.²⁸ Aldhelm's influence is also strongly attested by manuscript evidence and the testimony of stylistic imitation of him in the works of Anglo-Latin authors that followed after him.²⁹ This evidence, however, also supports the claim that Aldhelm's influence was primarily literary, while Bede's was primarily theological. Bede's many exegetical works demonstrate how he absorbed and transmitted the theologies of gender that he received,

while Aldhelm's works manifest his understanding of those ideas in literary form.

Aldhelm's most famous work is *De virginitate*, written in the *opus geminatum* format that Caelius Sedulius, the Christian Latin poet, and others had used before him.³⁰ The prose version was written sometime in the last quarter of the seventh century CE, and followed later by the poetic work written in hexameters.³¹ Both versions are renowned for their arcane vocabulary and serpentine syntax and are known to have been the object of much study throughout the Anglo-Saxon period. In this work that encourages modesty and virginity, Aldhelm immodestly luxuriates in his own command of Latin rhetoric and in the high degree of Latin literacy that he credits to his stated female audience, Hildelith of Barking Abbey and the nuns or abbesses associated with her.³² Within this milieu of Latin literacy, Aldhelm uses the metaphors and concepts of Latin Christianity to express the ideals of Christian virginity and chastity as the heavenly or angelic life. In so doing, he presupposes an audience that knows how to interpret and understand the rhetorical devices he employs in outlining both the spiritual foundations for the practice of chastity and the exemplary *vita* and *passiones* of his catalogue of saints, an audience that shares a classical, patristic, and hagiographical education similar to his own. The elaborate Latinity and rhetoric of the work may have been Aldhelm's tribute to a group of women whom he admired and respected, but he also probably had in mind a broader circulation for the work into which he invested so much erudition, and thus wrote for audiences of both men and women. Even if we proceed with the unlikely idea that Aldhelm intended his work solely for the women he names, the presence of male exemplars presents no particular problem. The Latin Doctors held virginity up as the highest attainment of purity, the practice of the "angelic life" for both men and women, and these fathers had not presumed that only women could be encouraged by the example of women, nor men only by the example of men, but that both sexes could be strengthened in their minds by exemplars of both sexes.³³ The point, after all, was the activity of the soul, the part of men and women that has no sex and so is imitable by all. Thus, Aldhelm's inclusion of the examples of male virgins emphasizes the fact that he understood the earlier fathers to be encouraging virginity for men as well as for women, and that he understood that the demonstrations of virtue and holy power manifested through virginity were the province of the metagendered *imago Dei* in both women and men. By including a catalogue of male virgins, Aldhelm plainly teaches that both men and women

who desire the crown of virginity must curb their own sexual and material desires in order to enter into God's transcendent society.

In Aldhelm's writings the virtue of virginity is not a power of the body, but a power of the mind restored to proper order by love for Christ. Accordingly, Aldhelm drives the strength of the saints' minds home repeatedly as he tells the legends of both male and female saints, for virginity is maintained by "integritas animae regnans in corpore casto" [integrity of mind ruling in a chaste body].³⁴ In fact, he emphasizes this equality of mind as he shifts the focus from male saints "ad inclitas itidem secundi sexus personas, quae in sanctae virginitatis perseverantia inflexibili mentis rigore usque quaque durauerunt" [in the same way to the celebrated persons of the second sex, who have continually remained in holy virginity by perseverance through inflexible firmness of mind].³⁵ Aldhelm indicates clearly that women, the second sex due to the order of creation, can and do exercise the same mental strength "in the same way" in pursuit of the angelic life that men do.³⁶ This expression is not an isolated example, but a synopsis of a theme that Aldhelm establishes in the very preface of the prose work as he writes about the intellectual exploration and mental disciplines of study, prayer, and contemplation exercised by his female audience.³⁷ In his view, the way to such mental strength lies through the study of sacred books; the way to weakness lies through concentration upon worldly wealth, which results in idleness and atrophy of the mind.³⁸

Aldhelm is very much the spiritual son of Jerome more than of any other early father, although Augustine's influence, both direct and indirect, can also be detected. Significantly, he passes on to his audience a concept of equality of mind and of intellectual achievement among men and women in the new Anglo-Saxon church, an equality achieved through the practice of chastity and contemplation. The idea implicit behind his teachings on virginity is the same idea stated more explicitly by Jerome: when men and women commit themselves to chaste living, they become living proof that they are no longer either male or female—they are neither masculine or feminine but metagendered—for all are one in Christ.³⁹ This idea, however, remains only implicit in *De virginitate*, for Aldhelm leaves it unspoken.

Unlike some of the women Aldhelm addresses in his *opus geminatum*, the best known of the early Anglo-Saxon churchmen, Bede, entered into monastic life at the age of seven. He spent all of his life in the monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow in Northumbria, teaching, writing, and

observing the full scope of Western monastic duties and services. Thanks to the industry of such abbots as Benedict Biscop and Ceolfrith, Bede had access to a large, though not exhaustive, collection of works by the Latin fathers.⁴⁰ Bede's life bespeaks a man immersed in the teachings of the four Latin Doctors (indeed, Bede was the first to give them that title⁴¹) from childhood on, yet whose understanding and acceptance of those teachings were also shaped by his own Anglo-Saxon cultural and social surroundings. Bede's immersion in patristic thought reveals itself in all of his various works, but nowhere does it show itself more clearly than in his biblical commentaries. Most of these works are compilations and distillations of earlier patristic commentary, yet even the most derivative of them reflects Bede's own copious memory at work, selecting, weaving together, and clarifying the thought of the Latin Doctors for the sake of his less-learned colleagues.⁴² Within these works Bede's own personality reveals itself. For example, M. L. W. Laistner observes, "However great his debt to his predecessors may be, Bede does not copy uncritically. He is careful to select what will be useful and intelligible to his readers, he adds his own comments and observations, and he has knit the whole together in a way which raises his theological works well above the level of mere compilation or catenae and which bears clearly the impress of his own mind and personality."⁴³ While one cannot hope to examine Bede's works exhaustively in the space allotted to this chapter, some brief examples may suffice to illustrate his treatment of some of the patristic ideas discussed earlier.

Bede's *Libri quatuor in principium Genesis*, in which he addresses the biblical account of creation and the Fall, would be the first place to look for his conceptions of gender and to assess the influence of the Latin Doctors. Bede states in his letter to Acca, which serves as a preface to the commentary, that he intends for this work to make the erudite theology of the earlier fathers accessible to his less-learned colleagues in such a way as to motivate the better students to the pursuit of higher studies.⁴⁴ Bede's use of his patristic authorities to this end reveals how Bede himself understood the nature of fallen humanity. Joseph F. Kelly notes Bede's pronounced preference for Augustine's interpretation, especially as found in *De Genesi ad litteram*, but also observes, "This is not to say that Augustine overwhelms or marginalizes the other authorities, but rather that Bede thought so highly of Augustine that the English historian turned to the African Doctor universally whereas he turned to others primarily for particular reasons."⁴⁵ Bede reprises in his own fashion the ideas of the earlier fathers concerning the *imago Dei* in the mind of human beings, the loss

of the image in Adam through sin, the restoration of the image in and through Christ as the new Adam, the human need to recover the image by becoming a new person, and the importance of lifting up the mind from earthly things to the contemplation of heavenly matters. He further emphasizes that the beauty of Adam's likeness to God consisted of the virtues of justice, holiness, and truth, along with humility. A bit further in the same work, Bede also makes explicit that women possess rational minds as well as men, saying "Et femina enim ad imaginem Dei creata est secundum id quod et ipsa habebat mentem rationalem." [The woman truly was created to the image of God in that she too possessed a rational mind.]⁴⁶ By sharing in the image of God, both men and women share the capability of understanding, loving, and seeking God in contemplation. All of the essential elements of the concepts of transformed identity and metagender resonate in these passages, even without the gender metaphors. Scott DeGregorio explains that "Bede was well aware that the works of the fathers were often far too complex to be grasped by everyone. Thus, in his *Commentary on Genesis* he set out to consolidate the opinions of Basil, Ambrose, and Augustine, since only the most wealthy could afford their books, and only the most learned could understand them. It was to the 'novice reader' (*rudem ... lectorem*), he explained, that his commentary was addressed."⁴⁷ Bede's omission of the metaphors of male and female gender in his discussion of the Creation and Fall of human beings along with his plain statement that women were created with the same rational soul as men points not only to his understanding of Augustine, but also to the probability that unskilled, literal-minded readers might easily come to the wrong conclusions if left to flounder along in Augustine's allegorical psychology on their own.

Bede's omission of Augustine's figural male and female activities of the soul did not result from ignorance, however. His early work, *Expositio actuum apostolorum*, shows his own originality in biblical commentary as well as the diversity of his reading in the works of the early fathers. He quotes abundantly from the Latin Doctors, especially Jerome and Augustine, but also applies his own understanding of biblical and patristic ideas to the text before him. One story in Acts tells of many widows who were mourning the death of a wealthy widow named Dorcas and who recounted to the Apostle Peter when he arrived the many good works that Dorcas had done. The book of Acts says that the widows stood around Peter, weeping. Bede explains the allegorical meaning of Dorcas's death as the fall of a saint into sin through the weakness of mortal nature, and of

the preparation of her body as the soul's turn toward repentance. He then explains the weeping widows thus: "Viduae sunt piae cogitationes animae paenitentis, quae sensus pristini uigorem quasi uiri regimen ad tempus omiserant, quae pro anima delinquentे necesse est suppliciter exorent" [The widows are the repentant soul's holy thoughts, which for a time had lost the vigor of their original purpose, as though they had lost for a time the guidance of a husband. They must humbly pray for the soul which has done wrong].⁴⁸ Interestingly, Bede outlines a situation in which the Augustinian "female" activity of the soul can continue in governing pious behaviors while the "male" activity has been distracted away from its contemplation of heavenly matters into sin. Such "widowed" holy thoughts and behaviors may lose their intensity (vigor) because the "male" activity of the mind has abdicated its responsibility of guidance by turning to sin, but the "widows" need not follow into sin and, indeed, are portrayed by Bede as participating in the restoration of the harmonious ordering of the soul in repentance. An example of how this scenario might work out would be the case of a monk or nun whose contemplations turn from God to lust while at the same time he or she continues to participate in the postures and gestures of the rituals and services through the exercise of the "female" activity that governs the body. Indulgence in lustful thinking might make the commitment to bodily purity weaken (the holy thoughts losing their vigor), but that does not mean that bodily sin will actually occur. In fact, the attention given to the activity of regular monastic observances and the maintenance of bodily purity, even while the mind is seized with lust, could help bring the "male" activity to repentance and thus restore the harmony of purity within the soul. By interpreting the passage as he has, however, Bede modifies Augustine's thought. In *De trinitate*, Augustine outlined a metaphorical situation in which, because the temptations of the body come to the will through mismanagement by the "female" activity of the mind, the "female" part would be the part to fall into contemplating sin first, but the "male" part would not fall unless it gave the "female" activity clearance to enact the sinful thought.⁴⁹ Bede modifies Augustine's model so that, while retaining the will's responsibility for sin, Bede allows the body not to sin with it. In doing so, he emphasizes the importance of bodily practice and conduct, illustrating how "going through the motions" can help restore the mind to its purity and proper focus upon God. Even in the process of developing Augustine's psychology, however, Bede still indicates that, ideally, the holy thoughts represented by the widows should have "male" guidance, bringing the whole concept back to Augustine's

idea of the properly ordered mind. Bede's interpretation, however, asserts a new kind of equality both in independent potential for sin and in independent potential for obedience in the "male" and "female" activities of the mind. Through his biblical commentaries, homilies, and other works, Bede distills and transmits patristic writings to his own ends of instructing and grounding those who would be teachers not only of the Anglo-Saxons but also of their Germanic cousins on the Continent through the work of the Anglo-Saxon missionaries. The legacy of Bede's learning and labors with the pen last throughout the Middle Ages and strongly influence his most important protégé, Alcuin.

Alcuin of York probably had access to a better library than Aldhelm and perhaps Bede, although even he did not have access to all the patristic works that he would have liked.⁵⁰ Archbishop Ælberht of York took the example of Benedict Biscop and Ceolfrith, making trips to the Continent and collecting books to bring back to England. These books built up the cathedral library at York and the library, as well as the school, became Alcuin's responsibility after Ælberht retired.⁵¹ Alcuin's famous list of authors whose works could be found in the library at York, which includes all four Latin Doctors, Aldhelm, and Bede, does not often tell us which of the works of these writers made up the library's holdings. In addition, Alcuin later had access both to Charlemagne's palace library and to the library at the monastery of St. Martin of Tours, all of which suggest that he had access to a wide range of patristic and other writings. For his own personal use, however, Alcuin's collectaneum known as *De laude Dei* has excerpts from Aldhelm's "Carmen de uirginitate," Augustine's *Confessiones*, *De trinitate*, and *Soliloquia*, Gregory's *Homelia in Hiezechielem*, and two works of Bede on the psalms.⁵²

York was the premier center of education in the English kingdoms and even in Europe in Alcuin's day. Thus, when Charlemagne had the opportunity to recruit the schoolmaster of the best center of learning in western Europe, he did not let the moment pass.⁵³ In 782, Alcuin joined Charlemagne's court and took charge of the palace school and the king's ambitious plans for educational, religious, and cultural revival. He produced most of his own works after relocating to Charlemagne's court. Now one of the number of Anglo-Saxon *peregrini* among the Franks, he wrote a large collection of letters, commentaries, instructional books for the schools, poetry, hagiography, and theological treatises, and he made abundant use not only of the four Latin Doctors (especially Augustine) but also of the leading scholars from the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, Bede

and Aldhelm.⁵⁴ Like Bede before him, Alcuin displayed intelligence and instructional talent in taking the essential teachings of the earlier fathers and councils and making the kernel of those teachings accessible to an audience that was either newly converted from paganism or recently reinvigorated in the study of the central doctrines of the Christian faith under the Carolingian educational program. Alcuin's works brought the ideas of the earlier fathers and of the first generation of Anglo-Saxon scholars into the dynamic context of the Carolingian court, with its international circle of scholars, at the height of Charlemagne's power and influence.⁵⁵ His agenda focused on a "return to first principles" intended to spread the core doctrines of Christianity beyond the monastery and cathedral walls into the hearts and souls of the laity.⁵⁶ While doing so, he "translated" the earlier fathers' ideas about gender and the soul into a different cultural context with different challenges to face. Alcuin attended to these challenges by relying upon the authority and acknowledged orthodoxy of the four Latin Doctors plus Bede and others, thus ensuring that their works and ideas would continue to shape religious culture in the new Carolingian world.⁵⁷

Among Alcuin's many works are three that expound upon the Trinity: *De fide s. trinitatis*, *Quaestiones de trinitate ad Fredegisum*, and *De ratione animae*. The third work presents itself as a letter to "Eulalia" (Alcuin's alias for Gundrada, Adalhard of Corbie's sister and a lady at Charlemagne's court).⁵⁸ In this work, Alcuin addresses the subject of the soul, primarily by using ideas from Augustine's *De trinitate* and *De Genesi ad litteram*.⁵⁹ Peter Clemoes observes that "typically Alcuin re-expresses the thought of these passages: there is a word-for-word borrowing only once."⁶⁰ J. J. M. Curry carries the observation further: "Alcuin does more than simply repeat received ideas in condensed form; he combines them into a unified system whose parts function harmoniously to achieve his epistemological and ethical purposes."⁶¹ Alcuin noticeably avoids the gendered metaphors used by Augustine in *De trinitate* and this avoidance suggests a number of possibilities.⁶² Alcuin and his audience were separated by time, place, and culture from the interpretive milieu in which Augustine wrote. As a result, they may have had considerable disagreement and difficulty with the subtle distinctions of Augustine's gendered metaphors. During the intervening centuries the center of Western Christian literary culture had shifted to the far west, the island kingdoms of the English and the northern Frankish empire of Charlemagne. Classical culture was preserved in these centers, yet not without being affected by the Germanic

culture of the Anglo-Saxons and of Charlemagne and his court. As a result, no one could assume that any particular reader of Augustine (or the other Doctors) would possess the nuanced cultural understanding and attitude toward the gendered metaphors that the earlier fathers could expect the educated Roman Christian audiences of their own day to bring to their reading.⁶³ What was a daring and in some ways radically effective use of gender symbolism in the culture of late antique Rome apparently was not well received in the Germanic cultures of northern and western Europe in the early Middle Ages. Alcuin understood the *imago Dei* to be present in women as well as men, and he seems to have transmitted the teaching of Augustine on the human soul without using the gendered metaphors Augustine used.⁶⁴ Whether Alcuin avoided these metaphors because they led to misunderstandings or even offended members of the court is unknown, but does not seem improbable.

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

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

[Love is inborn in (the soul), a love which must be guided by the intellect and curbed by the reason from illicit pleasures, so that it may love the things which ought to be loved. According to its functions it receives various names: soul, as giving life; spirit, when contemplating; sensation, when perceiving; intellect, as knowing; mind, as comprehending; reason, when examining; will, when determining; and memory, when recalling. Yet these are not discrete in substance as they are in name, for they all are but one soul.]⁶⁵

In the midst of all this variety of activities of the soul (taken over from Isidore of Seville), Alcuin makes no association here of any of them with men or women, with masculine or feminine characteristics. They are aspects of one mind, one soul in each person which encompasses and transcends the sum of its named activities, again reflecting the idea

of metagender in the *imago Dei* as God had created it. The Anglo-Saxon scholar and teacher understood the erudite thought of Augustine and the other Latin Doctors, but put it into a form that made sense in the context of the Frankish court and educational program of the late eighth century. John Cavadini expresses Alcuin's cultural adaptation of Augustine best in these comments on *De ratione animae*'s companion piece, *De fide*, "The Augustine that emerges here is decidedly more accessible, more optimistic, less guarded, and less authoritarian, and in some ways almost charming. ... Alcuin in this regard ... has an ebullience and idealism so great that it managed even to catch up the sometimes gloomy, ever-suspicious bishop of Hippo in its enthusiasm, presenting us with an Augustine who, despite certain new naïvetés, some might regard as an improvement on the original."⁶⁶ Part of this "improvement," however, derives from the difference in the audience addressed by Augustine's works and that which Alcuin addresses in his. Augustine's audience would have had the classical education, Roman cultural background, and leisure to devote time and effort into reading and digesting Augustine's contemplations upon complex and profound theological topics. Alcuin's audience on the other hand was situated in the court of Charlemagne and the Anglo-Saxon teacher largely focused upon educating a marginally literate secular clergy and the laity, many of whom likely had neither the time nor the inclination (with a few exceptions) to pursue much beyond a functional understanding of Latin and the foundational verities of the Christian faith. Alcuin may have given Augustine a more encouraging aspect for a new audience, but Augustine's ideas still provided the framework for Alcuin's thought.

The same enthusiasm with which Alcuin took up the ideas of Augustine carries over into the letters that he wrote to a wide variety of correspondents. Alcuin's letters reveal a man of generous character, who encouraged both men and women, monastic and lay, in the pursuit of lives of holiness and responsible execution of secular and religious power because they would be held accountable by the court of heaven. Concerning this transcendent society of heaven and the place of men and women in it, Alcuin wrote to the nobleman, Count Wido, that

Igitur sicut in omnibus aequaliter regni Dei predicata est beatitudo, ita omni sexui, aetati et personae aequaliter secundum meritorum dignitatem regni Dei patet introitus. Ubi non est distinctio, quis esset in seculo laicus vel clericus, dives vel pauper, iunior vel senior, servus aut dominus, sed unusquisque secundum meritum boni operis perpetua coronabitur gloria.

[The kingdom of heaven is open to every sex, age and person equally according to his deserts. There is no distinction there as to who was lay or clergy, rich or poor, young or old, slave or master in the world, but each will be crowned with eternal glory according to his good works.]⁶⁷

Alcuin understood the heavenly society to be truly egalitarian because all would be of the same metagender, making none of the distinctions that timebound, earthly societies use, such as sex, social rank, clerical status, or wealth. Alcuin may have had in mind Jerome's comment that when men and women have put on Christ and been filled with love by the Holy Spirit, "omnis diversitas generis, conditionis et corporum aufertur istiusmodi vestimento" [all diversity of race, condition, and body is taken away by such a garment].⁶⁸ Instead, a woman or a slave might be rewarded with greater glory in eternity than a man who had possessed considerable wealth and power in the temporal world. In these remarks to Count Wido, Alcuin restates without expressly saying so the biblical teaching of Galatians 3:26–28 and Colossians 3:11 concerning the disappearance of the earthly divisions of rank, social status, or gender in the Body of Christ.

While Alcuin does not elaborate the monastic application of these biblical ideas to the secular count, his other letters to men and women indicate a generous understanding of the patristic concept of metagender. Helene Scheck observes that "Alcuin's transcendence of prevalent attitudes toward women most probably stems from his belief that the intellect is the heart of the subject."⁶⁹ He writes to Æthelburga (whom he calls by the nickname "Eugenia," who was a cross-dressing saint) to encourage her to persevere in the life of virginity, saying that in heaven "naturae victor omnium conditori creaturarum consociabitur" [the conqueror of nature has fellowship with the Creator of all creatures].⁷⁰ Alcuin's words echo the thought of Ambrose in *De uirginibus*: "quia quod ultra naturam est de auctore naturae est" [because what is beyond nature belongs to the author of nature].⁷¹ By conquering the natural tendency of the flesh toward its own gratification, Æthelburga would have fellowship with her Creator on the same terms as the earlier saints. By overcoming the natural tendency of corporeal beings to indulge the body, any man or woman could enter into fellowship with God and the transcendent society of heaven.

Alcuin's letters and didactic writings reveal that even though he respected the writings of the earlier church fathers he did not consider them to be beyond improvement. His transmission of patristic ideas does

not slavishly follow the metaphors and expressions he found in their works, but rather indicates that he considered the spiritual concepts trustworthy while the language used to express the concepts could be adapted. He conveyed his own practical understanding of those concepts in his letters, especially his letters to women and laymen, emphasizing the difference in structure between the heavenly realm and earthly society that eradicated temporal concepts of rank, wealth, gender, and social status, replacing them with a transcendent model in which worldly categories of difference possess little force or influence. The writings of Aldhelm, Bede, and Alcuin express the early, learned understanding and adaptation of the major teachings of the four Latin Doctors on creation, the Fall, the Trinity, and the nature of the human soul and mind. Their writings elucidate a process of cultural adaptation that made the Christian teachings of the four Latin Doctors available in a new context. The dynamic of lay education that Charlemagne and Alcuin put into motion spread the recasting of patristic authors in the writings of Bede and Aldhelm as well as in Alcuin's own considerable corpus to the major religious centers of Francia and Germany on the Continent and from those centers into the minds and beliefs of the educated Carolingian laity, albeit with uneven effectiveness.

While expatriate Anglo-Saxon scholars labored to spread religious learning beyond the monastery walls on the Continent, Latin education in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms declined so sharply that by the 870s there were few educated churchmen, much less a laity educated in Latin learning, according to the preface to the Old English translation of Gregory the Great's *Regula pastoralis*.⁷² King Alfred embarked upon a program of education similar to that of Charlemagne, inviting scholars from Mercia, the Continent, and Wales to participate in his own court school. Alfred's plan included an ambitious program of translation whereby Latin works were rendered into English. The project focused on those books the king and his scholarly advisors considered "most necessary for all men to know" and included some of Gregory's works considered in the first chapter, *Regula pastoralis* and *Dialogi*, as well as Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* and even Augustine's *Soliloquies*.⁷³ Regarding Alfred's translation project Michael Lapidge notes that "the concern with producing a vernacular literature and educating the laity to read it, had no parallel anywhere in Europe at that time, but it established a valuable precedent for later tenth-century English practice."⁷⁴ The selection of texts for translation had a clearly religious emphasis, yet also had a nonmonastic focus. The transla-

tions produced during Alfred's reign seemed designed to produce devout, virtuous nobles and secular clergy who would use their authority justly and support the churches and monasteries as institutions integral to the welfare of the kingdom. This emphasis on both religious instruction of the laity and the mutual support of church and state came to its fruition in the tenth century with the close ties between Alfred's successors and leading churchmen such as Archbishop Dunstan and especially his reformist colleague, Bishop Æthelwold. The networks of belief and strategic support that bound bishops, kings, and queens together in the mid- to late 900s are clearly exemplified in the close association of Æthelwold with King Edgar and with Queen Ælfthryth, which extended into the early reign of King Æthelred II until Æthelwold's death in 984.⁷⁵ Even though Ælfric seems to have been less intimately involved with the king than his teacher, Æthelwold, his close association with his patrons, the ealdorman Æthelweard and his son, Æthelmær, who both served as royal advisors, would have given him insight and perhaps indirect influence in the workings of Æthelred's unstable court during the times of renewed Viking incursions.⁷⁶ Though Ælfric's primary focus remained the instruction and encouragement of all Christian believers within reach of his works, his writings indicate that he may have considered the king and his *witan* as part of his larger flock, even if not directly under his localized pastoral care.⁷⁷

Ælfric's translations set out a program of religious education for a primarily nonmonastic audience of layfolk and secular clergy. The religious education of the laity, however, came with its own set of problems, as Ælfric acknowledged in his own works. When his patron, Æthelweard, asked Ælfric to translate the first part of the book of Genesis into English for him, Ælfric reluctantly complied, voicing his concerns in his *Preface*: “We secgað eac foran to þæt seo poc is swiþe deop gastlice to understandenne, and we ne writaþ na mare buton þa nacedan gerecednis. Þonne þincþ þam ungelæredum þæt eall þæt andgit beo belocen on þære anfealden gerecednis, ac hit ys swiþe feor þam” [We also say beforehand that the book is exceedingly profound to understand in the spiritual sense. We will not be writing any more than the bare history, yet it seems to the unlearned that all the meaning is contained in that single-faceted history. Nevertheless the spiritual sense is very far from that history].⁷⁸ Ælfric knew well the distance between the concrete, literal, “naked” history of biblical narrative and the resplendent spiritual truths he believed to be couched within the bare narrative, for his monastic education in Latin had steeped

him in the orthodox teachings and ideas of the Latin Doctors and the earlier Anglo-Saxon fathers concerning not just the meanings of the book of Genesis but of the rest of the Bible and other religious books. Speaking of monastic education, Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe observes that the memory and performance indicated by the use of Ælfric's *Colloquy* "is an instrument of installing in the boys Latin, the language of power and of monastic identity, and, thereafter, the forms of interpretation—tropes of words and thought—leading to techniques of reading, and through a critical use of memory, the internalization of proper discourses and bodies of knowledge."⁷⁹ This education provided a defining language and served to populate the minds of those entering the monastic profession with ideas and images that could be accessed at will and brought together in contemplation and meditation. Mary Carruthers explains the importance of a well-stocked memory for interpretation and composition, so that "In the minds of monastic writers, every verse of the Bible thus became a gathering place for other texts, into which even the most remote (in our judgments) and unlikely matters were collected, as the associational memory of a particular author drew them in."⁸⁰ Such seems clearly to have been the fruit of Ælfric's own education, for J. E. Cross observes early on that "often we find, Ælfric's memory holds phrases from other sources, even when he is clearly following a main source, so that his 'adaptation' or 'free rendering' is both circumscribed and aided by memory."⁸¹ While Ælfric's use of his own apparently copious memory is not the focus of this book, he himself in his capacity as teacher within the monastic school would be intimately familiar with the practice of memory and also with the kinds of interpretive errors that might come from approaching a text with little training in interpretation and an inadequate memorial storehouse of literary knowledge.⁸² The desire of devout laypeople to have the Bible and other religious works translated into English presented a unique problem for Ælfric, for responding to such requests meant putting sacred works into the hands of people who mostly had not received or sufficiently mastered the Latin education that would teach them how properly to interpret such works, and so they might fall into error. Ælfric's own translation projects made both the literal texts of the Bible and the sermons, homilies, and other materials that explained the orthodox spiritual meanings of Scripture available to his countrymen both inside and outside of the monastery walls. *Lives of Saints*, though more restricted in audience, could then spur its readers to action through its depictions of what love for God looks like.

Several scholars have commented upon Ælfric's consideration for his audiences both in terms of his desire to make religious works available in English and of his desire to convey orthodox teachings through his translations.⁸³ Leslie Lockett, for example, discusses Ælfric's orthodox agenda at the end of her exploration of vernacular concepts of the soul. In her work, Lockett extensively analyzes the Anglo-Saxon vernacular conception of the soul as a corporeal substance and the mind as part of the body located in the chest based upon the idea of "embodied realism." Embodied realism describes the way that the experiences of sensations of heat or pressure in the chest simultaneously with intense mental occurrences are expressed in the language used to refer to various mental states in Old English works.⁸⁴ Lockett challenges the modern scholarly assumption that all Christianized medieval societies held Augustine's putatively dualist perspective that distinguished between the corporeal body and the incorporeal soul and argues that such a perspective was not widespread in Anglo-Saxon culture through most of the Anglo-Saxon period. At the end of her study, Lockett devotes a chapter to Ælfric as the first Anglo-Saxon figure to try to persuade devout, non-Latinate Anglo-Saxons to accept a different, more Augustinian theological conception of the soul. By doing so, Ælfric positioned himself in opposition to the teaching found in other vernacular homilies and hagiographies: "Ælfric's audience already knew the soul was real, but many of them were not aware that it was incorporeal and utterly imperceptible to the senses. To convince them of this demanded that Ælfric contradict much of what they would have heard from other vernacular preachers."⁸⁵ This opposition is not a new position for Ælfric, as Mary Clayton has also demonstrated in her books on the Marian observances in Anglo-Saxon England.⁸⁶ Lockett observes that "what Ælfric achieves in his nativity homily [LS 1] is a remarkable novelty. He was only the second Anglo-Saxon to generate vernacular discourse on the unitary nature of the *sawol*, and he was the first author working in England to assimilate the Platonizing concept of the incorporeal unitary soul, to recognize the interdependence of the ontological and the epistemological ramifications of the soul's incorporeality, and to render such a discourse in a form that had the potential to be disseminated to a broad audience."⁸⁷

Two things that may be determined with certainty from Ælfric's contentious relationship with his religious contexts are that Ælfric had the independence to stand by himself if necessary and that he did not uncritically adopt the ideas of the religious or social milieu in which he lived.

In doctrine, he followed an orthodoxy based upon the scriptures and the writings of the Latin Doctors and other orthodox authors, transmitted especially through Bede, Alcuin, and the texts of the Carolingian reform, and then passed on to Ælfric himself by means of Æthelwold's school in Winchester.⁸⁸ Clearly, such orthodoxy did not hold sway over all or even most of England outside the monasteries in Ælfric's time. Milton McC. Gatch remarks that, just as there was more than one stream of theological influence in late Anglo-Saxon England, so also there were preachers who did not share Ælfric's "sense that one could and ought to discriminate among theological sources."⁸⁹ As a result, vernacular versions of a variety of more or less heterodox sermons and saints' legends encouraged misperceptions and (from Ælfric's view) outright error that could lead laypeople and both secular and regular clergy astray.⁹⁰ His collections of homilies addressed this wide audience both inside and outside the monastery in order to instruct as many as possible in orthodox teachings. Ælfric knew the writings of earlier Anglo-Saxon scholars and so had their own examples of critical preferences for the writings of one or another Latin Doctor over the rest when it came to different aspects of interpretation. Ælfric thought highly of the Latin Doctors, but like Bede and Alcuin before him, he reveals through his writings a strong Augustinian influence.⁹¹ He also exhibits almost no direct knowledge of Ambrose's works and turns to Bede in the place of this particular Doctor. Michael Lapidge notes that Ælfric quotes in his homilies from Jerome's *Aduersus Iovinianum* and commentary *In epistulas Pauli*, Ambrose's *Exameron*, Augustine's *De bono coniugali*, *De sancta virginitate*, *De ciuitate Dei*, *De doctrina Christiana*, *De trinitate*, and once from *De Genesi ad litteram*. Excerpts from Gregory the Great's *Dialogi*, *Homiliae in Euangelium*, and *Moralia in Job* appear in abundance in Ælfric's homilies and likewise passages from Bede's commentary on Genesis, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, and the commentaries on *Acta Apostolorum* and *Epistulas catholicas*. Ælfric made his own translations of Alcuin's *De ratione animae* and *Interrogationes et Responsiones in Genesin*, as well.⁹² The presence of quotations from these authors in Ælfric's works does not, however, automatically mean that Ælfric knew each work of the earlier fathers in its entirety. Gregory the Great, Bede, and Alcuin transmitted and subtly adapted patristic ideas through their own works, and Ælfric had access to other intermediary sources as well. Yet, while acknowledging the authority of these scholars, Ælfric did not treat them as sacred vessels of orthodoxy that could not be adapted to his own purposes. James Hurt states that Ælfric had a free hand

with his sources and that in his translations “Ælfric reshaped his sources and put them into the language of his own country. The result was a carefully organized summary of the religious learning of his day, but Ælfric made it thoroughly English and at the same time Catholic in its authority and orthodoxy.”⁹³

For instance, Ælfric translated an abridged version of Alcuin's *Interrogationes et Responsiones in Genesin*, perhaps to accompany his translation of the first part of Genesis for his patron.⁹⁴ Alcuin's treatment of the fall into sin depended heavily upon Bede's commentary on Genesis, which in turn quoted Augustine's *De Genesi ad litteram* extensively. Ælfric opens the discussion of the Fall with Alcuin's clarification about whether the serpent could understand speech:

Alcuin:

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

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

[(Question 62:) Was the serpent able to understand the sound of the words of him who spoke through it?]

(Response:) It is not believable that it (the serpent) was able to understand what the devil did through it, but just as the demoniac and the insane one speaks what he does not know, so the serpent proclaimed words which it did not understand.]

Ælfric:

Hweþer seo næddre þurh hire agen andgit to Euan spræce?

Nis hit na geleaflic þæt se worm þurh his agen andgit Euan bæhte, [ac] se deofol spræc þurh þa næddran, swa swa he deð þurh wodne man, and heo ne undergeat þa word þe ma þe se woda deð.

[Did the serpent speak to Eve by means of its own understanding?]

It is not believable that the worm deceived Eve by means of his own understanding, but the devil spoke through the serpent, just as he does through the insane one, and it could not understand the words any more than the insane one does.]⁹⁵

Ælfric's question has a subtle difference from Alcuin's in that the Old English question asks whether the serpent itself possesses understanding, a function of the rational soul, by which it could speak to Eve, whereas in Alcuin the question only asks whether the beast could understand the words the devil caused it to speak. Ælfric's answer categorically denies that the *wurm* possessed a rational soul by which it could either intend to deceive Eve or use speech in the same way as humans and angelic beings. Ælfric seems to have gone out of his way to create a context in which to deny that beasts, even the most subtle of beasts, might possess a soul and the rational function, for in Ælfric's conception the soul "is primarily an intellectual inner self, whose mental activity imitates God and distinguishes man from the beasts."⁹⁶ This appears to be one of those instances Malcolm Godden refers to when he observes that

Ælfric, however, repeatedly rejects the view that animals have souls. He makes the point at least a dozen times in his various writings, always, so far as I can discover, as a personal interjection in the argument of any authority that he is following. ... Ælfric's repeated insistence on the point suggests that he was consciously taking issue with others, perhaps his contemporaries, perhaps his patristic authorities, perhaps, Alfred.⁹⁷

Ælfric's next move is to compare the state of the unreasoning animal with that of the insane person, who also lacks the capacity for reason. William Stoneman notes that the comparison between the serpent and the madman appears in both Bede and Augustine.⁹⁸ While Alcuin's Latin text makes a distinction between the insane and the possessed, Ælfric's translation omits any reference to possession, stating that when the devil speaks through madmen, the madmen have no understanding of what they are saying. The point implies that the devil can only speak through those who lack a rational mind or whose mind is seriously compromised, such as the insane or animals like the serpent—a point that comes into very clear focus in the lives that Ælfric translates.

After addressing the question about whether the serpent understood the conversation it had with Eve, Ælfric omits all of the questions about how the woman could believe the serpent, why she contemplated the tree, and how the man came to enter into sin with his wife.⁹⁹ The Old English *Hexameron*, however, succinctly outlines Ælfric's view on how Adam was tempted: "Wel wyste ure Scyppend ða ða he geworhte Adam, / ðone frumsceapanan mann, ðæt he syngian wolde / ðurh ðæs deofles lare,

swa swa he dyde syððan" [Our Creator knew fully when he made Adam, the first-formed human, that he (Adam) would desire to sin by means of the devil's teaching, just as he (Adam) later did].¹⁰⁰ Here Ælfric's interpretation of the Fall reflects the Augustinian concept, paralleled in Cassian's work, that the devil tempted Adam through the serpent rather than through Eve.¹⁰¹ When Ælfric actually describes the Fall, he demonstrates a remarkably egalitarian attitude:

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

[Then the devil was grieved in his wicked mind that the human should attain to that joy from which he had fallen because of his pride, and with great envy he then deceived the humans so that they both ate of the forbidden tree and then became mortal and guilty toward their Lord, and then they knew both evil and good.]¹⁰²

In Ælfric's version, both Adam and Eve fell into sin together, deceived by the devil into disobeying the one command that God had given them. As a result, not only did they become mortal and subject to death, but "Heora gecynd eac ða wæs eall on costnungum / and him ungewylde to rihtre wis-sunge" [Moreover, their nature then became entirely in accordance with temptations and unsubmissive to them for right direction].¹⁰³ Both the male and the female essentially lost control of themselves, of their own souls, becoming unable to direct their own lives to avoid sin and love God.

The opening sermon in the collection of Ælfric's saints' *vitae* and *passiones* found in the British Library (BL), Cotton Julius E.vii, contains his most direct and detailed statement about the nature of the soul or the mind.¹⁰⁴ The sermon, titled "Natiuitas Domini nostri Iesu Christi" (*LS 1*), addresses two main topics, the Trinity and the human soul.¹⁰⁵ In putting this text together, Ælfric draws from a number of sources including Boethius's *De consolatione Philosophiae* and Alcuin's *De ratione animae*.¹⁰⁶ In his analysis of the definitions of "mind" found in Alcuin, Alfred, and Ælfric, Malcolm Godden concludes that "soul and mind are ... very closely associated, although as a matter of terminology Ælfric prefers, at least when being careful, to call the intellectual inner self *sawl*, reserving

mod for the locus or instrument of the soul's thought.”¹⁰⁷ In Ælfric, the entire soul “is distinctly the thinking power or agent,” that governs the self and the body, thus reflecting Augustine’s formula that includes the “female” activity in reason rather than following the Ambrosian formula that equates the woman with the beasts in representing the senses.¹⁰⁸

Through the works of Bede and Alcuin especially, Ælfric received the Augustinian psychology of the human mind and its structure as the image of the Trinity, consisting of memory, will, and understanding.¹⁰⁹ This trinitarian structure of the soul encapsulated everything at the heart of a saint’s legend: the deliberate development of memory fueled by love, the desire to pray and reflect to build up understanding of oneself and of God within the memory, and the will to remain faithful to the relationship to Christ held within memory and understanding. Bede also, however, transmitted Augustine’s conception of the two activities of the mind by quoting *De trinitate* 12.12 in his *Collectio*, including the quotation of Galatians 3:27–28, the concept that the *imago Dei* is found in the mind where there is no sex, and that the division of activities in the mind is represented in the sexually differentiated bodies of men and women.¹¹⁰ The psychology of Augustine concerning the “male” and “female” activities of the mind was known and transmitted into Anglo-Saxon England at least through Bede, and Ælfric had access to these concepts. The best measure of Ælfric’s understanding of Augustine’s psychology of the soul, though, lies not so much in his didactic rendering of sermons or homilies, but in his narrative adaptations of the lives of saints.

In *Lives of Saints* as in the *Catholic Homilies*, Ælfric did not follow a rigid approach toward translation. In many of his lives he stayed fairly close to the text of his Latin exemplars, but often he radically compressed, selectively deleted, or narratively rearranged material and even shifted the focus of the stories, sometimes making them more adaptations than translations. Both storyteller and teacher, Ælfric not only toned down the verbosity of hagiographers such as Abbo of Fleury, but remained mindful of orthodoxy and concerned to avoid confusing his vernacular audience as may be seen in his wholesale rewriting of the legend of Eugenia or his selective trimming of the already brief *passio* of Abdon and Sennes. Ælfric outlines such objectives in the Latin Preface to *Lives of Saints* and also seems to indicate both there and in the Old English preface a conception of audience that reaches further than just his patrons, Æthelweard and Æthelmær.¹¹¹ Joyce Hill has demonstrated that beyond use by his patrons, Ælfric’s *Lives of Saints* had a limited readership of religious communities

judging by the manuscript evidence for the transmission and dissemination of the monastic lives from the collection.¹¹² The manuscript evidence, however, may not reflect the audience that Ælfric envisioned. Jonathan Wilcox argues that if some kind of quasi-monastic practices were kept within the households of Æthelweard and Æthelmær as seems to be the case (especially later after Æthelmær's "forced retirement"), they may have included reading aloud from the lives in Ælfric's collection in a devotional context. In that context, the audience for the lives may have included a significant number of nonmonastic men and women from a variety of classes. While Ælfric did not intend *Lives of Saints* for liturgical use and public reading in services as he did the *Catholic Homilies*, the audience he envisioned for the collection may have included the cross section of layfolk who might be found in such politically prominent and well-connected households, and perhaps even communities of secular clergy following the Rule of Chrodegang.¹¹³ Stephanie Hollis observes the probable presence of ordinands to the secular clergy and children of layfolk who may have been present in Reform monasteries to receive education in the vernacular, and Ælfric, ever the pastor and teacher, may also have had such people in mind as an audience.¹¹⁴ The abridgements and alterations Ælfric made in his vernacular versions of the saints' lives then may not have been made solely for the sake of avoiding tedium, but also deliberately to redirect the material for the sake of communicating orthodox and Reformed teaching to his Anglo-Saxon audience at the end of the tenth century, as Charles D. Wright indicates had been done by other translators, as well.¹¹⁵ As such, the legends in Ælfric's collection may be best understood in Joyce Hill's terms, "as versions rewritten for an audience not familiar with the learned Latin tradition on which they draw."¹¹⁶

Ælfric and the *Lives of Saints*: The Discourse of Holy Desire

The *passiones* and *vitae* that Ælfric includes in *Lives of Saints* are not those generally honored by the laity and celebrated in his two series of *Catholic Homilies*, but those "þe mynster-menn mid heora þenungum betwux him wurðiað" [whom the men and women of the monastery honor among themselves with their services].¹¹⁷ These lives in their Latin versions illustrate an understanding of the religious life known to those within the walls of the monasteries, but that "læwedan men ... nyston" [laypeople did not

know].¹¹⁸ In translating the legends from Latin into English, Ælfric also had to make two cultures, late Roman culture and contemporary Anglo-Saxon monastic culture, accessible for his noble lay patrons, Ætheweard and Æthelmaer and other nonmonastic, or at least non-Latinate, people.¹¹⁹ As a result, Ælfric's vernacular saints' legends seem to work, in Rita Copeland's terms, "to erase the cultural gap from which it emerges by contesting and displacing the source and substituting itself" in a process similar to the translation of a saint's relics.¹²⁰ In a sense, Ælfric takes each *passio* or *vita* out of the Latin language and renders it into Old English, translating or "carrying over" the relic of the saint's legend from its Latin linguistic and cultural reliquary and enshrining it anew, washed and freshly clothed, in an Anglo-Saxon linguistic and cultural reliquary. The process preserves the essential features of the *passio* or *vita* as Ælfric sees them, but clothes and houses them in a new language with new rhetorical colors, not the same, but dynamically equivalent.¹²¹ Hagiographical literature formed its own place within the Latin literature of the Middle Ages, and in his translations Ælfric developed his own personal style of written endeavor within Anglo-Saxon literature.¹²² The rhythmic prose style that Ælfric developed resonated with Anglo-Saxon poetic narrative tradition, creating a space in which the unfamiliar legends could be integrated culturally and individually in memory.¹²³ Just as the translation of a saint's material relics brought the influence and intercession of the saint into a new place, so the translation of a saint's life into a new language and a new cultural context facilitated the appropriation of the saint's example by a new audience. By their nature the lives of saints invite the audience to identify with the saint, actually to become the saint in the realm of imagination and memory, experiencing the transformations, trials, and triumphs of the saint in a way that would encourage emulation of the saint's steadfast characteristics in each reader or hearer. Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe observes that "The relationship between fantasy and desire ... is a constitutive one as fantasy structures and enables desire."¹²⁴ The saints' *passiones* move the audience literally to "lose themselves in the story" and emerge at the end a changed people, encouraged, instructed, embodying the memory, fortified by their own encounter with the power of God through their identification with the saint.¹²⁵ Augustine describes the process as one of recognition whereby the audience apprehends the unchangeable truth (God) within another person and longs to know it through relationship with that person in whom it is recognized.¹²⁶ In this way, the recognition of the eternal truth in the *vita* of a saint conceives in the audience a desire for relationship

with that truth through relationship with the person who reflects it. For a brief time, the audience has entered into and participated in the transcendent society, has imaginatively encountered the very Other who through love had so powerfully transformed mere sexually differentiated flesh and blood into a metagendered saint before and who might deign to do the same again. Such men and women who seek to grow in virtue and obtain a place in the heavenly kingdom “bið þonne to oþrum menn geworht; oþer he bið þurh godnysse; 7 se ylca þurh edwiste” [will then be made into another human being; he will be other in goodness and the same in substance].¹²⁷ For while the imaginative didacticism of a saint’s life purports to instruct its audience in moral living, Gregory the Great teaches that on a deeper level it intends to arouse desire: “Et sunt nonnulli quos ad amorem patriae caelestis plus exempla quam praedicamenta succendunt” [And there are some who are kindled to love of the heavenly homeland more by examples than by preaching].¹²⁸ Augustine and Gregory indicate that the desire kindled by the process of identification with the saint in a hagiographical text is not sexual desire, but a desire just as strong, just as driving—a will that is love.¹²⁹ Such desire is not directed at the saint, but through the saint it is reoriented toward God, and it seeks above all to know and love and imitate God. In *LS 1*, Ælfric emphasizes this point, saying, “Nis nanum menn on ðisum deadlican life libbendum nanes þinges . swa mycel neod . swa him biþ þæt he cunne þonne ælmihtigan god mid geleasan . and sibþan his agene sawle” [There is nothing that any among humans living in this mortal life need so greatly as that he or she might know the Almighty God through belief, and after that, his or her own soul].¹³⁰ Belief is of central importance in Ælfric’s understanding of the soul’s powers and especially of *mod*, for “The *mod* can actually perceive spiritual realities that are imperceptible to the senses. ... The reason why the *mod* can do so is because it is part of the incorporeal soul.”¹³¹ It is only through the *mod*’s ability to perceive incorporeal realities through belief that a person can grasp the spiritual truths represented in the narratives of the deeds and deaths of the saints. Ælfric places his statement concerning a person’s greatest need at a crucial point in his sermon, as he finishes writing about the Trinity and turns the attention of his readers to the matter of their own souls. By addressing these matters at the beginning of his collection of saints’ legends, Ælfric “primes the pump” of his readers’ expectations, so to speak, by providing an organizing principle and interpretive framework within which a saint’s life might be read, a framework based upon the nature of proper love and proper desire:

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

[It is natural to humankind that one should love that which is good. What is good except God alone, he who is sublime goodness, but for whom no one is able to have any good thing? We ought always to love this goodness, from whom all good things come to us, but love for this goodness is not able to exist except in the soul—and only that soul is nobly born, therefore, that loves him from whom it comes, who created it such that in its understanding it is able to have the uniqueness and image of God, and might be worthy of this: that God might dwell in it. ... Desire is given to humans to long for those things that benefit them, for useful things and for their eternal salvation.]¹³²

The *vita* of a saint serves as a vehicle both for knowledge of God and for knowledge of one's own soul by evoking a desire for knowledge of the immaterial, transcendent, good that is God and of the image of God in oneself. The second Person of the Trinity, by being both God and human, possesses the knowledge of both and so becomes the rightful object of desire. The incarnate Christ embodies the point of contact between the transcendent spiritual realm and the temporal physical realm; inasmuch as a saint demonstrates a likeness to Christ, she or he also acts as a point of contact wherein, as Peter Brown has said, heaven and earth are joined because the immortal image of God within the mortal body of the saint has been restored to wholeness and purity.¹³³ Above all else, a saint's life inflames desire in its audience, not a desire for the saint but a desire to *be* the saint, to be the one who loves Christ so wholeheartedly that the Son of God performs marvelous deeds for and through his beloved. As the soul of the saint becomes more and more like Christ, the image of God within the soul displays more clearly the characteristics of its metagendered nature by showing itself to be not merely an amalgam of masculine and feminine attributes, but by showing itself to be, like God, greater than the sum of its

gendered parts. Within this context of the saint's desire for a transcendent relationship with Christ, the readers and hearers of a saint's *passio* come to know both God and their own souls in relationship to each other—a relationship not defined by gender distinctions formed in the earthly society of men and women, but defined instead by the metagendered image of God clearly reflected in the rational human soul.

Yet it was only within the context of the monastic profession that the concept of metagender was theorized and discussed despite the belief that the soul in all men and women had no sex and was the *locus* of relationship with God in all human beings. How was Ælfric to take monastic *vitae* and *passiones* that expressed in assorted ways and to varying degrees the ideas associated with a third gender and translate them for the encouragement and enactment of a nonmonastic audience? The following examination compares Ælfric's translations of the legends of female and male Roman martyrs and Anglo-Saxon royal saints to the closest known Latin versions in order to answer this question.

NOTES

¹ For a brief example, see my article, McDaniel, "Agnes among the Anglo-Saxons," 224–29.

² Blair, *Church in Anglo-Saxon England*, 8; cf. Mayr-Harting, *Coming of Christianity*, 13 and 58–61.

³ Blair, *Church in Anglo-Saxon England*, 11; cf. Mayr-Harting, *Coming of Christianity*, 30–39.

⁴ Bischoff, "Latin-Exegetical Literature." Throughout the "Catalogue" Bischoff describes the writers quoted by Irish exegetes.

⁵ Klein, *Ruling Women*, 11.

⁶ See Foot, *Veiled Women*; Ferrante, "Education of Women"; and Hunter Blair, "Whitby."

⁷ Neuman de Vegvar, "Saints and Companions," 56.

⁸ Hunter Blair, "Whitby," 32. See also Ferrante, "Education of Women," 15.

⁹ Blair, *Church in Anglo-Saxon England*, 81–82; Ferrante, "Education of Women," 10; Neuman de Vegvar, "Saints and Companions," 56.

¹⁰ Hunter Blair, "Whitby," 15–16.

¹¹ Foot, *Veiled Women*, 1.26.

¹² Leyser, *Medieval Women*, 20–21.

¹³ For some insight into the demands and problems of running a double monastery, see the letter of Abbess Eangyth to Boniface, dated around 720, available at "A Letter from Eangyth, Abbess," *Epistolae: Medieval Women's Latin Letters*, last modified 2014, <https://epistolae.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/letter/358.html>.

¹⁴ Neuman de Vegvar, “Saints and Companions,” 55.

¹⁵ Klein, *Ruling Women*, 4.

¹⁶ Foot, *Veiled Women*, 1.52; Neuman de Vegvar, “Saints and Companions,” 57.

¹⁷ Hunter Blair, “Whitby,” 30.

¹⁸ For complete treatment of the demise of the double monasteries in Francia and the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, see Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society*; Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women*; and Foot, *Veiled Women*, 1.63–64. For a more summary treatment, see Neuman de Vegvar, “Saints and Companions,” 77–79.

¹⁹ Blair, *Church in Anglo-Saxon England*, 81–82.

²⁰ See Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society*, 127–48, and Foot, *Veiled Women*, I.61–69. Foot observes that the Anglo-Saxon emphasis in importing the Carolingian reforms seemed to have a focus on avoiding scandal rather than on the ritual purity of women.

²¹ Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women*, 6.

²² Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity*, 192; Laistner, *Thought and Letters*, 153. Michael Lapidge questions the credibility of the tradition of Aldhelm’s Irish education under Mealdubh, however, since the source for this information is William of Malmesbury’s twelfth-century work on the abbots of Malmesbury; see *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, trans. Lapidge and Herren, 6–7. Andy Orchard, on the other hand, reasserts the reliability of the story of Aldhelm’s Irish education in *Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, 4–5.

²³ Crawford, *Anglo-Saxon Influence*, 95.

²⁴ Orchard, *Poetic Art*, 1.

²⁵ Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, 178–91.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 191–228.

²⁷ Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity*, 214–16.

²⁸ McKitterick, *Books, Scribes and Learning*, 2.403–04; Kaczynski, “Bede’s Commentaries,” 25.

²⁹ James, *Two Ancient English Scholars*, 11; also *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, trans. Lapidge and Herren, 2.

³⁰ Godman, “Anglo-Latin *Opus Geminatum*,” 217–220.

³¹ Most of the available commentary on this dual work addresses either the prose version alone or the metrical version alone and so there is little ambiguity as to which version of the work is meant when the authors refer to *De virginitate* or “De virginitate.” Since my analysis refers to both versions at the same time and to the twinned work as a whole, for the sake of clarity in the following discussion I will refer to the prose version as “Prosa de virginitate,” the metrical version as “Carmen de virginitate,” and the two works together as *De virginitate*.

³² Aldhelm, “Prosa de virginitate,” 228. Scott Gwara has challenged the idea that the women named along with Hildelith were nuns under her rule at Barking, positing instead that they may have been abbesses of other monasteries associated with Barking or in the area of Aldhelm’s influence in the Introduction to *Prosa de virginitate*, 48–50.

³³ See Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum* (*PL* 23.282A–B); Ambrose, “De Viduis,” in *Sancti Ambrosii Episcopi Mediolanensis Opera*, ed. Gori, 2.5; Augustine, “De sancta virginitate,” §53; and Gregory, *Dialogues*, ed. de Vogué, 1.6.

³⁴ Aldhelm, “Carmen de virginitate,” in *Aldhelmi Opera*, ed. Ehwald, 191. [All translations of Aldhelm’s works are my own.] For examples of saints whose strength of mind Aldhelm notes, see in “Prosa de virginitate,” Athanasius, §32; Babilas, §33; Agatha, §41; and Justina, §43, to name just a few.

³⁵ Aldhelm, “Prosa de virginitate,” §39.

³⁶ Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*, 109.

³⁷ Aldhelm, “Prosa de virginitate,” §1–4, 13–18.

³⁸ Aldhelm, “Carmen de virginitate,” 2767–69. Ælfric emphasizes this point for all Christians, lay and clergy, throughout his homily for the fifth Sunday after Pentecost, *CH* 2.29.

³⁹ See Galatians 3:28. See also Jerome’s brief explication of this verse in *Contra Rufinum*, §29.

⁴⁰ What we are able to know of Bede’s life and education has been well documented in such works as Hunter Blair *World of Bede*; Ward *Venerable Bede*; and Gerald Bonner, *Famulus Christi*.

⁴¹ Ward, *Venerable Bede*, 8; Kaczynski, “Bede’s Commentaries,” 19.

⁴² Hurst, introduction to *Catholic Epistles*, xvi.

⁴³ Laistner, *Thought and Letters*, 163.

⁴⁴ Bede, *In principium Genesis*, in *Beda Venerabilis Opera, Pars II, Opera Exegetica*, ed Jones, Praefatio 18–29.

⁴⁵ Kelly, “Bede’s Use of Augustine,” 190.

⁴⁶ Bede, *In principium Genesis*, 1.837–39; Bede, *On Genesis*, 28. Cf. Augustine, *De trinitate*, 12.3.12, which Bede quotes in *Collectio Bedae presbyteri ex opusculis sancti Augustini in Epistulas Pauli Apostoli*, 187, translated by David Hurst in *Excerpts*.

⁴⁷ DeGregorio, “Venerable Bede,” 8.

⁴⁸ Bede, “Expositio Actuum Apostolorum,” in *Opera Exegetica*, ed. Hurst 48; Bede, *Acts of the Apostles*, 92.

⁴⁹ Augustine, *De trinitate*, 12.18.

⁵⁰ See, for example, his comments in “Alcuin, *De ratione animae*,” ed. Curry, §8.

⁵¹ Alcuin, *Bishops, Kings, and Saints*, 1526–30.

⁵² Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, 228–33.

⁵³ Reynolds and Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars*, 93. See also Coates’s comments in “Bishop as Benefactor,” 533–34.

⁵⁴ George H. Brown, “Preservation and Transmission,” 164. See also Aldhelm: *The Poetic Works*, ed. Lapidge and Rosier, 101; Kaczynski, “Bede’s Commentaries,” 25; and Alcuin, *Bishops, Kings, and Saints*, ed. Godman, lxxv–lxxviii.

⁵⁵ Reynolds and Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars*, 93.

⁵⁶ Colish, *Medieval Foundations*, 66–67.

⁵⁷ Otten, “Carolingian Theology,” 69.

⁵⁸ "Alcuin, *De ratione animae*," ed. Curry, 3.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 1; also Clemoes, "Mens absentia cogitans," 63.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 65.

⁶¹ Alcuin, *De ratione animae*," ed. Curry, 24.

⁶² Scheck, *Reform and Resistance*, 48.

⁶³ Kaczynski, "Bede's Commentaries," 21.

⁶⁴ Scheck, *Reform and Resistance*, 69. Scheck does note one occurrence in which Alcuin, due to the nature of the text, must discuss Isidore's etymology of *vir* and *mulier*, but she goes on to note that, "The gendering of body and soul, though a commonplace among the Fathers, is rare in Alcuin's corpus" (48).

⁶⁵ Alcuin, *De ratione animae*," ed. Curry, §6, pp. 55–56; §6, pp. 84–85.

⁶⁶ Cavadini, "Alcuin's *De Fide*," 142.

⁶⁷ Alcuin, "Epistola 305," in *Epistolae*, ed. Dümmler, 464; Alcuin, *Life and Letters*, 156.

⁶⁸ Jerome, *ad Galatas* (PL 26.369b); Jerome, *St. Jerome's Commentaries*, 151.

⁶⁹ Scheck, *Reform and Resistance*, 53.

⁷⁰ Alcuin, "Epistola 36" in *Epistolae*, ed. Dümmler; Alcuin, *Life and Letters*, 56.

⁷¹ Ambrose, "De virginibus," ed. Gori, 1.2.8; Ambrose, "On Virginity," trans. Ramsey, 1.2.8.

⁷² "Translation of Gregory's *Pastoral Care*," in *Alfred the Great*, trans. Keynes and Lapidge, 125.

⁷³ Ibid., 126.

⁷⁴ Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature 900–1066*, 8.

⁷⁵ Yorke, "Æthelwold and the Politics," 79–86. See also Jayakumar, "Reform and Retribution," 337–52; Yorke, *Wessex in the Early Middle Ages*, 213; and Joyce Hill, "Making Women Visible," 153–67.

⁷⁶ Keynes, "King Æthelred's Charter," 471; Gordon, *Eynsham Abbey*; Clayton, "Ælfric and Æthelred," 65–88 and "De Duodecim Abusiis," 141–63; and Upchurch, "A Big Dog Barks," 505–33, and "Shepherding the Shepherds," 54–74. For the events of the reign of Æthelræd "Unræd" II, see Ashdown, *English and Norse Documents*; Keynes, *Diplomas of King Æthelred*; Lavelle, *Aethelred II*; Williams, *Æthelred the Unready*; and Howard, *Reign of Æthelred II*.

⁷⁷ Clayton, "Ælfric and Æthelred," 88; Clayton, "De Duodecim Abusiis," 159, 163; Upchurch, "Shepherding the Shepherds," 58; Upchurch, "A Big Dog Barks," 520 n. 65.

⁷⁸ "4, Old English Preface to the Translation of *Genesis*," in *Ælfric's Prefaces*, ed. Wilcox, 41–44. See also Crawford, "Ælfric's Preface to *Genesis*," in *The Old English Version of the Heptateuch*, ed. Crawford, 77. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Old English are my own.

⁷⁹ O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Stealing Obedience*, 112.

⁸⁰ Carruthers, *Craft of Thought*, 19.

⁸¹ Cross, "Ælfric—Mainly on Memory," 135.

⁸² See Ælfric's comments on his own early experiences as the student of a barely Latinate priest; "The Old English Preface to the Translation of *Genesis*," in *Ælfric's Prefaces*, ed. Wilcox, 116.

⁸³ See Gatch, *Preaching and Theology*, 14; Hurt, *Ælfric*, 82; Leinbaugh, "Ælfric's *Lives of Saints I*," 209; Joyce Hill, "Ælfric: His Life and Works," 52–53; Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, 413.

⁸⁴ Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, 11.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 411.

⁸⁶ See Clayton, *Cult of the Virgin Mary and Apocryphal Gospels of Mary*.

⁸⁷ Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, 418.

⁸⁸ Lapidge, "Æthelwold as Scholar and Teacher," 110.

⁸⁹ Gatch, *Preaching and Theology*, 120–21.

⁹⁰ "1a, Latin Preface to the First Series of *Catholic Homilies*," in *Ælfric's Prefaces*, ed. Wilcox, 9–12, "1b, Old English Preface to the First Series of *Catholic Homilies*," 5–13. Cf. Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, 379–80.

⁹¹ Grundy, *Books and Grace*, 267.

⁹² Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, 250–62.

⁹³ Hurt, *Ælfric*, 47.

⁹⁴ Clemoes, *Chronology*, 15; and Dekker, "Vernacularization," 93.

⁹⁵ Stoneman, "Ælfric's Translation of Alcuin's *Interrogationes Sigwulfi Presbyteri*," 148–49.

⁹⁶ Godden, "Anglo-Saxons on the Mind," 285.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 281.

⁹⁸ "Ælfric's Translation of Alcuin's *Interrogationes Sigwulfi Presbyteri*," ed. Stoneman, 263. According to Stoneman, the reference may be found in Bede, *In principium Genesis*, 1.3.1 and in Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, 11.28.

⁹⁹ Alcuin, *Interrogationes Sigwulfi*, (PL 100,523C), *Interrogationes* 66–8.

¹⁰⁰ Ælfric, *Exameron Anglice*, 397–99.

¹⁰¹ Cf. Augustine, *De trinitate*, 12.20 and Cassian, *Conférences*, 5.6.

¹⁰² Ælfric, *Exameron Anglice*, 397–99. Cf. Ælfric, *CH I* 1.136–42.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 465–66.

¹⁰⁴ Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, 374. See also Godden, "Anglo-Saxons on the Mind," 278. The opening sermon is titled "Natiuitas Domini nostri Iesu Christi," and there has been some disagreement among scholars as to whether or not Ælfric originally intended for this particular sermon to introduce his lives. Peter Clemoes opines that *LS* 16, "De memoria sanctorum" was originally intended to open the collection, but Leinbaugh argues that *LS* 1 was designed for that purpose. See Peter Clemoes, "Ælfric," 205; Leinbaugh, "Ælfric's *Lives of Saints I*," 192.

¹⁰⁵ Skeat, "Natiuitas Domini nostri Iesu Christi," *LS* 1.10–25. For the sake of brevity, each life, after being introduced, will be referred to by its number in Skeat's edition. Citations will be given by item number and line numbers: e.g., *LS* 1.1–3.

¹⁰⁶ For the identification and analysis of Boethius's *De consolatione Philosophiae* and Alcuin's *De ratione animae* as sources for this material, see Bolton, "Alfredian Boethius," 406–7; Clemoes, "Mens absentia cogitans," 62–77; Godden, "Anglo-Saxons on the Mind," 278–85; Leinbaugh, "Ælfric's *Lives of Saints I*," 191–211; and Leinbaugh, "Liturgical Homilies."

¹⁰⁷ Godden, "Anglo-Saxons on the Mind," 285.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 279.

¹⁰⁹ LS, 1.112–22. "Ælfric's favourite Trinitarian image ... is that of Augustine: the image in the human soul." Raw, *Trinity and Incarnation*, 35.

¹¹⁰ Bede, *Collectio Bedae presbyteri ex opusculis sancti Augustini in Epistulas Pauli Apostoli*, Item 187. This work has not yet been edited or published, though a translation of the material found in the manuscripts has been published by David Hurst in Bede, *Excerpts*, #187.

¹¹¹ "5a, Latin Preface to *Lives of Saints*," in *Ælfric's Prefaces*, ed. Wilcox, 1–5, 11–27 and "5b, Old English Preface to *Lives of Saints*," 29.

¹¹² Joyce Hill, "Preservation and Transmission," 407 and 422.

¹¹³ "Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*," *Ælfric's Prefaces*, ed. Wilcox, 248–49. See also Lendinara, "World of Anglo-Saxon Learning," 270. The Old English Enlarged Rule of Chrodegang charges priests to "geāmtigion hi silfe to gebedum 7 to rædingum, ... 7 to drihtlicum larum 7 to mænigfealdum larcraeftum" [make time for themselves for prayers and for reading, ... and for Godly learning and for various kinds of knowledge.] Napier, *Enlarged Rule of Chrodegang*, §53.34–36. My translation.

¹¹⁴ Hollis, "Anglo-Saxon Learning," 23–29.

¹¹⁵ Wright, "New Latin Source," 248–56.

¹¹⁶ Joyce Hill, "Translating the Tradition," 244.

¹¹⁷ Wilcox, "5b, Old English Preface to *Lives of Saints*," 9–10.

¹¹⁸ Wilcox, "5b, Old English Preface to *Lives of Saints*," 12.

¹¹⁹ See Joyce Hill's comments concerning Ælfric's *translatio* of the *Catholic Homilies* in "Translating the Tradition," 245.

¹²⁰ Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation*, 30.

¹²¹ Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation*, 48.

¹²² Godden, "Experiments in Genre," 281–82.

¹²³ See the process described by Ursula Schaefer in "Ceteris Imparibus," 299–300.

¹²⁴ O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Stealing Obedience*, 113.

¹²⁵ See Horner, *Discourse of Enclosure*, 142–43 and Peter Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, 81–83.

¹²⁶ Augustine, *De trinitate*, 9.11, 12.

¹²⁷ Ælfric, CH 1 25.167–68.

¹²⁸ Gregory, *Dialogues*, 16. [My translation]

¹²⁹ Cf. Augustine, *De trinitate*, 15.40, wherein he uses *amor* and *dilectio* as synonyms for *uoluntas*, and then comments that such love is will at its most effective.

Also *De trinitate* 15.42, in which Augustine speaks of the memory, understanding, and will ternary synonymously as memory, understanding, and love.

¹³⁰ *LS*, 1.79–81.

¹³¹ Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, 407.

¹³² *LS*, 1.88–96, 100–01.

¹³³ Peter Brown, *Cult of the Saints*, 1–2.

Chapter Three

Metagender in Genders

Eugenia: *Ecce Feminam!*

The first saint whose *passio* appears in Ælfric’s collection is Eugenia, virgin and martyr (*LS* 2).¹ Ælfric’s placement of Eugenia’s legend on December 25 is unattested in any known English calendar from Ælfric’s time, though Michael Lapidge notes that the Cotton-Corpus Legendary (CCL) commemorates her on this day.² This placement may have allowed Ælfric or the compiler of BL, Cotton Julius E.vii to make a connective wordplay based on her name between *LS* 1 and Eugenia’s life. *Eugenia* in Latin means “well-born, nobly born” and in *LS* 1 Ælfric specifically refers to the *æðelboren* (nobly born) soul when he writes “seo an sawul is æðelboren þe ðonne lufað þe heo fram com” [only the soul that loves him from whom it came is nobly born].³ Alcuin, whose work Ælfric was translating, used *nobilis* (noble, nobly born). Ælfric could have translated Alcuin’s word using *æðele*, *æðelcund*, or *æðellic* just as well, but chose the term *æðelboren* (nobly born) rather than just noble, suggesting that he may have intended his choice of words for *LS* 1 to resonate with the name of Eugenia and with each further use of *æðelboren* in other lives in the collection. Such a wordplay would not have been lost on Ælfric’s patron, Æthelweard (who knew Latin well enough to translate one of the Anglo-Saxon *Chronicles* from Old English into Latin⁴), nor on a monastic audience familiar with Latin and yet non-Latinate audiences would have lost nothing by missing the connection to Eugenia’s name. Accordingly, Ælfric may have been foreshadowing or suggesting for more educated audiences an interpretation of Eugenia’s *passio* as the experience of the nobly born soul coming to love the God who created it.

Eugenia’s reputation as one of the “transvestite saints” renders considerations about sex and gender in her case problematic from the start, especially in the Latin texts of her life.⁵ The Latin text of the *passio* of Eugenia preserved in the CCL bears the closest relationship to Ælfric’s

translation (although the manuscripts of the Legendary itself postdate Ælfric) and Grau's *Pasionario Hispánico* (*PH*) provides the closest printed edition. Unlike his treatment of many other legends, Ælfric in this *passio* departs repeatedly and significantly from his Latin exemplar. The first part of the Latin life presents Eugenia's legend as both a journey and a liturgical progression from paganism into Christian faith that culminates in a symbolic apotheosis of the virgin, but when Ælfric translates the legend, it becomes instead an exemplum of how Eugenia “ðurh mægðhad mærlice þeah . / and þurh martyr-dom þisne middan-eard ofer-swað” [nevertheless by means of her glorious virginity and through her martyrdom overcame this world].⁶

The anonymous Latin author first describes Eugenia's background: born into a noble pagan family whose head is the prefect of Alexandria in Egypt, provided with the best education in Latin and Greek eloquence, and “etiam filosopham docere permisit” [he even permitted her to teach philosophy].⁷ Ælfric does not have this last statement in his translation, and at first blush it seems as though he suppresses the idea that a woman might be able to teach philosophy. He may have left out this comment, however, because his Latin text reflected the variant found in the CCL: “etiam philosophiam doctrinam doceri permisit” [he even allowed her to learn (lit., to be taught) philosophical doctrine].⁸ Ælfric's Latin source probably gave the same variant reading because he combines Eugenia's philosophical instruction with her schooling in Latin eloquence when he writes that she went to school “þat heo on woruld-wysdome wære getogen / æfter grecisre uðwytegunge . and lædenre getingnysse” [so that she might be established through Greek philosophy and Latin rhetoric].⁹ Instead of dismissing the idea that a woman could teach philosophy, Ælfric probably did not know a manuscript tradition in which Eugenia did so. More significantly, however, Ælfric from the start establishes the expectation that Eugenia would be well-grounded in all the mental and memorial skills associated with a classical education in rhetoric and philosophy.

The anonymous Latin author then observes that Eugenia “erat ... pulchra facie et eligans corpore, sed pulchrior mente et elegantior castitate” [was lovely in countenance and beautiful in body, but more lovely in mind and more beautiful in chastity].¹⁰ Here again one finds a different statement in the CCL: “Erat ergo eugenia pulchra mente et formosior castitate” [Therefore Eugenia was lovely in mind and more beautiful in chastity].¹¹ The version closest to Ælfric does not maintain the same focus on Eugenia's physical beauty that appears in Grau's edition, focusing on

her mind and virtue instead. Ælfric does not exactly follow either of these versions. He emphasizes Eugenia's strong mental qualities and the results of her education, noting that she "wel þeah on wisdome . and on uðwyte-gunge" [excelled very much in wisdom and in philosophy].¹² For an audience that may not have been familiar with the ethical aspects of education in Latin, Ælfric plainly states the results of Eugenia's intellectual training rather than leaving them implicit, but he does not mention her chastity at this point—perhaps because she has not yet become a Christian. In fact, Ælfric also omits the Latin text's narrative detail about how the saint-to-be refuses a proposal of marriage from Aquilius, son of the pro-consul Aquilinus.¹³ He focuses the attention of his audience instead on how Eugenia obtained the teachings of the Apostle Paul, how "Pa wearð hyre mod mycclum on-bryrd / þuruh þa halgen lare" [thereupon her mind became greatly excited by means of the holy teachings].¹⁴ Ælfric presents Eugenia's response to Christian teaching as a response of the mind, of the rational soul, by implication the part of the soul that recognizes the God in whose image it has been made. This recognition, while not yet belief, produces a will (desire) to know: "Heo ... wolde swa cepan þære cristena lare," [She ... desired to seek the teachings of the Christians], which causes her to leave her father's house and Alexandria itself in search of some "geleaffulne mann" [believing person] to instruct her in Christian doctrine.¹⁵ The departure from her father's house bears all the symbolism of a deliberate turning—a choice to leave the identity constructed in the context of her pagan family, culture, and upbringing in order to pursue what she desires through her wisdom but does not yet really know.

In the Latin text, as Eugenia departs from the city, she hears Christians singing: "Omnes dii gentium demonia, Dominus autem celos fecit" [All the gods of the peoples are demons, but the Lord made the heavens].¹⁶ With tears Eugenia addresses her two companions, eunuchs and schoolmates named Protus and Jacinctus, declaring her intention to cut her hair and go in disguise as a male with her companions to the Christians. (Ælfric, apparently concerned that his audience might not immediately understand the nature of a eunuch, explains without further comment that such men are *belisnode* "castrated".¹⁷) The psalm from the liturgy, the departure from the city, and the change of appearance from female to male all combine to illustrate the spiritual significance of the moment: Eugenia leaves her pagan childhood to begin a journey to Christian maturity, leaves her pagan father's house in search of a new home with a heavenly Father, leaves pagan Alexandria from whence all Christians have been

expelled to seek the City of God, leaves the pagan philosophy in which she has been educated in order to learn Christian wisdom, and leaves the figurative “womanliness” of pagan wisdom for the “manliness,” the *virum perfectum* symbolized by the eunuch, of Christian teachings and a life of virtue and chastity. For an audience familiar with the figural meanings of male and female discussed in chapter 1, Ælfric’s translation maintains the rich texture of these parallel movements and all of their multifaceted symbolism. Eugenia’s change of appearance “on wæpmonna wysan” [in the manner of men] especially symbolizes the Augustinian psychology of conversion, for now the “male” activity of Eugenia’s rational soul, overpowered and dormant while in unbelief, begins to assert itself, to recognize and long for its Creator.¹⁸ Even more, the donning of male garb reflects the concept discussed by several of the fathers of growing in spiritual strength (becoming the *virum perfectum*) as one turns from the world to Christ. As of yet, however, the change is only in appearance, for Eugenia has not yet been instructed in what to believe, and so the conversion is not yet complete. For a nonmonastic audience, there may have been an element of surprise upon hearing about Eugenia’s decision to disguise herself as a man. Ælfric, though, apparently did not believe the move would be offensive, especially given Eugenia’s reasons for doing so—namely her desire to learn about Christ and to avoid being found out and so expelled from among the Christians. To anyone hearing the legend without knowing the complex symbolism of the Latin context, Eugenia’s actions would suggest that the desire for Christ justified such a subterfuge and Eugenia might rightly be admired for her willingness to abandon the outward signs of her female identity out of desire for God. Ælfric is careful not to imply any real change of sex, however, for Eugenia only dresses “on wærlicum hiwe. þæt heo ne wurde ameldod” [in the appearance of men so that she would not be discovered, betrayed].¹⁹

As Eugenia, now in disguise, approaches a monastery she again hears the Christians singing an antiphonal response: “Via iustorum recta facta est; iter sanctorum preparatum est” [The path of the just has been made straight; the way of the holy ones has been prepared].²⁰ In the Latin text, the young woman once more turns to her companions and recounts (in case the audience has missed the point) how she and the two eunuchs, having been instructed by the first song they heard, turned from the pagan gods to seek Christian salvation and now the singing is pointing their way to this monastery. Upon learning about the saintliness of the Bishop Helenus, who rules the monastery, Eugenia asks that she and her

two “brothers” be allowed to come into the monastery. She and her companions enter singing a hymn: “Suscepimus, Deus, misericordiam tuam in medio templo tuo” [We have received, O God, your mercy in the middle of your temple].²¹ Once again, the liturgy within the Latin version tells the story as Eugenia’s entry into the monastery concretely symbolizes her entry into Christian belief and life. Ælfric, however, omits most of this scene. He provides and translates the first antiphonal response, but then abbreviates the conversation between Eugenia and her companions, only rendering the gist of her comments in indirect discourse, and does not provide either the text or a translation of the psalm with which Eugenia and her friends enter the monastery. From this point onward, the entire liturgical theme found in the Latin version disappears from Ælfric’s translation. He brings his nonmonastic audience with Eugenia and her companions to the “rihtwisa wæg” [the way of the just],²² but leaves them outside the monastery by leaving off any further references to the liturgical progression into a monastic life followed in the Latin text. The focus from this point onward in Ælfric’s Old English text is on Eugenia’s example following the way of the just.

At this time in the story, the bishop Helenus, having received the disguised virgin and her companions into the monastery, has a dream “in quo ad simulacrum feminae ducebatur, ut illi sacrificaret” [in which he was led to an image of a woman, in order that he might offer a sacrifice to her].²³ Instead of offering a sacrifice, however, Helenus commands the goddess (*dea*) to know that she is a creation of God and not to permit herself to be worshiped. At once she comes down to Helenus and promises to remain with him until such time as she might be restored to her Creator and maker.²⁴ From this point, Ælfric begins to make significant omissions from his translation of Eugenia’s legend. He has already said in the Latin preface to *Lives of Saints* that “reticemus de libro uitæ patrum, in quo multa subtilia habentur quæ non conueniunt aperiri laicis, nec nos ipsi ea quimus implere” [We keep silent concerning the book *Lives of the Fathers*, in which many matters that require discernment are contained (and) which are not fitting to be disclosed to the laity, nor are we able to fully treat them ourselves],²⁵ and apparently Helenus’s dream fits Ælfric’s description of something requiring discernment. He does not describe the dream nor does he mention the fact that in the Latin text Eugenia’s name is not given in the dream—Helenus has to figure out that the dream referred to her. Ælfric notes only that “him wearð geswutelod on swæfne be þy-sum” [it was revealed to him in a dream about this matter], and adds

that the dream reveals Eugenia's intentions to Helenus by way of explaining how Helenus knows who she is despite her disguise.²⁶ Ælfric possibly considers the content of Helenus's dream too prone to misunderstanding to set forth in his translation, but he still includes the story of the dream in order to show that Helenus's spiritual insight leads him to the truth despite outward appearances.²⁷ In the Latin text, the dream serves as a foreshadowing device and later on in the story it works in coordination with the continuing liturgical elements to create a rich narrative resonance. Ælfric leaves all of these elements out of his translation, changing the texture of the legend but at the same time demonstrating his own skill as a storyteller by retaining the drama, as we shall see.

In the Latin, after waking from his dream, Helenus ponders its meaning and a man arrives to ask that Eugenia and her comrades be admitted to the monastery. Helenus draws Eugenia aside and questions her apart from her "brothers." When she gives her name as Eugenius (the masculine form of Eugenia), Helenus responds: "Recte ... vocaris Eugenius, quia viriliter agendo, virum perfectum in agone dominico te obtulisti." [Rightly ... do you call yourself Eugenius, because by behaving courageously you have presented yourself a perfect man for suffering with the Lord]. After making this point, Helenus orders the virgin to remain in her man's clothing (*virili habitu*) in the monastery.²⁸ Again, Ælfric changes the details passing over how Eugenia calls herself Eugenius and then changing Helenus's response: "He genam hi þa onsundron . and sæde hyre gewislice / hwæt heo man ne wæs" [He took her apart (from her companions) and said to her truly that indeed she was no man].²⁹ Ælfric avoids any suggestion of Eugenia actually becoming Eugenius, and he omits Helenus's comment about her behaving in a "manly" manner or becoming the *virum perfectum*. Even if Ælfric declines to use the language of "manliness" only in order to avoid confusing a nonmonastic audience, the emphatic denial that Eugenia might even figuratively become a man affirms the saint both in her body and in her spirit as a woman. Ælfric affirms the reality of Eugenia's feminine body by insisting on her femaleness instead of following the Latin text in moving her towards androgyny or maleness; he affirms her spiritually by following the example of Alcuin and asserting her capacity as a woman for the same spiritual growth and strength as men without her having to "become a man" in the process. In Ælfric's version of the legend Eugenia's male disguise is precisely that: an entirely outward appearance and a covering.

Ælfric continues to emphasize Eugenia's femaleness as he describes her life in the monastery after Helenus secretly baptizes her and her

companions. In the Latin text, Helenus “iussit eam sic in uirili habitu permanere” [ordered her to continue thus in the condition of a man].³⁰ The Latin term *habitus* (clothing, condition, habit, bearing or nature, character, disposition) loads this statement with connotations of more than just a change of clothing. Eugenia’s life in a masculine *habitus* suggests an ongoing metamorphosis of gender from materially female to the spiritual *virum perfectum*. Ælfric, however, creates a distinction between wearing a man’s clothing and becoming a man. Instead of recreating the symbolism of outward sign and inward reality found in the Latin, Ælfric insists upon establishing the independence of the two, saying “be-bead se biscop þam gebogenan mædene / þæt heo swa þurh-wunade . on þam wærlicum hiwe” [the bishop ordered the converted maiden to continue thus in that manly appearance].³¹ In Old English, *hiw* means “appearance, pretense” or else “kind or species.” If Ælfric had used Old English *wise* (custom, habit, manner and condition, state, circumstance), or *cynd* (nature, quality, character), he could have matched the semantic range of Latin *habitus* more closely. Ælfric, however, has shown himself to be precise about his choice of words in the translations, and so he no doubt chose *hiw* deliberately. This choice limits the possibilities of interpretation for his nonmonastic audience and, in context, limits Eugenia’s “masculinity” to the outward appearance of maleness while showing her attaining spiritual maturity and virtue as a woman.

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

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

[She, in fact, in the manner and mind of a man remained as a man in the aforesaid monastery (or in CCCC 9: in the monastery of men): in this fashion she progressed in divine teachings to such an extent

that within two years she retained almost the entire scriptures of the Lord in memory. So great was her calmness of mind that they called her one of the number of angels. Who might detect that she was a woman when the manliness of Christ and spotless virginity covered her to such a degree that she was truly imitable of men? Her conversation, nevertheless, was humble in charity, distinguished in moderation, without fault, and avoiding excessive eloquence she surpassed all in humility. None was found superior to her in prayer: she consoled the sad, rejoiced with the joyful, soothed the wrathful with one word. She instructed the proud by her own example so that, having been suddenly made a sheep from a wolf, he delighted to believe.]³²

The Latin text continues the theme of Eugenia's progression toward the *virum perfectum*: she grows in knowledge of Christian doctrine, memorizes nearly all of the scriptures(!), and sets the rest of the monastery such an example in speech that the anonymous author claims that Eugenia is truly able to be imitated by men. The feats of memory described here are the root of everything else, for memory is the place of self-formation. As Kurt Danziger observes, "Clearly, monastic memory was different from [memory necessary for constructing arguments and ordering information] in that its primary domain was the fostering of the virtuous life. This it accomplished when the individual became immersed in textual depictions of virtue to the point that they took over his or her life."³³ A memory full of the scriptures and teachings of Christianity would be both a treasure-house and a temple, a place in which to know God, define oneself in relationship with God, and from which to construct and enact the virtues of the *virum perfectum*. The tone and context of this passage make clear that Eugenia's imitability is not a matter of her example shaming men so that they will do better—after all, within the context of the life, the men in the monastery did not know that she was a woman—but rather of Eugenia truly surpassing men at being “manly” in Christ. Not only does she have a better-equipped intellect than the rest of her “brothers,” she is the meta-gendered *virum perfectum* and they are not. The tone of the Latin work expresses no envy, no competitiveness, just straightforward admiration. In the Latin version, the clothes do not conceal Eugenia’s womanhood, rather her moral excellence (*virtus Christi*) and her virginity transcend the fact of her female sex, rendering the biological clothing of her soul irrelevant. Ælfric, on the other hand, never allows his audience to forget that Eugenia is a woman. In his translation, she triumphs not through sexless-

ness but by demonstrating under cover in her own body that women can be not only men's equals in virtue, but their betters as well.

The Old English translation of the Latin passage above is the only place where Ælfric adopts the language of manliness when referring to Eugenia herself: "Eugenia þa wunode on þam mynstre / mid wærlicum mode . þeah þe heo mæden wäre" [Eugenia then remained in that minster with a manly (or heroic) mind, although she was a young woman].³⁴ Ælfric still carefully insists that Eugenia is a woman, though, and never lets his nonmonastic audience think that having a "manly or heroic" mind could in any way change her physical womanliness. And what kind of characteristics did Ælfric want his audience to associate with Eugenia's "manly" mind? He outlines them as he describes how Eugenia

heold on hyre þeawum halige drotnunge / ðurh modes liþnesse .
and mycelre eadmodnesse / and þurh halige mægnu . þam hælende
ge-cwæmde. / Heo þeah on lare . þæs rihtan gelefan / and on
godcundlicum gewrytum mid godum wyllan / and wearð awend of
wulfe to sceape .

[maintained in her conduct a holy way of life through gentleness of mind and great humility, and by means of holy might she served the Savior. She flourished in the teachings of true belief and in spiritual writings with great determination, and became changed from a wolf into a sheep.]³⁵

Ælfric emphasizes gentleness and humility, focuses upon pleasing or serving the Savior through holy strength and the study of spiritual writings. Interestingly enough, he does not mention her virginity; even more interestingly, he does mention the change from wolf to sheep that is found in the Latin, but his translation (in which Eugenia is the one changed from a wolf into a sheep) shifts the focus of the change from the proud one instructed by Eugenia in the Latin text to Eugenia herself, creating an interpretive dilemma in the process. How would Ælfric have explained such a change in the saint, since, as Paul E. Szarmach notes, "Eugenia has hardly been wolvish in any of her actions or thoughts"?³⁶ This characterization of her as a former wolf does not seem to fit the context that Ælfric has provided, even though it does (in a rather heavy-handed way) accurately illustrate her moral redirection. On the other hand, Gopa Roy asserts that "It is not clear in the Old English, however, whether the reference to her turning from a wolf to a sheep denotes her spiritual growth, her progress from paganism to Christianity—or, at the same time, to

her having become, in some way, though a woman, like a man. Perhaps Ælfric has not been careful enough about possible ambiguities in his adaptation.”³⁷ While the possibility of a textual variant in the Latin exemplar may explain the enigma of Ælfric’s portrayal of Eugenia as a wolf, it still does not explain how he and his audience might have made sense of such a depiction. Ælfric uses the wolf as a symbol for unbelieving people and the sheep to represent those who believe in his homilies and other hagiographical works and so the most likely interpretation Ælfric and his audience would have attached to this comment would be in line with the context in which it appears: a description of Eugenia’s transformation into a new person. No longer defined by the pagan wolvishness of unbelief, she exemplifies in mind and deed the ideal of the humble sheep of Christ.

To this point, Ælfric has directed the attention of his audience toward the change of character and identity that Eugenia experienced as a result of her study and practice of right belief.³⁸ Now, however, he returns to the Latin account of Eugenia’s pagan family and describes their mental state in contrast to the virgin’s: “Philippus ða se fæder forwearð on mode / and seo modor claudia . mid murcnunge wæs for-numen / and eall seo mægð on mode wearð astyred / and sohten þæt mæden mid myclere sarnysse” [Then the father, Philip, sickened in mind and the mother, Claudia, was consumed with sorrow; and all the household became anxious in their minds and searched for the young woman with great distress].³⁹ The Latin text also depicts the family’s response to Eugenia’s disappearance as one of overwhelming grief: “Erat itaque planctus inextimabilis, fletus inmensus: lugebantque universi inconfuse; parentes filiam, sororem fratres, servi dominam; et tenebat universos meror, et infinita animi tribulatio” [Therefore the lamentation was incalculable, the weeping immeasurable: the whole household mourned unashamedly; the parents for their daughter, the brothers for their sister, the servants for their mistress; and grief possessed them all, and boundless distress of mind].⁴⁰ Both versions describe the grief of the entire household—parents, brothers, and servants—but Ælfric’s translation imposes rather more restraint upon the scene and emphasizes the debilitating effect that the distress has upon their minds. In the extremity of their sorrow, Philip and Claudia consult sorcerers and their pagan gods to find out what has become of their daughter. Upon being told (falsely, the Latin author and Ælfric point out) that Eugenia has been stolen into the heavens by the gods, Philip orders a golden image of his daughter to be made, so that she might be worshiped along with the other gods. Their minds disordered by grief, ignorant as

yet of the God whose image they bear, the members of Eugenia's spiritually blind family seek consolation from their pagan gods and sorcerers but receive only deception and false hope. Their devotion to Eugenia, however, leads to the fulfillment of bishop Helenus's dream in the Latin text about the virgin in which he had been brought to the golden figure of a goddess and had then commanded her to know that she was a creature and not to allow herself to be worshiped. This dream connects Helenus directly to Eugenia's father, Philip.

The parallel oppositions in the Latin text between the bishop Helenus and Philip are striking: Philip is left behind and Helenus is sought; Philip loses a daughter and Helenus gains a "son"; Philip has a disordered mind that cannot perceive spiritual realities, but Helenus has a mind restored to right order by God and so sees beyond outward appearances to the truth about Eugenia; Philip is deceived into worshiping an image of his daughter, but Helenus orders the image in his dream not to allow herself to be worshiped. Eugenia's two "fathers" contrast sharply the states of disordered unbelief and rightly ordered belief. The disorder of Philip's mind, however, shows most vividly in his anger.

After several years, Philip sees Eugenia again for the first time, but he does not recognize her as his daughter. In the intervening time, she has been made the abbot of the monastery after Helenus's death by acclamation of the brothers, and has gained a reputation as a miraculous healer. One of her female patients, having been overcome with lust for the "abbot" after being healed of a disease, attempts to seduce Eugenia and receives a crushing rebuff for her efforts. Melantia, the woman scorned, rushes to Philip and accuses the "abbot" of attempted rape, whereupon Philip becomes violently or exceedingly enraged, *vehementer irascitur*,⁴¹ a state of mind consistently associated with the hegemonic masculinity of non-Christian rulers in the narratives of the Roman Martyrs. This same kind of language characterizes Philip's conduct of Eugenia's trial as the Latin author describes him as *vehementer iratus* (exceedingly or violently wrathful) (although the CCL version has *vehementer commotus* [exceedingly or violently moved or excited]).⁴² Ælfric preserves the same characterization of uncontrollable rage when he translates *vehementer irascitur* as Old English *swiðe gehat-heort*, literally "exceedingly hot-hearted" or "exceedingly enraged." In both versions Philip then imprisons Eugenia and her brethren while he prepares various tortures such as fire and beasts and other punishments for the Christians, although Ælfric does not name the tortures as the Latin does: "Abtantur eculei, verbera,

ferae, flammae, tortores; et caetera, quae solent abscondita cordis exculpere, praeparantur” [The rack, scourge, wild animals, fires, and tortures are made ready; and other things that customarily force out the secrets of the heart are prepared].⁴³ In omitting these details, Ælfric’s translation loses the concrete vividness of words such as *flammae* “flames” and *ferae* “wild beasts” that illustrate some of the connotations of the Latin word *ira*.⁴⁴ Tyrannical Philip’s own bestial ferocity illustrates the inward condition of his mind: he is like a beast, ruled by violent passion rather than by reason. Augustine describes the process as one in which fallen humankind, “incipiens a peruerso appetitu similitudinis dei peruenit ad similitudinem pecorum” [beginning from a distorted appetite for being like God they end up by becoming like beasts].⁴⁵ Augustine concludes that “cum sit honor eius similitudo dei, dedecus autem eius similitudo pecoris: *Homo in honore positus non intellexit; comparatus est iumentis insensatis et similis factus est eis*” [since his honor consists in being like God and his disgrace in being like an animal, *man established in honor did not understand; he was matched with senseless cattle and became like them*].⁴⁶ For a learned monastic audience, the theme would resonate with Ambrose’s description of the “manly” lion that refused to attack the virgin of Antioch and the “beastly” men that were ready to brutalize, rape, and martyr her.⁴⁷ As with the Latin text, Ælfric repeats the idea of the tyrant’s violent anger when he says that Philip addresses Eugenia (before he knows who she is) “mid ful-lum graman” [with utter rage].⁴⁸ Because Philip has made himself like God by making his own daughter into a goddess (in fulfillment of Helenus’s dream) and by driving the Christians from Alexandria, Philip has fallen within his own soul from reflecting the image of God down to the level of unreasoning beasts, ruled by his own passions instead of by the *imago Dei* within himself. Ælfric’s picture of the unbelieving tyrannical ruler is nothing but grim.

“Pa wearð se geræfa . þearle gebolgen” [Then the prefect became violently angry].⁴⁹ Philip’s anger only increases as all of Melantia’s servants falsely testify against Eugenia, describing how the “abbot” tried to rape their mistress on her sickbed. At this moment of heightened intensity and imminent danger, as the full wrath of the court hangs suspended over Eugenia’s head, Philip demands to know how Eugenia can ever prove her innocence. In the Latin text, this climactic confrontation brings the two opposing states of mind into sharp contrast. Eugenia’s mind, rightly ordered through belief in Christ, exemplifies gentleness, humility, calmness, and perfect self-control in the midst of a seemingly hopeless

situation; Philip's mind demonstrates the bestial nature of the fallen, disordered, deceived mind of the unbeliever. As the two face each other, every eye and every ear focuses upon Eugenia as she responds:

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

[So great, indeed, is the power of his (Christ's) name that even women standing in awe of him may obtain manly esteem. For in the faith no difference of sex is able to be found, since the blessed Paul, teacher of all Christians, says that with God there is no distinction of masculine and feminine, for all are one in Christ. Therefore, fervently receiving in my mind the confidence of this standard, which I possess in Christ, I did not desire to be a woman. I truly considered that pretense through which a woman plays the part of a man not to be adverse to virtue, although this is more rightly to be punished if a man feigns a woman through a disposition for vices. And this is rightly to be praised if, for the love of virtue, the weaker sex imitates manly honor. For that reason, kindled by the divine love of religion, I now have chosen a manly condition, and I have displayed the *virum perfectum* by courageously maintaining my virginity for Christ.]⁵⁰

In this climactic moment in the Latin life, as the beastly man and the manly woman face each other in a highly symbolic confrontation between paganism and Christianity, Eugenia proves herself to be the *virum perfectum* by the very act of proving herself to be a woman. She tears apart her upper clothing and reveals the womanly feature of her breasts for all to see, thus proving herself innocent of the charge of rape.⁵¹ She obtains the status of *virum perfectum* first by refusing marriage (in the Latin text), then by preserving her virginity even though surrounded by men, and by

not lapsing into the love of luxury and of seductive lust displayed in her accuser, Melantia. Indeed, she has proved in her own body that in Christ there is neither male nor female by clothing herself outwardly as a man, but inwardly clothing herself with Christ so that she did not become a man, but became metagendered in Christ, reflecting both the feminine and masculine virtues of Christ's character. By living bodily and mentally as a metagendered *virum perfectum* among gendered men striving for the same, she set the example of Christian virtue for men and ruled over them in the monastery.

By the same token, her two companions, Protus and Jacinctus prove the same point in the opposite direction through their status as eunuchs, for they "imitabantur eam, et erant in omnibus obtemperantes ei" [imitated her and were conforming (or submitting) to her in all matters].⁵² The unmanned men follow Eugenia toward perfect "manliness" in the *schola Christi*.⁵³ By placing a woman and two eunuchs at the center of an exemplary narrative about achieving perfect "manliness," the anonymous Latin author emphasizes the figurative and symbolic nature of this third gender whereby it becomes a sign of a greater reality that has nothing to do with sex and everything to do with spiritual and moral strength. The sign of Eugenia's perfection is the strength by which she preserves her virginity in Christ while becoming more like Christ in humility and other virtues in the process. The sign that she has accomplished this perfection is her own distinctly female body, her own breasts.

Eugenia's entire speech about obtaining the *virum perfectum* receives only indirect and monothematic treatment in Ælfric's translation. By means of indirect discourse, Ælfric focuses on the saint's preservation of her virginity through her male disguise, again limiting Eugenia's "masculinity" to her appearance, resolutely insisting upon her physical reality as a woman while simultaneously exalting her spiritual strength in maintaining her virginity and keeping her secret for so many years. This indirect treatment blunts the drama of the symbolic transformation of identity in Eugenia's spiritual quest found in the Latin text, but it also circumvents any opportunity for confusion on the part of Ælfric's lay audience. In the Old English text, the desire for Christ and preservation of virginity are the only acceptable reasons for Eugenia's transvestitism; there are no other symbolic implications to the disguise.

Eugenia's revelation of her womanhood, however, remains the dramatic focal point in the Old English life: "Æfter þysum wordum heo totær hyre gewædu / and æt-æwde hyre breost . þam breman philippe / and

cwæð him to . þu eart min fæder” [After these words she tore her clothing and showed her breast to the raging Philip, and said to him, ‘You are my father!?’]⁵⁴ The violence of the motion in the verb *to-teran* (tear to pieces, lacerate, cut out, destroy) and the direct, blunt immediacy of Eugenia’s assertion that the raging Philip is her father compensate for the loss of dramatic capital in Ælfric’s handling of the previous section. In the Latin text, Eugenia immediately covers her breast as soon as she has exposed it and before she says anything to Philip. In Ælfric’s translation, however, the revelation of Eugenia’s womanly body and of her relationship to her judge are simultaneous. Eugenia’s statement in the Latin version is an almost leisurely observation: “Tu quidem mihi secundum carnem pater” [Surely, you are my father according to the flesh], whereas Ælfric renders Eugenia’s words as a stark, forceful, almost accusatory declamation as she bares her breasts.⁵⁵

In addition, Ælfric does not translate the Latin line wherein Eugenia immediately covers her breasts. Rather, he leaves Eugenia exposed, leaves her covering of her breasts indeterminate. In this instance, at least, the Latin original shows more modesty than Ælfric’s translation, calling into question the idea that Ælfric possessed “a certain nervousness about the power of the gaze and the knowledge it yields.”⁵⁶ Instead, Ælfric’s translation makes Eugenia’s bare torso the dramatic focal point of the story, inviting the gaze with electrifying results. The knowledge revealed by her body joins with the knowledge of relationship revealed by her words to effect not only the conversion of her family, but also of the crowd of spectators who witness the event—making Eugenia their spiritual mother.

This moment of vindication and of recognition leads to a joyful reunion that includes the populace of Alexandria that had gathered for the spectacle of the trial and the tortures that had been prepared. Instead of hellish punishments, however, “deferuntur vestimenta auro texta, et licet invita, induitur, atque in excelso tribunali inposita, in sublime adtollitur, et ab omni populo conclamatur: Unus Deus, Christus, unus et verus Deus christianorum” [vestments woven with gold were brought, and although unwilling, she was clothed and placed upon the highest tribunal, raised up on high, and all the populace shouted: “There is one God, Christ, the one and true God of the Christians.”]⁵⁷ Ælfric renders the passage in this fashion: “Hi þa gefretewodon . þa fæmnan mid golde / hyre un-bances . and up gesætton to him” [Then they adorned the virgin with gold—she, unwilling—and placed [her] up with them].⁵⁸ Philip has been seated on his tribunal, his two sons beside him, so that they formed a sort of family trinity

as they sat together. Eugenia has now been brought to the highest tribunal (*in excelso tribunali*), clothed in gold, and seated with them. The mental image created by this scene is of Eugenia enthroned with three men in a highly suggestive parallel to artwork that places Mary with the Trinity in glory. Eugenia's unwillingness to be so honored resonates with the Virgin Mary's well-known humility. The symbolic apotheosis of the virgin in the text mirrors the apotheosis of the Virgin Mother of God.

Following this scene and its accompanying mass conversion of all those present, including Eugenia's family, both the Latin life and Ælfric's translation narrate in short order the martyrdom of Philip (murdered while praying in the church), the departure of Eugenia and the rest of the family to Rome, and the martyrdoms of Basilla (one of Eugenia's converts), Protus, and Jacinctus, before describing Eugenia's own torments and martyrdom. Campbell Bonner, in his early analysis of possible folkloric elements in the Latin life, observes that "it will probably be conceded by most critics that the martyrdom of Eugenia and her family is a pious addition to the legend, which originally concluded with the scene of recognition and reunion."⁵⁹ Certainly this second part of the Latin story lacks the male/female dynamic of the first part, drops the liturgical elements entirely, and unlike the earlier part gets distracted into the sub-life of a virgin named Basilla. By the time the legend reaches Ælfric, all the martyrdoms listed above have accreted to the story and he includes them in his translation. Ælfric's version of the story as a whole, however, is more uniform in tone and theme than the Latin version because Ælfric has removed the male/female imagery and has removed the liturgical progression of the first part of the legend out of his translation, so the original story blends more smoothly with the martyrdoms that were added later. When Ælfric's readers come to the added part in the Old English version, there is nothing to signal that anything has changed from the original story. The two themes that remain constant across the two sections are Eugenia's virginity and perfected mind. Ælfric uses these ideas as his unifying concept, creating a more coherent work in the process.

As Eugenia's life nears its end, she again appears before a hostile judge. By refusing to worship an image of Diana, indeed, by bringing down the goddess's temple through prayer, Eugenia receives the emperor's condemnation. Various means of inflicting death are attempted, such as tying a stone around her neck and throwing her into the river, burning her in an oven, and then starving her of food and light for twenty days in prison when the first two methods failed. God miraculously saves Eugenia

from all of these executions, first by breaking the stone and making her sit on top of the water. While she is in prison, Christ appears, illuminating the prison “mid heofonlicum leohte” [with heavenly light] and providing the saint with a white loaf of bread.⁶⁰ The symbolism here is clear: Christ provides spiritual food and light to Eugenia’s soul, which in turn sustains her body. Then Christ tells her, “Noli timere, Eugenia, ego sum salvator tuus, cui tota et integra semper mentis devotione servisti: eodem te die in celo suscipiam quod ipse descendit ad terras.” [“Do not fear, Eugenia, I am your Savior, whom you have always served by complete and total devotion of mind. I will receive you into heaven on the same day that I descended to earth”].⁶¹ Christ’s words point out the mind that Eugenia has preserved with complete integrity rather than the body, valuing the mental integrity that Augustine outlines in *De civitate Dei* and that Ambrose depicts in his life of the Virgin of Antioch.⁶² Ælfric translates, “Ic eom þin hælend . þe þu healice wurðost / and mid eallum mode . and mægne lufast / On þam dæge þa scealt cuman to me . þe ic com to mannum / and on minre gebyrd-tide / ðu bist on heofonum gebroht” [I am your Savior, whom you worship profoundly and love with all your mind and might. You will come to me on the day that I came to men and women, and you will be brought to heaven on the feast day of my birth].⁶³ In Ælfric’s translation, these words of Christ to Eugenia are the first that are given in direct discourse in the entire second part, making them the climactic focal point of the events following Eugenia’s self-revelation. Again, no mention is made of Eugenia’s bodily virginity. Christ instead recounts how she had always loved him with all her might and mind. Ælfric wants his audience to know that bodily purity means nothing without the purity of a mind devoted in love to Christ. In its reference to the totality of Eugenia’s mental devotion the Latin text distantly echoes the wording of Mark 12:30: “Diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo et ex tota anima tua et ex tota mente tua et ex tota virtute tua hoc est primum mandatum” [You will love the Lord your God with your entire heart, with your entire soul, with your entire mind, and with your entire strength. This is the first commandment].⁶⁴ Ælfric recognizes the allusion and brings the thrust of the biblical passage to the forefront when he departs from the Latin wording by having Christ place the emphasis on the action of love rather than the action of service. The primacy of Eugenia’s love for Christ demonstrates the right ordering of her mind and exemplifies the harmony of restored relationship to God that manifests itself in her love for Christ and her reflection of his metagendered *imago*.

Accordingly, in translating the Life of Eugenia to show the journey of the soul for nonmonastic people, Ælfric still focuses upon the right ordering of Eugenia's mind, showing her progress toward the spiritual ideal of the *virum perfectum* in Christ (though he never calls it that). First, he contrasts her restored mind with the disordered mind of her father before his conversion, and then points out that the sign of a rightly ordered mind is wholehearted love for the Savior. Ælfric does not deny the female body in his text—far from that, he affirms it by insisting upon the reality of Eugenia's womanhood. But even Eugenia's virginity seems to come second to the transformation of her mind through her love for Christ. In Ælfric's version of her *passio*, Eugenia enacts an unnamed gender that highlights the soul as it is supposed to be: reigning like a queen over the body by keeping it in chastity and shaping itself to the highest level of virtue through study and memory then practice. This undefined gender has only one true characteristic—an unshakable single-minded and single-hearted love for Christ.

Alban: *Sanctus Humilior*

St. Alban holds pride of place as both a Roman martyr and as a native British saint.⁶⁵ Ælfric's source, Bede, sets the scene for his *passio* by briefly describing the persecution that took place during the reign of the emperors Diocletian and Maximianus. Alban becomes a target for the fury of a local Roman magistrate when he shelters a fugitive priest during this widespread persecution of Christians. Bede describes the coemperors as ordering “uastari ecclesias, affligi interficique Christianos” [churches to be wasted and the Christians to be persecuted and slain].⁶⁶ Ælfric only describes Diocletian and is much less reserved than Bede. The emperor is *cwealm-bære* (murderous) and “reðe cwellere . / swa þæt he acwealde and acwellan het” [a violent killer, such that he killed and commanded to kill].⁶⁷ Further, Ælfric writes that the men who carry out the emperor's orders do so “mid ormetre wodnysse” [with excessive frenzy/madness],⁶⁸ a detail not found in Bede, but that perhaps suggests the Vikings of Ælfric's own day. Diocletian's magistrate who ultimately orders Alban's execution is similarly described by Bede and Ælfric as enraged and full of fury when he encounters Alban.⁶⁹ All of these descriptions emphasize the uncontaminated violence and mindless fury that characterize the emperor and his representatives, the hegemonic men with power to condemn and to kill in the legends of the Roman martyrs. They exemplify the dehumanizing

effects of the vice of *ira* and the worship of idols, evidence of a disordered soul that lacks self-control, which suffers from a kind of insanity and lack of health-giving knowledge that leads to a masculinity either bestial or devilish in its unjust aggression and unrestrained violence.⁷⁰

Against this fiery and threatening background, both Bede and Ælfric introduce Alban as a haven of hospitality, even though Alban is himself a pagan. We receive no background on Alban, no clear indication of his social rank or of his economic standing except that he has his own house and can support at least himself and the fugitive priest. Ælfric refers to Alban as “se æpela martyr” (the noble martyr),⁷¹ but Ælfric may have been thinking of the *Te deum*’s reference to the “noble army of martyrs” rather than noting Alban’s worldly social rank. Bede never refers directly to Alban as being of worldly noble rank and, further, the magistrate who later carries out the persecution against the saint has to ask Alban’s name and who his family is. This is a stock device in hagiography, but it seems reasonable to expect that a local or even regional official will be familiar with the local nobility, but in this case the judge apparently only knows who Alban is not—the priest the magistrate wants to prosecute—and has no idea who Alban actually is. Further, neither Bede nor Ælfric indicate Alban’s marital status. No mention is made of wife or children nor of any decision on Alban’s part to remain unmarried. If Alban had a family, they disappeared into irrelevance for Bede and Ælfric.

Alban’s path to martyrdom begins when he provides shelter for the priest who is fleeing the persecution. Bede focuses his readers’ attention on Alban’s action, how he provides hospitality to the priest then observes the man as he prays.⁷² In Ælfric, however, the priest is the actor, escaping from the frenzied persecutors and running in secret to Alban’s house and hiding there.⁷³ Alban provided a place of safety to the priest and “þa began se preost swa swa he god lufode / his gebedu singan and swyðe fæstan . / and dæges and nihtes his drihten herian” [then the priest, because he loved God, began to sing his services and fast very much and praise his Lord by day and by night].⁷⁴ Ælfric provides more information about the priest’s activities than Bede does, who only mentions that the man keeps vigils and prays continually. Ælfric instead foregrounds the priest’s love for God (a detail not found in Bede), his singing and fasting, and praising—none of which appear by name in Bede. Ælfric mentions no books and seems to assume that the priest had his offices memorized because of his love for God so that he could continue his regular services of worship in the temple of his memory, regardless of whether in a church or not.

Carruthers remarks that “prodigious memory is almost a trope of saints’ lives,” usually as an example of the desire of the saint to know and become more like Christ by memorizing and “embodying” the Gospel as Eugenia did, but applicable here to the nameless priest.⁷⁵ Intimate knowledge of the services of God and the willing performance of them is the proper work of the clergy and necessary for the well-being and safety of the laity according to Ælfric. Singing and praying may not seem to accomplish much compared to fighting and farming, but Ælfric makes his case for the value of the clergy’s services of worship in “De oratione Moysi” (*LS* 13) when he writes, “Be ðysum man mæg tocnawan þæt micclum fremiað / þam læwedium mannum . þa gelæredan godes ðeowas . / þæt hi mid heora ðeow-dome him ðingian to gode . / nu god wolde arian eallum ðam synfullum . / gif he þær gemette tyn riht-wise menn” [By this one may know that the learned servants of God greatly benefit the unlearned people, that with their divine service they (the clergy) intercede for them (the laypeople) to God since God wished to spare all the sinful ones (of Sodom) if he found ten people who did rightly].⁷⁶ From Ælfric’s perspective, if it were not for the faithfulness of the monks, nuns, and other clergy in the praise of God, the people of England might have suffered even worse things than the Viking attacks because of their sins.

In addition to singing the offices, however, the faithful priest also uses the time between his services “secgan ðone soðan gelefan / þam arwurþan albane . oþþæt he gelyfde / on ðone soðan god” [to speak of the true faith to the honorable Alban until he believed in the true God].⁷⁷ The psalms were considered to be a comprehensive text of “the true faith” and the priest would have known them all by heart as a standard part of his education along with the scriptures used in the liturgy so that he was able to teach Alban all that was needful for him to become a believer in Christ. Thus, through faithful love and performance of his service to God and from the library of his memory, the fugitive priest speaks to Alban, who is instructed, converted, and strengthened in his faith. The priest continues to dwell with Alban until the local magistrate discovers his whereabouts. Bede’s version simply notes that divine grace led Alban to imitate the behavior he saw in the priest and, being instructed bit by bit, Alban “Christianus integro ex corde factus est” [becomes a wholehearted Christian].⁷⁸ Ælfric does not mention the action of divine grace in Alban’s soul, but rather makes the priest the actor in bringing Alban to salvation.

The strength of Alban’s faith comes to the test fairly quickly, for Diocletian’s magistrate discovers that Alban has given refuge to the priest

and “mid fullum graman” [with utter rage] sends his officers to bring the priest to judgment.⁷⁹ Alban, however, “eode ut to þam ehterum / mid ðæs preostes hakelan swylce he hit wære . / and hine nolde ameldian ðam manfullum ehterum” [went out to the persecutors wearing the vestment of the priest as if he were that man, and he would not betray him to the wicked persecutors].⁸⁰ Alban uses what means he has to protect the life of the man of God. He apparently is not a military man for he has no weapons to use or to lay aside. He protects the priest by taking advantage of the fact that the officers do not know who they are looking for except by his clothing, but he also proclaims his new faith by putting on garments that unmistakably identify him as Christian. Mary Harlow notes that “proponents of Christianity seem to have used dress as a marker from an early date” and the saints’ legends reflect this practice.⁸¹ The change of garment was a frequent motif in Ambrose and became a popular feature of hagiography, especially in the legends of former military men where much is made in the Latin *passiones* of taking off military dress and donning identifiably Christian garments. Alban, however, is apparently not a military man and so has no identifiably military clothing or equipment to shed when he takes on the priest’s vestments. Though he takes advantage of the ignorance of the guards, the change of clothing is not so much a disguise as a statement, and the magistrate understands it very well when he sees and recognizes that Alban is not the man he meant to arrest.

A further point may be taken from Alban’s action here, and may have been part of Ælfric’s decision to include this legend in his translations. Alban demonstrates a nonmilitary layman’s valuation of the faithful clergy and at the same time enacts a nonhegemonic but nonetheless heroic kind of masculinity. Having seen the priest’s faithfulness and received soul-saving instruction from the learned man, Alban values his work enough to give his own life to protect the man of God. Protecting a guest is his obligation as a host who has given shelter to a man in need, but that obligation did not require Alban to take on the priest’s clothing and surrender himself to the authorities instead of simply seeing the priest to another place of safety and refusing to reveal him.⁸² No, by taking the priest’s identity Alban attempts to free the priest to go without fear and continue his work of worship and instruction. Whether he was ultimately successful in this goal or not Ælfric does not say, but the example remains: even a non-military layman can enact a heroic gender associated with nobility in the kingdom of heaven (martyrdom) to protect the clergy, those who in turn defend him spiritually by means of their faithful prayers and teaching. The

example of Alban serves to illustrate what Ælfric says more directly in the “Item alia: Qui sunt oratores, laboratores, bellatores” (*LS* 25) found at the end of his translation of the Maccabees:

Nu swincð se yrðlincg embe urne biglefan . / and se woruld-cempa
 sceall winnan wið ure fynd / and se godes þeowa sceall symle for
 us gebiddan . / and feohtan gastlice . wið þa ungesewenlican fynd .
 / Is nu for-þy mare þæra muneca gewinn / wið þa ungesewenlican
 deofla þe syrwið embe us . / þonne sy þæra woruld-manna þe
 winnað wiþ ða flæsclican . / and wið þa gesewenlican feohtad . /
 Nu ne sceolon þa woruld-cempan to þam woruld-licum gefeohte /
 þa godes þeowan neadian fram þam gastlican gewinne . / forðan þe
 him fremað swiðor þæt þa ungesewenlican fynd / beon ofer-swyðde
 þonne ða gesewenlican .

[Now the farmer works for our food, the worldly warrior must strive against our foes, and the servant of God must always continue praying for us and fighting spiritually against the unseen foes. Now greater is the warfare of the monks against the unseen devils that lay snares around us than may be that of the worldly men who strive against the fleshly foes and fight against visible enemies. At this time the worldly champions must not force the servants of God from the spiritual battle to that worldly warfare, because it will benefit them more that the unseen foes be overcome than those that are seen.]⁸³

While each order of society has its purpose and each order needs the support of the others, the spiritual battle undertaken by the clergy is the most foundational and important, for other problems are just the visible manifestations of laxity and neglect in this area. Ælfric carries the point home in “De oratione Moysi” by calling to remembrance that in the so-called “golden age” of Anglo-Saxon England when monastic vocation was honored, there was peace and the laity were prepared to defend against any foes, then asking “Hu wæs hit ða siððan ða þa man towarp munuc-lif . / and godes biggengas to bysmore hæfde . / buton þæt us com to cwealm and hunger . / and siððan hæðen here us hæfde to bysmre” [How was it then afterward when people cast away the monastic life and held the services of God in disgrace except that plague and hunger came to us and afterward the heathen hosts held us in contempt]?⁸⁴ Alban’s example of sacrificial regard for the faithful priest who loved God enough to continue to sing his offices even when alone and in hiding would continue in the memories of Ælfric’s audience, perhaps to influence their own actions should the

occasion arise. The Anglo-Saxon laymen who heard Alban's legend might find in it an acceptable construction of gender that they could enact themselves, while all layfolk in general, men and women, would learn to hold the work of their priests in high regard.

The Roman magistrate in the legend, however, practically raves in his anger over Alban's conversion and protection of the priest. His aggressive, violent, lack of self-control depicts an unredeemed hegemonic masculinity that seeks to dominate and destroy whatever opposes it. When he sees Alban he immediately recognizes that the saint is *not* the man he was expecting and also recognizes the meaning of his clothing. "Deofollice gram" [devilishly furious], the judge then threatens Alban with the same torments he had planned for the priest unless Alban recants his Christian faith and bows to the official's gods.⁸⁵ Ælfric then shows that it is better to be a soldier for God's kingdom than for any earthly emperor's (or Viking's), saying that "albanus næs asyrrht for his feondlicum þeow-racan . / forðan þe he wæs ymb-gyrd mid godes wæpnum / to þam gastlicum gecampe" [Alban was not frightened by his hostile threats because he was completely armed with the weapons of God for that spiritual battle].⁸⁶ Both Bede and Ælfric invoke the image of the *milites Christi*, but only Ælfric actually mentions weapons and a little later refers to Alban as "se godes cempa" [the champion of God].⁸⁷ If not a military man before, Alban now served as a soldier of Christ armed with the weapons given to him by God: memory of faithful instruction from the priest, a bold confession, and patient fortitude under torture.⁸⁸

Once Alban's execution had been ordered, his martyrdom is delayed by a crowd of men and women who were moved to go with him. Bede suggests that they were led by divine inspiration, but Ælfric simply notes they were *onbryrde* (stirred up).⁸⁹ Everyone in town seemed to be part of the crowd, so that Bede observes "Denique cunctis pene egressis iudex sine obsequio in ciuitate substiterat" [In fact almost everyone had gone out so that the judge was left behind in the city without any attendants at all]. Ælfric slips a bit of humor into his translation, saying "Hit gelamp ða . swa þæt se geleafleasa dema / ungerereordod sæt . on ðære ceastrā oð æfen / butan ælcere ðenunge unþances fæstende" [It came about that the unbelieving judge sat without food in the town until evening, and without attendants besides, grudgingly fasting].⁹⁰ All of the judge's household apparently had joined the procession with Alban. Alban performs a miracle in order to cross the river without using the bridge blocked by the crowd, and the executioner who witnesses the miracle throws down

his sword and converts to Christianity. Bede says that “ergo is ex persecutore factus esset collega uieritatis et fidei” [therefore from a persecutor he was made a companion in truth and faith], or, as Ælfric puts it, “He wearð þa gean-læht mid anrædum geleafan / to ðam halgan were” [he then became united with single-minded belief to that holy man], joined by a common faith to a common fate.⁹¹ There follows an awkward moment in which none of the other executioners move to pick up the sword to carry out the execution. Whether they were astonished by Alban’s miracle or by the unexpected conversion of their comrade, none of the soldiers seems to want to carry through with the deed. The one who finally does pays for his irreverence by both eyes bursting out of his own head as he strikes off Alban’s head, and all hit the ground together.⁹² Gruesome as that event is, it does not deter the rest of the soldiers from also beheading the soldier who converted before they report back to the hungry judge. So great was the reverence they communicated, that the judge who ordered Alban’s death put a halt to the persecutions in his precinct out of reverence for the martyr.⁹³

In Ælfric’s *passio* of Alban, this nonmilitary saint constructed through his actions a heroic, nonviolent kind of masculinity that transformed the violent masculinity of one executioner into martyrdom and reduced the hegemonic masculinity of the judge to fasting. Characterized by the virtues of hospitality, self-sacrifice, faith, courage, and desire for God, this unnamed Christian gender for laymen possessed nothing of worldly power, yet overcame all the earthly powers that arrayed themselves against it. Alban’s choice of identity and alliance with Christ led to his choice of martyrdom as a means of enacting his desire to be with God. And behind Ælfric’s depiction of Alban’s nonhegemonic “masculinity” was another, even less hegemonic gender enacted by the priest—quieter yet more necessary because of being foundational to Alban’s faith: the faithful and loving obedience of the unnamed priest to his duties of praising God and instructing layfolk like Alban to conversion and faith. This is the gender that Ælfric himself enacts and that Helenus, Protus, and Jacinctus exemplified in the *passio* of Eugenia. In the *passio* of Alban, Ælfric reminds his audience that despite its lack of visible, earthly power, it is the most important, yet underrated and difficult, performance of gender of all when he writes “sy wuldor and lof þam welwillendan scyppende / seðe ure fæderas feondum æt-bræd . / and to fulluhte gebigde þurh his bydelas” [Glory and praise be to the benevolent Creator who rescued our fathers from the fiends and persuaded them to Christianity through his

preachers].⁹⁴ Within Ælfric's conception of masculinities, this "masculinity" of the chaste, faithful, learned man is the most counterintuitively effective and generative of all, for while drawing little attention to itself it is necessary to make saints of others.

* * *

This last paragraph presents some difficulties with language in discussing the alternative "masculinities" illustrated in Ælfric's *passio* of Alban, for the two men discussed here do not conform to the hegemonic masculinity defined by the emperor and his representatives. Rather, Alban and the priest (and briefly the converted executioner) construct and enact identities defined independently of the visible society around them and not subordinate to it, identities that are based in their relationships within the transcendent society of God's kingdom. In the legends of Eugenia and Alban, Ælfric affirms the physical sex of the saint, especially Eugenia's, but avoids explicitly defining the gender(s) they enact. Eugenia is a woman defined by her knowledge, wisdom, persuasive skill, gentleness, humility, virginity, courage, and love for Christ. Alban is a man defined by his hospitality, self-sacrifice, faith, courage, and desire for God. The unnamed (and unvenerated) priest is not a monk but is faithful in his prayers, service to God, and instruction of others because of his love for God. Rather than boldly going to his own martyrdom, he flees and hides from the persecution and gives Alban his identifying garments so that Alban may go to martyrdom in his stead. Such behaviors may seem cowardly, and yet his very flight results in Alban's conversion and Alban's sacrifice insures that the faithful priest may continue to serve God through worship and through instruction of others. The priest has a mission to carry out in life, and Alban fully supports him in this purpose. By these examples, Ælfric, without saying so, begins to construct the concept of a third gender for his nonmonastic audience that is defined by belief and love for God but leaves room for interpretation of how that love would best be expressed in any given situation. For a woman, this might include the bold extreme of disguising herself for a time as a man in order to preserve her purity (or avoid marriage), even though Ælfric opposes cross-dressing for any other reason. A nonmilitary layman might courageously sacrifice himself to protect the clergy. A secular priest may bravely flee from Vikings in order to continue his work of worshiping God and bringing others to salvation. Ælfric teaches in these legends that the motive for the action, the will and love that define it, can justify performances of gender that defy societal expectations.

NOTES

¹ LS, 2. The published Latin edition of the Life of St. Eugenia that is closest to Ælfric's version is "Vitae Eugeniae," in *Pasionario Hispánico (PH)*, ed. Grau, 1.83–98. The text may also be found in *PL* 21.1105–22 and as part of the *Vitae Patrum* in *PL* 73.605–20. The manuscript version considered to be closest to Ælfric's source may be found in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College (CCCC) MS 9, 410–26. According to Gneuss and Lapidge's *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, the manuscripts that compose the Cotton-Corpus Legendary (CCL) (CCCC MS 9 [Gneuss and Lapidge #36] and BL, Cotton Nero E.1, vols. 1 and 2 [Gneuss and Lapidge #344]) date from the second half of the eleventh century, well after Ælfric translated his collection of lives, and, as Whatley notes, we cannot be certain at this point that the CCL versions were identical to Ælfric's exemplar ("Eugenia before Ælfric," 367). For further analysis of the relationship between Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* and the CCL, see Zettel, "Saints' Lives in Old English," 17–37. See Jackson and Lapidge, "Contents of the Cotton-Corpus Legendary," 131–46, for a brief history and list of the contents of the Legendary. E. Gordon Whatley provides details the transmission of Eugenia's legend in "Eugenia before Ælfric," 349–67 and details about the version of Eugenia's life known in Anglo-Saxon England in "Eugenia," in "Acta Sanctorum," 195–96. Whatley's monumental "Acta Sanctorum" outlines the information available on the sources for Ælfric's saints' lives. For an eloquent statement of the frustrations inherent in doing source study from the printed hagiographical collections and the need for studies of the complete manuscript traditions of individual saints' lives, see Cross, "Saints' Lives in Old English," 38–40. The foremost work in the Anglo-Saxons' Latin hagiographical manuscripts may be found in Zettel, "Ælfric's Hagiographic Sources."

² Lapidge, "Ælfric's *Sanctorale*," 123.

³ LS, 1.92–93.

⁴ Ælfric's *Prefaces*, ed. Wilcox, 9.

⁵ See also Szarmach, "Ælfric's Women Saints: Eugenia," 146–57; Roy, "Virgin Acts Manfully," 1–27; and Gulley, *Displacement*, 67–81; Horner, *Discourse of Enclosure*, 156–64. For a more general study of transvestitism and transvestite saints, see Bullough, "Transvestites," 1381–94; Anson, "Female Transvestite," 1–32.

⁶ LS, 2.3–4. For a closer examination of the "systematic contraries" in the Life, see Szarmach, "Ælfric's Women Saints: Eugenia," 154–55. Andrew Rabin explores the political resonance of Eugenia overcoming *bisne midden-eard* in his article, "Holy Bodies" 243–55.

⁷ "Vitae eugeniae," PH, §3.

⁸ CCCC MS 9, p. 411. In this instance, the reading found in *PL* 21.1107A is closer to Ælfric than the version found in *PH*. This example of textual variation (and others that will be noted below) illustrates a point made by E. Gordon Whatley: "We need to find out as much as possible about the Anglo-Saxons' own

Latin recensions of the legends before we can approach the vernacular versions with critical confidence.” Whatley, “Old English Prose Hagiography,” 14.

⁹ *LS*, 2.20–21.

¹⁰ “Vita Eugeniae,” *PH*, §3.

¹¹ CCCC 9, p. 411.

¹² *LS*, 2.23. Andrew Rabin points out that Eugenia’s education was that of the “forensic orator,” learned in legal practice and argument, in “Holy Bodies,” 244.

¹³ “Vitae Eugeniae et comitum,” *PH*, §3. The CCL makes Aquilinus a consul instead of a proconsul. CCCC 9, p. 411.

¹⁴ *LS*, 2.26–27a.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 28–32.

¹⁶ “Vitae Eugeniae,” *PH*, §3.

¹⁷ *LS*, 2.46. Werferth uses *belisnian* in the Old English translation of Equitius’ dream about being made a eunuch in Gregory’s *Dialogues*. Werferth, *Übersetzung der Dialoge*, 26. The Anglo-Saxons wrestled with the translation of *eunuchus*, however, as Patrizia Lendinara’s survey of Old English words coined and used to translate the word demonstrates. Since the patristic authors used the idea of the eunuch as a figural concept as well as to refer to actual *castrati*, the problem of translation into a culture that had no comparable social role was problematic. Lendinara, *Glosses and Glossaries*, 45–46 and 66.

¹⁸ *LS*, 2.50.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 53.

²⁰ “Vitae Eugeniae,” *PH*, §6.

²¹ “Vitae Eugeniae,” *PH*, §9. Psalm 47:10.

²² *LS*, 2.61.

²³ “Vitae Eugeniae,” *PH*, §10.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, §10.

²⁵ *LS*, praefatio. 12–14. Cf. Wilcox, *Ælfric’s Prefaces*, 119.

²⁶ *LS*, 2.64.

²⁷ See Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, 407.

²⁸ “Vitae Eugeniae,” *PH*, §11. The text of the CCL essentially agrees with Grau’s edition here: “Recteque inquit uocaris eugenius quia enim viriliter agendo uiurum perfectum te in agone dominico obtulisti.” CCCC 9, p. 414.

²⁹ *LS*, 2.77–78a.

³⁰ “Vitae Eugeniae,” *PH*, §11.

³¹ *LS*, 2.89–90.

³² “Vitae Eugeniae,” *PH*, §13.

³³ Danziger, *Marking the Mind*, 72.

³⁴ *LS*, 2.92–93.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 95–100.

³⁶ Szarmach, “Ælfric’s Women Saints,” 149.

³⁷ Roy, “Virgin Acts Manfully,” 17.

³⁸ *LS*, 2.98.

³⁹ Ibid., 104–7.

⁴⁰ “Vitae Eugeniae,” *PH*, §12.

⁴¹ Ibid., §21.

⁴² Ibid., §25; CCCC 9, p. 419.

⁴³ “Vitae Eugeniae,” *PH*, §22.

⁴⁴ This aspect of concrete illustration is especially true of *bestia*, which literally indicates an “animal without reason.”

⁴⁵ Augustine, *De trinitate*, 12.16; Augustine, *Trinity*, 12.16.

⁴⁶ Augustine, *De trinitate*, 12.16; Augustine, *Trinity*, 12.16. [The italics of both the Latin and the English are in the originals.]

⁴⁷ Ambrose, *De virginibus*, 2.3.20. This lion/human opposition is also illustrated in the *passio* of Chrysanthus and Daria.

⁴⁸ *LS*, 2.199.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 223.

⁵⁰ “Vitae Eugeniae,” *PH*, §25. [Grau indicates that “norman” is the form in his base manuscript, but that the grammatically correct form, “normae,” is found in other manuscripts.] Roy has extensively analyzed the assumptions of masculine superiority and feminine inferiority in this passage in “Virgin Acts Manfully,” 8–13.

⁵¹ “Vitae Eugeniae,” *PH*, §26.

⁵² Ibid., §13.

⁵³ Ibid., §26.

⁵⁴ *LS*, 2.233–35.

⁵⁵ “Vitae Eugeniae,” *PH*, §26.

⁵⁶ Lees and Overing, *Double Agents*, 131.

⁵⁷ “Vita Eugeniae,” *PH*, §26.

⁵⁸ *LS*, 2.253–54.

⁵⁹ Campbell Bonner, “Trial of Saint Eugenia,” 253–64.

⁶⁰ “Vitae Eugeniae,” *PH*, §41; *LS*, 2.403.

⁶¹ “Vitae Eugeniae,” *PH*, §41.

⁶² Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 1.18; Ambrose, *De virginibus*, 2.24.

⁶³ *LS*, 2.407–08.

⁶⁴ *Biblia Sacra*, ed. Weber.

⁶⁵ The most popular version of Alban’s legend (*Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina* [BHL] 206–10) is told by Bede in *Historia Ecclesiastica* (HE) in Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, 1.7. See also Whatley’s entry on Alban in “Acta Sanctorum,” 62–64.

⁶⁶ Bede, *HE*, 1.6.

⁶⁷ *LS*, 19.2 and 5–6.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 19

⁶⁹ Ibid., 33 and 41. Bede, *HE*, 1.7.

⁷⁰ For the argument for just warfare in the works of Ælfric, see Whatley, “Hagiography and Violence,” 217–38.

⁷¹LS, 19.13.

⁷²Bede, *HE*, 1.7

⁷³LS, 19.16–21.

⁷⁴Ibid., 23–25.

⁷⁵Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 14.

⁷⁶LS, 13.216–20. The comment follows Ælfric's description of Abraham's intercession for the city of Sodom.

⁷⁷LS, 19.26–27.

⁷⁸Bede, *HE*, 1.7.

⁷⁹LS, 19.33. On Ælfric's use of such epithets, see Corona, “Ælfric's Schemes and Tropes,” 298–300.

⁸⁰Bede, *HE*, 1.7; LS, 19.35–37.

⁸¹Harlow, “Clothes Maketh the Man,” 62.

⁸²Gautier, “Hospitality,” 31.

⁸³LS, 25.819–32.

⁸⁴LS, 13.147–55 (only 152–55 are quoted).

⁸⁵LS, 19.41 and 48; Bede, *HE*, 1.7.

⁸⁶LS, 19.49–51; Bede, *HE*, 1.7.

⁸⁷LS, 19.61.

⁸⁸Bede, *HE*, 1.7; LS, 19.61–79.

⁸⁹Bede, *HE*, 1.7; LS, 19.88.

⁹⁰Bede, *HE*, 1.7; LS, 19.90–92.

⁹¹Bede, *HE*, 1.7; LS, 19.103–4. Ælfric uses the same language of one person becoming *anrēd* with another in faith to describe the spiritual union of Chrysanthus and Daria in LS, 35.122.

⁹²Bede, *HE*, 1.7; LS, 19.116–22.

⁹³Bede, *HE*, 1.7; LS, 19.127–32.

⁹⁴Bede, *HE*, 1.7; LS, 19.152–54.

Chapter Four

Brides and Soldiers of Christ

Agnes: *Sponsa Christi*

Ælfric's life of St. Agnes appeals to its audience in terms of desire, the desire of the saint for a relationship with Christ, which then reproduces itself in the audience as they (male and female alike) identify with the saint and thus participate in desiring the Son of God. For the life of Agnes, like that of Eugenia, illustrates the relationship of the soul with its Creator. Whereas Eugenia's life exemplifies the journey of the soul to salvation and the *virum perfectum* of spiritual completeness, the life of Agnes depicts the relationship of the soul to Christ as bride to bridegroom.

The version of Agnes's legend known to Ælfric was attributed to Ambrose throughout the Middle Ages, but was not actually written by him. The author of this life, however, seems to have known Ambrose's *De uirginibus* very well, for the work resounds with thematic ideas and images found throughout Ambrose's work, thus earning the author the nickname of Pseudo-Ambrose.¹ The Pseudo-Ambrosian legend is the one quoted by Aldhelm in his "Prosa de uirginitate" and translated by Ælfric in *Lives of Saints*.

From the first, Ælfric emphasizes that Agnes "on ðone hælend gelyfed" [believed in the Savior], even when there is no matching phrase in the closest published Latin texts nor in the CCL.² Following the Latin text closely, Ælfric describes Agnes as *snotor* (wise) and *eald-lic on mode* (elderly in mind) in contrast to her youth. He mentions in line fourteen that Agnes attended school, but does not indicate what her education entailed. Given her wisdom and mental maturity, however, we might reasonably infer that she received the common education in rhetoric, which would have included training of the memory. Mary Carruthers stresses the connection, saying, "[Memory] was co-extensive with wisdom and knowledge, but it was more—as a condition of prudence, possessing a

well-trained memory was morally virtuous in itself. ... the memory feats of saints are frequently stressed in hagiography, even of saints who were not scholars (like Francis of Assisi). This was done not to show off their intellectual prowess, but to stress their moral perfection.”³ Ælfric translates the Latin version’s brief comment on Agnes’s beauty, but also reproduces the greater emphasis placed upon her mind, so that we know in passing that “heo wæs wlitig on ansyne” [she was beautiful in countenance], but also understand that her physical beauty holds no match to the beauty of faith and virtue in her soul because she is “wlitigre on gelefan” [more beautiful in faith].⁴ Her true loveliness lies in the moral character developed in her soul rather than in her nubile body. Hers is not just dry belief in the sense of intellectual assent, however, for Ælfric observes how “heo lufode crist” [she loved Christ], making the person Agnes loves more specific than the Latin version, which says that Agnes “dilexit auctorem” [loved the Creator].⁵ Where the Latin version implicitly connotes this love to be the expression of the *imago Dei* in relation to its maker, Æfric personalizes Agnes’s love and humanizes it by fixing her love upon Christ. In this brief introduction, the audience sees at work in Agnes’s life the two activities of loving God and governing her own body so that the beauty of Agnes’s outer appearance reflects the inward beauty of her faith because “heo lufode crist.”⁶

The reason that Agnes even has a story to be written into a life is summed up in those three words: “heo lufode crist.” No other man can rival the Son of God in Agnes’s affections, not even the son of the Roman prefect, who promised rich clothing and great wealth to Agnes if she would wed him. Ælfric translates almost the entire response she delivers, maintaining the lyrical quality of the Latin original. Agnes first sharply rejects the offer of gems and worldly riches her suitor has made to her, calling him “synne ontendnys / leahtras foda . and deaðes bigleafa” [incitement of sin, nourishment of vice, and support of death], words that place him in the serpent’s role as tempter.⁷ Agnes herself succeeds, however, where Adam and Eve failed: the Augustinian “female” rational activity that manages worldly matters submits to the “male” rational activity that contemplates truth so that her decisions with regard to marriage and worldly wealth reflect her proper desire for Christ. This belief in and love for the transcendent other translates Agnes’s life out of the material order of riches and marital intercourse into the transcendent order of grace, salvation, and relationship with God. Agnes’s submission to Christ gives her free-

dom from the physical and temporal demands of men like Sempronius's son just as the submission of the "female" activity of the mind to the "male" activity results in a harmony that frees the mind from the tyranny of the physical passions.

Yet this freedom from the dominance of sensual desire does not seem to negate either the body or sex. Agnes declares "Ic hæbbe oðerne lufiend / þinne ungelican . on æðelborennysse" [I have another lover unlike you in noble birth].⁸ She claims Christ as her own lover, a better lover than the son of the prefect will ever be. The language of the rest of Agnes's speech is unblushingly embodied and sexual in its portrayal of a womanly perception of her standing as a virgin bride of Christ, yet it is so bodied that the prefect's son misunderstands it in a completely literal way. In the Latin text, she speaks not only in terms of the imperishable riches her heavenly lover possesses, but speaks of Christ himself in frankly sexual and desiring terms, which Ælfric reproduces from the Latin text almost word for word. Pseudo-Ambrose writes, "Iam mel et lac ex eius ore suscepit / iam amplexibus eius castis astricta sum / iam corpus eius corpori meo sociatum est: / et sanguis eius ornauit genus meum [sic]" [Now I have received honey and milk from his mouth; already I am drawn close in his chaste embrace; now his body is joined to my body and his blood decorates my cheeks]. Ælfric translates this passage as "Of his muðe ic under-feng meoluc . and hunig . / nu iu ic eom beclypt . mid his clænum earmum . / his fægera lichama is minum geferlæft . / and his blod ge-glende mine eah-hringas" [From his mouth I receive milk and honey; now already I am embraced by his pure arms, his fair body is united to mine and his blood decorates my eyes.]⁹ While not quite so frankly embodied, the closing words to Agnes's speech also speak of her union with the transcendent bridegroom in sexual terms. In Pseudo-Ambrose she says,

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

[when I love him, I am chaste; when I touch him, I am clean; when I receive him, I am a virgin, nor will children be lacking after the marriage, where birth follows without sorrow and fruitfulness is increased daily].

Ælfric translates,

Ponne ic hine lufige . ic beo eallunga clæne . / þonne ic hine hreppe
 . ic beo unwemme . / ðonne ic hine under-fo . ic beo mæden forð
 . / and þær bærn ne ateoriað . on ðam bryd-lace . / Pær is eacnung
 buton sare . and singallic wæstmbærnyss

[When I love him, I am altogether pure; when I touch him, I am unstained; when I receive him, I am a virgin still. And issue ceases not in that wedded state; there is increase without pain and incessant fruitfulness].¹⁰

In both the Latin and Ælfric's version, the climax of Agnes's love for Christ will come with fulfillment of her longing: the wedded state, the intimate consummation of pure and holy desire that is perpetually fruitful, perpetually satisfying. Agnes speaks of the relationship as something present and ongoing: she receives, is embraced, is united to her lover in language evocative of the psalms and canticles and of Ambrose's interpretation of the bride seeking the kisses of her spouse: "illa osculum poposcit, deus uerbum se ei totus infudit" [She sought the kiss, God the Word poured himself into her wholly].¹¹ Agnes shows absolute confidence in her transcendent lover, so much so that she turns down every offer of wealth that the prefect's son makes as though he were offering sewage.¹² In doing so, she embodies the ideal of the soul that refuses to be distracted by material, temporal allurements from its contemplation of and devotion to the divine and does so by showing that ardor in its closest parallel from human experience: the sexually desiring bride seeking consummation with her lover. In the bridal chamber of Agnes's memory this sanctified image of gendered sexuality in the context of relationship with the metagendered other drives away any attraction that a worldly marriage might have to offer. In that chamber, she meets her bridegroom as a woman in a union that transcends sex and is completely satisfied and at peace in herself.

In sharp contrast to Agnes's example of the restored harmony of the activities of the mind through relationship with Christ, the young Roman and his father, Sempronius, both illustrate Ælfric's translation of Alcuin on the misdirection of the three parts of the soul in *LS* 1:

Uþwytan sæcgað . þæt þære sawle gecynd is ȝdryfeald . An dæl is
 on hire gewylnigend-lic . oðer yrsigend-lic . þrydde gesceadwislic.
 Twægen þissera dæla habbað deor and nyten mid us . þæt is

gewylnunge and yrre. Se man ana hæfð gescead . and ræd . and andgit. Gewylning is þam menn forgifen to gewilnienne þa ðing þe him fremiað to nit-wyrðum þingum and to þære ecan hæle . Þonne gif seo gewylnung mis-went . þonne acend he gyfernesse . and forlygr and gitsunge. Yrre is ðære sawle forgifen . to ðy þæt heo yrsige ongean leahtres . and ne beo na synnum under-þeodd. ... Gif þæt yrre bið on yfel awend . þonne cymð of þam unrotnisse . and aemylnysse. Gescead is ðære sawle forgifen to gewyssienne and to styrenne hire agen lif . and ealle hire dæda. Of þam gesceade gif hit miswænt . cymð modignysse and ydel gylp .

[Philosophers say that the nature of the soul is threefold: one part in it is capable of desire, another is wrathful, the third is reasonable. The wild animals and cattle possess two of these parts together with us, that is, desire and wrath. Only a human being has reason and wisdom and understanding. Desire is given to humans to long for those things that benefit them, for useful things and for their eternal salvation. Yet if the desire goes astray, then it brings forth gluttony and fornication and avarice. Wrath is given to the soul in order that it might be angry against vices, and not be subjected to any sins. ... If wrath is turned aside to evil, then sadness and sloth come from it. Reason is given to the soul to guide and to govern its own life and all its deeds. If it goes astray from that reason, pride and vainglory come.]¹³

Sempronius's son exhibits errant desire in that he longs for the pleasure of a sexual relationship instead of relationship with his Creator. Sempronius himself illustrates wrath gone astray: instead of restraining vice in his son he takes offense at Agnes's refusal of marriage and becomes filled with rage.¹⁴ These two men also portray Augustine's concept of the unbelieving mind in which the "male" activity has turned away from the contemplation of truth and fallen into pride: "Ita cum uult esse sicut ille sub nullo, et ab ipsa sui medietate poenaliter ad ima propellitur, id est ad ea quibus pecora laetantur" [And then, while he wants to be like God under nobody, he is thrust down as a punishment from his own half-way level (of being both spiritual and physical) to the bottom, to the things in which the beasts find their pleasure].¹⁵ The very act of desiring to be one's own God results in a symbolic plunge to a sub-human level, slavery to the passions that humans share with beasts. The animal pleasures are those carnal activities that excite the bodily senses but require no understanding, such as eating or copulation.

Sempronius's son certainly seems to have been motivated by just such animal desires. When Agnes frustrates him, the Latin text describes him as being *insanus* (of unsound mind); according to Ælfric, he is first “ge-ancsumod and wið-innan abblend” [vexed and inwardly blinded], then stricken with *mod-least* (lack of heart or mind).¹⁶ Due to his unbelief, the young man takes Agnes's speech to refer to a human lover that she prefers to himself. The “male” activity of the young Roman's mind is unable to recognize the truth and he has apparently never exerted the “female” activity to rein in the body's desire for pleasures. In Ælfric's psychology, when the human mind turns away from God in this manner, it loses more and more of its likeness to its Creator, becoming instead more and more like the unreasoning beasts by allowing the parts of the soul that humans share with beasts, desire and wrath, to overrule reason and to direct and govern the actions of the person. According to Augustine and the other Latin Doctors, only the grace of God can restore the harmony and order of the *imago Dei* in a man or woman once he or she has descended to this bestial level.¹⁷ The son of Sempronius, denied his fleshly desire, sickens and sulks in mindless sloth. In his lovesickness, he exemplifies a masculinity defined by the pursuit of sex and outward beauty.

Sempronius cannot believe that any girl in her right mind would refuse to marry his son and so he himself sends a proposal of marriage to Agnes on his son's behalf. Agnes refuses again, saying that she would not “þæs ærran bryd-guman æbelan truwian / æfre gewemman þurh ænig wedd” [ever by any agreement tarnish the noble pledge of that first bridegroom].¹⁸ The prefect, in his own desire “to be like God under nobody,” sinks not into beast-like lust as his son did, but into bestial rage when frustrated by Agnes's refusal to bow to his power or to bolster his high opinion of himself and his family by submitting to marry his son. Inquiring into who this first bridegroom might be, Sempronius learns that Agnes has been a Christian from childhood and is filled with delusion.¹⁹ In a dramatic irony that Ælfric's educated audience would not have missed, the unbelieving prefect thinks Agnes is deluded because he is himself unable to recognize the truth. Becoming “dreorig on mode” [troubled in his mind],²⁰ he turns away from the wrath that he rightfully wields as a government official in order to restrain vice and crime and falls into an errant wrath that attacks the bride of Christ, trying to persuade her with flattery and then with threat of dire punishments if she does not abandon her devotion to Christ.²¹ Agnes, however, repeatedly proclaims her love of Christ in both

Pseudo-Ambrose's and Ælfric's versions.²² When Sempronius warns her not to anger the Roman gods with her childishness, she responds in the Latin text with, "Fides enim non in annis sed in sensibus inuenitur: et deus omnipotens mentes magis comprobat quam actates" [Faith is not found in years but in understanding, and God omnipotent approves minds more than years.] Ælfric renders the thought as, "Se ælmihtiga herað / swiðor manna mod . þonne heora mycclan ylde . / and se geleafa ne bið on gearum . ac bið on glæwum andgitum" [The Almighty commands / the minds of men more than their great age; / and belief is not in years, but is in wise understandings].²³ Agnes's words again underscore the importance of the mental qualities of belief. Her knowledge of God provides her with the knowledge also of the importance of her own mind, the image of God in her own soul. Armed with such knowledge, Agnes remains unmoved by the persuasions and threats of Sempronius. Against the prefect's vexed mental state Agnes remains calm, steadfast in her knowledge of God. When threatened with having to chose between sacrificing to the pagan gods or being shamed among harlots, Agnes answers him with unshakable resolve:

Pseudo-Ambrose:

Si scires quis est deus meus: non ista de ore tuo proferres. Vnde quia ego noui uirtutem domini Iesu christi: secura contemno minas tuas credens: quod neque sacrificem idolis tuis: neque polluar sordibus alienis: Mecum enim habeo custodem corporis mei angelum domini.

[If you could know my God you would not let such words out of your mouth. Because I know the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, I, believing, am secure from your threats; moreover, neither shall I sacrifice to your idols nor be violated by the filth of strangers.]

Ælfric:

gif du cuðest minne god . ne cwæde þu ðas word . / Orsorhlice ic forseo þine þeow-racan . / forþan þe ic geare cann mines drihtnes mihte . / Ic truwige on him forþan ðe he / Is me trumweall . and unateorigendlic bewerigend . / þæt ic ðinum awyrgedum godum ne ðurfe / ge-offrian . ne þurh ælfremede horwan . / æfre beon gefyled . mid þam fulum myltestrum / Ic hæbbe godes encgel haligne mid me.

[If you knew my God you would not say such words. Without worry I scorn your threats because I know very well the power of my Lord. I trust in him because he is a strong wall for me and a lasting defense so that I have no need to sacrifice to your detestable gods, nor by means of outward defilements may I ever be polluted among the foul prostitutes. I have the holy angel of God with me.]²⁴

Agnes's response highlights the importance of knowledge. Sempronius behaves as he does because he does not know God. Agnes, however, is perfectly confident in God's ability to protect her and so she has no fear of anything the prefect threatens. Even if she is outwardly defiled in her body at a place of prostitution, such acts cannot touch her inward purity because she will not have taken part in them willingly. As with Ambrose's Virgin of Antioch, Agnes knows that the purity of her mind and soul cannot be taken away by the violation of her body. Agnes herself finally describes the terrible judgment of God that awaits Sempronius, which sends him over the edge into a mindless fury.²⁵ The Latin text calls him *insanus iudex* (the insane judge). The word Ælfric uses is *woda* (madman). Again, the picture is of a man who has lost his rational mind and become like an animal by giving rein to beastly rage. It is a picture of hegemonic masculinity at its worst, for not only is it violent, it is violent in an unjust cause.

On Sempronius's orders, Agnes is stripped of her clothing but miraculously “þæs mædenes fex . befeng hi eall abutan . / sona swa þa cwelleras hire cladas of abrudon . / and þæt fex hi behelede on ælce healfe gelice” [the virgin's hair enclothed her all around as soon as the executioners wrenched off her clothes, and the hair covered her over on each side alike].²⁶ The immediacy with which Agnes's hair covers her allows for no gazing upon her nakedness. She is stripped, to be sure, but the reader's attention is directed not to the naked body of the saint, but to the abundance of hair with which God miraculously clothes her. This episode takes us back to the same Pauline passage in I Corinthians 11 that Augustine addresses in book twelve of *De trinitate*, which discusses a woman's covering for her head. Paul comments that “quoniam capilli pro velamine ei dati sunt” [for her hair is given to her for a covering].²⁷ In this manner, the life externalizes the inward reality of the ordered gender functions in Agnes's mind, for Augustine states that the covering of hair for the woman that Paul speaks of in the Corinthians passage figuratively describes the authority of the “male” activity of rationality, the part that faces God and reflects the divine image, that “covers” the “female” rational activity so

that its interaction with the temporal will not lead the mind away from its rightful attention to God. In fact, the life implies that God provided the covering precisely because Agnes did not let concern for her bodily condition distract her from being entirely focused upon God. Sempronius orders that Agnes be dragged to a brothel so that she might be raped and thus despoiled of her virginity, but God sends a shining angel to the whorehouse to protect her and provide her with a shining tunic that fits her exactly.²⁸

The importance of this relationship with the divine other and the order such a relationship brings to the mind is illustrated in the death, restoration, and conversion of Sempronius's son. "Mid sceand-licum willan" [with shameful desire] the youth rushes into the brothel to rape Agnes, but he is immediately struck dead.²⁹ When Agnes prays for him, the youth is restored to life by the angel of Christ and he *immediately* begins praising the Christian God.³⁰ Belief, as depicted in the life of Agnes, is the result of an encounter with the presence and reality of a transcendent other, and is considered to be the proper response to such an encounter. It is brought about by the soul encountering and recognizing the one in whose image it is made, which begins the restoration of the *imago Dei* that was shattered by the effects of sin. The sign of this restoration is the harmony and proper ordering of the activities of the mind. After being raised, the youth no longer is ruled by his animal desires because the proper order of his mental functions has been restored. The animal has submitted to the "female," which has submitted to the "male," which has submitted to God.

Following this radical change in the prefect's son, the Romans accuse Agnes of practicing a sorcery that *mentes mutat* (perverts minds).³¹ Ælfric translates this idea as "awent ... manna mod" [perverted the minds of men and women].³² Both Pseudo-Ambrose and Ælfric use words that point out the irony of the situation: *muto* primarily denotes "change" and *awendan* variously means "turn aside, change, translate." In this context and from the point of view of the pagan Roman crowd, both words literally mean "pervert." But from the perspective of the authors and their religious readers, the words also literally mean "change," for the minds of Sempronius and his son have been changed through their encounter with Agnes and by seeing for themselves the power of God at work in her. What the perverse crowd sees as perverted is actually rightly ordered and true *sub specie aeternitatis*. The unbelieving crowd cannot recognize this rightness, however, and being *hetelic gedrefede* (exceedingly disturbed), they attempt to burn Agnes. But instead of immolating the saint, the fire turns against the

crowd and consumes them. Agnes praises God for the miracle, but after hearing her words of praise, an even greater crowd clamors for her execution. Agnes receives the crown of martyrdom and the fulfillment of her holy desire by means of a sword stroke to the throat.

In all probability, the monastic Anglo-Saxons would have recognized the dynamics of this order of relationships in the life of Agnes, not just by virtue of the writings of earlier churchmen and Ælfric's sermon on the Trinity and the soul, but also in light of their own experiences in identifying with Agnes, their own desires for relationship with the same lover that Agnes loved so much. Looking from within this desiring relationship, one can begin to imagine how religious laymen and women in the time of Ælfric could have seen in Agnes an example worth following. The characteristics that make Agnes a beacon for the faithful, with the metagendered harmony of the activities of her mind, could be emulated by both men and women, lay and cleric. Agnes represents the believing soul's desire for God, a desire that redirects Agnes's love away from a female/male sexual relationship to a gendered/metagendered spiritual relationship. In the same way, the desire that her life arouses in the audience is not the desire of a man for a woman or *vice versa*, but a movement of the will toward Christ for which the closest analogue in strength and intensity is erotic desire, the erotic desire of a woman for her lover, her bridegroom. God would harmonize the exercise of these same mental functions for the believing Anglo-Saxons, freeing them to pursue relationship with the transcendent other, God himself. In this way, the believer could escape the domination of the animal passions that kept him or her from pursuing the most noble and truest desire of the soul, to see and know God face to face, to be able to say as Agnes said before her execution:

Pseudo-Ambrose:

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

[Behold! Now I see what I have believed, what I have hoped for I now possess, what I have desired I embrace. I confess you with my lips and heart, with all my innermost parts I long for you. Behold! I come to you, the living and true God, who, with our Lord Jesus

Christ, your Son, and with the Holy Spirit lives and reigns always and for ever! Amen].

Ælfric:

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

[That which I have believed, that I see; that which I desired, that I now have. I confess you with my mouth and with my soul and with all my heart I long for you, the one true God, who reigns with your Son and with the Holy Ghost, one Almighty God forever!]³³

In leaving the world through death, Agnes obtains her life's desire, union with her transcendent bridegroom and a dwelling in the court of heaven.

Sebastian: *Emissarius Clandestinus Dei*

Some years ago, Allen J. Frantzen asserted that “for a man to be holy is to act like a man; for a woman to be holy is also to act like a man,” yet certain elements of the *passio* of Agnes seem to call that statement into question.³⁴ She certainly demonstrated through her virtue and steadfastness that she had come as close as a yet mortal being can come to attaining the *virum perfectum*, but she did so by completely building her identity as a virtuous bride desiring union with virtue itself, Christ her bridegroom. As a result, one might wonder what it means for any saint, male or female, to “act like a man.” Does Frantzen have in mind participating in what Clare E. Lees calls “the traditional male pursuits of warfare, territorial expansion, and aggression”?³⁵ Or does the hagiography of the late Roman martyrs reorient masculinity in a way that creates a new, metagendered kind of man, the saint, just as it reoriented femininity and created a new, metagendered kind of woman, the saint? Ælfric has already demonstrated in the previous *passiones* that Christian deeds can define unexpected kinds of masculinity in men whose lives are lived outside of the identity-constructing culture of the monastery. From the deeds of Alban, the fugitive priest, and the converted executioner to the proclamations of the resurrected son of Sempronius, behaviors that society might consider aberrant or outright unmanly are lauded in the *passiones* as heroic evidence of true belief and

love for God. The *passio* of St. Sebastian continues to explore this alternative gendering of male saints.

The *passio* of Sebastian, another Pseudo-Ambrosian work like those of Agnes and Eugenia, may provide a template for what it means for holy men to enact a third gender in the late antique/early medieval religious cultural milieu in which Pseudo-Ambrose wrote.³⁶ Ælfric drastically edited the *passio* of Eugenia when he translated it into Old English, especially with regard to its imagery of Eugenia's symbolic transformation from female into the third gender—in short, Ælfric wrote the entire issue of shifting gender out of his rendition, leaving simply the story of a woman disguised in man's clothing. Yet he did describe Eugenia as living “mid werlicum mode” [with a manly mind].³⁷ Both the Latin and the Old English versions, however, define the behaviors of this manliness so that Eugenia and her two eunuch companions are characterized by the rather womanly qualities (in the late Roman view) of virginity, gentleness in speech, humility, and single-hearted service and devotion to Christ. Similarly, in Ambrose's life of the Virgin of Antioch, the soldier who exchanges clothing with the virgin claims that donning her feminine clothes (symbolically acquiring female attributes) will make him a true soldier of Christ. The implication of these legends and of others is that a fusion of gender characteristics occurs in both men and women when they enter into a believing relationship with Christ—the mixture of masculine and feminine qualities that the Gospels attribute to the Son of God manifests itself in the lives of the saints as they draw closer to him through prayer, study, and good works. The saints of both sexes thus transcend their biology and are freed from the gender roles assigned to their sexes by their secular societies so that they might pursue the metagendered other and become more like Christ in the process. This interpretation, however, is rooted in the monastic understanding of the transformation of men and women who devote themselves to virginity. How does Ælfric translate this process in the *passio* of Sebastian for a nonmonastic audience?

Ælfric begins by telling his audience that Sebastian lived “lange on lare on mediolana byrig” [a long time in the city of Milan during his instruction].³⁸ The text in *Acta Sanctorum* (*AASS*) notes that Sebastian was in Milan “partibus eruditus” [imparting instruction], but BL, Cotton Nero E.i omits this important information. Ælfric first establishes that Sebastian possesses considerable education—enough to be an established teacher in a major imperial city. Pseudo-Ambrose first tells his readers that the emperors Diocletian and Maximian think very highly of Sebastian and

make him commander of the first cohort of the Roman military before ever discussing the qualities the two emperors find so admirable. This appointment implies that the emperors consider Sebastian to be a capable and successful warrior, well educated, a leader, and loyal to themselves and so indeed he turns out to be:

Pseudo-Ambrose:

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

[Sebastian was loved by Diocletian and Maximian. ... He was truly a wholly prudent man, truthful in speech, just in judgment, careful in counsel, faithful in [any] undertaking, vigorous in action, remarkable for goodness, distinguished for general probity of character. The soldiers even honored him as a father; all the people who presided over the palace honored him with the most loving affection. For he was a true worshiper of God, and it was inevitable that he whom the grace of God had filled would be loved by all people.]

Ælfric:

He wæs swiðe snotor wer . and soðfæst on spræce . / rihtwis on dome . and on ræde fore-gleaw / getreowe on neode . and strang fore-
pingere / on godnysse scinende . and on eallum þeawum arwurðful
. / Dæghwamlice he gefylde his drihtnes þenunge geornlice. / ac
he bediglode swa þeah . his dæda þam casere / dioclitianæ se wæs
deofles big-gencga . / He lufode swa þeah ðone halgan wær /
and calle þa hyred-menn hine hæfdon for fæder . / and mid lufe
wurðodon . forðon þe god hine lufode .

[He was an exceedingly wise man and honest in speech, just in judgment and prudent in counsel, faithful in duty and a resolute intercessor, resplendent in goodness and honorable in all habits. He diligently fulfilled the service of his Lord daily, but nevertheless he kept his actions secret from the emperor Diocletian, who was a

worshiper of the devil. Nevertheless, he loved the holy man ... and all of the retainers esteemed him as a father, and honored him with love because God loved him.]³⁹

Although Ælfric rearranges the way the information is presented, he does not make any essential changes to the description of Sebastian, including the fact that he kept his Christianity *occultum* (hidden).⁴⁰ This “man’s man,” beloved by his soldiers and by the emperor and all his household, is noted for his wisdom, honor, justice, prudence, goodness, and trustworthiness—all of which are mental virtues that were the goal of the study of rhetoric as well as Christian virtues. The Latin text highlights Sebastian’s prudence, and Carruthers tells us that “Prudence involves both reason and will, an ‘intellectual virtue’ which also directs and ‘perfects’ the emotional, desiring will. It requires knowledge but it acts to shape up our ethical life so that we may live well, and not merely be good.”⁴¹ Sebastian’s high degree of prudence manifests itself continually, showing to what degree the *imago Dei* has been restored in his soul by the degree to which he “lived well.” As a result, even the pagan emperor greatly values him, and his cohort loves and honors him as a “father,” a title of respect and honor. All of these attributes and all of this respect accrues to Sebastian for one reason—not because Diocletian loved him, but “forðon þe god hine lufode” [because God loved him].⁴² Neither Pseudo-Ambrose nor Ælfric mention anything about Sebastian’s physical strength, possible battlefield victories, parentage, or whether he has or had a wife and children (though we may assume he does not). It stands to reason that he has considerable political influence since he is so well loved by the emperor, but neither writer shows Sebastian ever abusing his influence with the emperor(s). Rather, he acts like a secret agent of God, using his position for the purpose of encouraging other Christians who are being put to death because of their faith. Sebastian keeps his faith secret from the secular authorities in order to strengthen these persecuted Christians, and in so doing he uses the disguise of Roman masculinity to hide his true identity in Christ.

Both the Latin and Old English Lives first describe how Sebastian “Christianorum animos ... conforta[bat]” [comforted the souls of the Christians] who were weakening in their resolve because of the cruelty of the persecution.⁴³ Sebastian runs considerable personal risks not for the sake of advancement or the gaining of political power, but for the sake of comforting and encouraging persecuted Christians, strengthening their souls in the midst of their suffering. Immediately after describing

Sebastian's work of encouragement, however, the Latin text begins a rather serpentine narrative of Sebastian's works and their subsequent repercussions in the lives of various other people. Whatley describes the legend as "an epic *passio*, which interweaves the story of Sebastian with those of numerous other martyrs whom he supposedly converted or encouraged,"⁴⁴ a narrative strategy almost reminiscent of the (in)famous digressions in *Beowulf* except that these sub-legends are a bit more obviously related to Sebastian's own story. The first of these interwoven sub-lives is that of Marcus and Marcellianus, who faced the death penalty, or, as Ælfric more colorfully puts it, "Hi sceoldon þa under-hnigan . nacodum swurde" [They then must bow their heads for the naked sword].⁴⁵ Ælfric, following the main narrative line of the Pseudo-Ambrosian text, next describes how the friends, parents, wives, and children of the two brothers appeal to their love for family in an attempt to turn the men back to paganism and so save their lives. Ælfric emphasizes the irony of this attempt by pointing out how they "mid manegum tihtingum / þæra cnihta mod fram cristes gelefan . / woldon awecgan . swylce hi wislice dydon" [with many accusations desired to shake the minds of the young men away from belief in Christ, as if they did so wisely].⁴⁶ In light of the medieval Christian consensus that the worship of man-made pagan idols is foolishness and the worship of the one true God the only real wisdom, Ælfric portrays the foolish friends and family as trying to persuade the brothers away from true wisdom back into their foolishness, highlighting their paradoxical position by commenting that these well-intentioned people thought they were acting wisely. Not that Ælfric makes them the butt of a joke—he simply brings out the tragic ignorance of the relatives as a way of setting up his audience to share the joy of the future conversion of the brothers' families by making them sympathetic figures even in their state of unbelief. The family members, in fact, are so sympathetic that Marcus and Marcellianus are touched by their pleas and begin to waver in their determination, to consider recanting their profession for the sake of their families. Such pathos could not fail to affect both monastic and nonmonastic audiences in Anglo-Saxon England, especially given the centrality of the kin group in early medieval cultures.

This scenario illustrates the point made by the Latin Doctors about the ways in which even good temporal things such as family could distract a man or woman from wholehearted devotion to the Savior. The brothers were not tempted away from their devotion by riches or sex or the threat of death, but when their families plead with them to spare them the

torment of losing husbands, fathers, children, the two men begin to weaken by turning their minds away from Christ to their loved ones. Their very love itself works against them to make them vulnerable to temptation. Here the difference between the Roman ideal of the man as *pater familias* and the Christian ideal of the *virum perfectum* comes most sharply into conflict. As *patres familiarum*, Marcus and Marcellianus must recant and continue in their roles as heads of the households, providers for their dependent wives and children and partakers in whatever civic duties are appropriate to their rank; as *viri perfecti*, they must subject their obligations to family and society to their ultimate loyalty to God, even if it means death. Both Pseudo-Ambrose and Ælfric make clear the toll this inner conflict takes upon the two brothers:

Pseudo-Ambrose:

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

[In the meantime, while those things were being spoken and these were being related, between the tears of their wives and the sighs of their children, the soldiers of Christ began to soften and to turn their minds toward their [the wives' and children's] sorrow. ... And then [Sebastian] perceived the athletes of God to be tired by the immense weight of the struggle.]

Ælfric:

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

[See, then! The warriors of God began to soften and their minds to turn aside toward the distress of their wives. Then Sebastian soon perceived how the warriors of God began to weaken because of their great conflict.]⁴⁷

Sebastian also recognizes the rending choice that the brothers face, and he observes how the love these men possess for their families causes their resolution to waver. He is unable, however, to stand by and allow the

men to choose momentary worldly happiness over the ultimate good not only of their own souls but of the souls of their families as well. Sebastian, “quem occultabat militaris habitus, et chlamydis obumbrabat aspectus” [who was disguised in the dress of a soldier and hidden from sight by a military cloak],⁴⁸ enters the pagan household of Nicostratus, into whose custody the brothers had been given. (Ælfric omits the comment upon Sebastian’s disguise from his translation.) Sebastian proceeds to encourage the young men, whom he calls *milites Christi* [soldiers of Christ] (Ælfric: *godes cempan* [God’s champions]), to remain firm in their faith and thus save their families and be with them for eternity rather than satisfying their families now and being separated from them forever in hell. The role of *pater familias* can only provide temporary happiness to each brother and his family; only in the role of the *virum perfectum* can each brother bring his family to eternal happiness. While Sebastian encourages the brothers in faithfulness and instructs the families in the course of greatest wisdom in a speech that includes “oðrum langsumum spræcum” [other lengthy discourses], which Ælfric compassionately omits, a heavenly light shines upon the saint and an angel appears in front of him.⁴⁹ Again the Latin text emphasizes the saint’s disguise, saying he was “indutus chlamyde, succinctus baltheo” [clothed in a military cloak, girded with a swordbelt], reminding the Latin audience of the irony of Sebastian’s appearance when the light and angel appear.⁵⁰ Ælfric again omits any mention of Sebastian’s military costume, pointing his vernacular audience’s attention to the miraculous light and accompanying angel. The immediate effect of this manifestation of transcendence is awe and conversion among the members of Nicostratus’s household, beginning with his wife, Zoe.

Upon seeing the angel, Zoe falls at Sebastian’s feet “cum intellexisset omnia” [because she had understood wholly], and in Old English, “mid fullum gelefan” [with complete belief].⁵¹ To this point, Zoe had suffered from an illness that had rendered her mute for six years, but when Sebastian recognizes her faith, he heals Zoe and restores her speech as a sign that he has spoken the truth. The woman immediately testifies that she has seen the angel and that the angel held a book from which Sebastian had instructed them, reminding the audience that Sebastian had first been a teacher. These comments are delivered in direct discourse in the Latin text, but Ælfric translates them as indirect discourse. As a result, Zoe’s next words, which Ælfric keeps in direct speech, stand out more forcefully:

Pseudo-Ambrose:

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

[Blessed are those who believe in all that you have spoken and cursed are those who doubt even one word of all these things that they have heard. For just as the rising dawn shuts out the whole darkness of night and restores to the eyes of all the light which blind night had denied, so has the light of your discourse wiped clean all of the fog and all of the blindness of ignorance, and after the darkness of night has restored bright day to the eyes of those believing rightly; from me, however, it has not only shut out the darkness of unbelief, but has opened the gateway of speech for me, which was closed for six years.]

Ælfric:

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

[Blessed are those that believe your words and be those accursed that are uncertain of them. Just as the dawn disperses the dim gloom and gives light to the eyes of men and women that were blind in the night, so your teaching dispersed that unbelief from me and opened my mouth and enlightened my mind.]⁵²

Understanding and belief now having dawned in Zoe's mind, her restored spiritual and physical health manifest themselves in this testimony. She describes her conversion in terms that specifically address the mental nature of the event, the teaching that dispels the darkness of ignorance, illuminating the mind with spiritual truth that blesses all who recognize and believe it. The significance of this treatment of Zoe is that her healing

and her testimony about the angel and the enlightenment that comes to her through Sebastian's teaching serve to validate his message and thus play a part in the efficacy of his preaching. Ælfric does not tone down the importance of Zoe's contribution—in fact, he translates the forceful nature of her words as she blesses those who believe Sebastian's message and curses those who doubt it. As a result, her husband, Nicostratus, thirty-three members of their household, the families of the two imprisoned young men, plus sixteen others who were being held prisoner at Nicostratus's house, more than fifty people in all, believe Sebastian's message, convert to Christianity and receive baptism.

By this point in the story, Sebastian's sanctity is beyond question. He teaches, he shows compassion, he heals, his teaching converts hundreds to Christianity, and he encourages those Christians who are waiting to be martyred. Yet martyrdom awaits Sebastian himself. Passing over digressions from the focus on Sebastian, I want to skip to the torture and execution of Marcellus and Marcellianus and then of Sebastian himself.

As renewed persecution of Christians breaks out, the new prefect Fabianus, called *insanissimus* (most insane) in Pseudo-Ambrose's text, orders the brothers be placed into a pillory and made to stand upon nails stuck into the soles of their feet. Yet the two stand singing a psalm about the happiness of brothers who dwell together in unity.⁵³ Fabianus's unhealthy, insane mind contrasts sharply with the patient suffering of Marcellus and Marcellianus. When he hears the brothers singing about their happiness in being able to suffer together, he responds “Eala ge ungesæligan . and soðlice earmingas . / alecgāð eowre ge-wit-leaste . and alysað eow fram witum” [O you unhappy and truly wretched men! Give up your madness and free yourselves from punishment].⁵⁴ Unable in his own madness to see himself or his prisoners from an eternal perspective, Fabianus calls Marcus and Marcellianus “unhappy” and “insane” when all the while they possess the rightly ordered, believing minds and he possesses the disordered, unhealthy mind. The brothers reply that they are glad to suffer “on cristes lufe” [in the love of Christ], and they remain in the pillory singing all night.⁵⁵ Despite their obviously painful position, the love of the two brothers for Christ overwhelms all physical pains and distractions. Neither the Latin text nor Ælfric says that the pain was removed; instead the joy the brothers feel because of Christ's love enables them to take up their pain and transform it into song. Then Fabianus “iussit eos ambos vbi stabant lanceis per latera verberari” [commanded that they both be

struck with lances through their sides where they stood].⁵⁶ Ælfric adds that Fabianus gives this order “mid fullum graman” [with utter rage] and the young men are “ofstunge” [pierced] where they stand.⁵⁷ The brothers receive not just the threat of penetrative violence against them, but the violence itself. Their bodies are pierced through at the moment of their martyrdom, and they die immediately. The idea of lances piercing the sides of the brothers calls to mind the piercing of Christ’s side while he hung on the cross. The symbolic identification of Marcus and Marcellianus with Christ through their pierced feet and sides confirms their sanctity and hallows their martyrdom.

After the deaths of the two brothers, Fabianus in the Latin version penetrates Sebastian’s military disguise and accuses Sebastian to the emperor Diocletian.⁵⁸ Ælfric does not mention the military clothing and simply notes that Fabianus denounces Sebastian to the emperor. He uses adjectives and adverbs that associate Diocletian with the devil, calling him *deoflice gram* (devilishly enraged) and *deofollica cwellere* (devilish murderer).⁵⁹ Feeling betrayed by the discovery that his beloved servant held secretly to the hated Christian religion, Diocletian furiously orders Sebastian to be tied up and shot with arrows until dead. Pseudo-Ambrose writes that “Tunc posuerunt eum milites in medio campo, et hinc inde eum ita sagittis repleuerunt, ut quasi hericus ita esset hirsutus ictibus sagittarum” [Then the soldiers placed him in the middle of a field and they filled him with arrows on this side and that to such an extent that, like a hedgehog, he was very prickly with the strikes (shafts) of arrows]. Ælfric translates: “Pa læddan þa cempa þone cristes þegn . / and setton hine to myrcelse . swa swa se manfulla het . / and heora flan him afæstnodon . foran . and hindan . / swa þicce on ælce healfe hwylce iles byrsta” [Then the warriors led the thane of Christ thence and set him up as a target, just as the wicked man ordered. And their arrows fastened into him, before and behind, so thick on each side they were like the bristles of a hedgehog].⁶⁰ Sebastian’s executioners do a thorough job, for every spare inch of flesh has an arrow stuck in it. Sebastian, however, does not die from his wounds. A martyr’s widow comes to bury Sebastian’s body, but she finds him still alive and so takes him to her home and nurses him back to health in a miraculously short amount of time. The saint through whom God healed so many now himself receives healing from God through this widow. Instead of fleeing from Rome when he had recovered, though, Sebastian goes back to the emperor’s palace and confronts Diocletian

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

What, then, does Sebastian's legend teach about the performance of male sanctity? The lesson is not an affirmation of "traditional" masculine endeavors, such as fighting or striving for political power. Sebastian illustrates the secret use of secular position in order to accomplish God's purposes of teaching, encouraging, preaching, and healing. Ælfric mentions the saint's military disguise once, then never refers to it again despite the probable example of his source text. Given Ælfric's apparent comfort in translating the story of Eugenia in disguise—and he constantly reminded his audience that she *was* in disguise—it seems odd that he would quibble with the idea of disguise in the story of Sebastian, especially since Sebastian, too, had strong reasons for maintaining his outward military appearance, namely building up the courage and spiritual strength of persecuted Christians. Ælfric's reluctance to foreground the disguise of a spy, even a spy for God, may reflect a sensitivity to the event of ealdorman Ælfric of Hampshire's treason against King Æthelred in 992.⁶¹ The contrast between an outward military disguise and Sebastian's depiction as a soldier of Christ that Pseudo-Ambrose makes so prominent Ælfric erases in his translation, leaving Sebastian as a secret soldier of Christ never leaving his earthly military context. As a result, there is no obvious opposition in the Old English version between a heroic, military masculinity and the heroic Christian masculinity enacted by Sebastian. Ælfric seems to teach that one man can be both secular warrior and soldier of Christ. (His comments in the *Item alia* at the end of his translation of Maccabees would then apply only to the ordained clergy.⁶²) If this is the case, then Ælfric seems to argue against warriors abandoning their military obligations in order to follow Christ. In the context of a Christianized Anglo-Saxon society there would be no need to choose between the two. The legend of Sebastian in Ælfric's hands provides military males with the opportunity to imagine and construct themselves as soldiers of a different kind, humble, encouraging, guiding, teaching, and able to stand firm in their faith and service to God.

George: *Nunquam Deceptor Est*

The *passio* of St. George also brings out this same theme of rejecting cultural definitions of masculine gender in favor of the new Christian constructions for nonmonastic men and women that point toward metagender, a construction based upon the characteristics of the mind as the *imago Dei* rather than on physical and sexual prowess, establishment of a family, or political power.⁶³ The Latin life begins with a description of the requisite diabolical emperor, Datian, and narrates how he has ordered everyone in his realm to worship his pagan idols. George does not even enter into the story until section five in the Latin text. In Ælfric's translation, however, George appears immediately, both in Ælfric's opening remarks about heretical versions of George's *passio* and in the first line of the *passio* itself. In mentioning how "Gedwolmen awriton gedwyld on heora bocum" [Deceivers have written falsehoods in their books],⁶⁴ Ælfric immediately sets up a theme that carries throughout the saint's *passio*: the opposition of truth to falsehood and insight to blindness. Deceivers have written lying stories about George, but Ælfric will restore the truth so that no one may take any secret harm from the lies.

George, a nobleman, possesses great wealth and holds the place of an economically, militarily, and politically powerful figure in Cappadocia.⁶⁵ No mention is made of George's education, but given his rank and position in Cappadocia it seems unlikely that he did not have a similar education to that of Eugenia or Sebastian. When he sees the way that Datian intimidates and frightens the people into worshiping the pagan gods, however, George cannot stand quietly by:

Latin life:

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

[Nevertheless, holy George, seeing that among the people of all provinces gathered before the impious Datian, there were many

present who blasphemed Christ and worshiped demons, ... all the money, which he had brought with him, he distributed to the needy. And taking off the cloak of the earthly empire, he put on the swordbelt and breastplate of the faith; protected by the sign of the cross and illuminated by the radiance of the Holy Spirit, thus he rushed up under the gaze of the emperor Datian, saying, "All the gods of the gentiles are demons, but our Lord made the heavens."]

Ælfric:

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

[Then the holy man saw the error of the heathen people, how they sacrificed to the devil and despised their Lord. Then he fearlessly distributed his property in alms to needy men and women, to the praise of the Savior, and became bold through Christ and said to the emperor, "Omnes dii gentium demonia, dominus autem caelos fecit," "All the gods of the heathens are cruel devils, and our Lord truly made the heavens."]⁶⁶

George in his wealth and military office embodies the late Roman cultural construction of powerful masculinity, but when he witnessed the way that Datian coerced his subjects into renouncing Christ and offering sacrifices to idols, George himself comes to a point of decision. Instead of leading a military coup against the emperor and seeking the imperial honor for himself or someone more tolerant than Datian, George counterintuitively liquidates all of his wealth and distributes the money to the poor around him, then removes the clothing that symbolizes his rank and power in secular society, the *chlamis* (cloak, often purple with gold threads, worn mainly by soldiers). This stripping of himself signifies George turning away from one identity (and the culture that shaped it) as a military leader and embracing another identity as a servant/soldier of Christ, enlightened by the Holy Spirit. The symbolism of these actions is lost in Ælfric's translation, however, for he omits the removal of the *chlamis* and donning of spiritual weapons, focusing only on how George distributed his wealth. In fact, even in his earlier description of

George, Ælfric leaves out any mention of his secular military status. The Latin version shows George laying aside his *chlamis* and donning the spiritual armor of a different kind of military, the *milites Christi*, as he goes to confront Datian. Instead of a cloak of purple and gold, George dons the belt and bears the breastplate of faith, protected by the cross and illuminated by the radiance of the Holy Spirit. Yet Ælfric also omits this aspect of George's transformation, noting only that the saint approached the emperor "þurh crist gebylde" [emboldened by Christ]. Ælfric's reluctance here is a mystery, for there is certainly a wealth of biblical support for the idea of spiritual weaponry, not the least of which comes from Ephesians 6:14, wherein Paul writes, "state ergo succincti lumbos vestros in veritate et induti loricam iustitiae" [Stand, therefore, having girded your loins in truth and being clothed with the breastplate of justice]. Moreover, Ælfric does describe Alban being armed with such spiritual weapons. Whatever his reasons for leaving out George's change of clothing from *chlamis* to spiritual armament, Ælfric has uncharacteristically detracted from the impact of his story by doing so.

Nevertheless, George acts boldly enough when he marches up to Datian and quotes the same verse from Psalm 95:5 that seems to have been the battle cry of the Roman martyrs when confronting the secular authorities.⁶⁷ George gives a hint about his use of memory by having ready for use appropriate words of Scripture for the occasion. The Latin version has already depicted the kind of identity George has constructed of himself through his association with Christ and now he reveals that he has memorized at least the psalms, which, for medieval Christians such as the Latin hagiographers was "a book every educated person learned by heart as a step to learning to read."⁶⁸ The prudence associated with memory enables him to say the right thing for the occasion—in this case, a bold challenge to the emperor concerning false gods *versus* the true Creator God. The Roman pantheon is full of gods made of precious metals, wood, and stone, all made by "getreowleasera manna" [truthless people].⁶⁹ The emphasis upon false images sets up a contrast when George identifies himself to Datian as a true Christian a few lines later:

Latin life:

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

[Holy George said, “I am a Christian and a servant of God. I am named George, Cappadocian by race, holding the rank of a count in my homeland. And I have chosen this better thing, to be divested of the temporal honor of the dignity of this world to cleave to the empire of the immortal God.”]

Ælfric:

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

[Then George answered that wicked one and said, “I am truly a Christian and I serve Christ. I am named George and I have high authority in my land, which is called Cappadocia. It pleases me better to set aside now this temporal dignity and to serve in the kingdom of the glorious God in holy service.”]⁷⁰

In both the Latin and Old English versions, George’s speech contrasts power in a worldly court with service in the realm of God (a point Ælfric makes more clearly than the Latin author) and clearly shows that George considers it better to serve in the kingdom of Christ than to hold authority in Datian’s empire. This inversion of ambition underscores the restructuring of George’s desires away from self-aggrandizing temporal power and domination and toward humility and obedience to Christ. By deliberately turning his back upon temporal power and authority and taking up humble servitude, George behaves in a way that a secular ruler like Datian, who is intent upon those very “traditional male pursuits” identified by Lees,⁷¹ can only perceive as ignorance or insanity because George’s actions are attuned to a reality that Datian cannot perceive.

Datian first gives George the benefit of the doubt, assuming that the saint acts out of ignorance: “Erras, Georgi; accede pronus et immola invictissimo deo Apollini, qui poterit tuae ignorantiae veniam condonare et sibi veridicum exhibere cultorem” [You err, George. Come near—bow to and sacrifice to the invincible god Apollo, who will be able to give pardon for your ignorance, and show yourself as a true worshiper of him].⁷² Datian tries to reason with George, to convince him that his loyalties are misguided. In translating Datian’s speech into Old English, Ælfric

preserves Datian's interpretation of George's behavior: "þu dwelast georgi. / genealæc nu ærest and geoffra þine lac / þam unofer-swiðendum (*sic*) apolline . seðe soþlice mæg / þinre nytenyssse gemiltsian . and to his man-rædene gebigan" [You err, George. Approach first now and offer your sacrifice to the invincible Apollo, he who truly is able to show mercy to your ignorance, and turn back to his service].⁷³ The Old English verb that Ælfric uses here in Datian's speech, *dwelian* (lead astray, deceive, err), is the root for the word Ælfric uses in the opening lines of George's *passio* when he writes about *gedwolmen* (heretics, deceivers) that have written *gedwyld* (heresy, deception) in their books about George.⁷⁴ Less than thirty-five lines later, Ælfric places the verbal form of this same word into Datian's mouth as the emperor tells the saint that he *dwelast* in his service to Christ, who died an ignominious criminal's death on a cross, instead of worshiping the victorious Apollo.⁷⁵ Through this choice of words, Ælfric brings out the irony of the scene in which the devil-like pagan calls the saint a deceiver when the emperor himself is the one led astray, deceived by his own temporal ambitions and disordered desires. It also highlights the disparity between the hegemonic masculinity of Datian's devotion to the victorious Apollo and the seemingly feminized worship of a crucified Christ.

George's reply, in the form of a rhetorical question, reminds the readers of the *passio* again of what their greatest love is supposed to be: "Qui melius diligendus est, aut cui debemus exhibere culturam, Domino Iesu Christo Redemptori omnium saeculorum, aut Apollini omnium auctori daemoniorum?" [Whom is it better to love, or to whom ought we to offer worship, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of all the worlds, or Apollo, originator of all demons?] or as Ælfric translates it, "hwæðer is to lufigenne . oððe hwam lac to offrigenne . / ðam hælende criste ealra woruldra alysend? / oþþe apolline ealra deofla ealdre." [Which is to be loved, or to whom to offer sacrifice: to the Savior Christ, Redeemer of all the worlds, or to Apollo, parent of all the devils?]⁷⁶ George's question cuts through the veneer of appearances between Christ and Apollo by pointing out their true identities. Even the vernacular audience of the *passio* could supply the answer to George's question by remembering LS 1, where Ælfric writes, "Þam men is gecyndelic þæt he lufige þæt þæt god is. Hwæt is god butan gode anum se þe is healic godnisse . butan þam ne mæg nan man nan þing godes habban" [It is natural to humankind that one should love that which is good. What is good except God alone, he who is sublime goodness, but for whom no one is able to have any good thing?]⁷⁷

Datian apparently understands the answer George expects, for “ira repletus” [filled with anger], or “mid deofollicum graman” [with devilish rage] as Ælfric puts it, the emperor orders his men to torture the saint.⁷⁸

The tortures that Datian commands involve George being hanged, having his flesh stripped off with iron pincers, and then having torches held to both of his sides until his inner organs could be seen through the burned flesh. The initial tortures seem designed to strip or burn away George’s outward covering of skin to reveal the truth below the surface of his body. Ælfric omits the description of how much George is to be burned, only translating that torches were to burn the saint’s sides. Then, if George persists in his loyalty to Christ, he is to be thrown outside the city, beaten with whips, and have salt rubbed into the wounds, perhaps as much to drive the corruption of Christianity out of George’s body as to cause gratuitous pain.⁷⁹ Yet after all of the torments, “corpus eius manebat illae-sum” [his body remained unhurt].⁸⁰ George’s body is preserved unharmed, like those of some of the virgin martyrs, as a demonstration of George’s holiness and God’s power. In this fashion, the unharmed body itself serves as the proof of the wholeness of his essential humanity in his soul, just as it does in the *passiones* of the female saints. Through his lack of insight into nonmaterial realities, however, Datian attributes this miracle to magic and seeks a sorcerer to counter George’s power. This sorcerer, Athanasius, hears and comes to Datian, promising to do the job. Throughout this entire section in Ælfric’s translation, he always refers to Athanasius as a *dry*, and his sorcery as *drycraeft*, yet Athanasius refers to the miracle of George’s good health as *scyncraft* (illusion). George himself perceives beyond the surface appearance of Athanasius, however, and comments that he recognizes God’s grace at work in the sorcerer. Because George participates in a transcendent reality, he perceives the interior truth and recognizes the trace of God in Athanasius’s heart before Athanasius knows it himself. George’s ability to see beyond the surface of things to true reality signifies the quality of his memory. Carruthers reminds us that “a trained and well-provided memory was regarded throughout this long period not as a primitive learning technique, but as the essential foundation of prudence, *sapientia*, ethical judgment.”⁸¹ George’s perception of truth unrecognized by others points to a well-developed memory. Athanasius, administers two poisonous potions to George, perhaps in an attempt to drive out whatever hidden power was believed to reside in George. Upon seeing the saint standing whole and healthy after drinking a deadly poison, the *dry* indeed falls at the saint’s feet in belief, asking for baptism. This scene sends Datian

into a fit of fiendish rage (he “deoflice wearð gram” [became devilishly enraged]⁸²), in which he immediately orders the hapless new Christian to be taken outside the city and beheaded.⁸³

After several tortures fail to affect George, Datian returns to reasoning with the saint, pleading with him as he would his own son and saying the gods want to show him mercy. The emperor alternates torment with temptation, each one serving to exacerbate the effects of the other in a late antique version of good cop/bad cop interrogation, except in George’s case there has been no real torment—he has emerged hale and whole from each attempt to destroy the body and inflict pain. Datian’s offer of fatherly advice and comments about the gods showing George mercy are so incongruent with the circumstances that George, filled with the Holy Spirit, smiles (“subridens,” and in Ælfric, “smearcode mid muðe” [smiled with his mouth]) as he answers equivocally that it is fitting to sacrifice to God.⁸⁴ In his inability to perceive beyond the surface meaning of the words, Datian misinterprets George’s response as a capitulation, an admission that he will worship Apollo, and so the emperor orders the idols to be decorated with gold and silver in order to make George’s apparent renunciation of Christ a highly public and festive occasion. George has no such intentions, however, but desires to do what will be most likely to bring people to belief, as his prayer indicates when he asks God to destroy the idols with fire “ut hi, qui in te futuri sunt credere, cognoscant te et credant unum solum verum Deum et quem misisti in saeculum Jesum!” [So that those who are to believe in you might recognize you and both believe in the one and only true God and in him whom you sent into the world, Jesus!]⁸⁵ George bows and prays for the destruction of the idols not for the sake of showing off power but for the sake of saving souls by revealing to them how helpless the idols are and so bringing the people to belief in the one true God. Even in this situation he exhibits a kind of manliness at variance with the traditional concepts of the military man and the authoritative ruler in that he does not do this feat himself, but with a humble bow asks another, God, to do it. In his dependency and his position as a suppliant, George behaves more like a servant than a soldier, yet his actions result in the destruction of Datian’s gods.

Unable to tolerate defeat by means of the humble prayer of the saint, Datian orders that George be dragged through the streets face-down and then beheaded. The dragging face-down seeks to enforce humiliation by mocking George’s bow in prayer, but George seems to see his very humiliation paradoxically as a triumph. In his final words, George thanks

God, “qui mihi contra inimici rabidam feritatem victoriam dignatus es condonare” [who has deigned to award to me the victory against the raging savageness of my enemy].⁸⁶ Ælfric expands this thought in his translation of the prayer, saying that George thanked God, “þæt he hine gescylde wið þone swicolon deofol . / and him sige forgeaf þurh soðne gelefan” [that he protected him against the deceitful devil and gave him victory through true belief].⁸⁷ Ælfric recapitulates the theme of deception that he set up at the beginning of the *passio*, and brings together the role of Datian as a deceived and deceiving, devil-like figure and George’s example of the triumph of true belief over the deceptive temptations offered to the saint through Datian’s persuasion, and to the readers by the devil himself. The saint’s prayer reminds the readers of the *passio* that true belief will give them insight and protect them from all manner of deception as long as they remain true to Christ.

After finishing his prayer the warrior of God receives the deathblow from the sword and the people of Cappadocia bury him with great honor. Datian, however, is suddenly slain by a bolt of heavenly fire as he is heading home with his companions. Ælfric adds a bit to the final thoughts of the *passio*, drawing out a final contrast between Datian and George: “and he [Datian] becom to helle ærðan þe to his huse . / and se halga georius siðode to crist . / mid ðam he a wunað on wuldre.” [and he went to hell before getting to his house, and the holy George departed to Christ, with whom he dwells ever in glory].⁸⁸ Datian now has no home but with the devil, this time in hell, while George attains to his greatest desire, dwelling with Christ for eternity. The contrasting ends illustrate to the readers the vanity of pursuing a hegemonic definition of masculinity by portraying it as a sure pathway to hell. Conversely, striving toward the spiritual maturity of the *virum perfectum* leads to the fulfillment of the greatest need and desire of all people (according to Ælfric), God. It produces growth in wisdom and discernment that allows those who believe to see past the surface appearance of things to the truth of God that lies beneath. By means of such wisdom, neither the saint nor those who imitate him may ever be deceived by the wiles of any spiritual enemy because it is a wisdom established through love and relationship with truth itself, with God.

* * *

The legends of George, Sebastian, and Agnes reflect different expressions of faithfulness to God and it is as difficult to discuss gendered expressions of the metagendered soul and mind here as in the previous chapter. Agnes

depicts the soul as the bride of Christ clothed in a body still residing in the material world. Her beauty and intelligence attract a suitor for whom she has no desire because she has already constructed her own identity as a bride of Christ independently of the men around her. As a bride, she desires the embraces and kisses of her bridegroom and she expresses her desire in one of the longest passages of direct discourse in *Lives of Saints*. Her rejection speech to Sempronius's son reveals how she has created her own bridal chamber in her memory and already meets there with Christ in intimate relationship. Yet desire is not Agnes's only attribute. Her desire for Christ exists only because she is wise, mature in mind, believes in the Savior, and will let nothing draw her love and intention away from him, not even the threat of rape or the actuality of martyrdom. She faces the danger of the one and the actuality of the other with the calm fortitude of a soldier and the eagerness of a bride on her wedding day. Sebastian, on the other hand, shows worldly warriors how they may be soldiers of Christ as well, even under the command of a pagan tyrant. Unlike Agnes, Sebastian hides his devotion to Christ, not out of fear of martyrdom but out of a desire live in order to strengthen and encourage other Christians suffering persecution. The masculinity Sebastian performs is complex in that it hides and avoids martyrdom for a while. Ælfric makes sure his audience knows that this is only acceptable because he is helping fellow believers who are undergoing torture and temptation. In this way, Ælfric takes the humble works of encouragement and teaching and turns them into work suitable for a warrior. Sebastian is neither a priest nor a monk, yet he brings others to Christ by his humility, teaching, and exhortation until his cover is blown whereupon he undergoes martyrdom twice, perhaps to make up for having avoided it so long before. George, too, reveals himself to be a Christian by responding to the plight of the people suffering under another tyrannical emperor. Ælfric does not reveal that George is a warrior in his translation of the *passio*, but sets up the opposition between falsehood and truth and highlights the insight and spiritual understanding that George possesses because of his belief in the truth of Christ. It is through belief that the mind perceives spiritual realities and George's insight comes into sharp relief in comparison to Datian's ineffectual attempts to see beyond outer appearances.⁸⁹ George initially reveals himself to be a Christian because of his compassion for the masses of people oppressed into worshiping idols. This compassion leads to munificent almsdeeds and confrontation with the emperor. By contrast with the emperor's own deceived condition and spiritual blindness George's wisdom and insight

show themselves clearly. The saint's humility and dependence upon God render the tortures ineffectual, maintaining his body's health and integrity until he prays for God to bring down the idols in order to convert the people to God. Relinquishing his wealth and status, George adopts a gender characterized by wisdom, spiritual insight, humility, and dependence upon God, a kind of masculinity that the emperor Datian finds intolerable and seeks to destroy—only to find destruction for himself.

NOTES

¹ For a brief comparison of the themes in Ambrose's *De virginibus* with Pseudo-Ambrose's *passio* of Agnes, see McDaniel, "Agnes Among the Anglo-Saxons," 224–29.

² *LS*, 7.7b. This phrase does not appear in the Latin editions (Pseudo-Ambrose, *Epistola* 1, *PL* 17.813–21, and "Passio Agnetis," in *Sanctuarium seu Vitae Sanctorum*, ed. Mombritius, 1.40–44), nor is it found in the text of what is considered to be the closest manuscript version found in the CCL, BL Cotton Nero E.i, Nero E.i, fol. 114r–116v, which simply says that she "dilexit auctorem" on 114r. For another reading of Ælfric's life of Agnes, see Gulley, *Displacement*, 37–49 and Hodgson, "Impossible Women," 12–21.

³ Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 88–89.

⁴ *LS*, 7.13; cf. "pulchra facie sed pulchrior fide" [beautiful of face and more beautiful of faith], "Passio Agnetis," ed. Mombritius, 1.40.42.

⁵ *LS*, 7.12b. "Passio Agnetis," ed. Mombritius, 1.40.41.

⁶ *LS*, 7.12b.

⁷ *LS*, 7.25b–26. "Passio Agnetis," ed. Mombritius, 1.40.51: "fomes peccati nutrimentum facinoris pabulum mortis." The idea of the serpent as tempter rather than of the woman as tempter occurs in Augustine, *De trinitate*, 12.20 and in Cassian, *Conférences*, 5.6.

⁸ *LS*, 7.27b–28.

⁹ "Passio Agnetis," ed. Mombritius, 1.41.9–11; *LS*, 7.45–48. The last two words of Mombritius's edition of Pseudo-Ambrose's text differ from the text of the CCL found in BL, Cotton Nero E.i, which has "genas meas" rather than the scribal error, "genus meum." My translation follows the text of the Cotton manuscript.

¹⁰ "Passio Agnetis," ed. Mombritius, 1.41.15–17; *LS*, 7.57–62.

¹¹ Ambrose, "De Isaac uel anima," 3.9; "Isaac or the Soul," in *Seven Exegetical Works*, trans. McHugh, 3.9.

¹² "Passio Agnetis," ed. Mombritius, 1.40.45; *LS*, 7.20.

¹³ *LS*, 1.96–109.

¹⁴ For an alternative reading of Sempronius, see Bankert, "Reconciling Family and Faith," 143–46.

¹⁵ Augustine, *De trinitate*, 12.16; Augustine, *Trinity*, 12.16.

¹⁶ “*Passio Agnetis*,” ed. Mombritius, 1.41.17; *LS*, 7.63 and 68.

¹⁷ “nec redire potest effusis ac perditis uiribus nisi gratia conditoris sui ad poenitentiam uocantis et peccata donantis. *Quis enim infelicem animam liberabit a corpore mortis huius nisi gratia dei per Iesum Christum dominum nostrum?*” Augustine, *De trinitate*, 12.16. “nor can [the soul] go back up again, having squandered and lost its strength, except by the grace of its maker calling it to repentance and forgiving its sins. For who will ever free the hapless soul from the body of this death except by the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord?” Augustine, *Trinity*, 12.16 [italics as in original].

¹⁸ *LS*, 7.72–73.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.79

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.95.

²¹ “*Passio Agnetis*,” ed. Mombritius, 1.41.27–30; *LS*, 7.83–84, 96–97.

²² “*Passio Agnetis*,” ed. Mombritius, 1.41.43; *LS*, 7.73, 86, and 105.

²³ “*Passio Agnetis*,” ed. Mombritius, 1.41.49–50; *LS*, 7.109b–112.

²⁴ “*Passio Agnetis*,” ed. Mombritius, 1.42.1–4; *LS*, 7.123–31.

²⁵ “*Passio Agnetis*,” ed. Mombritius, 1.42.12; *LS*, 7.137–41.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.145–47. “*Passio Agnetis*,” ed. Mombritius, 1.42.14–15: “Statim autem ut spoliata est: crine soluto tantam densitatem capillis eius diuina gratia concessit: ut melius eorum fimbriis uideretur quam uestibus tecta.” [“Immediately, however, when she was stripped, her hair loosened and divine grace granted her so great a density of hair that she seemed to be better covered by its ends than by her clothing.”]

²⁷ *I Cor.* 11: 15b.

²⁸ “*Passio Agnetis*,” ed. Mombritius, 16–21; *LS*, 7.148–59.

²⁹ *LS*, 7.170b.

³⁰ “*Passio Agnetis*,” ed. Mombritius, 1.43.1–3; *LS*, 7.201–6.

³¹ “*Passio Agnetis*,” ed. Mombritius, 1.43.7.

³² *LS*, 7.210.

³³ “*Passio Agnetis*,” ed. Mombritius, 1.43.23–27; *LS*, 7.234–39.

³⁴ Allen J. Frantzen, “When Women Aren’t Enough,” 165.

³⁵ Lees, *Introduction to Medieval Masculinities*, xv.

³⁶ Whatley, “*Acta Sanctorum*,” 408. The *passio* of Sebastian (*BHL* 7543) may be found in the *Acta Sanctorum* for 20 Januarii (13 calendas Februarii), 265–78. The CCL version used for this analysis is from BL, Cotton Nero E.i (Gneuss and Lapidge #344). See also Damian Fleming, “Demilitarized Saint,” 1–21.

³⁷ *LS*, 2.93.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 2; Cf. *AASS* “S. Sebastianus,” §1 and Cotton Nero E.i, fol. 102r. I have preserved the ambiguity of Ælfric’s phrasing in Old English so that Sebastian may either be learning or teaching during his time in Milan.

³⁹ *AASS* “S. Sebastianus,” §1; *LS*, 5.4–10.

⁴⁰ *AASS* “S. Sebastianus,” §2; Cotton Nero E.i, fol. 102r.

⁴¹ Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 83.

⁴² As in the other *passiones*, Ælfric only mentions one of the coemperors, Diocletian, because he thinks it better not to confuse his audience (or give them unwanted ideas) with the suggestion that more than one person might be the king or highest ruler at the same time. See Ælfric, *LS Praefatio* 19–21.

⁴³ *AASS* “S. Sebastianus,” §2. Cf. *LS*, 5.23: *gehyrte heora mod* (encouraged their minds).

⁴⁴ Whatley, “Acta Sanctorum,” 408.

⁴⁵ *LS*, 5.28; cf. *AASS* “S. Sebastianus,” §4. Skeat has translated *under-hnigan* as “undergo,” which is one possible meaning of the word. *Hnigian*, however, means “to bow down (the head),” and given the sentence of beheading by means of a sword, I have chosen to retain the more specific meaning of the root verb, since it also carries the implication of submission that is given as the primary meaning of *under-hnigan* in Hall & Meritt.

⁴⁶ *LS*, 5.40b–42. Since Marcus and Marcellianus are married and have children, Skeat’s translation of *cnihta* as “of the youths” seems inaccurate here. We do not really know whether they are retainers, disciples, or warriors, so it seemed best to me to translate the terms simply as “of the young men.”

⁴⁷ *AASS*, “S. Sebastianus,” §9; *LS*, 5.48–49. Although *mag* may also mean male relatives and kinsmen, the context of the lines leading up to this statement encourages the more specific translation of *maga* as “of their wives,” a usage that is attested in Hall & Meritt.

⁴⁸ *AASS*, “S. Sebastianus,” §9; Cotton Nero E.i, fol. 103r.

⁴⁹ *LS*, 5.86. These lengthy discourses are found in §§13–22 of Pseudo-Ambrose’s text.

⁵⁰ *AASS*, “S. Sebastianus,” §23; Cotton Nero E.i, fol. 105r.

⁵¹ *AASS*, “S. Sebastianus,” §24; *LS*, 5.93.

⁵² *AASS*, “S. Sebastianus,” §24; *LS*, 5.106–11. Zoë’s affirmation of the efficacy of Sebastian’s teaching uses the metaphor of the dawning light of instruction chasing away the gloom of ignorance—a metaphor that can be found also in Augustine’s *De civitate Dei* where he writes: “Sed quia ipsa mens, cui ratio et intelligentia naturaliter inest, uitiis quibusdam tenebrosis et ueteribus inualida est, non solum ad inhaerendum fruendo, uerum etiam ad perferendum incommutabile lumen, donec de die in diem renouata atque sanata fiat tantae felicitatis capax, fide primum fuerat inbuenda atque purganda.” Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 11.2. “But since the mind, which was meant to be reasonable and intelligent, has, by dark and inveterate vices, become too weak to adhere joyously to His unchangeable light (or even to bear it) until, by gradual renewal and healing, it is made fit for such happiness, its first need was to be instructed by faith and purified.” Augustine, *The City of God*, 11.2

⁵³ Psalm 132:1.

⁵⁴ *LS*, 5.396–97.

⁵⁵ *LS*, 5.398.

⁵⁶ *AASS*, “S. Sebastianus,” §84; Cotton Nero E.i, fol. 115v.

⁵⁷ *LS*, 5.404–05.

⁵⁸ *AASS*, “S. Sebastianus,” §85; Cotton Nero E.i, fol. 115v.

⁵⁹ *LS*, 5.421 and 447.

⁶⁰ *AASS*, “S. Sebastianus,” §85; *LS*, 5.425–28.

⁶¹ See Upchurch, “Big Dog Barks,” 522–23, n. 80.

⁶² *LS*, 25.819–32.

⁶³ The legend of St. George (*BHL* 3373/74) has been dated to the early fifth century and apparently enjoyed great popularity throughout the early Middle Ages. The published edition closest to Ælfric’s own Latin source and used here is by Huber, “Zur Georgslegende,” 194–203. The closest manuscript version may be found in the CCL, BL Cotton Nero E.i. See also the entry on Georgius provided by Joyce Hill in Whatley, “Acta Sanctorum,” 215–17.

⁶⁴ *LS*, 14.1

⁶⁵ Huber, “Zur Georgslegende,” §5 and *LS*, 14.5–6 and 28–30.

⁶⁶ Huber, “Zur Georgslegende,” §6 [the ellipses indicate missing text]; *LS*, 14.12–19.

⁶⁷ *LS*, 2.38.

⁶⁸ Carruthers, “Mechanisms,” 9.

⁶⁹ *LS*, 14.21.

⁷⁰ Huber, “Zur Georgslegende,” §8; *LS*, 14.26–32.

⁷¹ Lees, Introduction to *Medieval Masculinities*, xv.

⁷² Huber, “Zur Georgslegende,” §9.

⁷³ *LS*, 14.33–36.

⁷⁴ *LS*, 14.1.

⁷⁵ The entry in Hall & Meritt defines *dvelian* “(to go astray; lead astray; deceive.)” The implication is that one might also go astray by being deceived, which may be the sense in which Ælfric uses the word here.

⁷⁶ Huber, “Zur Georgslegende,” §9; *LS*, 14.38–40.

⁷⁷ *LS*, 1.88–90.

⁷⁸ Huber, “Zur Georgslegende,” §10; *LS*, 14.41.

⁷⁹ Huber, “Zur Georgslegende,” §10; *LS*, 14.41–46.

⁸⁰ Huber, “Zur Georgslegende,” §11.

⁸¹ Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 219.

⁸² *LS*, 14.82.

⁸³ Huber, “Zur Georgslegende,” §12–13 and *LS*, 14.48–84.

⁸⁴ Huber, “Zur Georgslegende,” §16; *LS*, 14.126.

⁸⁵ Huber, “Zur Georgslegende,” §18. See also Ælfric’s translation of this prayer, *LS*, 14.137–40.

⁸⁶ Huber, “Zur Georgslegende,” §20.

⁸⁷ *LS*, 14.164–65.

⁸⁸ *LS*, 14.182–83.

⁸⁹ Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, 407.

Chapter Five

Material and Spiritual Bodies

Agatha: Femina Tamen

In her discussion of Ælfric's "corporeal hermeneutics," Shari Horner points out Ælfric's use of *lichamlic* (bodily, carnal, physical, material) to denote a literal or historical reading of a text, saying that, "for Ælfric understanding a text *lichamlice* means understanding it both by means of the body, and in the literal sense."¹ Yet there is a *gastlic* (spiritual) sense that Ælfric desires his readers to attain, for it is by means of understanding the spiritual sense of the *passiones* that Ælfric's audience may come to know both God and themselves as they remember and reflect upon the legends. The legends that have already been analyzed here demonstrate the accuracy of Horner's observation inasmuch as the literal body of the saint has a *gastlic* meaning beyond itself. Both the saint's material body and the saint's temporal life function on two levels: historically as living human beings in the midst of particular historical events (regardless of whether they were actual historical people or not), and iconographically as images of the soul that draw the readers through identification and imitation into the greater reality of the *imago Dei* in the saint, the Creator whose image is reflected there, and the transcendent realm of eternal truths.² In the legend of Agatha, the opposition between reading the saint's body and the saint's *passio* literally and spiritually moves the audience beyond merely identifying with the saint's physical sufferings to the more important (from Ælfric's perspective) identification with and imitation of Agatha's mind and soul. The physical threats and tortures that Agatha endures are means to an end for Quintianus the lecherous magistrate, for the anonymous author of the Latin life, and for Ælfric himself, although obviously the ends are not the same.

The Latin life makes Quintianus's motives regarding Agatha clear from the outset. His description comes even before Agatha's and focuses on his lust and desire to gaze upon the young woman. Ælfric seems to be

dissatisfied with such a beginning and so inserts a very brief description of Agatha's character before describing Quintianus, saying that she is "snotor and gelyfed" [wise and believing].³ Already Ælfric implies two things about Agatha's soul: she possesses the well-developed memory that is necessary for wisdom and she can perceive incorporeal truths beyond the surface appearances of the world around her. Ælfric then provides a condensed description of Quintianus, setting up the opposition between the wise, rightly ordered, believing mind of Agatha and the chaotic, unperceptive, unbelieving mind of Quintianus, which is subject to the passions of greed and lust that have overruled his reason and enslaved him to the devil.⁴ The rest of the life is a dramatic enactment of these material and spiritual oppositions.

The focus of the *passio* on the opposition between a believing mind and an unbelieving mind has often been overlooked in recent criticism in favor of spotlighting Agatha's breast as a representation of her sexual identity.⁵ The violence done to Agatha's female body in the course of her opposition to Quintianus's will rightly deserves evaluation and critical attention, yet the context of the hagiographical setting and the idea that the described violence may have a purpose beyond titillation do not always factor into analyses of the saint's body itself:

The breast emblematizes the hermeneutic function of the virgin martyr narratives: its violent mutilation stirs our horror and pity, yet the saint's denial of the significance of her own flesh reminds us that the truth of this text is not found at the literal level, but deep within its (her) beautiful surface. Agatha's spiritual reading of her own body depends upon its literal sense, while the torturer's repeated assaults on her flesh demonstrate his inability to read beyond a literal level.⁶

One must ask, though, whether or not the denial of the body is really the main point of the virgin martyr narratives. The body figures significantly in each one, albeit in some more than others, as both an object and a vessel of desire. Agatha has apparently cared well for her own body, since Quintianus finds it so desirable that he sends her to Aphrodosia and her nine *filias turpissimas* (very foul daughters) for thirty days so that they might persuade her to yield to him.⁷ The conflict arises when Agatha refuses to be persuaded, but, according to both the Latin author and Ælfric, Agatha's resolution is entirely a matter of the mind. Agatha does not speak about her body, nor does Aphrodosia directly attempt to change Agatha's

chaste behavior. The older woman tries to change Agatha's mind instead, for she understands that the mind directs behavior, that virginity of the mind protects bodily integrity rather than the other way around. One might perform bodily chastity all one wants, but according to Ambrose and Augustine, and to Aldhelm after them, only the virginal integrity of the mind counts as true purity.⁸ The body, then, is the outward expression of inward purity, for a rightly ordered mind will manifest itself by the living of chastity, not just the outward performance of it. True chastity is an integral aspect of identity. This is why Quintianus sends Agatha to dwell with Aphrodosia for thirty days—so that Agatha might be defined by new memories formed within a new context and learn a new identity in her mind.⁹ Agatha thwarts the attempt by means of her “fæstrædde gebanc . / þe is gegrund-stabelod” [steadfast mind which is firmly grounded].¹⁰ The entire focus of the episode is upon Agatha's mind rather than upon her body. In the end, Aphrodosia tells Quintianus “Stanas magon hnexian . and þæt starce isen / on leades gelicnysse . ærðan þe se geleafa mæge / of agathes breoste . beon æfre adwæsced .” [Stones may soften and hard iron become the likeness of lead before the belief in Agatha's breast may ever be extinguished].¹¹ Agatha's faith remains immovable after Aphrodosia's best efforts and, even though Ælfric has the prostitute refer to Agatha's breast as a metaphor for her heart or mind, the comment foreshadows the site of Agatha's future torture and is not found in the closest Latin text. At the end of the thirty days in the brothel, Agatha retains the purity of both her body and her soul. In its status as a visible sign the saint's body functions as an icon, a point of entry into the transcendent world of the saint's soul and of God, and so possesses value and importance both to the saint and the reader.

This said, the breast that has borne so much of the gaze of the faithful and of scholars of the body seems to matter very little to Agatha herself. Allen J. Frantzen comments that “Agatha annihilates her womanhood more effectively than her torturers when she disowns the breast she has lost in favor of the true faith in the breast of her soul.”¹² “Disowns,” however, is too strong a term, for Agatha is not unmoved by her loss. Rather she rebukes Quintianus for his cruelty: “Agatha uero respondit: Impie et crudelissime non es confussus hoc amputare in femina quod ipse in matre suxisti? Sed ego habeo mammillas integras intus in anima mea: ex quibus nutrio omnes sensus meos: quos ab infantia domino consecraui” [Nevertheless Agatha responded, “Impious and most cruel! Are you not disordered to cut off that part on a woman which you yourself

sucked on your mother? Yet I possess whole breasts inwardly, in my soul, from which I suckle all my thinking, which from infancy I consecrated to the Lord.”] Ælfric is slightly more direct, saying, “Agathes him cwæð to . Eala þu arleasosta / ne sceamode þe to ceorfanne þæt þu sylf suce . / ac ic habbe mine breost on minre sawle . ansunde . / mid þam ðe Ic min andgit eallunga afede” [Agatha said to him, “Alas, you most impious man! Are you not ashamed to cut out that which you yourself have sucked! But I possess my breast whole within my soul by means of which I entirely feed my intellect.”]¹³ In neither account does Agatha disown her flesh. Instead, she reproaches her tormentor for his cruelty and disrespect for a breast like the one that had nourished him when he was a weak and helpless child. The reference is more specific in the Latin text than in the Old English, but the idea of disrespect for the nourishment that Quintianus had received from his own mother’s breast is not lost despite Ælfric’s omission of the specific reference to Quintianus’s mother. Far from rejecting her fleshy breast, Agatha points out the inhumanity of a man cruel enough to try to deprive a woman of her womanhood. In turn, she affirms her essential femininity by claiming to have other breasts within her soul by which she nourishes her thoughts. Both the Latin author and Ælfric use active verbs in the first person, *nutrio* and *afede*, indicating that Agatha feeds herself by means of these inner breasts. Horner identifies these inner breasts with Christ: “Agatha herself is nourished through the breast (i.e., Christ) within her own soul,” an image that evokes Ambrose’s description of Christ as the virgin whose teats do not fail.¹⁴ Yet Agatha claims these inward breasts for herself, saying *habeo* and *Ic habbe* rather than *Christus est* or *Crist is*. With these words in mind it seems more likely that Agatha means the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, an allegorical interpretation of breasts made by Ambrose: “Ubera vel duo Testamenta dixit, quorum altero annuntiatus est, altero demonstratus. Et bene ubera, quoniam velut quodam nos spiritali lacte nutritos educavit, et obtulit Deo Filius” [He said “the breasts” or the two testaments, in one of which he is announced, in the other he is shown forth. And well did he say breasts because the Son has raised us by nourishing us as it were with a certain spiritual milk, and has presented us to God].¹⁵ While Ælfric probably did not know Ambrose’s work directly, the idea was also transmitted through Augustine and Bede as well as the Latin life.¹⁶ Agatha could nourish her thoughts at any time from the lifegiving words of the breasts of the Old Testament and New Testament scriptures stored away in her memory since she was an infant. She clearly states that nourishing her mind outweighs

concern for her body, but it does not make her reject her flesh or refuse to acknowledge the loss of her physical breast. Her comment also emphasizes the distinction between her soul and her physical body in that the soul remained whole and healthy independently of her physical mutilation.¹⁷ Ælfric does not allow his audience, monastic or lay, to confuse Agatha's soul with her body.

Even while Agatha thus maintains her identity as a woman after the loss of her breast, she does so through her identity with and love for Christ. She affirms her own womanhood even more after the Apostle Peter visits her that same night in her prison cell, offering to heal her wounds. Agatha refuses his aid, not realizing that the one before her is not a mortal physician but rather a heavenly messenger: "Agatha Respondit [sic]: *Quia habeo saluatorem dominum Iesum Christum: qui uerbo curat omnia: et sermo eius solus restaurat uniuersa: hic si uult: potest me saluam facere*" [Agatha replied, "Because I have a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who cures all things with a word, and his word alone restores all things. If he wishes, he is able to make me well."] Ælfric omits most of the conversation between Agatha and Peter, focusing on her reason for refusing medical treatment: "Ne gymde Ic nanes læce-cræftes næfre on minum life . / ic hæbbe minne hælend þe gehæld mid his worde . / he mæg gif he wyle . mihtelice me gehælan" [Never in my life have I cared anything for physician's remedies. I have my Savior who heals by means of his word; he is able to heal me mightily, if he wishes.]¹⁸ While the refusal of medical aid may seem to support Frantzen's interpretation of Agatha disowning her breast, it is rather an assertion of hope that her dismembered flesh might yet be made whole. She knows that no medical skill can reattach her breast and so on the purely corporeal level her only hope of being made whole again lies in a miracle of Christ. And yet she does hope. She does not despair over her disfigurement, but demonstrates absolute confidence in her Savior. At a deeper, incorporeal level, Agatha's confidence in her inner breasts of the Old and New Testaments is simultaneously indicative of her confidence in Christ, the Word made flesh, who can heal her inside and out. Upon hearing Agatha's profession of confidence, Peter proclaims her restoration in Christ's name and disappears.¹⁹ The author of the Latin version describes how Agatha praises God for her healing and then says, "Et dum complessset orationem suam respiciens ad omnes maculas corporis sui: sanata omnia membra sua cognovit" [And when she had finished her prayer, looking at all the injuries of her body she perceived all of her parts to be whole.] Ælfric, however, elab-

orates upon this rather terse scene, observing that “Æfter ðam gebede .
beseah to hyre breoste . / and wæs þæt corfene breost / þurh crist
ge-edstaðelod . / and ealle hire wunda wurdon gehælede” [After that
prayer she looked upon her breast, and that breast that was cut off
became restored by Christ and all her wounds became whole.]²⁰ Alone
and in prison, Agatha gazes upon her own restored breast. Ælfric per-
sonalizes the moment, letting his audience see Agatha’s womanhood con-
firmed and affirmed through her own eyes, not through the objectifying
gaze of a man. By restoring Agatha’s flesh, God demonstrates the value
and importance of her body; by viewing her own breast, Agatha does the
same. Ælfric’s portrayal both of Agatha’s desire for healing and of how she
sees her own restored body communicates to his audience a holy appre-
ciation for the body without making preservation of the body the highest
priority.

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

Latin life:

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

[Agatha replied, “All of your words are foolish and empty and your
perverse precepts pollute the very air. Whence, wretch, you are both
without feeling and without reason who wants to call upon a stone
for his help and not the highest and true God, who has deigned to
cure me from every blow with which you thus harassed me, in order
that he might restore to me my breast quite whole.”]

Ælfric:

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

[Then Agatha said, “You wretched, foolish man! Why do you want to call out to a stone and not to the true God, who for the sake of his name protected me from all the injuries that you cruelly committed upon my body and restored my breast that you basely cut off?”]²¹

After the miraculous events in the prison regarding Agatha’s healing, this scene brings back to the attention of the audience the opposition between the saint’s belief and Quintianus’s unbelief that has been the consistent focus of the life though not discussed here. The importance of the mind and of the body are brought together in Agatha’s blunt response, for after both she and the audience have directly encountered the power of Christ, praying for help to deaf stones would be utter mindlessness. Moreover, Christ’s regard for Agatha’s female body, signaled by the restoration of her breast, points up the cruel disregard Quintianus displayed when he ordered her mutilation. The irony in this contrast deserves mention, for it calls into question interpretations of female saints’ *passiones* that insist upon the denial of the female body or upon the necessity of “becoming male” in order to attain salvation or sanctity: Christ, who supposedly should confirm the saint’s rejection of her breast, instead restores it; Quintianus, who supposedly desires to possess Agatha’s breast, instead destroys it. There is no rejection of female sex in Agatha’s pursuit of the *virum perfectum*, for that transformation toward metagender takes place in the soul where there is no sex, so that Agatha can still value and care for her sexed body.

At the end of her life (and once again in prison) Agatha spreads her hands in prayer, saying, “Domine … ut accipias spiritum meum modo: quia tempus est: ut me iubeas istud saeculum derelinquere: et ad tuam misericordiam peruenire” [Lord, I entreat you to receive my spirit now, because it is time for you to command me to abandon this world and to attain to your mercy.] Ælfric adjusts the Latin author’s awkward attempt to demonstrate the saint’s volition and God’s sovereignty in the saint’s prayer by writing, “ðe ic bidde drihten . þæt ðu minne gast / nu to þe genime . forðan þe nu is tima . / þæt ic þas woruld forlæte . and to þinre liðan miltheortnysse / becuman mote . min leofa drihten” [I entreat you, Lord, that you take my spirit to you now, because now is the time, that I may leave this world and may come into your gentle mercy, my beloved Lord.]²² And so saying, Agatha gives up her *gast* at a time of her own choosing rather than at the hands (or swords) of her executioners. Quintianus, helpless to obtain her body, proves equally helpless to take

her life. Agatha determines the moment of her own entry into heaven, not her persecutor. Quintianus had imprisoned her in order to possess her, but she eluded his temporal restraint, slipping beyond his reach into the realm of the eternal. As a sign to the people of her acceptance into heaven, an angel followed by a hundred men brings an inscribed stone to place at the head of Agatha's tomb, which reads: "Mentem sanctam spontaneam, honorem deo, et patrie liberationem" [A holy mind by her free will, honorable to God, and liberation to the homeland]. Ælfric gives the Latin of the inscription, then translates it into English for his readers: "halig mod . sylfwillie wurðmynt . þam / wel-wyllendan gode . and eardes alysednyse" [A voluntarily holy mind, glory to the benevolent God, and the redemption of the earth].²³ Agatha's agency in shaping her own mind into a holy place produces praise for God and benefits for the people (and chastity as a by-product).

By contrast, Quintianus meets a most ignominious death, yet one that fully symbolizes his life and his disordered mind: he is caught on a boat between two horses, one of which picks him up with its teeth while the other kicks him overboard into the river, from which his body is never recovered.²⁴ The horses serve as a symbol for the animal passions in patristic and medieval literature and so Quintianus's death by means of these beasts illustrates the idea that the mental misrule of his own lustful desire and cruel wrath, his own beastliness, kills him.²⁵ And unlike Agatha, whose body remains intact, locatable, and memorialized within its sarcophagus, Quintianus's body disappears into the river's depths. It is consigned to oblivion and forgotten. In this final irony, Agatha preserves her body because she valued her soul more, demonstrating once more the right ordering of the powers of her mind. Quintianus, on the other hand, loses his body precisely because he valued it more than his soul, seeking gratification in the animal pleasures and thus losing his mind together with his body.

In this way, the *passio* of Agatha instructs the men in Ælfric's lay audience on the importance of the soul's activity of controlling the sexual impulses of the body even more than it instructs the women. Every cruelty Quintianus commits arises from an insanity of frustrated sexual passion. Unused to curbing his own passions, he does not know how to respond to having them curbed for him by Agatha's refusal of his desires. Quintianus's unrestrained lust places him on a level with the mindless beasts, and so, by means of unusually astute beasts, he meets his end. Agatha, on the other hand, lives out the importance of memorizing Scripture and nourishing

herself mentally through reflection and meditation on the word of God. She also models a properly ordered appreciation of the body: willing to sacrifice the flesh in order to preserve her integrity of mind, but governing and loving her own flesh in an appropriate way nonetheless, by caring for the body but subordinating its needs to those of the soul. Ælfric instructs both men and women through Agatha's experience how to properly order their own loves for God, others, and self.

Lucia: Virgo Immobilis

Closely associated with Agatha, Lucia of Syracuse first appears with her mother Eutychia at Agatha's tomb. They have come in response to Agatha's growing reputation, seeking physical healing for the saint-to-be's mother, who suffers from the uniquely feminine disorder of a continual flux of blood that no physician has been able to cure.²⁶ Eutychia's illness draws the reader's attention to the female anatomy, specifically the womb, and suggests the impurity that follows upon the loss of virginity in the marital embrace and childbirth. The broken integrity of Eutychia's body, the loss of stainless purity reflects the fallen nature of humanity, its integrity broken through Adam's disobedience, its soul stained and corrupted by sin, as desperately in need of salvation as Eutychia's own body is in need of healing. While at Agatha's tomb, Eutychia and Lucia hear the gospel story of Jesus's healing of the woman with a flux of blood, which gives Lucia the idea to appeal to Agatha to intercede with Christ to heal her mother. The parallel between Eutychia and the woman in the gospel reinforces the emphasis on the lack of health in Eutychia's corrupted womb and the need for divine intervention.

In contrast to Eutychia's plight, Lucia is healthy, whole, a virgin, although neither Mombritius, the Hereford manuscript of the Cotton-Corpus Legendary, nor Ælfric's translation reveal this fact directly, simply referring to Lucia once as *ge-sælige* (happy, fortunate, blessed) rather than as a virgin.²⁷ Lucia and her ailing mother spend the night at Agatha's tomb, prostrate in prayer for so long that Lucia falls asleep. While asleep, Lucia sees a vision of Agatha, accompanied by many angels and richly attired. When Agatha greets Lucia, she reveals Lucia's virginal status: "Min swus-tor lucia . soð godes mæden / hwi bitst þu æt me þæs þe ðu miht sylf getiðian?" [Lucia, my sister, true virgin of God, why do you pray to me for that which you yourself are able to give?] ²⁸ Agatha's announcement dramatically creates the impression of a sort of annunciation of Lucia's

virginity. Up to this point in Ælfric's translation, Lucia is not directly called a virgin, but she learns through the vision that God claims her for his own, naming her a true virgin possibly before she has truly determined to be so. As a result of this knowledge of Lucia's status, God grants her ahead of time a reward for her future faithfulness—Eutychia's malady is healed. These events evoke questions about free will—an essential aspect of virginity—that are left unstated in the text. In the Latin text Lucia credits the saint with Eutychia's healing, but Ælfric shifts the credit, making Agatha explicitly emphasize that Christ healed the woman, not Agatha herself.²⁹ Agatha then explains that Lucia had the faith to effect her mother's cure, "quia iucundum deo in tua uirginitate habitaculum præparasti" [because you have prepared a pleasing dwelling place for God in your virginity]. Ælfric stays very close in his translation: "fordan þe þu gearcodest criste . on þinum clænan mægð-hade . / wynsume wununge. [because by your pure virginity you have prepared yourself [to be] a pleasant dwelling for Christ.]"³⁰ The comment bears both bodily and spiritual meanings: Lucia's virginity is a matter of both body and soul. Understood within the practice of virginity outlined by the Latin Doctors, Lucia must have developed her memory, furnishing it with scriptures and constructing herself into a temple for God's presence reminiscent of Jerome's comparison of the virgin's soul to the mercy-seat in the holy of holies of the Old Testament temple. Young enough not to have been married yet, the virtue of Lucia's virginity seems to lie more in her mental and spiritual preparation for choosing a life of chastity than in having actually determined to set aside all corporeal entanglements.

After Agatha finishes her announcement, Lucia wakes and quickly rouses her mother to tell her about her cure and to make a request that "per ipsam . te precor per eam quae te saluauit suis orationibus : ne tu mihi aliquando sponsum nomines : ne tu uelis de corporis mei posteritate fructum mortalitatis inquirere" [By the same one who healed you through her prayers, I pray you that you neither name anyone to me as a husband at any time, nor that you desire to look for the fruit of mortality in offspring from my body.] Ælfric translates these lines closely, but nuances Lucia's comment: "nu bidde ic þe . þurh þa ylcan . þe þe mid ge-bedum gehælde . / þæt þu nanne bryd-guman næfre me ne namige . / ne of minum licha-man deadlicne wæstm ne sece" [Now I ask you, by that one that healed you through prayers, that you never name for me a bridegroom, nor ask for mortal fruit from my body.].³¹ In Ælfric's translation, Lucia makes the point that Christ, who has cured Eutychia's womb, now lays claim to

Lucia's own so that it may never know the corruption of lust and begetting offspring as Eutychia's has known, and so that Lucia's offspring might be spiritual rather than mortal children who must themselves later die. By virtue of Lucia's pure womb, Eutychia's has been healed through Agatha's prayers and by Lucia's own heavenly bridegroom. This same idea of virginal daughters thus saving their mothers is found in Jerome's *Adversus Jovinianum*, which makes the point that married women attain through their virgin children what they themselves have lost; the spiritual fruits of the child's virginity make up for the corruption of lust that accompanies copulation and of having borne bodily fruit.³² In addition to warning her mother not to expect grandchildren, however, Lucia also wants the dowry that Eutychia would have provided to anyone who married her daughter, in order to use it in Christ's service.³³ Eutychia tries to defer because for the nine years she has been a widow she has stewarded and increased the wealth left by her husband.³⁴ Despite Eutychia's remarkable business acumen, which is clearly stated in both the Latin and Old English versions, Lucia remains adamant and eventually persuades her to sell even the land as well as the jewels, and together they distribute all of Eutychia's carefully guarded wealth to the widows and orphans and others in need. As a result, both Lucia's would-be husband and the prefect, Paschasius (whom Ælfric apparently mistakenly conflates into one person), bring her to trial.³⁵

At this point, Ælfric abridges an already short life by editing much of the dialogue between Lucia and Paschasius at her trial out of his translation, condensing most of the debate into "and hi spræcon fela" [and they spoke much].³⁶ Ælfric does, however, retain the part of the dialogue in which Lucia describes how the Holy Spirit of God is present within her. Paschasius has just threatened to beat Lucia if she says any more, but Lucia refuses to be silent, saying that he will be unable to stop God's words:

He axode þa mid olle . Eart þu la god? / Lucia him andwyrde . Ic eom þæs almihtigan þinen . / forþi ic cwæð godes word . forþan þe he on his godspelle cwæð . / Ne synd ge þe þær sprecad . ac spryceþ se halga gast on eow . / eft þa paschasius orgellice befran . / wunað se halga gast on þe eornostlice . / Lucia andwyrde þam arleasan and cwæð . / Se apostol behet þam ðe healdad clænnyse . / þæt hi synd godes templ . and þæs halgan gastes wunung . / Pa cwæð se arleasa . Ic hate þe ardlice lædan . / to þæra myltestrena huse . þæt ðu þinne mægð-had forleose . / þæt se halga gast þe fram fleo . donne þu fullice byst gescynd . / Lucia andwyrde þus . ne bið ænig gewemmed . / lichama to plihte . gif hit ne licað þam mod."

[Then he asked with scorn, “Oh, are you God?” Lucia answered him, “I am the servant of the Almighty, therefore I speak the words of God because in his Gospel he says, ‘You are not wherefrom you speak, but the Holy Spirit speaks in you.’” Then Paschasius arrogantly asked a second time, “Does the Holy Spirit really live in you?” Lucia answered that impious man and said, “The Apostle promised those who preserved chastity that they are the temple of God and the dwelling of the Holy Spirit.” Then the wicked man said, “I will command [the executioner] to lead you quickly to the house of prostitutes so that you may lose your virginity and so that the Holy Spirit will flee from you when you are foully disgraced.” Lucia answered in this fashion: “The body is not at all dangerously defiled if it does not please the mind.”]³⁷

Paschasius’s literal (mis)understandings of Lucia’s serious declarations carry great potential for a humorous interpretation. Shari Horner has already pointed out both the humor of the situation and the symbolic lesson about literal and spiritual interpretations of both texts and saints’ bodies at work in this exchange, but the element of the ridiculous seems to have been lost on Ælfric. Or perhaps Ælfric saw the potential for humor all too well, and took steps to make sure that the readers of this life would not find in Paschasius a source of comedy by translating his comments so as to leave no such possibility. For instance, when Paschasius asks Lucia if she is God, the Latin simply says *Paschasius dixit*, but Ælfric interprets for his audience the attitude with which the prefect spoke, saying “He axode ða mid olle” [He then asked with scorn].³⁸ Later the Latin text again says *Paschasius dixit* when the prefect inquires whether the Holy Spirit is in Lucia. Ælfric interprets again, however: “Eft þa pascasius orgellice befran” [After that Paschasius asked insolently].³⁹

This exchange serves as more than a moment of potential comic relief, however. Underlying the ridiculousness of Paschasius’s literal misunderstanding of Lucia’s comments are the ideas evoked earlier by the healing of Eutychia and the theme of Lucia’s virgin body prepared as a dwelling for Christ. Lucia ties together the concepts of chastity and the inward dwelling of the Holy Spirit by literally speaking God’s words from memory when she quotes the Apostle Paul’s remark that the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁰ Paschasius makes the connection, but again takes the idea too literally and determines to take Lucia to a brothel where she might be raped so that the Holy Spirit will flee from her. He (mis)understands the connection between virginity and the dwelling of

the Holy Spirit to be a matter of bodily location, of the womb actually being the place in which the Holy Spirit lives rather than in the memory in the soul as Augustine describes. Lucia corrects the error of his thoughts, however, when she asserts that “Numquam inquinatur corpus nisi de consensu mentis” [the body may never be corrupted except by agreement of the mind].⁴¹ Here Lucia repeats the teaching of Ambrose, Augustine, and Aldhelm on the primacy of mental purity over mere physical integrity, adding that God, who “de sensibus et voluntatibus iudicat” [judges according to the understanding and the will], will hold her guiltless of any impurity because of her unwillingness. Ælfric’s source may not have had the reference to the understanding, for it is not found in the Hereford manuscript or in Ælfric’s translation: “seþe demð be þam willan” [who judges according to the will].⁴² Ælfric makes the point that, even though threatened with rape, Lucia remains calm and fearless because she knows herself and her own will.

Not so with Paschasius. He starts to drag the saint to the brothel as he had threatened to do, but, along the way, Lucia becomes fixed to the ground, immovable. Paschasius and his men try everything they can think of to move the woman—pulling with ropes, magic spells, even a team of oxen—but all to no avail. Since Lucia cannot be brought to her torment, Paschasius orders the torment to be brought to Lucia, and his men quickly build a large pyre around her. As with the other persecutors of the saints, Paschasius depicts the mind gone mad, chaotic, violent, and disordered because ruled by the passions rather than by reason. In contrast, Lucia is quite literally steadfast and immovable, both mentally and physically. The longer Lucia stands her ground, the more violent and mindless Paschasius becomes. Ælfric uses terms that vividly describe this state of mind (or mindlessness): *wodlice geancsumode* (insanely vexed), and *mod-least* (lacking in mind).⁴³ Paschasius’s friends are unable to calm him from this violent state of mind, and so in Mombrutus’s edition, they order Lucia to be jugulated, “iussurunt gladium mergi in gutture eius” [they ordered a sword to be plunged into her throat]. Here the Hereford manuscript differs from Mombrutus and says, “iussurunt gladium mergi in uiscera” [they ordered a sword to be plunged into her womb], which Ælfric translates as “Ac heton acwellan þæt clæne mæden mid swurde . / heo wearð þa gewundod . þæt hire wand se innoð ut” [but they commanded (one) to kill that pure virgin with a sword. Then she was wounded so that the womb twisted out from her].⁴⁴ The violence of Paschasius’s comrades exposes Lucia’s womb, the very site of contention, revealing her essential corporeal

femininity for all to see. Lucia's injury does not prevent her from addressing the crowd that had gathered to watch her martyrdom, nor does her disembowelment prevent her from continuing to stand rooted in the middle of the street, praying and prophesying to the people. Indeed, Lucia remains standing in the same place until Paschasius himself is brought before her in chains like a wild beast, on his way to be executed.⁴⁵ After Paschasius meets his ignominious end, Lucia finally consents to die. Like Agatha before her, she chooses the time of her own death, not her executioners.

Lucia's life, while still demonstrating all of the evidences of active self-formation that have appeared in each life, provides a unique focus upon a different aspect of the female body from breasts that feature so prominently in Eugenia's and Agatha's legends. Lucia's life sets up an iconography of the womb as a dwelling place for God, both in terms of Christ as he was incarnated through the Virgin's womb into humanity and in terms of the Holy Spirit who dwells, according to Lucia, in believers who have prepared for the Spirit a clean and pure dwelling by living lives of chastity. The material female bodies of these two saints make a point of contact between two realities, the material and the transcendent, pointing by means of the one to the presence of the other.

Abdon and Sennes: *Reges Credentes*

Ælfric translates legends of several devout kings in *Lives of Saints*, but the brief *passio* of Abdon and Sennes does not depict them behaving as one might expect kings to do.⁴⁶ As Ælfric introduces them, he highlights their Christianity, how they "on crist gelyfde" [believed in Christ].⁴⁷ In the Latin account, the kings' refusal to offer sacrifices to the pagan gods comes to the notice of the emperor Decius.⁴⁸ Ælfric omits these details, only saying that the emperor heard news about them and then continuing with a description of Decius's absolute and god-like rule over all the kings of the earth.⁴⁹ Ælfric sets up the emperor as a type of antichrist, ruling over all orders of men on earth, including kings, and yet possessed of that same proud will to power attributed to the devil, seeing himself as being like God, under nobody.⁵⁰ The description dovetails perfectly with other depictions of hegemonic masculinity and adds Ælfric's spiritual perspective in its comparison of Decius to the devil. Even when describing how Decius sent for the two kings to be brought before him, Ælfric writes that Decius "wolde hi gebigan fram godes biggenegum" [desired

to turn them back from the worship of God], even as Lucifer sought to turn his fellow angels and archangels away from serving God to serving himself.⁵¹ In order to make sure that his audience understands the parallel, Ælfric describes Decius as “deoflic” [devilish] and “se deofles biggenga” [the devil’s worshiper].⁵² Yet even as the kings are threatened with the most painful physical tortures because of their refusal to sacrifice to the pagan gods, they respond with the same fearless defiance exhibited by the female martyrs: “Dixit Abdo et Sennes: Quid tardas? Fac quod putas: nos securi sumus de Domino nostro Iesu Christo, qui potens est omnia cogitamenta tua et te ipsum destruere” [Abdon and Sennes said, “Why do you wait? Do what you are thinking. We are safe on account of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is able to destroy all your intentions and you yourself.”] Ælfric expands their retort, writing, “Abdon and sennes him andsyrdon ðus . / Hwæs abitst þa casere cyð hwæt þu wylle . / þæt þu wite soðlice . þæt we orsorge syndon / on urum hælende criste . þe hæld þa mihte . / þæt he ðine geþohtas . and þe sylfne mæg / mid ealle towurpon . and on ecnyssse fordon” [Abdon and Sennes answered him thus: “Why do you wait, emperor? Do what you will. Then you might truly understand that we are safe in Christ our Savior, who possesses such strength that he is able entirely to cast down your purposes and your own self and to destroy you for eternity.”]⁵³ In the opposition of will between any antichrist and Christ, the antichrist always loses. The Latin hagiographer sets Decius up in opposition to Christ and to Christ’s saints and shows that Abdon and Sennes know that the emperor is setting up his own downfall, both in time and in eternity. The kings do not try to overpower or threaten Decius with military might, but depend entirely upon Christ for their safety—a safety in which preservation of the immortal soul is more important than preservation of the physical body. Neither the Latin nor the Old English versions say anything about physical or political displays of power, but rather point out Christ’s ability to overthrow the intentions (*cogitamenta* in Latin and *geþohtas* in Old English), the purposes of Decius’s will, and so the kings’ comments speak directly to the moral functions of the soul, especially of the will. Further, in both versions, Abdon and Sennes say that Christ has the power to destroy Decius himself. Ælfric takes the point further, indicating that the warning does not refer to merely killing the body, but to eternal destruction of the essence of who Decius is, the soul itself. Decius may be ruler of all the known world, but his temporal power cannot avail him in the transcendent realm of the soul and of God.

Unfortunately, neither the Latin life nor Ælfric's translation gives Decius's response to this dire prediction, accordingly we have no way of knowing whether or not Decius understood what the kings meant. Instead, the Latin narrative abruptly shifts in time to another day in which Decius orders his prefect, Valerian, to hand over the kings to lions and bears to be slain. Ælfric makes Decius's threat rather more graphic by changing the verb to *abiton* "tear apart, devour."⁵⁴ Ælfric's choice of words evokes the biblical passage from I Peter 5:8, in which the devil is described as a lion seeking someone to devour. In the Old English glosses to Aldhelm's *De virginitate*, the Latin term *devorans* (devouring; from *devoro*, the same root used in I Peter 5:8, *devoret*, in the Vulgate) is glossed with the Old English *abitende* (biting in pieces, tearing to pieces, devouring; from *abitan*).⁵⁵ By using this word, Ælfric may have intended to draw in yet another allusion to the parallel between Decius and the devil, a subtlety that might have passed unnoticed by his lay audience, but would likely have been recognized by monastic readers.

Valerian gives the kings one last opportunity to save themselves from a painful death by worshiping the gods of Rome, but Abdon and Sennes respond, "Jam diximus tibi: Nos Dominum Jesum Christum adoramus. Nam manufactis simulacris numquam humiliamur" [Now we have said to you, we worship the Lord Jesus Christ. For this reason we will never grovel to hand-made images.] Again, Ælfric expands their comment, saying, "We gebiddað us to drihtne gebigdum limum . / and we næfre ne onbugað . þam bysmorfullum anlicnyssum . / manna handgeweorc . þe ge habbað for godas" [We pray to the Lord with limbs bowed, and we will never bow down to those disgraceful images, the handiwork of a human, that you have for gods.]⁵⁶ Ælfric adds emphasis and insult to the answer the two kings give to Valerian. He also embodies the action of worship by indicating that the kings pray "gebigrum limum," a posture which any audience could readily imagine. Then, in the Latin text, "eadem hora denudavit eos, et furore repletus duxit eos ante simulacrum solis. [in that same hour he stripped them bare and, filled with madness, he led them before the image of the sun.]"⁵⁷ Ælfric, oddly enough, omits the comment about Valerian's madness, saying only "Þa het ualerianus . ða halgan unscrydan . / and lædan swa nocode (*sic*) to ðære sunnan anlicnysse. [Then Valerian ordered the holy ones stripped and led them thus naked to the image of the sun.]"⁵⁸ Ælfric does not give details as to where the kings are at this point, nor where the image of the sun is, but the Latin text explains that the kings have been brought to the amphitheater to face the lions and

bears. It also describes how the image of the sun god to which the kings are led is next to the amphitheater. All of these actions, then, take place before an audience and, unlike the case of the female saints, no divine intervention preserves the modesty and dignity of Abdon and Sennes by covering their nudity from the gaze of others. The kings refuse to make offerings to the sun god, even though tortured and beaten with leaded whips. Finally, Valerian returns them to the crowd waiting in the amphitheater:

Latin life:

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

[And when they had entered, Abdon and Sennes replied in the sight of Valerian, saying, “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ we enter to the crown, which he will forbid to you, unclean spirit!” And having made the sign of the cross they entered into the amphitheater who, while they entered into the sight of Valerian with nude body, were nevertheless clothed (*induti*) with the body of Christ.]

Ælfric, however, tersely states, “and lædde hi syððan / to ðam wæfer-huse . þær ða deor wunodon . / beran . and leon . þe hi abitan sceoldon” [and afterwards he led them to the amphitheater where the beasts dwelt, the bears and the lions, so that they might be able to devour them.]⁵⁹ Ælfric leaves out several points: the two kings endure the gaze of their persecutor, who focuses upon their nakedness, but at the same time the Body of Christ invisibly clothes them. It covers them after a fashion, but not in the sense of hiding their nudity or shielding their bodies from the hostile gaze of their tormentor or the audience in the amphitheater. How the kings might be clothed with Christ’s body and what kind of garment the Body of Christ might supply remain unexplained, but comes from Paul’s comments in Romans 13:14, “sed induite Dominum Iesum Christum et carnis curam ne feceritis in desideriis” [but put on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will not regard the care of the flesh in its desires], and Galatians 3:27, “quicumque enim in Christo baptizati estis Christum induistis” [whoever truly has been baptized in Christ, you all have put on Christ.] The Latin *passio* uses the same verb, *induo* (put on, clothe), and echoes the biblical passages to imply a covering over sin. The verse in Galatians immediately

precedes Galatians 3:28, Paul's statement that there is neither male nor female among believers clothed with Christ through baptism. Christ has made all into one in his own Body. The symbolism involved in covering the naked corporeal bodies of the kings with the incorporeal Body of Christ, which is imperceptible to the unbelieving crowd, evokes concepts of metagender—being clothed in Christ spiritually covers the nakedness, the sexuality of the male bodies and signifies their reorientation of identity from kings to martyrs and their participation in the transcendent society of God and angels. The sexed body, and by implication the gendered self, are covered by the metagendered Body of Christ in a kind of spiritual transvestitism, signaling the process of transformation taking place in the souls of Abdon and Sennes. Such a spiritual covering, however, does little to protect the kings' bodily modesty, and the garment that upholds their dignity before God and the angels remains invisible to Valerian and the spectators in the amphitheater. Perhaps for this very reason, Ælfric barely touches this scene, reporting tersely that the kings were led to the amphitheater to be fed to the lions and bears. Ælfric apparently considered the change represented in the Latin *passio* by being clothed with Christ (with its implications of metagender) to be one of those subtle ideas unfit to present to a nonmonastic audience, and so he sets aside the mention of these saints being clothed with the Body of Christ. He also avoids getting into a mare's nest of explanation as to how something real might not be perceived by everybody and why the kings refer to Valerian as an unclean spirit, focusing his readers' attention instead upon the beasts whose behavior will provide a more tangible, less metaphysical miracle.

Made bloody by the severe beating, the two kings remain steadfast in their refusal to offer pagan sacrifices, and thus are brought into the arena to face the wild animals. Valerian orders two lions and four bears to be set upon the two men. In both the Latin and Old English accounts, the animals run out with awful roaring "ad pedes sanctorum" [to the feet of the saints], where they remain, protecting the saints so that none dare to approach them or, according to Ælfric, dare even to enter the arena.⁶⁰ In this instance, as in the legends of Thecla recounted by Ambrose and of Chrysanthus and Daria below, the positions of human persecutor and beast are inverted—the beasts have spiritual insight and honor the saints of God, thus behaving as humans ought, while the humans are blind to the image of God in the saints and so torture and attempt to kill them, revealing themselves to be like beasts.

Frustrated in his desire to see the kings devoured by the uncooperative lions and bears, Valerian “furore plenus” [full of madness] (or “swyðe gram” [exceedingly enraged] according to Ælfric) orders gladiators into the arena to kill Abdon and Sennes.⁶¹ These men do what the beasts refused to do, and the kings finally meet their deaths by swordstroke. Valerian then commands that the corpses be dragged before the image of the sun god and left exposed there as a warning to other Christians. In a scene reminiscent of the fate of the two witnesses in Apocalypse 11, the bodies of these men remain the objects of the public gaze for three days before they are taken and given burial.⁶² Ælfric translates from the Latin that the bodies then remained concealed until the time of Constantine, when Christ himself revealed the location of the two saints, and then concludes with this moral (not found in the Latin): “Ge habbað nu gehyrod hu ða halgan cyninges / heora cynedom for-sawon for cristes gelefan . / and heora agen lif forleton for hine . / Nimað eow bysne be ðam . þæt ge ne bugon fram criste / for ænigre earfoðnysse . þæt ge þæt ece lif habbon” [Now you have heard how these holy kings renounced their kingdom because of belief in Christ and lost their own lives for him. Take an example through them so that you do not turn aside from Christ for the sake of any affliction, so that you may have eternal life].⁶³ Ælfric returns here to the theme of proper desire that he laid out in the sermon in *LS 1* and he brings it up in a statement that seems pointed directly at Æthelred *Unred*, though perhaps only referring to the high office held by his patron, Æthelweard. Ælfric may have considered retirement with integrity and faith intact more important for the good of Æthelweard’s soul (and that of Æthelmær, as well) than continued service amid the treacherous factionalism of Æthelred’s court. Desire properly directed would lead his patrons and other readers or hearers of the life of Abdon and Sennes to Christ and thus to eternal life, the greatest goods for both body and soul, as much for kings and rulers as for anyone else. This same desire and love of the good that is God enables Abdon and Sennes, and all who would imitate them, to remain steadfast in their faith in expectation of life in the transcendent society of heaven rather than yielding for the sake of bodily comfort in the temporal world.

* * *

There are many differences between the female *passiones* examined above and that of these two kings. In the legend of Abdon and Sennes, no one is converted to Christianity, nor do the kings instruct anyone in the tenets

of the faith. They taunt Decius and insult the pagan gods, but they do not instruct as the female saints do. Yet the focus on the material body in all three lives unites them. Agatha demonstrates a femininity characterized by knowledge and memory of Scripture, a properly ordered care for her incorporeal soul and her corporeal body that illustrates deeper spiritual truths, and agency even in the moment of her own death. Lucia's rather plainer life incorporates Agatha's sanctity in establishing Lucia's own position. As Agatha's torments open a deeper spiritual discussion of the breast and its role in nourishment, Lucia's trials and evisceration open a discussion of the womb and the indwelling of the saint with the Holy Spirit of God. The material bodies of Abdon and Sennes, by contrast, depict no such spiritual truths in Ælfric's version of their story, for the concepts they illustrate in the Latin version have been consistently excised from Ælfric's translations. Nor are these two saints healed or relieved of the pain of their torments as Agatha was, spared the humiliation of their nudity as Agnes was, or shielded from the public exposure of their naked, dead bodies—a situation not paralleled in any of the female lives Ælfric translates. In contrast to his treatment of the female bodies in the legends of Agatha and Lucia, Ælfric treats the material bodies of the two kings with remarkable disinterest, cutting off the spiritual significance found in the Latin text. The animals in the arena recognize the sanctity of the kings, but no one else seems to do so, especially not in Ælfric's rendition. The kings remain faithful to Christ even through torture and death, and such is their only demonstrated claim to sanctity.⁶⁴ The life of Abdon and Sennes illustrates that the one essential saintly characteristic is a steadfast, virtuous soul that remains faithful only to Christ, even at the cost of kingdoms and bodies. In this way, the life of the two kings demonstrates Gregory the Great's thought that "Neque enim si talia signa non faciunt, ideo tales non sunt. Vitae namque uera aestimatio in uirtute est operum, non in ostensione signorum" [One cannot conclude that there are no great saints just because no great miracles are worked. The true estimate of life, after all, lies in acts of virtue, not in the display of miracles].⁶⁵ While the Latin life symbolizes the change of identity indicated by the removal of worldly dress and being clothed in Christ, with the implication of changing from masculine to metagender in the covering over of the kings' sexually differentiated bodies with the spiritual Body of Christ, Ælfric omits these features of the story from his translation. Ælfric's kings are men and remain men who, unlike the female saints, define themselves solely through the virtues of belief and faithfulness to the end.

NOTES

- ¹ Shari Horner, *The Discourse of Enclosure*, 136.
- ² For the iconographical nature of saints' lives, see Thomas Hill, "Imago Dei," 41–43.
- ³ "Natale Sancte Agathe Uirginis," in *LS*, 8.2.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.5–6.
- ⁵ Frantzen, "When Women Aren't Enough," 160; Horner, *The Discourse of Enclosure*, 145–50. For other readings of St. Agatha and/or St. Lucia, see Gulley, *Displacement*, 51–66; Jorgensen, "Historicizing Emotion," 529–38; Rossi-Reder, "Embodying Christ," 183–202; Gulley, "Suffering and Salvation," 105–20.
- ⁶ Horner, *The Discourse of Enclosure*, 149.
- ⁷ Mombritius, "Passio Agathae," 1.37; *LS*, 8.9–12.
- ⁸ Ambrose, *De virginibus*, in *Sancti Ambrosii Episcopi Mediolanensis Opera*, ed. Gori, 2.4.24; Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, in *S. Aurelii Augustini de civitate Dei libri I–X*, ed. Dombart and Kalb, 1.18; Aldhelm, "De virginitate," in *Prosa de uirginitate cum glossa Latina atque Anglosaxonica*, ed. Gwara, §27 and §53.
- ⁹ *LS*, 8.12–13.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 20–21.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, 29–31; Cf. Mombritius, "Passio Agathae," 1.38.
- ¹² Frantzen, "When Women Aren't Enough," 164.
- ¹³ Mombritius, "Passio Agathae," 1.38; *LS*, 8.124–27.
- ¹⁴ Horner, *The Discourse of Enclosure*, 149; Ambrose, *De virginibus*, in *Sancti Ambrosii Episcopi Mediolanensis Opera*, ed. Gori, 1.5.22.
- ¹⁵ Ambrose, *De benedictionibus patriarcharum*, 11.51 (*PL* 14.722D–723A).
- ¹⁶ Augustine, *In epistolam Joannis ad Parthos tractatus decem*, 3.1 (*PL* 35.1998A), and Bede, "Epistolas VII Catholicas," in *Bedae Venerabilis Opera*, ed. Hurst, 232.
- ¹⁷ See Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, 396–97.
- ¹⁸ Mombritius, "Passio Agathae," 1.39; *LS*, 8.135–37.
- ¹⁹ Mombritius, "Passio Agathae," 1.39; *LS*, 8.138–40.
- ²⁰ Mombritius, "Passio Agathae," 1.39; *LS*, 8.144–46.
- ²¹ Mombritius, "Passio Agathae," 1.39; *LS*, 8.157–61.
- ²² Mombritius, "Passio Agathae," 1.39; *LS*, 8.191–94.
- ²³ Mombritius, "Passio Agathae," 1.40; *LS*, 8.199–202.
- ²⁴ Mombritius, "Passio Agathae," 1.40; *LS*, 8.207–14.
- ²⁵ The association of the horse with the passions is based upon Psalm 31:9, "nolite fieri sicut equus et mulus quibus non est intellegentia." [Do not become like the horse and the mule, which have no understanding.]
- ²⁶ *LS*, 9.210–19; Mombritius, "Passio Luciae," 2.107.23–24.
- ²⁷ Mombritius, the Hereford manuscript, and Ælfric's translation differ at this point from the text of the CCL found in CCCC 9, p. 437, in which Lucia is identified as a virgin as soon as she enters the legend. All quotations from the

Latin *Passio* of St. Lucia come from the version found in Mombritius “*Passio Sanctae Luciae virginis et martyris*,” 2.107.19–109.31.

²⁸ *LS*, 9.26–27; Mombritius, “*Passio Luciae*,” 2.107.31–32, cf. Hereford, Cathedral P.vi.7, 190v: “Soror mea Lucia uirgo deo deuota . quid a me petis : quod tu poteris præstare continuo?” [Lucia, my sister, virgin devoted to God, why do you ask from me what you will be able to fulfill at once?]

²⁹ *LS*, 9.29; Mombritius, “*Passio Luciae*,” 2.107.34–35.

³⁰ *LS*, 9.32–33a; Mombritius, “*Passio Luciae*,” 2.107.36–37.

³¹ Mombritius, “*Passio Luciae*,” 2.107.38–40; *LS*, 9.36–38.

³² Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*, §27.

³³ *LS*, 9.39–40; Mombritius, “*Passio Luciae*,” 2.107.40–42.

³⁴ *LS*, 9.41–45; Mombritius, “*Passio Luciae*,” 2.107.42–46.

³⁵ Whatley, “*Acta Sanctorum*,” 290.

³⁶ *LS*, 9.68; Ælfric removes Mombritius, “*Passio Luciae*,” 2.108.14–29.

³⁷ *LS*, 9.72–85; Mombritius, “*Passio Luciae*,” 2.108.30–38.

³⁸ Mombritius, “*Passio Luciae*,” 2.108.30; *LS*, 9.72.

³⁹ Mombritius, “*Passio Luciae*,” 2.108.34; *LS*, 9.76.

⁴⁰ I Corinthians 6:19.

⁴¹ Mombritius, “*Passio Luciae*,” 2.108.38. “ne bið ænig gewemmed . / lichama to plihte . gif hit ne licað þam mode.” “The body is not at all dangerously defiled if it does not please the mind.” *LS*, 9.84b–85.

⁴² Mombritius, “*Passio Luciae*,” 2.108.40; *LS*, 9.89a. For the earlier fathers on the primacy of the will in virginity, see Ambrose, *De virginibus*, 2.24; Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 1.18; and Aldhelm, “*Prosa de virginitate*,” §58.

⁴³ *LS*, 9.124, 125.

⁴⁴ Mombritius, “*Passio Luciae*,” 2.109.15–16, cf. Hereford, Cathedral P.vi.7, 191v; *LS*, 9.126–27. I have translated *uiscera* here as “womb” because the context of the legend points to the womb as a specific focus of attack instead of the more general entrails. The phrase *wand se innoð ut*, which I have translated here as “the womb twisted out,” is open to several possible interpretations (“viscera, intestines, womb, inward parts”). Nor would the translation be any more certain if Ælfric had used *wamb* “stomach, belly, womb” instead of *innoð* because the same ambiguity about whether he meant the general inner parts of the abdomen or a specific part, such as the womb, stomach, or intestines, would remain. As a result, I have rendered the phrase in keeping with the emphasis upon the womb in the context of the story.

⁴⁵ Mombritius, “*Passio Luciae*,” 2.109.22–25; *LS*, 9.139–45.

⁴⁶ Whatley, “*Acta Sanctorum*,” 21; “Natalis Sanctorum Abdon et Sennen,” ed. Skeat, *LS* 24. The closest Latin source may be found in the CCL manuscript BL, Cotton Nero E.i (Gneuss and Lapidge #344). See the complete notice in Whatley, “*Acta Sanctorum*,” 20–21.

⁴⁷ *LS*, 24.2.

⁴⁸ *AASS*, “*Abdon et Sennen*,” §1.

⁴⁹ LS, 24.4.

⁵⁰ Augustine, *De trinitate*, 12.16.

⁵¹ LS, 24.10.

⁵² Ibid., LS 24.1 and 20. These descriptors do not appear in the Latin.

⁵³ AASS, “Abdon et Sennen,” §4; LS, 24.22–27.

⁵⁴ AASS, “Abdon et Sennen,” §5; LS, 24.30.

⁵⁵ Napier, *Old English Glosses*.

⁵⁶ AASS, “Abdon et Sennen,” §5; LS, 24.37–39.

⁵⁷ AASS, “Abdon et Sennen,” §5.

⁵⁸ LS, 24.40–41.

⁵⁹ AASS, “Abdon et Sennen,” §6; LS, 24.48b–50.

⁶⁰ AASS, “Abdon et Sennen,” §6; LS, 24.51–57.

⁶¹ AASS, “Abdon et Sennen,” §7; LS, 24.60.

⁶² In Apocalypse 11:3–13, especially vv. 7–9, two witnesses (who remain unnamed) testify publicly against the beast from the pit. Finally, they are slain and their bodies left exposed for all the people to see. After three and a half days, however, the witnesses in scripture are raised to life again, whereas Abdon’s and Sennes’s corpses are secretly removed for burial.

⁶³ LS, 24.76–80.

⁶⁴ See Peter Brown’s comments about the “non-gendered” nature of male saints in “Rise and Function,” 376.

⁶⁵ Gregory, *Dialogues*, 1.12.4; Gregory, *Dialogues*, trans. Zimmerman, 1.12.

Chapter Six

Material and Spiritual Rulership

Æthelthryth: Virgo Incorrupta

Of all the female saints that Ælfric includes in his collection Æthelthryth seems to live the least dramatic life, in part because she is not a Roman martyr. All but one of the most important events in her legend take place after her death, the one exception being her remarkable maintenance of her virginity through two marriages and over the course of a combined thirteen years of wedded life.¹ Æthelthryth's story differs remarkably from the stories of the female Roman martyrs in that she has no tense confrontations with figures of authority, engages in no learned disputations with anyone else, faces no threats of corporal torture or death, and overcomes no severe temptations.² Bede reports the attested facts of this queen's *vita* in his *Historia ecclesiastica*, complete with eyewitness testimony given in direct discourse, rather than just narrating the story of her triumphs in virginity. Ælfric does more to set the life as a narrative piece when he translates it, but since he stays very close to the original, most of his narrative improvements lie in putting the story into a chronological form.

When Bede writes about Æthelthryth's two marriages, he seems to indicate that the marriages were thrust upon her rather than actively sought by her: "Accepit autem rex Ecgfrid coniugem nomine Aedilthrydam ... quam et alter ante illum uir habuerat uxorem. ... Sed illo post modicum temporis, ex quo eam accepit, defuncto, data est regi praefato" [King Ecgfrith received a wife named Æthelthryth, ... whom another man (Tondberht) before him had had as wife. ... But he (Tondberht) having died after a limited amount of time from when he married her, she was given to the king mentioned before].³ Ælfric maintains this impression of Æthelthryth's marriages in his translation: "Æðeldryð wearð þa for-gifen anum caldor-mann to wife . / ... and heo wearð forgifen ecfride cunincge" [Æthelthryth was given as a wife to a certain alderman. ... and she was given to king Ecgfrith].⁴ Passive as she seems to have been in her marriages,

Æthelthryth seizes the part of the active agent in preserving her virginity: “perpetua tamen mansit uirginitatis integritate gloriosa” [however, she remained glorious with the lasting integrity of virginity], with Ælfric rendering the feat as “heo … twelf gear wunode unge-wemmed mæden” [She remained for twelve years an undefiled virgin].⁵ Bede leaves her desire for virginity unexplained at this point, but Ælfric inserts the cause for her behavior before going any farther. She pursued virginity because “Heo lufode þone hælend þe hi heold unwemme” [she loved the Savior who kept her undefiled].⁶ Paradoxically, Ælfric depicts Æthelthryth both as passive and as agent in her own virginity: she loves and chooses while Christ keeps her undefiled. In Ælfric’s translation, Æthelthryth’s love for the Savior moves her to action, to preserve her virginity through thirteen years of marriage to two different men. She may have been a passive participant in the contracted marriages, perhaps even reluctant if Bede and Ælfric attest correctly to her desire to enter into a monastic life, but her love for God motivates her to resist actively any and all attempts by her husbands to consummate the marriages. While Bede’s account implies this difference and takes the audience’s recognition of Æthelthryth’s motivation for granted, Ælfric makes the matter explicit and so sets up the familiar opposition between love for heavenly and earthly bridegrooms found in the *passiones* of Agnes and Lucy.

Bede does address Æthelthryth’s desire for Christ further along in the history. King Ecgfrith offers the bishop Wilfrid great wealth if he will persuade Æthelthryth to consummate the marriage, but the queen remains adamant: “Quae multum diu regem postulans, ut saeculi curas relinquere atque in monasterio tantum uero regi Christo seruire permetteretur, ubi uix aliquando impetravit” [petitioning the king for a long time in order that she might be permitted to leave behind the concerns of the world and to serve only the true king, Christ, in a monastery, where she at last, with effort, obtained her desire]. Ælfric provides a little more color as he translates, “Æðeldryð wolde ða ealle woruld-þincg forlætan . / and bæd georne þone cynincg þæt heo criste moste þeowian . / on mynsterlicre drohtnunge swa hire mod hire to-speon . / Pa lyfde hire se cynincg þeah þe hit embe lang wäre / þæs þe heo gewilnode” [Æthelthryth then wanted to leave behind all worldly things and she earnestly asked the king that she be allowed to serve Christ in the monastic way of life, just as her mind drew her. Then the king lived with her, although that which she had desired came about after a long time.]⁷ In both Bede’s account and the Old English *Ecclesiastical History*, Æthelthryth deliv-

ers a kind of back-handed insult to her husband by asking that he permit her to serve the true king, Christ. Ælfric silently omits the implication that a human king is not a true king, telling how the queen, drawn by her mind to a contemplative life, continually entreated the king to let her go so that she might serve Christ. Gwen Griffiths interprets this phrase as a sign of Æthelthryth's powerlessness in Ælfric's translation of the saint's legend, of her inability to gain her own goals without male help and supervision, "Since Æthelthryth ostensibly submits to all male figures, and a male agent must finally expedite her entry to a monastery, male power and intervention in the achievement of God's will are privileged. Yet it can equally be argued that Æthelthryth's virginity demonstrates power in its denial of male power through physical withholding. Ælfric ignores this, as he must, for such denial challenges institutional power—royal, ecclesiastical, societal, or familial."⁸ It may be fair to claim Ælfric's concern about issues of secular and ecclesiastical privileges, especially in the climate of the anti-Reform events of Æthelred II's early reign. As Bede and Ælfric tell this story, however, Æthelthryth chooses virginity not as a means of subverting male power but so that she might love and serve Christ instead. Æthelthryth's choice of virginity and Ecgfrith's eventual submission to her will reflect different concerns in which the transcendent kingdom of God receives priority. There may have been political or other factors behind her choice, historically, but within the context of her legend there is only one motivation: Æthelthryth's love for Christ. While the queen's desire for purity interrupts the usual course of establishing royal heirs, Ecgfrith does not force her into the marriage bed against her will and finally agrees to her monastic vocation. He appears weak and ineffectual in his own home, unable to secure through Æthelthryth a peaceful succession for the security of his earthly kingdom because of his wife's devotion to a different King. Æthelthryth wants his cooperation in her monastic profession because of the church's teaching against one partner in marriage making a unilateral decision for a monastic vocation without consideration of its effects upon the other partner.⁹ Since both Æthelthryth and Ecgfrith are Christians, he grudgingly comes to acknowledge her decision for virginity, and she respects the ethical and moral necessity of his "free" choice in the matter before she leaves the marriage for the monastery. In the process, Æthelthryth accomplishes her greatest living feat—she remains a virgin despite twelve years of Ecgfrith's entreaties for sexual union. Both Bede and Ælfric focus upon Æthelthryth's desire and purity of intention to serve Christ through the monastic life and her perseverance in obtaining

that desire as the justification for her denial of the conjugal debt. Ælfric's translation, however, makes the matter much more explicit because he actually speaks of her desire, referring to what she *gewilnode* in the same language that he used to describe the desiring part of the soul in *LS* 1.

Having finally obtained the king's release from the demands of marriage (one gets the sense that she finally wore him down), Æthelthryth immediately takes the veil and enters into monastic life. After a year-long novitiate at Coldingham Abbey, she becomes an abbess herself in the region of Ely in East Anglia, "ubi constructo monasterio uirginum Deo deuotarum perplurium mater uirgo et exemplis uitae caelestis esse coepit et monitis" [where, having constructed a monastery, she began to be the virgin mother, both by her examples of heavenly life and by her admonitions, of many virgins devoted to God].¹⁰ Æthelthryth establishes Ely as a double monastery, as shown by the presence of brothers of the monastery later in the *vita*, but Ælfric translates this passage straightforwardly so that it refers to the *mynecena* "nuns," who may have formed the majority of the monastery's population: "and heo syððan wearð gehadod / eft to abudissan on elig mynstre . / ofer manega mynecena . and heo hi modor-lice heold / mid godum gebysnungum to þam gastlican life" [and afterward she was consecrated again as abbess over many nuns at Ely Minster, and she ruled them maternally by means of setting a good example for the spiritual life].¹¹ Ælfric does not emphasize Æthelthryth's fecund virginal motherhood as Bede does, describing her as ruling the women of her abbey "maternally" rather than calling her their mother in virginity. Nor does he hide the fact that Æthelthryth and later her sister, Sexburh, ruled a double monastery and that they governed men as well as women. He states that "þa wæs þær sum læce on ðam geleaffullum heape . / cynefryð gehaten" [At that time there was a certain leech in that faithful company, named Cynefrith], and later describes how Sexburh, Æthelthryth's successor as abbess, "sende þa gebroðra" [sent the brothers] to seek stone for a new coffin for Æthelthryth's remains.¹² Ælfric acknowledges the fact that such houses formerly existed and that they were ruled by women—indeed, it would have been pointless to deny it since Bede's history had been translated into Old English as part of the Alfredian educational agenda. On the other hand, he does not emphasize the female rule of double monasteries in Æthelthryth's *vita* either. For his purposes (which are more pastoral than political) the double monastery at Ely simply exists as the setting in which Æthelthryth prospered in her religious observance and

service. He neither condones nor condemns the institution in the legend of Æthelthryth, nor comments upon it directly at all.

The focus of Ælfric's attention, as with Bede before him, is on Æthelthryth's ascetic life. The strict control that she exercised over her own body through fasting and avoiding baths and her continuing exercise of chastity demonstrates how she "wel drohtnode" [conducted her life well] in temporal matters, a manifestation of the rightly ordered functions of her mind.¹³ The queen-turned-abbess spent the hours between matins and dawn of each day in solitary prayer, a period of extended meditation based in the memory. Æthelthryth prayed alone in the morning hours before dawn, the time of fewest interruptions and of darkness that would help her to lift her thoughts and her soul to God. Her well-conducted life and practice of prayer combine with her persevering love for Christ to illustrate an orderly mind in which Æthelthryth shaped her soul in the image of her Creator. Bede simply describes Æthelthryth's behavior in his *Ecclesiastical History*, but in the context of Ælfric's sermons and legends in Cotton Julius E.vii, this behavior gains meaning beyond its simple performance: it indicates the abbess's active rule over her own life and body, a function of the soul that Ælfric describes in *LS 1* when he writes:

Das fif andgitu gewissed̄ seo sawul to hire wyllan . and hyre
gedafnað þæt heo swa swa hlæfdige . geornlice foresceawige hwæt
heo gehwylcum lime bebeode to donne . oððe hwæt heo gehwylcum
lime geþafige on gewylnunge his gecyndes . þæt þær nan þing
unþæslīc ne gelympe on nanes limes þenunge .

[The soul directs these five senses in accordance to its will and it befits the soul that, just as a noblewoman, it diligently give forethought to what it commands each limb to do or what it consents to for each limb in the desire of its nature, so that in that respect nothing unbecoming may happen in any limb's service.]¹⁴

Once Æthelthryth's life is placed into the context of early medieval Christian belief, what seems to be a passive life from a modern perspective turns out to be an active life of choice, of agency in the sense outlined by Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe as "an improvisation within conflicting structures."¹⁵ Æthelthryth's improvisation of virginity within her marriages and then her conduct of life and governance in a double monastery reflect the queen's pursuit of the *virum perfectum*, a gendered soul moving towards the metagendered Other in the pursuit of her greatest desire.

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

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

[She said, "I know well that I am indeed worthy that my neck be afflicted by such an infirmity because in youth I adorned my neck with many necklaces, and it seems to me now that the grace of God cleanses that offense, wherefore now this swelling shines for me in place of gold, and the burning of this heat in place of noble gemstones."]¹⁶

The pain that came to Æthelthryth by means of her tumor served as a vehicle for grace from her perspective, allowing her to make amends bodily for the mind's vanity in her youth. As the only direct speech in Ælfric's whole *vita*, Æthelthryth's self-diagnosis spotlights the spiritual reality manifested through the physical symptom and places her insight at the center of the reader's attention. In contrast, Ælfric marginalizes the physician Cynefrith. In Bede's history, Cynefrith delivers his testimony about Æthelthryth's illness, the measures he took to cure it, and the discovery of her uncorrupt body with the healed wound on her neck in direct discourse to emphasize its status as eyewitness testimony. His long and dramatic description of events easily overshadows Æthelthryth's speech.¹⁷ Ælfric, however, not only takes Cynefrith's information out of direct discourse, he does not even present it as indirect discourse. The physician's testimony becomes subsumed into Ælfric's narrative arc, impersonal and disengaged from the man himself. The primary witness to the discovery and verification of Æthelthryth's uncorrupt corpse in Bede's account is nudged aside to the margin in Ælfric's so that the miracle and the saint herself always remain foregrounded for the audience.

What, then, is Ælfric's point in translating the story of Æthelthryth, especially since a translation of Bede's legend already existed? Ælfric takes her out of her original context among the earthly kings and queens of early Anglo-Saxon England and in *Lives of Saints* places her in the transcendent

context of the court of saints in the kingdom of God. The translation itself effectively illustrates the spiritual reality and helps his vernacular audience see their own connection to the heavenly kingdom through their native identification with Æthelthryth. As an Anglo-Saxon saint, Æthelthryth brings the possibility of successfully emulating her devotion and holy living much closer to Ælfric's Anglo-Saxon audience because of her cultural familiarity and the sense of kinship Ælfric's readers may have felt.¹⁸ While it poses its own difficulties and complexities in terms of the differences between the historical queen and the queen of hagiographic legend, the life of Æthelthryth instructs its readers in the value of chastity in an almost colorless fashion as it describes the “white (that is, bloodless) martyrdom of the ascetic life.”¹⁹ In order to make sure that his readers understand the point of the legend, Ælfric tacks on a brief moral: “Oft woruld-menn eac heoldon swa swa us bec secgað / heora clænnysse on synscipe for cristes lufe / swa swa we mihton reccan gif ge rohton hit to gehyrenne” [Frequently the laity also, just as the books tell us, preserved their purity within marriage out of love for Christ, as we were able tell if you desired to hear it].²⁰ Yet even in this rather ham-handed attempt to encourage his nonmonastic audience towards lives of chastity, Ælfric brings up the matter of desire and why even lay folk ought to live chastely within marriage—they should do so because they love Christ, just as the saints in the books do. Then they, too, might reign in their own souls as queens over the household of the body.

Oswald: *Rex et Famulus*

The first of the royal martyrs of Anglo-Saxon England, Oswald sets an example (according to Bede) of the servant king, a man simultaneously strong and humble, a warrior and a man of prayer, a king of one kingdom and a subject in another kingdom that occupy the same time and space yet both only become visible concurrently in Oswald himself.²¹ In translating Oswald's life, Ælfric follows the same strategy that he used in his version of the life of Æthelthryth, not only condensing Bede's account but also rearranging the parts to provide greater narrative coherence and to foreground Oswald's example of Christian kingship. With its emphasis on humility, Ælfric's *vita* of Oswald portrays a kind of kingship that exercises its secular power only with reluctance in contrast to hegemonic kingship as “an institution of, by, and about power.”²² In the *vitae* and *passiones* examined here, the men in high positions of power who have wanted to show

their sanctity have done so by renouncing their secular authority because, as Clare Stancliffe notes, “In the martyrs’ acts, it is normally the secular powers which *persecute* Christians.”²³ Oswald’s *vita* redeems the image of the secular ruler, but paradoxically does so by depicting the king as a servant.

Ælfric sets up this paradox in Oswald’s *vita* early on when he translates Bede’s account of Oswald’s cross and of the battle against Cædwalla. At the end of chapter one, Bede contrasts both Oswald’s small army with Cædwalla’s very large force and Oswald’s dependence upon Christ as opposed to Cædwalla’s pride and confidence in his own strength.²⁴ Ælfric maintains this contrast, but he rearranges it and uses it as a frame around the story of the raising of Oswald’s cross. He sets the scene by describing how cruelly Cædwalla treats the conquered people of Northumbria after defeating and killing Oswald’s predecessors to the throne. Then, Ælfric writes that “Oswold him com to . and him cenlice wiðfeaht / mid lytlum werode . ac his geleafa hine getrymde . / and crist him gefylste to his feonda slege” [Oswald came to him and bravely fought against him with a little company. But his belief strengthened him, and Christ helped him for the destruction of his foes].²⁵ Oswald’s dependence upon Christ for victory offsets the “manliness” of his bravery and leadership against the persecutor of the Northumbrian people and suggests that Oswald’s leadership and masculinity may be of a different kind from what one might expect of an earthly king. Ælfric then describes how Oswald raises a cross the day before the battle and calls for his company to prostrate themselves with him in prayer to the Almighty God so that God in his omnipotence would save (*ahredde*) them from the enemy.²⁶ Oswald’s prayer emphasizes the contrast between his own military weakness and the power of God to save him, his men, and his kingdom. Ælfric then reports that Oswald and his little band won the battle the next morning, “swa swa se wealdend heom uðe . / for oswoldes geleafan . and aledon heora fynd” [just as the ruler granted to them because of the belief of Oswald, and [God] carried off their foes].²⁷ No doubt remains regarding who won this battle. It is not Oswald, but God who delivers the Northumbrians from the deprivations of Cædwalla. Ælfric closes the episode by framing it with Bede’s brief comment about the defeated king, “þone modigan cedwallan . mid his micelan werode . / þe wende þæt him ne mihte nan werod wiðstandan” [that arrogant Cædwalla with his great army, who thought that no host would be able to stand against him].²⁸ The artful contrast that Bede’s narrative implies finds its most telling expression in Ælfric’s rearrangement

of Bede's material so that the humility and weakness of Oswald and his puny army in the opening thought of the episode are neatly balanced at its close against this statement of Cædwalla's pride and the strength of his army. Ælfric even increases the sense of Cædwalla's humiliation, making the statement ironic by placing it immediately after the description of how God carried away all of Oswald's foes and gave the Northumbrian king and his small force the victory.

The David and Goliath parallel implicit in this incident sets the theme of godly kingship in the forefront of Oswald's life, in stark contrast to the focus upon renunciation of worldly power and glory in the legends of the Roman martyrs. Such a departure from hagiographical formula could be justified by an appeal to a more authoritative ideal, none of which could be more compelling than an example from the Bible, and none of the biblical examples speak with more force and clarity than the example of David, warrior, king, and man after God's own heart because of his humility and piety.²⁹ By departing from the themes of renunciation and symbolic emasculation that attempt to describe the process for men of becoming metagendered in the earlier Latin texts, does the *vita* of Oswald set up a conflicting standard of Christian manliness?

In the Latin *vita*, as soon as he has finished narrating some of the miracles of healing attributed to the cross that Oswald had set up before the battle, Bede describes Oswald's concern for the conversion of the people in his kingdom. The new king sends a request to the Irish that they send a bishop who might preach to and convert his people. Oswald's concern parallels the concern shown by various saints for the salvation of others through conversion; it also reflects the view that such conversions should be accomplished through persuasion rather than force. Oswald, even though he is the king, does not command his people to convert, but brings in an Irish missionary to persuade them to the faith. In translating this passage, Ælfric adds details that again draw out the implicit parallel between David and Oswald: in II Samuel 2:1, as soon as the former king of Israel, Saul, died in battle and the way cleared for David to take the throne as king, David "consuluit Dominum" [inquired to the Lord]. In like fashion, Ælfric adds to Bede's account by writing "Hwæt ða oswold ongann . embe godes willan to smeagenne . / sona swa he rices geweald" [Listen! Then Oswald began to seek after the will of God as soon as he had rulership of the kingdom].³⁰ The addition of this detail moves Oswald closer to David's example and also reminds Ælfric's readers that a king like Oswald keeps in mind that he is subject to God, rather than trying

to be his own independent authority, like God, under nobody.³¹ Oswald's kingship stands in stark contrast to the kinds of rulership demonstrated by the pagan Roman emperors and rulers in the other martyrs' *passiones*, and Ælfric draws attention to the point by enhancing Oswald's similarity to David. This contrast, however, also redefines the kind of royal behavior that a Christian king might portray. In George's *passio*, the emperor Datian sought to make all of his subjects worship his gods by terrifying them into compliance, forcing them on pain of torture and death to renounce Christianity and sacrifice to idols. This sort of hegemonic royal masculinity, forceful, aggressive, coercing compliance when it was not given voluntarily, is consistently depicted in both the female and the male saints' *passiones* as an undesirable characteristic of the devil and of men with disordered minds, and is described by Augustine as a fallen, unclean (gendered) love of self. As such, this "traditional male" behavior uniformly receives the condemnation of the Latin and English hagiographers alike. By contrast, Oswald desires his people to worship God, but approaches the matter of conversion in a different way, wanting his people to come to faith through *gewemunge* (persuasion), just as Sebastian, Eugenia, and others brought many to faith by means of instruction.³²

Unlike these other saints, however, Oswald does not instruct the people in the doctrines of the faith by himself. Instead, he acts as a translator for the Irish bishop, Aidan, never presuming to take upon himself the role of the clergy in instructing others.³³ Ælfric carefully maintains the separation between secular and ecclesiastical powers and responsibilities that Bede illustrates in his account of Oswald's life. Oswald may ask for preachers to be sent to his kingdom, but he does not himself instruct the people in any way other than by translating Aidan's preaching. This action on Oswald's part shows him as a servant of God, receiving his words from another and passing them on to the people. In this role, Oswald plays a relatively passive part in that the instruction and ideas he translates are not his own. Oswald functions here in a subject position, as a servant of the faith rather than as king and ruler. By acting as translator, however, Oswald participates in the instruction and conversion of his people and so he can in some way receive credit for their conversion as a sign of his sanctity.

Both Bede and Ælfric give considerable space in their narratives to Aidan, the Irish missionary, and his involvement in Oswald's kingdom. Aidan fills the role in Oswald's life that prophets such as Samuel and Nathan filled in the life of King David. Aidan balances Oswald's repre-

sentation of secular Christian masculinity by being himself the example of metagender much like that demonstrated by the other male saints after they renounced their earthly dignity and authority. Bede describes Aidan as “summae mansuetudinis et pietatis ac moderaminis uirum habentemque zelum Dei” [a man of the greatest gentleness, devotion, moderation, and possessing zeal for God].³⁴ Ælfric does not translate this description, but rather lifts a passage from later in Bede’s life and writes that Aidan “wæs mæres lifes man on munuclicre drohtnunge . / and he calle woruld-cara awarp fram his heortan / nanes þinges wilnigende butan godes wil-lan” [was a man of excellent life in monkish conduct and he cast aside all worldly concerns from his heart, desiring nothing except the will of God].³⁵ Expecting even his nonmonastic audience to know to some extent what the exemplary monastic life entailed, Ælfric apparently felt no need to elaborate the specifics of it, but only notes the way that Aidan completely turned away from worldly concerns and desired only the things of God, thus demonstrating the rightly ordered priorities of a mind restored through belief. The first quality that Ælfric describes in detail (also taken from a later chapter in Bede’s life) is how Aidan immediately gives away to the poor and needy anything in the way of gifts and wealth that were given to him by the king or other rich people: “Swa hwæt swa him becom of þæs cyninges gifum . / oððe ricra manna þæt he hraðe dælde . / þearfum . and wædlum . mid wellwillendum mode” [Whatever came to him of the gifts of the king or high-ranking people he quickly distributed with a kindly disposition to the poor and the destitute].³⁶ Aidan, then, balances the religious expression of proper desire within the same *vita* that addresses through Oswald the proper expression of desire within a secular context. The chief quality in the life of this Irish bishop, however, is the attention that he gives to instructing the minds of those who accompany him on his preaching journeys. While instructing the Northumbrian folk as he has opportunity, Aidan is much more structured in the way he educates his followers in the faith:

Bede:

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

[He differed so much, however, in his life from the slothfulness of our time that all who proceeded with him, whether tonsured or of the laity, had to meditate, that is to work either by reading holy writings or by learning the psalms. This was the daily work of him and of all who were with him, whatever place they went.]

Ælfric:

He lufode forhæfednysse . and halige rædinge . / and Iunge men teah georne mid lare . / swa þæt ealle his geferan þe him mid eodon / sceoldon sealmas leornian . oððe sume rædinge . / swa hwider swa hi ferdon . þam folce bodigende .

[He loved self-restraint and holy reading and taught the young men gladly with exhortation so that all his disciples that journeyed with him must study the psalms or some reading wherever they traveled to preach to the people.]³⁷

Again, both Bede and Ælfric emphasize the importance of developing the memory and of knowing God, for one can neither recognize nor love God's goodness if one remains ignorant of it or forgets it after reading about it. As Augustine comments, the first need of the newly restored mind is to be instructed in the faith so that the light of knowledge and recognition of God can continually grow and strengthen the soul back to the health of a loving relationship with God.³⁸ Aidan provides just the kind of instruction needed to strengthen the minds of the new Anglo-Saxon converts and of the king as well.

Both Bede and Ælfric make clear that Oswald occupies a subject position to Aidan when it comes to matters of faith:

Bede:

Huius igitur antistitis doctrina rex Osuald cum ea, cui praeerat, gente Anglorum institutus, non solum / incognita progenitoribus suis regna caelorum sperare didicit. ... Quo regni culmine sublimatus, nihilominus (quod mirum dictu est) pauperibus et peregrinis semper humilis benignus et largus fuit.

[Then King Oswald, who had been established as ruler over the race of the Angles, together with them learned to hope for the kingdom of heaven unknown by their own predecessors from the teaching of this bishop. ... Having been elevated to the highest office of the

kingdom, he nevertheless was always humble, kind, and bountiful to the lowly and to strangers (which is wonderful to relate).]

Ælfric:

Þa wearð se cynincg oswold swiðe ælmes-georn . / and eadmod on þeawum . and on eallum þingum cystig . / and man ahrærde cyrcan on his rice geond eall . / and mynsterlice gesetnyssa mid micelre geornfulnysse .

[Then King Oswald became very charitable and humble in disposition, and generous in all matters. The man built churches and monastic foundations throughout all of his kingdom with great zeal.]³⁹

Ælfric combines two different passages in his translation here: the comments on Oswald's growth in virtue and humility under Aidan's instruction and the information about his activity in building churches and monasteries. By putting these two ideas together in this fashion at this point in his rendition of Oswald's life, Ælfric again parallels events in the life of King David. Immediately after conquering Jerusalem and establishing himself as king, David brings the ark of the covenant into Jerusalem (paralleled by Oswald bringing the Gospel into his kingdom). As soon as the Ark is established in the royal city, David makes sacrifices and distributes gifts of food to all the people that had assembled for the event.⁴⁰ David then desires to build a temple as the resting place for the ark of the covenant, for up to this time the Ark has remained in a tent. God does not actually permit David to build the temple, because the king has shed blood in war, but rather instructs David to gather the building materials so that his son, Solomon, can build the temple.⁴¹ Similarly, once Oswald has become king and has brought a preacher of the Gospel to his kingdom, he becomes charitable and bountiful to his people, especially in terms of distributing food and alms, and then he sets about building churches and monasteries in a desire parallel to David's desire to build a temple for God. In this last parallel, however, Oswald actually builds as he desires to do even though he is a warrior, whereas David was prevented because he had shed blood as a warrior.

Ælfric expands upon the point he has just made by describing details of Oswald's distribution of food and building of the minster at York, at the same time describing how God then enlarged Oswald's kingdom and united four different peoples under him by way of blessing. The

example that Ælfric translates concerning the distribution of food also involves Aidan in his role as prophet. Briefly, as the king and the bishop observe the Easter feast together, notice comes to Oswald that many poor folk from all over his kingdom have gathered in the streets. The king then orders that the silver dish bearing the royal food be taken, the food distributed to the gathered people, and the dish cut up and distributed likewise. Aidan, rejoicing at the king's generosity, grabs the king's right hand and says "Nunquam inueterescat haec manus" [May this hand never decay].⁴² Both Bede and Ælfric note that, true to the bishop's pronouncement, the right hand of King Oswald continued to exist without the usual process of decay, remaining uncorrupt all the way to Ælfric's day as a sign of the generosity and benevolence of the king.⁴³

Next Ælfric describes how God unites the peoples of the Picts, the Britons, the Scots, and the Angles under Oswald's rule as a sign of the king's merits in God's eyes.⁴⁴ For Ælfric's purposes it does not matter that this "unity" most likely came about by means of conquest (a detail that Bede provides in a brief, passing observation regarding the land of Mercia, but that Ælfric omits), even though it parallels David's subduing of the enemies of Israel. Such unification at any time and place implies peace between the people who acknowledge one common ruler and, in turn, reflects upon the king as a peace-maker. By omitting how Oswald expanded his kingdom through warfare, Ælfric depicts the saint as one who fought only to defend his people and deliver them from a cruel tyrant. The omission reveals Ælfric's attitude towards war, inasmuch as it seems justifiable to him in the case of defending one's people and homeland but that he would not find war justifiable in the case of a king simply wanting to gain more territory for his own enrichment.⁴⁵ In this instance Ælfric deals rather disingenuously (as does Bede) with actual history for the sake of constructing an ideal of Christian royalty that excludes the expansionist ambitions associated with the hegemonic male. In both Bede's and Ælfric's versions of secular Christian masculinity, Oswald again plays a passive role: God unifies the four peoples (presumably through their common faith) as a reward for Oswald's merits in humbling himself before God.⁴⁶

Following immediately after the description of the enlargement and unity of Oswald's kingdom, Ælfric brings to his reader's attention the fact that Oswald completed the *aenlice* "glorious, noble, splendid" minster at York, the episcopal see of Northumbria.⁴⁷ In doing so, Ælfric reminds his learned audience again of Oswald's similarity to David concerning his

desire to construct places for the worship of God while instructing those who did not know the Bible so well in the kind of deeds appropriate to secular Christian piety and imitable by both men and women.

At this point in the Old English life, Oswald takes on the qualities more familiar to a saint. Ælfric skips several chapters of Bede's life and then translates Bede's description of Oswald as a devout man who "temporalis regni quondam gubernacula tenens magis pro aeterno regno semper laborare ac deprecari solebat" [formerly possessing the government of a temporal kingdom, was always more accustomed to work and to pray for the eternal kingdom], or as Ælfric succinctly puts it, "swanc for heofonan rice mid singalum gebedum" [labored for the heavenly kingdom with continual prayers].⁴⁸ The paradoxical image of the king as a laborer, more clearly evoked by Ælfric's frank brevity than by Bede's elegance, receives added emphasis in the Old English life because it immediately follows the description of Oswald's completion of the minster at York whereas Bede tags the comment on at the end of the story of a miracle at Oswald's tomb. The effect of Bede's use of *laborare* (to labor) is mitigated by the fact that in the Latin version the mention of the labor follows the statement that Oswald is "cum Domino regnantis" [reigning with the Lord], and that his former work (done while he was alive) is never defined—though Oswald worked and prayed, whatever work he did remains undefined and nebulous, an abstract idea rather than a concrete activity.⁴⁹ In Ælfric's translation, however, Oswald *swanc* (labored, worked) in prayer, a labor that any monastic audience especially would recognize as potentially exhausting, a labor at which even Jesus once sweated.⁵⁰ Moreover, Ælfric joins the idea of Oswald's labor in prayer syntactically to his completion of the construction project at York minster, ordering the work of construction as the first logical point and the work at prayer as the second logical point of the same sentence, making Oswald a saint for all the English of every estate in society by identifying the warrior king as one who labors and one who prays. Again, Ælfric not only draws out and refines the thought that he finds implicit or diffused in Bede's account, he actually changes Bede's focus, creating a sharper, clearer image of Oswald as earthly king and heavenly servant, so that the entire sentence reads like this:

He fulworhte on eferwic þæt ænlice mynster / þe his mæg eadwine
 ær begunnon hæfde . / and he swanc for heofonan rice mid singalum
 gebedum . / swiþor þonne he hogode hu he geheolde on worulde /
 þa hwilwendlican geþincðu . þe he hwonlice lufode.

[He completed the splendid minster in York that his kinsman Edwin had begun earlier, and he labored for the heavenly kingdom with continual prayers more than he cared for how he possessed temporal dignities in the world, which he loved little.]⁵¹

Ælfric makes no mention of Oswald ruling with God in heaven; instead he creates an image of Oswald as a servant motivated to labor because of his desire for the heavenly kingdom and his disdain for temporal honors, a familiar motif from the *vitae* and *passiones* of the other male saints. Both Bede and Ælfric then describe Oswald's habit of frequently praying with his palms turned upwards before parting ways again, Bede to describe the tradition of Oswald's dying prayer and Ælfric to narrate the story of the conversion of King Cynegils of Wessex.

The conversion of Cynegils and the West Saxons does not directly add much to the picture of Oswald. Ælfric's version, however, is more notable for what it leaves out than for what it tells. In Bede's account, a missionary sent by Pope Honorius in Rome comes to Wessex and preaches to the West Saxons. After receiving instruction from this missionary, Bishop Birinus, Cynegils converts and receives baptism. The king's sponsor at his baptism, however, is none other than Oswald, who has come to Cynegils's kingdom for an unspecified purpose. Bede makes a point of describing the friendly relationship between the two kings in light of the fact that Oswald would later marry Cynegils's daughter.⁵² Ælfric, however, omits this detail entirely. In fact, throughout the whole of Oswald's life he never mentions the fact that Oswald ever married, but then even Bede only mentions it as a sort of side note in this episode of Cynegils's conversion. Possibly Ælfric declines to call attention to the marriage because Bede treats the matter only this once. Yet Bede points out that the relational bond established between the two kings by the marriage is an important element that reinforces the relational bond formed between the two kings by their mutual faith, and so Ælfric's silence with regard to the marriage may have other implications than just his penchant for condensing and abbreviating his sources. By ignoring the sexual aspect of Oswald's life, Ælfric makes the king seem more like a monk, one who has voluntarily, according to Jerome, become a eunuch for the kingdom of God.⁵³ Only Oswald has not become a eunuch willingly—Ælfric has chosen it for him. The juxtaposition of this omission with the description of Oswald's intense life of prayer may also reveal another aspect of Ælfric's thinking, the connection between sexual abstinence and the life of prayer

that Jerome makes in *Adversus Jovinianum* and Bede repeats in his commentary on I Peter:

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

[The same Apostle in another place commands us to pray always. If we are to pray always, it follows that we must never be in the bondage of wedlock, for as often as I render my wife her due, I cannot pray. ... so [he] now says that prayers are hindered by the performance of marriage duty. ... If we abstain from intercourse, we give honour to our wives: if we do not abstain, it is clear that insult is the opposite of honour.]⁵⁴

The scant attention that Oswald's marriage receives in Bede's work and the way in which Ælfric places the story of Cynegil's baptism next to his description of Oswald in prayer probably both influence Ælfric's decision not to mention the marriage. If so, the omission highlights an interesting aspect of Ælfric's own process of thought in crafting his translations, how ideas that are associated within monastic teachings influence the decisions he makes as translator and redactor of saints' lives. In this case, he apparently cannot reconcile Oswald's continual prayers with married life, and so declines to mention the marriage at all.

Yet if Bede and Ælfric touched only lightly or not at all upon the subject of the king's sexuality, neither one avoided his body altogether. As with his *vita* of Æthelthryth, Bede does not provide a physical description of Oswald, nor does he depict the king engaged in any particularly "masculine" endeavor other than warfare. Instead, Bede shows Oswald building churches and monasteries, just as Æthelthryth did; devoting himself to prayer, as Æthelthryth did; participating in the Christian instruction of his people, as Æthelthryth did; and caring for the people under his rule, as did Æthelthryth. Yet the king's body also receives attention, especially his hands. In Bede's account, before his battle for the throne, the king holds and steadies the cross "utraque manu" [with each hand] while his men secure it in the ground.⁵⁵ Oswald also raises his hands in prayer with Aidan before the Easter feast at which the king provides food and silver for the poor gathered at his gates. In this same scene, Aidan blesses the

king's right hand because of his generosity.⁵⁶ Later, Bede describes how Oswald prays with his hands on his knees, palms turned upward, and how, after being slain in battle, the king's hands were hung on stakes, along with his head, as trophies of battle before being retrieved by Oswald's brother Oswiu.⁵⁷ Most importantly, however, Bede narrates how Oswald's right hand, which had been blessed by Aidan, remains undecayed long after his death as a sign of his sanctity.⁵⁸ The hands actually become the part of the king's body that lives out and undergoes the traditional motifs of the martyr's legend. They pray, give alms, raise places of worship, are violently impaled then exposed to public humiliation by the heathen King Penda, and the right hand remains uncorrupt after death, finally becoming the locus of the saint's cult and the site of miraculous cures. Ælfric does not carry all of the references to Oswald's hands through into his translation, but he retains enough of them to convey the same synecdoche of martyrdom that Bede's *vita* portrays.⁵⁹

Certain aspects of the Roman martyrs' legends do not appear in Oswald's *vita*, however. Like Æthelthryth, Oswald never undergoes any sort of temptation or torture that threatens to undermine his faith or turn him back to the pagan gods. He never debates with anyone concerning Christianity, nor does he act as the effective agent of anyone's conversion. All of Oswald's battles take place in the physical, temporal realm, he faces no demonic foes, nor does he receive protection in the form of an angelic being. The unusual light that plays a part in so many saints' *vitae* graces Oswald only after his death, appearing as a sign of the king's sanctity to recalcitrant Mercian monks when Queen Osthryth translates his bones to Bardney monastery.⁶⁰ Neither Bede nor Ælfric leave any room to doubt Oswald's sanctity, however, for both describe many of the miracles credited to Oswald's relics.

In the *vita* of this saintly king, one finds a secular ruler with the strength and authority to defend his people from their enemies and to enforce peace in a kingdom of diverse people. Yet this secular ruler is simultaneously a servant to another king in a transcendent kingdom, powerless in himself, belonging in life to the common class of believers, and dependent upon the strength and good will of the King of all creation. Oswald prays, gives generous alms, provides for his people's instruction in the Christian faith, and gives his life in defense of his people. In all aspects pertaining to the faith, his activities resonate with those of the Anglo-Saxon holy woman, Æthelthryth, except that Æthelthryth actually instructed her followers in the faith. Oswald can only enact this aspect of

a saint's activities vicariously as he translates for Aidan. As a man of the world and a man of God, this Northumbrian king opens the door to a new kind of masculinity, one that allows for aggression directed toward limited ends (such as defense of one's people) and approves worldly power for the purposes of spreading the Gospel, establishing peace, and aiding the poor.

Edmund: *Rex Memoriae*

Abbo of Fleury recorded the “*Passio Sancti Eadmundi Regis et Martyris*” from the remembered testimony of King Edmund’s sword-bearer, who told his recollections to Dunstan when the future archbishop was a young man. Ælfric indicated in both the Latin and the Old English prefaces to *Lives of Saints* that he wrote these translations “prodesse edificando ad fidem lectione huius narrationis” [to build up in faith those who read these accounts].⁶¹ The Old English preface more specifically states that Ælfric wrote the collection “to langum gemynde and to trymmincge þam towerdum mannum” [for a lasting memory and for encouraging future men and women].⁶² Ælfric approaches his translation of the “*Passio Sancti Eadmundi*” as a writing for the sake of memory, not just passive recall, but of reflective remembrance that will build up and encourage faithful behavior.⁶³ The *passio* as rendered by Ælfric retains Abbo of Fleury’s emphasis on memory, centering around the Old English word *gemyndig* (mindful, remembering). Both Abbo and Ælfric provide a historical introduction that connects the audience directly with the events to be related by means of memory: the memory of Edmund’s sword-bearer (affirmed by oath), the memory of Archbishop Dunstan, and Dunstan’s memory as recorded by Abbo in a Latin book and then a translation by Ælfric. Abbo especially makes a point of how Dunstan laid up the testimony “ut promptuario memoriae” [as in the storehouse of memory].⁶⁴ Ælfric omits this comment on Dunstan’s memory and characteristically condenses Abbo’s florid Latin prose into concise, direct English, describing King Edmund as:

snotor and wurðfull . and wurðode symble / mid æbelum þeawum
 þone ælmihrtigan god . / He wæs ead-mod . and geþungen . and swa
 an-ræde þurh-wunode / þæt he nolde abugan to bysmorfullum
 leahtrum . / ne on næfre healfe he ne ahyldre his þeawas . / ac wæs
 symble gemyndig þære soþan lare . / [gif] þu eart to heafod-men
 ge-set . ne ahefe þu ðe / ac beo betwux mannum swa swa an man of
 him . / He wæs cystig wædlum and wydewum swa swa fæder . / and

mid wel-willendnysse gewissode his folc / symle to riht-wisnysse
and þam reþum styrde .

[wise and honorable, and he always glorified Almighty God by his noble virtues. He was humble-minded and devout, and remained so steadfast that he would not bend to shameful vices; nor did he turn away his conduct to either side, but was always mindful of the true doctrine. “(if) you are placed in the position of a chief man, do not exalt yourself, but be among the people as one of them.” Edmund was generous to the poor and to widows just as a father, and with kindness always instructed his people to belief and restrained the violent.]⁶⁵

These lines emphasize, of course, the humble, wise character of the saint and his virtuous living, but buried in the middle of the passage is the comment that Edmund “wæs symble gemyndig ære soþan lare” [was always mindful of (or always remembering) the true doctrine] about rulers living among their people as one of them.⁶⁶ If virtue and especially prudence are developed through habits of memory, then this passage is a testimony to that process. Edmund is shown to be excellent in virtue, humble, generous, honorable, and kind. He exercises prudence in consistently shunning vices, instructing his people how to live rightly, caring for widows, and restraining the violent. In the context of political events in the mid-990s, the description of Edmund as the ideal Christian Anglo-Saxon king rings with implicit criticism of Æthelred II and his *witan*. Though all of the qualities Ælfric describes are found in Abbo and thus were probably not originally intended as a critique of Æthelred in the Latin version, it is impossible to think that Ælfric did not have the tumultuous factionalism and uncertainties within Æthelred’s *witan* as well as the attacks by Vikings in mind as he translated Edmund’s *passio* for his collection. All of the characteristics and virtues attributed to Edmund befit a Christian and a king, but the king has to choose to build such character in himself—wisdom does not automatically come with the crown. Self-formation, even in kings, has to be deliberately pursued through the application of memory in order to shape behavior. Lucie Doležalová and Tamás Visi comment that, “Remembering the correct patterns of behavior, remembering one’s social position and the rights and duties implied in it, or remembering one’s self in the sense of being faithful to it require a special effort. Memory here is a sort of ethical power.”⁶⁷ That Edmund was *symble gemyndig* of the teachings of his Christian faith indicates not the passive awareness of

such ideas, but a continual, active, reflective engagement on his part with concepts that he had committed to memory for the purpose of eschewing vices and deliberately cultivating the virtuous behavior described in the above lines. Ælfric may have had in mind a process similar to that described by Ambrose in *De bono mortis*.⁶⁸ Edmund's continual mindfulness of Christian teaching shaped his pattern of conduct and his understanding of the duties of his social position to such a degree that he could only be true to himself by being true to virtues that he never allowed himself to forget. Æthelred, on the other hand, seemed to lack a real sense of himself as king if Ælfric's attitude is any guide. In discussing one of Ælfric's earlier works, Mary Clayton observes that "It is one thing to make general comments about a king's responsibility for his country's problems when that country is relatively problem-free, but, in an England under attack and ruled by a king named Æthelred, to blame the misfortunes of a kingdom on the *misræd* of the king seems very deliberate."⁶⁹ It seems neither Æthelred's *witan* nor the king's own mind was equipped to pursue wisdom or the good of the people and exemplified the failure both of Alfred the Great's educational goals and of the relationship between the church and the king idealized in the documents of the Benedictine Reform. The troubles of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom arose because Æthelred failed to make the qualities of his father or of other virtuous kings his own. For this, as Edmund (or, at least, Abbo and Ælfric) apparently knew, was the point of reading or listening to the reading of books. Kurt Danziger remarks that "What medieval advice on reading and remembering stressed was ... the goal of making the text part of oneself. In the words of Gregory the Great: 'We ought to transform what we read into our very selves, so that when our mind is stirred by what it hears, our life may concur by practicing what has been heard.'"⁷⁰ For Ælfric to comment here that Edmund was *symble gemyndig* of Christian doctrine does not just mean that he pondered the mysteries of the Trinity and the incarnation, but that he gave careful consideration through continual reflection to embodying the text by incorporating or practicing in his own life what he heard.⁷¹ Thus Edmund actively used his memory to construct and nurture virtue in himself. Jerome refers to this process as making what he has read part of his nature, or making what is learned his own: "quicquid in nobis longo fuit studio congregatum et meditatione diuturna quasi in naturam uersum, hoc illa libauit, hoc didicit atque possedit" [Whatever I had gathered together by long study, and by constant meditation made part of my nature, (Marcella) tasted, she learned and made her own].⁷² The process entails choice, deliberation,

the intention to shape one's self in a particular way. In Abbo and Ælfric's accounts, Edmund shaped himself into a steadfast, generous king who guided his people in a fatherly way and restrained the violent among them.

Hingwar the murderous Viking interrupts this portrait of godly rulership and embodies not only the hagiographical commonplace of the tyrannous persecutor but also the existential threat that loomed over Ælfric and his Anglo-Saxon audience. Hingwar enters Edmund's realm slaughtering men, women, and children as he advances, devastating Edmund's fighting force. Hingwar then delivers an ultimatum, demanding Edmund surrender his wealth and submit to Hingwar as his overlord in return for his life. Ælfric omits Abbo's extreme portrayal of the Vikings as minions of the antichrist (especially the Danes) and of the Viking messenger's blasphemous description of Hingwar as God, but the ultimatum nonetheless confronts Edmund with the choice of two lords: either Hingwar or Christ. When the bishop Edmund consults advises submission out of fear for Edmund's life, Abbo reports that Edmund was astonished at such advice and thought deeply in silence about what to do.⁷³ Ælfric instead describes how Edmund considers what to do in silence and then answers the bishop *cynelice* (like a king), that "me nu leofre wære / þæt ic on feohte feolle . wið þam þe min folc / mos्�te heora eardes brucan" [it is more agreeable to me that I fall in fight against those who may be able to possess the dwelling places of my people].⁷⁴ Edmund's thoughts go first to fighting in defense of his people. That Ælfric describes this response as *cynelice* in opposition to the bishop's concern to preserve Edmund's life seems to criticize Æthelred and his advisors at the same time. The bishop's advice to submit to Hingwar is unthinkable to Edmund and the king must consult within himself in order to recollect his duty as king and know the way forward. Both Abbo and Ælfric describe the outward signs of this inward consultation by observing how Edmund remains silent for a while and looks at the ground. Carruthers notes that, "it had been observed that people often lower their heads in order to think and raise them when trying to recollect something. This was taken as evidence for the action of the *vermis*, opening as needed for recollection, and closing for concentrated thinking once one had received from memory the material one needed."⁷⁵ The *vermis* served as a sort of valve in the brain between the place in which memories were stored and the place where the action of cogitation or meditation occurred. Lowering the head cut off the ability of random or unregulated memories to intrude upon focused thinking, so the description of Edmund remaining silent and lowering his head by looking at the ground

communicates the serious, deep reflection in which he engages. The result is a kingly response in rejection of the bishop's fear-driven counsel to preserve Edmund's life through submission to Hingwar. The bishop, however, gently reminds the king that his people are already devastated and he, too, shall perish unless he either submits or flees. Edmund responds with a declaration of solidarity with his slain people and with God:

Pæs ic gewilnige and gewisce mid mode . / þæt ic ana ne belife æfter
 minum leofum þegnum / þe on heora bedde wurdon mid bearnum .
 and wifum . / færlice ofslægene fram þysum flot-mannum . / Næs me
 næfre gewunelic þæt ic worhte fleames . / ac ic wolde swiðor sweltan
 gif ic þorfe / for minum agenum earde . and se ælmihtiga god wat
 / þæt ic nelle abugan fram his biggengum æfre . / ne fram his soþan
 lufe . swelte ic . lybbe ic .

[This I long for and wish with my mind: that I not be left alone after my beloved thanes, who in their beds with their children and wives unexpectedly have been struck down by these boatmen. It has never been habit for me to flee; moreover, I would sooner die if I must for my own homeland. And Almighty God knows that I shall never turn away from his worship, ever, nor from true love of him, whether I live or die.]⁷⁶

Edmund's statement reveals his understanding of his duty as king and as Christian. He identifies with his murdered people and still determines to "be among them as one of them." He does not, like the bishop, consider himself to be so much more valuable as to justify the shame of flight or the treason of submission to Hingwar. Instead, Edmund connects his love for his thanes with his love for God, two loves that death itself cannot overcome. Ælfric brings out this point rather more moderately than Abbo, but the very terseness of Ælfric's language serves to emphasize rather than diminish Edmund's determination.

We see the kind of textual immersion shaping Edmund's behavior when he answers the ultimatum delivered to him by the Viking messenger to hand over his kingdom and its wealth or die. Edmund says, "Witodlice þu wære wyrðe sleges nu . / ac ic nelle afylan on þinum fulum blode / mine clænan handa . forðan-þe ic criste folgie / þe us swa ge-bysnode . and ic bliðelice wille beon / ofslagan þurh eow gif hit swa god fore-sceawað" [Surely you were worthy to be slain now except I will not befoul my clean hands with your vile blood because I follow Christ, who instructed us so by example. And I will gladly be slain by you if God ordains such].⁷⁷ By

constant reflection upon the example of Christ that he had committed to memory, Edmund not only knew how Christ had responded to the prospect of powerlessness in the face of a violent death, but also how Christ had commanded Peter not to resist violently when troops came to arrest him before his crucifixion. Even though Edmund would have been justified in the judicial execution of a murderer of his thanes, he chooses not to do so because of the example of Christ. Ælfric describes the dramatic moment of Edmund's own capture thus: "Hwæt þa eadmund cynincg mid þam þe hingwar com . stod innan his / healle þæs hælendes gemyndig . / and awarp his wæpna wolde geæfen-læcan / cristes gebysnungum . þe for-bead petre / mid wæpnum to winnenne wið þa wælhreowan iudeiscan" [See! When Hingwar came, King Edmund stood within his hall remembering the Savior, and cast aside his weapons, desiring to imitate the example of Christ, who forbade Peter to fight with weapons against the cruel Jews.]⁷⁸ Ælfric depicts Edmund in the act of shaping himself through actively remembering (*gemyndig*). Instead of using the language of memory, Abbo writes that Edmund "ut membrum Christi" [as a member of Christ] has thrown his weapons aside, not indicating any shaping of the action by memory at all. Where Abbo simply compares Edmund to Christ, Ælfric describes the king consciously imitating Christ by reflecting upon and choosing the example that he wished to follow, which he had heard about from reading or hearing the Gospels and had stored away in his memory. Edmund deliberately identifies himself with Christ on two levels: in choosing like Christ to accept death at the hands of hostile men, and in obeying Christ's command to Peter to put away his weapons and not oppose with violence the outcome that Christ had chosen. Edmund remembers the example of Christ from the Gospels, applies it to his own current circumstances, and enacts both Christ's example and instructions in himself. Regardless of whether Edmund actually read the words himself or heard them read, he retained the meaning of the gospel account in his memory and embodied it in his own life. Ælfric's account of Edmund's choice of martyrdom rather than submission to the slayer of his people shows this process in action as Edmund's intentional mindfulness produces an imitation of Christ that itself becomes an object of memory for encouragement and emulation by others.

Abbo and Ælfric do not stop there, however. Also included in the *passio* of St. Edmund is an example of what happens to a person's character when one fails to commit the writings in books to memory or to reflect upon what has been learned so as to shape one's character con-

tinually by remembering. Bishop Theodred in *impremeditatus sententiam* (unprepared judgment) illustrates Ambrose's description of losing virtue and judgment through neglect of study.⁷⁹ Many years after the death of Edmund and the translation of his body to a new church worthy of the saint, several thieves come to rob the church. The saint intervenes to prevent the theft and assure the capture of the culprits. Ælfric tells us,

Hi wurdon þa ge-brohte to þam bisceope ealle . / and he het hi hon on
 heagum gealgum ealle . / Ac he næs na gemyndig hu se mild-heorta
 god / clypode þurh his witegan þas word þe her standað . / Eos qui
 ducuntur ad mortem eruere ne cesses . / Pa þe man lät to deaðe alys
 hi ut symble . / and eac þa halgan canones gehadodum forbeodað
 / ge bisceopum ge preostum . to beonne embe þeofas . / for-þan-þe
 hit ne gebyraþ þam þe beoð gecorene . / gode to þegnigenne þat hi
 geþwærلæcan sceolon . / on æniges mannes deaðe.

[Then they were all brought to the bishop and he commanded them all to hang on a high gallows. But he was not mindful how the merciful God spoke through his prophet the words that stand here: “*Eos qui ducuntur ad mortem eruere ne cesses*” “Always release the one who is led to death.” And also the holy canons forbid the consecrated, both bishops and priests, to be concerned with thieves because it does not suit those who are chosen for service to God that they should agree with the death of any person.]⁸⁰

Ælfric pointedly takes Bishop Theodred to task for behaving in a manner inconsistent with his office because “he næs na gemyndig” of God's exhortation to show mercy or of the canon law that forbade ordained men to have any part in the deaths of others. Carruthers observes that “a well-supplied memory was necessary for making informed judgments,” which is precisely what the bishop failed to do.⁸¹ These failures are moral and ethical in nature and stem from the fact that Theodred has neglected to prepare his judgment in memory as he ought in order to maintain his moral character. Instead he acts out of passion and anger toward the thieves and so diminishes himself and his office through inappropriate behavior. Unlike Edmund, Theodred forgot his place and was led astray into sin because he neglected continually to remember and make his own what he had read in books. Because his reading lacked intention he failed to digest and absorb the precepts into memory and so he acted imprudently and unethically.

Abbo and Ælfric both describe Theodred's repentance, but Ælfric adds the detail that *books* serve to jolt Theodred's memory in a way that shapes the rest of his life. Ælfric writes that "Eft þa ðeodred bisceop sceawode his bec syððan / behreowsode mid geomerunge . þat he swa reðne dom sette / þam ungesaligum þeofum . and hit besargode æfre / oð his lifes ende." [Later, after he scrutinized his books, Bishop Theodred repented with grief that he had passed such a harsh judgment upon the unhappy thieves, and ever lamented it to the end of his life].⁸² With the memorial aid of books Theodred remembers how he should have behaved—in a sense, like Gregory the Great, he returns to himself—but too late for it to be of any benefit to him in exercising judgment in the case of these hapless thieves. Yet from this terrible experience of forgetting, then being reminded through reading, a new memory forms that molds Bishop Theodred's behavior from then on, for Abbo and Ælfric explain that Theodred laments his severity—his forgetfulness of who he is as a bishop and a consecrated man of God—to the end of his life. Though Ælfric does not use the word *gemyndig* to describe Theodred's activity, the fact that Theodred laments his behavior to the end of his life indicates that he is continually mindful of it, for one cannot lament over what one does not recall. The emotional impact of the memory is palpable, seared into Theodred's soul and incorporated into his actions with the implication that he never forgets and never repeats this particular moral failing ever again.

These examples of remembering and forgetting from the *passio* of St. Edmund clarify the point of relationship between written memorial aids (books), remembering, and forgetting. The memory stores, reflects upon, and "in-habits" the examples of virtue and right behavior held for memory's use in books. Reflection upon such examples in the memory makes them a part of the person who is remembering, so that the memories become the chosen actions and character, deliberately developed, of that person. In the case of Edmund, Ælfric portrays Edmund actively choosing to construct himself as a king, taking as his example the heavenly king who dwelt among fallen humanity as one of them and gave himself up for his people. In the process of translation, he holds up a mirror for King Æthelred and his advisors that does not reflect well upon them. Those who neglect the intentional remembrance of who they are supposed to be forget themselves as well by forgetting the good they should enact through their offices.

In the legends of the three royal Anglo-Saxon saints, Ælfric sets out examples of purity and rulership directed toward the noble and royal men and women of England. Æthelthryth reigns as queen of her own body as well as of a kingdom as she preserves her virginity for more than a decade through two marriages, and Ælfric deploys her *vita* perhaps to assure his patrons, the secular priests—or perhaps their wives—and possibly others in his nonmonastic audience that chaste marriage is possible even in Anglo-Saxon England. In a time of contention over clerical marriage this message may not have been well received by many of Ælfric's readers, as Ælfric's own words seem to indicate.⁸³ Oswald's *vita* provides a view of the active life of a good king who builds up the church, protects his people, brings peace to the land, submits himself to God, and dies fighting in defense of his realm. Edmund, on the other hand, reveals the interior, contemplative life of a good king. This interior life does not preclude the kingly duties of defending, instructing, providing, and restraining evil, but draws back the curtain on the activity of the mind and the means of growing in virtue incumbent upon a good king. Part or all of the bodies of the three royal saints remain to Ælfric's day without corruption as divine endorsement of their conduct in timebound life and their reward in the life of eternity.

NOTES

¹ For observations on Bede's and Ælfric's treatment of Æthelthryth, see Blanton, *Signs of Devotion*, 19–63 and 111–22; Szarmach, “Ælfric and the Problem of Women,” 571–90; Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, 176–210; Peter Jackson, “Purpose of Christian Marriage,” 235–60.

² Gwen Griffiths also notes the lack of hagiographical drama in her article, “Reading Ælfric's Saint Æthelthryth,” 36.

³ Bede, *HE*, 4.19.

⁴ *LS*, 20.8, 14.

⁵ Bede, *HE*, 4.19; *LS*, 20.15.

⁶ *LS*, 20.18.

⁷ Bede, *HE*, 4.19; *LS*, 20.31–35a.

⁸ Griffiths, “Reading Ælfric's Saint Æthelthryth,” 39.

⁹ Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage*, 55–63.

¹⁰ Bede, “St. Æthelthryth,” in *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and trans. Colgrave and Mynors, 4.19.

¹¹ *LS*, 20.36b–49.

¹² Ibid., 61–62a, 75.

¹³ Ibid., 41–48.

¹⁴ LS, 1.200–205.

¹⁵ O'Brien O'Keeffe, *Stealing Obedience*, 53.

¹⁶ LS, 20.54–60.

¹⁷ Bede, *HE*, 4.19. Cynefrith's speech takes up twenty lines in the Latin text, compared to the five lines of Æthelthryth's speech.

¹⁸ There are also several other factors that may have influenced Ælfric's decision to translate Æthelthryth's *vita*. Bishop Æthelwold, Ælfric's teacher, refounded the monastery at Ely, though this time as a monastery of men, and revived the cult of Æthelthryth in a context of political and social instability. See Blanton, *Signs of Devotion*, 65–129. Æthelthryth also had a place of prominence in Æthelwold's Benedictional, wherein she is depicted in a full-page painting (the oldest extant representation of Æthelthryth, according to Virginia Blanton-Whetsell, "Imagines Ætheldredae," 59) and the blessing for her feast "is in three lengthy sections written in extremely high-flown language." Prescott, "Text of the Benedictional," 133.

¹⁹ Noble and Head, introduction to *Soldiers of Christ*, xxiv.

²⁰ LS, 20.120–22. There has been some debate about Ælfric's purpose in adding this tag to Bede's Life of Æthelthryth. See Jackson, "Purpose of Christian Marriage," 235–60, and Szarmach, "Ælfric and the Problem of Women," 571–90.

²¹ The most detailed account of Oswald's Life appears in Bede's *HE*, 3.1–13; Ælfric's *passio* has also been edited by Needham in *Three English Saints*, 43–59. Whatley notes that all of the hagiographical tradition of Oswald is based upon Bede's account (see "Acta Sanctorum," 356). In the analysis that follows I am not so much interested in determining how much of Bede's and Ælfric's portrayals of Oswald might be true to the actual historical Oswald, but rather I am interested in the kind of masculinity that these writers give Oswald and the implications of the mixture of secular and religious ideals in those depictions.

²² Rosenthal, "Historiographical Survey," 83.

²³ Stancliffe, "Oswald," 42.

²⁴ Bede, *HE*, 3.1, 214.

²⁵ LS, 26.14–16.

²⁶ Ibid., 20.

²⁷ Ibid., 26b–27.

²⁸ Ibid., 28–29.

²⁹ The references to David as a man after God's own heart may be found in I Samuel 13:14 and Acts 13:22.

³⁰ LS, 26.45–46a.

³¹ Augustine, *De trinitate*, 12.16.

³² LS, 26.51.

³³ Bede, *HE*, 3.3, 220; LS, 26, 64–69.

³⁴ Bede, *HE*, 3.3, 218.

³⁵ LS, 26.54–56.

³⁶ LS, 26.57–59. Cf. Bede, *HE*, 3.5, 226.

³⁷ Bede, *HE*, 3.5, 226; LS, 26.75–79.

³⁸ Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 11.2.

³⁹ Bede, *HE*, 3.6, 230; LS, 26.83–84.

⁴⁰ II Samuel 6:1–19.

⁴¹ II Samuel 7:1–17.

⁴² Bede, *HE*, 3.6.

⁴³ Ibid., and LS, 26.102–03.

⁴⁴ LS, 26.104–08. Cf. Bede, *HE*, 3.6, 230.

⁴⁵ See Whatley, “Hagiography and Violence,” 219–21.

⁴⁶ LS, 26.108. Cf. Bede, *HE*, 3.6, 230.

⁴⁷ LS, 26.109–10. York was the official archepiscopal see established by Gregory the Great during the conversion period, but, during the time of Oswald, Lindisfarne held the episcopal authority in Northumbria. Stancliffe, “Oswald,” 76.

⁴⁸ Bede, *HE*, 3.12, 250; LS, 26.111.

⁴⁹ Bede, *HE*, 3.12, 250.

⁵⁰ Luke 22:44.

⁵¹ LS, 26.109–13.

⁵² Bede, *HE*, 3.7, 232.

⁵³ Jerome, “Epistula 14, Ad Heliodorum Monachum,” in *Epistulae, Pars I*, ed. Hilberg, §6; Jerome, “Letter 14, To Heliodorus,” in *Select Letters of St. Jerome*, ed Wright, 41.

⁵⁴ Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum* (PL 23.220B–220C). Cf. Bede, “In Epistolas VII,” in *Opera, Pars II*, ed. Jones, 244; Jerome, “Against Jovinian,” in *St. Jerome: Letters and Selected Works*, 1.7.

⁵⁵ Bede, *HE*, 3.2, 214.

⁵⁶ Bede, *HE*, 3.6, 230.

⁵⁷ Bede, *HE*, 3.12, 250–52.

⁵⁸ Bede, *HE*, 3.6, 230.

⁵⁹ LS, 26.99–103 and 162–68.

⁶⁰ Bede, *HE*, 3.11, 246.

⁶¹ Ælfric’s *Prefaces*, ed. Wilcox, 5a.2–3.

⁶² Ibid., 5b.14–15.

⁶³ “Passio Sancti Eadmundi,” in LS ed. Skeat, 32; Ælfric’s *passio* has also been edited by Needham in *Three English Saints*, 43–59.

⁶⁴ Winterbottom, “Life of St. Edmund,” in *Three Lives of English Saints*, Preface.24. All translations from Abbo are mine.

⁶⁵ LS, 32.13–24. Cf. Winterbottom, “Life of St. Edmund,” 4.1–19.

⁶⁶ LS, 32.19.

⁶⁷ Doležalová, “Revisiting Memory,” 6.

⁶⁸ Ambrose, *De Bono Mortis*, 8.36–37.

⁶⁹ Clayton, “Ælfric and Æthelred,” 72.

⁷⁰ Danziger, *Marking the Mind*, 71.

⁷¹ Cf. Winterbottom, “Life of St. Edmund,” 4.12–13. Abbo states that Edmund “semper habens prae oculis” [always held before his eyes] this precept.

⁷² Jerome, “Epistula 127, Ad Principiam,” §7; Jerome, “Letter 127, To Principia,” in Rebenich, *Jerome*, 125.

⁷³ Winterbottom, “Life of St. Edmund,” 8.5–6.

⁷⁴ *LS*, 32.65b–67a. Cf. Winterbottom, “Life of St. Edmund,” 8.9–13.

⁷⁵ Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 68.

⁷⁶ *LS*, 32.74–80a; cf. Winterbottom, “Life of St. Edmund,” 8.20–32.

⁷⁷ *LS*, 32.85–89; cf. Winterbottom, “Life of St. Edmund,” 9.

⁷⁸ *LS*, 32.101–05; cf. Winterbottom, “Life of St. Edmund,” 10.6–11.

⁷⁹ Winterbottom, “Life of St. Edmund,” 15.34; Ambrose, “De Iacob et uita beata,” 1.1.1.

⁸⁰ *LS*, 32.214–224a; cf. Winterbottom, “Life of St. Edmund,” 16.

⁸¹ Carruthers, “Mechanisms,” 6.

⁸² *LS*, 32.225–28a.

⁸³ *LS*, 20.120–22.

Chapter Seven

Chaste Marriage

Cecilia: *Doctrrix Christianorum*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Latin life:

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

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

Ælfric:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Latin life:

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

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

Ælfric:

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

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

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

Latin life:

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

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

Ælfric:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Chrysanthus and Daria: *Virgines Unanimus*

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

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

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

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

Latin passio:

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

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

Ælfric:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* * *

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

NOTES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

⁷ Upchurch, 2.10–11; cf. LS, 34.16.

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

⁹ LS, 1.171–75.

¹⁰ Upchurch, 2.12–13; cf. LS, 34.19.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

²⁰ *LS*, 1.73–77.

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

²² *LS*, 1.114.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

³³ Ambrose, *De bono mortis*, 3.11.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusion: Metagender, Gender, and Ælfric

THE LATIN DOCTORS AND the Anglo-Saxon scholars who inherited their theologies reveal in their writings a complex nexus of ideas centered upon the nature of the soul and its relationship to God that also defines their understanding of gender. At the very heart of the soul lies the agency of the individual, the *voluntas* or *willa*, working in and with memory and understanding to make deliberate choices about identity and self-formation. In the Christian context of the Latin Doctors and the Anglo-Saxon scholars, the soul had fallen through distraction into sin, fragmenting the metagendered *imago Dei* with which it had been created, and becoming lost and at odds even with itself. In this fallen state, the unbelieving men and women in the saints' lives defined themselves in relationship to each other rather than in relationship to God, vying with themselves and with each other in pursuit of wealth, power, social status, and physical gratification. Only a turn to salvation through belief in the Savior could begin the lifelong work of recovering the *imago Dei* that defined human beings as such within the soul. The saints-to-be frequently expressed this turn through a change of clothing, from one identifying form of garment to another.

The rational soul itself was believed to be present in every man and woman, and since it is not a part of the body it possesses no sex. This is why writers and compilers of hagiographies such as Ælfric could combine both male and female legends even if they were writing for a named audience of only one sex. The women and men who pledged their lives to restoring the prelapsarian perfection of their souls through the practice of virginity sought the development and maturity of the aspect of themselves that had no sex and so was of a common substance and nature and the basis of the third gender in both women and men. The souls of men and women alike begin to restore the *imago Dei* within through reading, studying, and memorizing Scripture, seeking to know God and themselves by purposefully situating themselves within a transcendent social context

defined by loving relationship with Christ and all the company of heaven, saints and angels alike. Rejecting the defining contexts of family, procreation, social exchange, and political power, monastic men and women practicing virginity chose a gender different from masculine and feminine because it enacted the profoundly different priorities of a spiritual society. No longer masculine nor feminine, monastic saints of both sexes chose the third-gendered activities intended to draw them closer in love to Christ, the source of virtue and metagendered perfection.

But Ælfric, when he decided to translate such legends for the encouragement of his patrons and a larger nonmonastic audience, faced a problem: how does one resituate Latin saints' lives formed around the subtle concept of a third gender into a new language and context for a non-Latinate audience that lives in a world defined by masculine and feminine genders? Ælfric found his solution to the problem in the fact that the saints, while already living the life of heaven, still had to live in the material world of men, women, blood, sweat, and flesh as did Ælfric's nonmonastic audience. Though the souls of the saints might have been beyond gendering in the transcendent society of heaven, their bodies still acted within their earthly social contexts as sites of gendered expectation and definition and this place of tension is precisely where Ælfric's saints succeed in enacting their sanctity. Ælfric's saints remain men and women and perform their acts of faith and holiness in their own female and male bodies (even when disguised) with the approval of God and the protection of his angels. By removing the gendered language of "becoming male" or "becoming a eunuch," of "acting manfully" or being "clothed in Christ" from his translations, Ælfric not only abridges the tedious length of some *passiones* but also removes the need to explain the performances of the properly ordered soul as a third gender for a less sophisticated audience. Instead of bogging himself down in the complexities of monastic theories of gender best not put before the laity, Ælfric presents metagendered saints in action without ever referring to them as such. Both the men and women among Ælfric's Roman martyrs and royal Anglo-Saxon saints perform variously and equally as learners, teachers, comforters, healers, encouragers, evangelists, rulers, builders, worshipers, prophets, lawyers, virgins, philosophers, and sometimes miracle-workers through their prayers. They memorize the scriptures, spend long times in prayer, generously give alms, preserve their chastity, desire for others to believe in Christ for salvation, defy earthly rulers and cultural expectations, resist tortures and blandishments, receive the service of angels and of wild

beasts, fearlessly approach martyrdom, obtain healing for their own bodies, perceive the truth beneath surface appearances, and without fail act with the motive of steadfast love for and belief in Christ. Since all of these activities are performed by both male and female saints, both masculinity and femininity become transformed in *Lives of Saints* not to the monastic third gender safely enclosed in the Latin texts, but into holy femininities and masculinities (some of which are rather surprising) whose shared defining characteristics are this same soul-shaping love and unwavering belief. Sometimes this love explicitly enacts a chaste lifestyle; at other times chastity is implied by omission of any mention of marriage or family even when history said otherwise. Ælfric always foregrounds the love itself, however, and the belief that accompanies it.

The main differences between Ælfric's female and male saints are that there are fewer female saints in the collection as we know it than male saints, and certain threats faced by some of the saints are clearly gendered in their intention (rape, seduction, or forced marriage) by the families or secular authorities within the legends. Ælfric also downplays Æthelthryth's secular life as noblewoman and queen in comparison with his treatment of Oswald and Edmund, but may do so to highlight a true monastic vocation, something he may have seen as paralleling the way several male saints gave up their kingdoms or perhaps as necessary to justify her long-term denial of the conjugal debt to the unwilling Ecgfrith. Of the saints in this study, only Agnes embodies the idea of the soul as a bride of Christ, and only Alban receives spiritual armament as a soldier of Christ, though several other saints are earthly soldiers referred to as champions or athletes of God. This study, however, only makes a beginning in exploring a more nuanced understanding of gender and metagender in Ælfric's *Lives*. One area in which further work needs to be done lies in tracing the presence of specific patristic quotations and concepts in the Latin hagiographies known in Anglo-Saxon England, especially those contained in the Cotton-Corpus Legendary. Further work needs to be done as well on the lives not covered here and also in other ways of approaching Ælfric's work, such as a focused study of his narrative technique in his hagiographical works in relationship to each other as well as in relationship to their Latin sources, which may also reveal insights into his treatment of gender.

The rationale for Ælfric's selection of saints for his collection as we have it is beyond recovery at this point. The incidents of gendering in the *Lives of Saints* should not be surprising, however, for the evidence seems to indicate that Ælfric intended for his saints to be metagendered souls in

gendered bodies so that they could serve as examples for a nonmonastic audience. If the saints could enact the characteristics of the third gender while being nothing other than men and women, then the virtues and love for God illustrated by the saints could be imitated by Anglo-Saxon men and women outside the monastery in their own bodies as well, proving Gregory's observation that "quia ad amorem Dei et proximi plerumque corda audientium plus exempla quam uerba excitant" [examples often rouse the hearts of one's hearers to love of God and neighbor better than words].¹

NOTE

¹ Gregory, "Homilia 39," in *Homiliae in Euangelia*, ed. Étaix, 390.270–71; Gregory, "Homily 39," in *Forty Gospel Homilies*, trans. Hurst 366.

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