LAS CANTIGAS DE SANTA MARIA: THIRTEENTH-CENTURY POPULAR CULTURE AND ACTS OF SUBVERSION

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Across medieval Europe, the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela in Spain traced a lattice web of popular culture. From the lowest peasant to the greatest king and churchmen, the devout walked pathways that created an economy and contributed to a social and political climate of change. Central to this impulse of piety and wanderlust was the veneration of the Virgin Mary. She was, however, not the iconic Mother of the New Testament whose character, actions, and very name are nearly absent from that first-century compilation of texts. As characterized in the words of popular songs and tales, the *mariales*, she was a robust saint who performed acts of healing that exceeded those miracles of Jesus described in the Bible. Unafraid and authoritative, she confronted demons and provided judgement that reached beyond the understanding and mercy of medieval codes of law. Holding out the promise of protection from physical and spiritual harm, she attracted denizens of admirers who included poets, minstrels, and troubadours like Nigel of Canterbury, John of Garland, Gonzalo de Berceo, and Gautier de Coinci. They popularized her cult across Europe; pilgrims sang their songs and celebrated the new attributes of Mary. This dissertation uses the greatest collection of these songs, *Las Cantigas de Santa Maria* compiled in the thirteenth century under the direction of Alfonso X, King of Castile and Leon, to construct the history of a lay piety movement deeply rooted in medieval popular culture. Making the transition from institutionalized, doctrinal saint to popular heroine, Mary becomes a subversive conduit through which culture moved from Latin poetry to vernacular verse and from the monasteries of scholasticism to the popular pathway of Wycliffite reform.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

And her months were fulfilled, and in the ninth month Anna brought forth. And she said to the midwife: What have I brought forth? And she said: A girl. And said Anna: My soul has been magnified this day. And she laid her down. And the days having been fulfilled, Anna was purified, and gave the breast to the child, and called her name Mary.

Protoevangelium of James Ch. 5

1.1 Topic Introduction and Chapter Sequence

Near the conclusion of *The Paradisio*, Dante offers a description of the Virgin Mary through the eyes of his guide, Bernard of Clairvaux:

> Look now upon the face [Mary's] that is most like
> The face of Christ, for only through its brightness
> Can you prepare your vision to see Him. (XXXII, 83-85)[1]

This tercet illuminates two elements of Mary's countenance. First, she is indeed, "most like the face of Christ" in as much as they are mother and son. Second, Mary's role as intercessor had evolved to such preeminence in Dante's mind that Christ was simply inaccessible without the help of the Mother. Mary stands as the temporal conduit through which believers might access the heavenly Son.

Nor is this assessment of Mary's value unusual for the Western world of 1300. Dante was not alone in creating parallelisms between Son and Mother. Even until the end of that century no less a firebrand than John Wycliffe, "Morning Star of the Reformation," clung to Mary's intercessory role: "It seems to me impossible that we should obtain the reward of Heaven without the help of Mary. There is no sex or age, no rank or position, of anyone in the whole

[1] Dante Alighieri, Charles H. Sisson, and David H. Higgins, *The Divine Comedy* (United Kingdom: Oxford Paperbacks, 1993), 493.

human race, which has no need to call for the help of the Holy Virgin."[2] Despite the apparent surety of the Englishman's statement concerning the primacy of Mary's role in bringing Christians to God, this view would not universally hold throughout Christianity during the Reformation and beyond. The age of Dante may well represent the height of Mary's hold on popular religious imagination.

The fact that Mary became infused into the popular imagination of the Middle Ages is unquestioned; from the many churches dedicated to her to the works of art and literature that feature this most holy of saints, medieval men and women reveled in Marian veneration. However, works of art and literature tend to represent only the high culture valuation of the Mother of God. This dissertation focuses on the many roles that Mary assumed in popular culture. I construct a history for late thirteenth-century based on texts that otherwise might appear to be divergent in structure, topic, intent, and application. Theoretically, I rely on suggestions supplied by Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt in *Practicing New Historicism*. The authors lay claim to "the notion of culture as text" in which any work—"text and images"—might provide a cohesive analysis of culture.[3] What is particularly important here is their assertion that "in the analysis of the larger cultural field . . . there are links between high cultural texts."[4] Unfortunately, exploring the world of pop culture frequently places the medieval historian on tenuous ground. In his introduction to a reader titled *Medieval Popular Religion, 1000-1500*, John Shinners admits that the first question that arises concerning popular religion is "'What isn't it?' since religion suffused every aspect of medieval life." Shinners goes on to explain, "but *popular* religion typically suggests something else. Too often it has implied

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[2]Gotthard Victor Lechler and Perter Lorimer, *John Wycliffe and His English Precursors* (United States: Palala Press, 2015), 299.

[3] Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 9.

[4] Gallagher and Greenblatt, *New Historicism*, 10.

some quaint grab-bag of superstition, magic, and pious hooey clouding the minds of bumpkin peasants."[5] Hoping to avoid a mere grab-bag, this work focuses on collections of Marian songs that were intended to fulfil a variety of purposes. Although these songs were collected by scholars who were generally a part of high culture, they had their roots in popular tales and songs that were known to the broad medieval audience.

Admittedly, the statement above draws a rather fine line between popular and high, elite, or in the case of the Middle Ages, *church* culture. This is the same sort of distinction drawn by Bruce A. Rosenberg in his appropriately titled, "Was There a Popular Culture in the Middle Ages?" Rosenberg uses the example of "The Handcart Song" in Mormon culture that begins as a church song, although it represents a folk event. Eventually, he concludes that "we all recognize that the distinctions among 'elite,' 'popular,' and 'folk' culture are arbitrary and 'analytic' rather than native. That is, such distinctions usually do not exist in the culture at large, but are categories of academicians."[6] The real test determining the popular nature of any artifact or expression does not lie within the thing itself; rather, it rests in the definitions of *popular* as established by the academic.

I intend to gather and to piece together the conflicting fragments of popular cultural history using the many stories collected as songs between the 11th and 13th centuries; in particular, the most imposing collection of tales found in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* serve as a touchstone text. These songs, some traditional and others crafted for very specific purposes and events, connect Mary to everyday life and religious belief and practice. By way of origin, some of these tales come out of widespread folk tradition traceable though a work such as *Morphology*

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[5] John Shinners, ed. *Medieval Popular Religion, 1000-1500 A Reader*, 2nd ed. (Ontario, Canada: Broadview Press, 2007), xvii.

[6] Bruce A. Rosenberg. "Was There a Popular Culture in the Middle Ages?" *Popular Culture in the Middle Ages* ed. by Josie P. Campbell (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Press, 1986), 155.

of the Folktale by Propp[7], others are directly attributed to troubadours, and still others may have originated with the collectors or churchmen themselves. While the act of collecting, compiling, and, often, even the act of setting to music these stories were the work of skilled craftsmen or literate churchmen, they express popular notions of Mary—popular in as much as the tales are often repeated in diverse collections and had an extended reception among literate and non-literate communities. The intention here is to examine the role of Mary in popular culture through these tales and to provide a systematic framework for understanding the direction that popular belief and practice.

Easily numbering in the hundreds, these Marian tales cast the figure of the Holy Mother in diverse circumstances and credit her with works, powers, and obligations that far exceed the cumulative descriptions of Mary in the first millennium of Christian worship. Taken as a whole, the expanded capacities and responsibilities occupy a position of stark contrast with the comparatively wanting descriptions of Mary in the Bible. Indeed, these tales bestow upon the Mother many of the Biblical abilities and commissions that had formerly been the exclusive purview of Jesus. That Mary had risen to rival the position of her Son in the popular imagination of the 13th century is reflected in the largest collection of Marian tales in the Medieval period—the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*.

The role of Mary in the New Testament is well known. She figures centrally in several stories: the Annunciation, the visit to Elizabeth, the birth of Jesus, the discovery of Jesus in the Temple, the Wedding at Cana. With a predictable circularity, she reappears, after some intervening years of narration, at the end of Jesus's life. Interestingly, though she makes peripheral appearances in Acts, she is alluded to but never referred to by name in the Pauline epistles.

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[7] V. Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale* (Austin: University of Texas Press).

Despite her relative absence from the narrative in the epistles, Mary reemerges as a central figure in medieval Christian belief. Luigi Gambero, Professor of Patristics at the Marianum in Rome and the International Marian Research Institute at the University of Dayton, has provided an introduction to the evolution of Mary. First, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church* traces the emergence of Mary in the works of the Apostolic Fathers through approximately 750 C.E., and then *Mary in the Middle Ages* provides a documentary outline of the burgeoning ritual surrounding the figure of the Holy Mother from 700 to roughly 1500. Gambero's works affirm that Mary was not a text-bound, static personality; rather, her nature and its many uses grow and change throughout Christian history: "the Virgin Mary, after accomplishing her essential function in the mystery of the redeeming Word incarnate, continue to carry out a mission."[8] The use of the present tense in Gambero's words is intentional; throughout his works, he not only chronicles the social functionality of Mary from the birth of Christ to 1500, but he also believes that she continues with agency through the Middle Ages to modernity.

The purpose of this dissertation rests in discerning the nature of Mary's roles and uses at a point in time when her character diverges dramatically from those outlined in Gambero's initial work. In the first chapter, I begin with an overview of Mary's appearances in the New Testament. Beginning with the Pauline letters (chronologically, the oldest books) in which Mary is never named, I move into the Gospels and to the book of Revelation in which her appearance may be more metaphorical than overt. That chapter also reviews the traditional task assigned to Mary, that of Theotokos, "God bearer," and briefly overviews the development of traditional church doctrine that emerged through the early church councils. Finally, that chapter will move

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[8] Luigi Gambero, *Mary and the Father of the Church: The Blessed Virgin Mary in Patristic Thought* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999), 20.

to a consideration of the growth of a robust, muscular personality with powers and abilities that extend far beyond those assigned by any Biblical or patristic texts. Her new powers develop in diverse ways, from the development of Marian shrines to pilgrimage to popular songs. Mary emerges in popular culture as fulfilling many of the traditional roles assigned to her Son.

Ensuing chapters look at evidence of the specific ways that twelfth and thirteenth-century culture valued Mary as imbued with Christ-like capacities. The second chapter, then, focuses on Mary as Physician. The most numerous of Christ's miracles in the Bible focus on healing. Certainly, physical healing becomes a metaphor for spiritual healing—probably more to the point of the Biblical text. Nevertheless, the popular need for real, bodily remedies permeated the world of the Middle Ages. The texts of the tales and songs indicate the status that Mary had achieved in her role not as intercessor but as actual physician, answering their call for corporeal healing. Her miracles of healing, both in number and in type, far outweigh those of Christ and indicate the extent to which medieval culture allowed Mary to absorb and expand upon the remedial acts of Christ.

The third chapter may display Mary in her most robust characterization. If Christ rejected the temptations of the Devil and banished demons on a handful of occasions, Mary actively interposes herself between innocents and evil. Titled "The Virgin and the Devil: Mary as Demonslayer," this section acknowledges that demons functioned as omnipresent entities, always prepared to lie, steal, or trick the unwary into everlasting damnation. Mary stood steadfast against the Devil, overturning every plan and rescuing her own devoted to happier lives or eternal bliss. Although she is never described in this capacity in the New Testament, Mary is imbued with the power to interpose herself between her devotees and the Devil.

The fourth chapter is titled Mary as Mediatrix: Alfonsine Law and Pilgrimage. Simply put, Mary stands in judgement over the acts of humans and over the disposition of their possessions, property, and bodies. Of course, none of these chapters—none of the roles of Christ that she assumes—is discreet; that is, the topics overlap a great deal, and judgement is also involved with Mary's choice to heal or raise her devotees. The specific focus of this chapter rests on a comparison of Alfonso's law codes, *Las Siete Partidas*, with the collection of songs in the *Cantigas*. Both documents comment on the nature and necessity of pilgrimage, for example; yet, they diverge on the description of crime and prosecution. Relying on sources in Roman Law, Visigoth codes, the *Decretals*, and on the constitutes of the Fourth Lateran Council, the code defines terms such as *pilgrim* and *pilgrimage* and seeks to protect pilgrims on their way across Spain. Clearly, Alfonso wants to safeguard the sanctity and the political and economic benefits of pilgrimage in his borders. Yet the *cantigas* themselves often conflict with the shape of prosecution and punishment in the *Partidas*. What emerges is a cultural conflict between the posited laws of humans and the divinely inspired judgment of Mary.

If Mary interposes herself in posited law, she also intercedes in the works of the established church. The conclusion investigates the manner in which Mary serves as both a supplement and a challenge to the papacy and to the ongoing development of church dogma and practice in the late Middle Ages. In a church dominated by a male clergy, Mary reflects the emerging interest of women in clerical and spiritual roles. In monitoring and checking the actions of God's elite, Mary simultaneously corrects clerical abuses and demonstrates the extent to which and understanding of clerical lapses were understood by all levels of society.

The conclusion also examines questions that must arise from the pervasive and interwoven powers of Christ incorporated into the medieval character of Mary. What accounts

for the shifting role of Mary both theologically and in popular imagination? To what extent is she the precursor for the emerging power of women in the church; and how is veneration of her expanded role relevant to what would later be called lay piety? Finally, what happens after the fourteenth century? With the coming of the Reformation, how does Mary's role diverge between the two ideologies, Catholicism and Protestantism?

In *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion*, Spanish-born philosopher George Santayna examines the connections between popular poetry and religious belief and practice. In his "Preface," Santayana lays out his thesis clearly: "This idea is that religion and poetry are identical in essence, and differ merely in the way in which they are attached to practical affairs."[9] The nobility of religion—like that of poetry—"lies in its fit rendering of the meanings and values of life, in its anticipation of perfection."[10] In his chapter titled, "The Poetry of Christian Dogma," Santayana underscores the importance of poetry in creating religious systems of belief.

> Reason is powerless to found religions, although it is alone competent to judge them. Good religions are therefore the product of unconscious rationality, of imaginative impulses fortunately moral. Particularly does this appear in the early history of Christianity. Every shade of Heresy, every kind of mixture of Christian and other elements was tried and found advocates; but after a greater or less success they all disappeared, leaving only the Church standing. For the Church had known how to combine those dogmas and practices in which the imagination of the time, and to a great extent of all times, might find fitting expression. Imaginative significance was the touchstone of orthodoxy; tradition itself was tested by this standard.[11]

Santayana applies the term "Darwinian" to this criterion that, through time and constant testing and adjustment, religion discovers its own inner consistency and pragmatism that answers the developing needs of its constituents.[12] The threads of religious—indeed, Christian beliefs—are thus developed.

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[9] Santayana, George. *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1900), v.
[10] Ibid. v-iv.
[11] Ibid., 109.
[12] Ibid., 108.

> The ritual was composed, the dogma developed, the nature of Christ defined, the sacraments and discipline of the Church regulated. The result was a comprehensive system where, under the shadow of a great epic, which expanded and interpreted the history of mankind from the Creation to the Day of Doom, a place was found for as many religious instincts and as many religious traditions as possible.[13]

To Santayana's assertions above, this dissertation would add that the nature of Mary was also defined. The nature of Mary became "comprehensive" and systematic; it developed under the shadow of the Bible and with the powers of Christ in mind.

Christian theologians established a parallel between Christ's Passion and the Virgin's compassion: while he suffered physically on the cross, she was crucified in spirit. The Council of Ephesus in 431 sanctioned the cult of the Virgin as Mother of God; the dissemination of images of the Virgin and Child, which came to embody church doctrine, soon followed. But theologians were not alone in participating in the making of Mary. In need of a focusing artifice—an avatar within reach and efficacious in remediating daily problems--popular piety latched upon the Virgin and remade her into more than the Mother of Christ. She became the mother of all. Perhaps her role in the thirteenth century lacked textual validity, but she had value to popular devotion. It is precisely this affirmation of the value of belief and the simultaneous denial of the dogmatic truth of religion that brings Santayana to write, "There is no God, and Mary is His Mother."

1.2 The Nature of Sources

As a history of culture, this dissertation investigates a variety of sources that range from traditional historical or literary studies to theologians in late antiquity to popular songs and poetry in vernacular languages to the Bible. The three sources that this dissertation references most often are the Bible and two texts produced by the court of Alfonso X. The latter pair of

[13] Ibid., 110.

resources includes the *Cantigas de Santa Maria,* the "Songs of Holy Mary," in the manuscript called the *Codex Rico,* or "Rich Text," and *Las Siete Partidas*, the "Seven Part" code of law. For all biblical references, I use the *New International Version* available from Zondervan Publishing.[14] All verses are indicated according to standard book, chapter, and verse reference in the *New International Version*.

In regard to the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, I use English translation of the *Songs of Holy Mary of Alfonso X, the Wise* as provided by Kathleen Kulp-Hill.[15] On the rare occasion that I refer to the Spanish text, I employ Jose Filgueira Valverde's version of the songs.[16] In fact, I did use Valverde's translation from Alfonso's original poetic language, called Galicio-Portuguese, in cross-referencing meaning and intent for my own understanding. When I quote the text of a song from the Kulp-Hill translation, I will use the conventional numbering system developed using the *Codex Rico*. Since most songs are between one and three pages in length, scholars simply refer to the song with the understanding that it will be referenced according to the number assigned by Alfonso's compilers of the El Escorial text. It is unnecessary and redundant to refer to page numbers in much the same way that references to the Bible are made by book, chapter, and verse without reference to a page number in a particular text.

So far as Alfonso's law code, I use the text of *Las Siete Partidas* translated with notes by Samuel Parsons Scott.[17] Please note that when I refer to the law codes in the text of this dissertation, I use the standard, three-part reference system associated with this source. Instead of referring to a page number in the Scott edition, I employ the "Part.Title.Law." nomenclature

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[14] Kenneth L Barker et al., *Zondervan NIV Study Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002).

[15] Alfonso X and Kathleen Kulp-Hill, *Songs of Holy Mary of Alfonso X, the Wise: A Translation of the "Cantigas de Santa Maria"* (United States: Arizona Center for Medieval & Renaissance Studies, US, 2000).

[16] Alfonso and Jos Alfonso, *Cantigas de Santa María: Códice Rico de El Escorial: Ms. Escurialense T.I.1* (Madrid: Editorial Castalia, S.A., 1985).

[17] Alfonso and Samuel Parsons Scott, *Las Siete Partidas* (Chicago: Commerce Clearing House, Inc., 1931).

that is typical in other scholars' work on this source; as a result, a reference to the Partidas, part I, title VI, and Law XXIX, may simply appear as I.VI.XXIX. Again, this is similar to references of the Bible that conventionally refer on book, chapter, and verse. The culmination of this use of the Alfonsine texts is that there will be no footnote references to either the *Cantigas* or the *Partidas*, but, instead, I will use conventional numbering associated with both.

I do want to add a word about other, non-typical sources that permeate this dissertation. During the academic year including the fall semester of 2007 and spring of 2008, I was awarded a Faculty Development Leave from Tarrant County College – Southeast Campus. This leave allowed me to pursue travel according to my academic interests. Having taken coursework in medieval history with Dr. Laura Stern at the University of North Texas, I was interested in exploring pilgrimage pathways throughout Europe. I went to Europe with the intention of studying the pilgrimage roads firsthand. To this end, I began by walking from London to Canterbury—from Tabard Lane in Southwark to Canterbury Cathedral—following the path of pilgrims to the shrine of Thomas Becket, martyred in 1170.[18] In northern England and Scotland, I walked St. Cuthbert's Way, a 100 kilometer trek from Melrose, Scotland, through Berwick-upon-Tweed on the English/Scottish border, and out the sands at low tide to Holy Island, one of the Farne Islands off the coast of England. There, the monastery of Lindisfarne rests in its ruin, but, established in the sixth century, it was once a thriving seat of intellectual and artistic activity. The monastery was also once home to St. Cuthbert—prior, bishop, and hermit—his life was made famous by the Venerable Bede's biography. I traveled to Durham where the relics of St. Cuthbert were entombed behind the altar in the twelfth century; Bede was also interred at the

[18] Before leaving London for Canterbury, I also visited Southwark Cathedral, though in Chaucer's day it would have been called Southwark Priory; it was a stop for English pilgrims departing for Canterbury. The church is the burial place of John Gower, contemporary of Chaucer and William Langland and author of the *Confession Amantis*, *Mirour de l"omme*, and *Vox Clamantis*. The latter work includes references to the Peasant's Revolt of 1381 and to the Lollard movement—important popular movements briefly addressed later in this dissertation.

opposite end of the cathedral in the Marian chapel. My final stop in England was to travel to Newcastle where I walked the path that Bede took between the twin monasteries of St. Paul's in Jarrow and St. Peter's in Wearmouth. Close to fourteen kilometers apart, these co-joined churches worked together in the early Middle Ages and have been a pilgrimage site since the seventh century.

Other sites in England that were the trail's end for pilgrims also attracted my attention. Without actually having to conduct a lengthy trek, I visited Westminster Abbey where I had arranged to see the shrine of Edward the Confessor with a church verger, a title indicating his official capacity as a warder of this noble monument in the center of London. Located behind a screen on the high altar, this reliquary is generally accessed only by priests and royalty and is unrevealed to the hundreds of thousands of visitors to the abbey church each year. I knelt in one of six tiny niches, three on a side, of the saint's elevated reliquary. Like medieval pilgrims, I raised my hands and placed them as near his remains as I could manage. The stone above bore hollowed indentations, rubbed smooth by many hands since Edward's death in 1066. In addition, I traveled to Winchester Cathedral, an impressive church whose nave is longer than any other Gothic church.[19] The most important relic, and the reason for pilgrimage, relates to the interment of St. Swithun (d. c. 862) inside the cathedral. Pilgrims entered by kneeling at a tiny door on the north wall; you must crawl through a dusty culvert to emerge behind the altar where the relics were housed. Raymond Birt believes that the reliquary was only a part of the medieval appeal.

> In a sense the whole Cathedral is his shrine. For nearly six hundred years countless Englishmen made their pilgrimage to pray before his relics for healing or for comfort of

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[19] Raymond Birt, *The Glories of Winchester Cathedral* (London: Winchester Publications Limited, 1958), 11.

> body and of mind. The shrine of the martyr-saint at Canterbury was not more reverenced in medieval times than that which housed Saint Swithun's bones.[20]

Swithun is associated with several miracle tales that recount events during his life and after his death. Unfortunately, the original reliquary housing his remains was destroyed in the 1530s during social upheaval associated with the English Reformation.

I departed from England in order to travel one final pilgrimage route—the *Camino de Santiago*. The "Road to Saint James" was the most-traveled pilgrimage road in the Middle Ages, yet William Melczer rightly indicates that "the origin of the cult of St. James in Galicia is wrapped in a shroud of darkness."[21] Later in this dissertation, I discuss the unlikely, early-medieval discovery of the bones of St. James in a plain in western Spain. Beginning in St. Jean Pied-du-Port ("Saint John at the Foot of the Pass"), I crossed the Pyrenees to Roncesvalles, where, according to *Le Chanson de Roland* , Charlemagne's nephew, Roland, met his doom. Over the course of the ensuing thirty-nine days and 504 miles or 811 kilometers, I passed through Basque country to Pamplona, dared the arid high plain to Burgos, endured industrialized Leon (where I was rewarded by seeing the Basilica of San Isidoro, the resting place of many of the Kings of Leon), and finally arrived in Santiago de Compostela. Additionally, I walked to Finisterre, the "end of the earth," where pilgrims could contemplate the vast Atlantic Ocean. Finally, I walked to A Coruña, a port city by the Cantabrian Sea where the Romans built a lighthouse called the Tower of Hercules in the second century CE. Here, pilgrims from England would land during the Hundred Years War in order to avoid French-held territory. I visited *Iglesia de Santiago*, the Church of Saint James; built in the late twelfth century, it was a favorite

[20] Ibid., 2.
[21] William Melczer, *The Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela* (New York: Italica Press, 1993), 7.

meeting place for English pilgrims.[22] There are over 1,800 medieval monuments along these pilgrim ways; many of these are pilgrimage sites dedicated to the Virgin Mary.

In the months that followed I visited several pilgrimage sites throughout Spain (traveling more conventionally by bus and train). These included the shrine of the Black Madonna of Montserrat, Our Lady of the Pillar in Zaragoza, the Veil of Veronica in Alicante, and sites in Avila associated with St. Teresa. In order to investigate the Arabic culture, I spent time in Granada exploring the Alhambra and in Cordoba at the Mezquita Mosque (now, the Cathedral of Cordoba, dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin Mary). Finally, I explored Seville and the cathedral, the third largest church in the world. The Marian chapel, accessible only to members of the congregation and those travelers with a pilgrim passport, holds the remains of King Fernando III, St. Fernando, and his son, King Alfonso X. In the dissertation, I write about several of their personal possessions that reflect a devotion to Mary; these are held in the museum now housed in the voluminous interior of the church.

I discuss these sites under a consideration of unique sources because I contend that locations are signifiers of cultural expression and identity. The notion of location as text is not new, but its use in investigating popular medieval culture has been under applied. In his introduction to *City as Text: The Politics of Landscape Interpretation in the Kandyan Kingdon*, James S. Duncan outlines this methodology.

> This book has three general goals. The first is to provide a methodology for interpreting landscapes. The second is to illuminate the way in which a landscape, understood as a cultural production, may be integral to both the reproduction and contestation of political power. The third is to analyze the relationship between landscape and the pursuit of power in a particular place and time.[23]

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[22] "LA CORUÑA: IGLESIA DE SANTIAGO - A. García Omedes," accessed June 27, 2016, http://www.arquivoltas.com/21-LaCoruna/01-CorunaSantiago.htm.

[23] James S. Duncan, *The City as Text: The Politics of Landscape Interpretation in the Kandyan Kingdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 3.

I would make the same claims of methodology for my use of pilgrimage routes and locations; the ways in which the landscape participates in the creation of cultures of veneration and in the generation of political power can often be experienced only by being present in the physical realities of place. Touching upon the remoteness of the Farne Islands or listening to the Cantigas in the inestimable volume of the Cathedral of Seville informs my dissertation in ways that I hope the reader can overtly appreciate and understand.

Lastly, I am pleased to mention here that I did access original manuscripts in my travels in Spain. Three institutions opened small portions of their collections for my perusal. First, the National Historical Archive in Madrid, maintained by the Archive Department of the Ministry of Culture of Spain, allowed me to view two documents from the royal court of Alfonso VI dating from the late eleventh century. I had explained my interest in the development of the Camino, and they provided access to two letters from the Monastery of San Benito el Real de Sahagun that were land transfers from the crown to the Abbey of Cluny. San Benito in Sahagun became known as the "Spanish Cluny" because of this affiliation and was the lynchpin of Cluny operations in Spain.[24] Second, in the Benedictine Abbey of Santo Domingo de Silos located outside of Burgos in northcentral Spain, I was offered access to a grant from Alfonso VI to Saint Dominic de la Calzada; this Latin manuscript on vellum allocated assistance and a small stipend to Dominic in order to provide maintenance for pilgrimage roads through eastern Burgos along the border with La Rioja.

The most important manuscript to which I was offered access was the T.I.1 manuscript of *Las cantigas de santa maria*—the highly illustrated *Codex Rico*. This and a wealth of manuscripts are held in the sixteenth-century monastery of El Escorial about thirty miles outside of Madrid. The Augustinian monastery has been the burial place for Spanish kings since it was

[24] Edwin Mullins, *Cluny: In Search of God's Lost Empire* (New York: BlueBridge, 2006), 75-76.

completed, and features an extensive royal library. I was offered two days' access to the two-volume manuscript and a third day with a facsimile on permanent display in the library reading room. I was able to see the paneled illustrations, the musical notation, the text (both Galicio-Portuguese and Latin). Of particular interest, as discussed later in this dissertation, were the politically motivated decorations in the borders of the panels. Alfonso's ambition to become Holy Roman Emperor were vividly drawn through these designs. Additionally, the twelve poems concerning his church and Marian shrine at Sirga testified to his allegiance for his home church over even that of the cathedral in Santiago.

CHAPTER 2

THE VIRGIN MARY AND HER STORIES

> *"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled."*
>
> Luke 1:38

2.1 Chapter Introduction

In the Vulgate, Mary's self-description before Gabriel at the Annunciation reveals her complete servitude to divine needs and wishes: "*Ecce ancilla Domini fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum*." (Luke 1:38) In the ensuing two millennia, Mary has more broadly been a handmaiden, the *ancilla*, to culture in many capacities. Her numerous roles only peripherally related to the description of Mary found in the Bible. Indeed, that source—a compilation of many sources—acknowledges only a fraction of the Marian literature that has emerged over the centuries. Some of those non-Biblical sources are, nevertheless, recognized by Christian sects as important ancillary texts to the canon. Others, however, emerged and grew organically out of the needs of popular culture and eventually made their way into literate traditions as texts of varying design and regard.

Popular culture maintains a practice of seizing on characters, both real and fictional, and offering them lives of their own. Examples of this phenomenon permeate high and low culture in literature, music, film, and all media. Enamored of the first American president (and hoping to sell a sensational biography), Mason Locke Weems added the story of a young boy chopping down a cherry tree to the fifth edition of *The Life of Washington* (1806). The tale, intended to provide an example of the pre-adolescent Washington's ability to mitigate his flaws with his innate virtue, took on a life of its own in American culture. Another example of character elaboration occurs with a Greek conqueror from another millennium. Did Alexander the Great

genuinely weep when he realized that he had no more worlds to conquer, or is that merely a snappy bit of dialogue given to the character of Hans Gruber in the film *Die Hard* (1988)? Consider a final example: the case of Paul Revere's ride. Revere's role in the events that occurred up to and through the month of April in 1775, which included the battles of Lexington and Concord, was comparatively slight. Nevertheless, the importance and drama of his ride were so conflated in Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem "Paul Revere's Ride" (1860) that the author's work helped spawn the Colonial Revival Movement; Charles Calhoun measures the impact of the poet's efforts, stating that modern historians have "a new appreciation of his [Longfellow's] role as a nation builder." Calhoun goes on to say that the study of Longfellow "has helped us understand how important a role 'invented' memory and mythopoetics play in those sometimes shaky constructs we call nations."[1]

It is exactly the mythopoetic nature of Mary that the present work explores. While Jesus continuously occupied a central position in Christianity, Mary occupied a place of remote concern compared to that of her son. In his collection of writings taken from early church fathers, Luigi Gambero writes that, "it is helpful to remember that Christian theology began to be expressed in Christology; more precisely, with the primitive church's concern to formulate a kerygmatic definition of the person of the Lord and of his earthly mission."[2] Gambero, a Servite monk, goes on to admit that "in the first centuries, the church did not know any Mariological doctrine separated from Christological doctrine. Mary's role is presented as being strictly tied to the person of her Son."[3] Mary's place in the religion underwent a slow evolution from supporting character in the first century to a primacy shared only by her son by the twelfth

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[1] Charles C. Calhoun, *Longfellow: A Rediscovered Life* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2004), xiv.

[2] Luigi S. M. Gambero and Thomas Buffer, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church: The Blessed Virgin Mary in Patristic Thought* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007), 25.

[3] Ibid., 26.

century. Sally Cunneen agrees that, "for a thousand years after the Council of Ephesus [431 CE], the implications of Mary's definition as God-Bearer would penetrate the Europe that replaced Rome and Constantinople as a world power. The twelfth century marked the height of this Christendom and Mary's full incorporation within it."[4]

This chapter is intended to introduce the twelfth and thirteenth-century Marian songs that will provide the material for the remainder of this work; however, in order to understand the importance of these works, it is necessary to highlight ideas and literature that preceded the twelfth century. Three phases of Mary's development in history emerge throughout this dissertation. It seems almost to go without saying that the Bible provides the first literary-historical phase for information about Mary. Initially, Mary appeared only as a peripheral character in the New Testament; she went, in fact, unnamed in many of the seminal texts. In a second phase, she becomes the object of biographical writing; a hundred years after the death of Christ, there were many questions to answer about his family, and authors of the second and ensuing centuries fashioned biographical material about his mother in order to answer these questions. In a third phase, stories about Mary's active participation and intervention in the world began to emerge. These tales blossomed in the culture of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The characterization of Mary in those centuries—the powers imbued upon her, her actions, and her cultural functions— disclose an evolution that reveals the nature of medieval history and popular culture. It is this third phase of Marian tale-making on which the remaining chapters focus.

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[4] Sally Cunneen, *In Search of Mary: The Woman and the Symbol* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996), 143.

2.2 Mary in the New Testament

The first step, then, is to undertake a survey of the role of Mary of the New Testament; however, to be clear, it is not the purpose here to provide a theological exposition. Works on Mary as she appears exclusively in first-century writings almost inevitably tread on broader ground; specifically, such books as Edward Sir's *Walking with Mary: A Biblical Journey from Nazareth to the Cross* or Stefano M. Manelli's well-researched *All Generations Shall call me Blessed: Biblical Mariology* tend to be unabashed apologists for Marian doctrine as purported mostly by the Roman Catholic Church or by the Orthodox Church. Nevertheless, two sources on the earliest foundations of Mary do stand out. First, the Mariological studies program maintained at the University of Dayton has produced particularly fine materials including the website, *All About Mary: An encyclopedic tool for information on Mary, the Mother of Christ*. The Catholic university publishes *Marian Studies* and offers research-based coursework and degrees specializing in Mariology; additionally, the encyclopedic website catalogues Marian sources. Along with Dayton's many offerings, *Mary in the New Testament: A Collaborative Assessment by Protestant and Roman Catholic Scholars* offers a meticulous assembling and discussion of all references to Mary in the New Testament. This work emerged from dialogues initially between Lutheran and Roman Catholic theologians; the authors acknowledged that the role of Mary is a "divisive topic in Christianity" and that "did not hope to settle all the ecumenical aspects of this question but only to ascertain what modern scholars could say in common about the picture of Mary in the various NT books."[5]

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[5] Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfried, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and John Reumann, eds., *Mary in the New Testament: A Collaborative Assessment by Protestant and Roman Catholic Scholars* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), vi.

The editors of *Mary in the New Testament* follow what has been established as a standard chronology for texts in the New Testament in their work on the Virgin. They reference B. H. Streeter's classic work *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins Treating of the Manuscript Tradition, Sources, Authorship, and Dates* as a seminal work that established approximate dates for the production of these early texts. Brown and his many co-editors suggest that the Pauline letters were written in the late 50s and in the 60s CE. These are followed by the Gospels: Mark in the late 60s, Matthew and Luke (and Acts) in the 80s, John around 90, and Revelation in its present form around 100 CE.[6] This dissertation will consider references to Mary in the order established by these scholars.

Chronologically, then, Mary's first appearance in the New Testament occurs most probably in Galatians 4:4— "But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman." Marina Warner dates the passage along with a comment on its importance: "St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians was probably written in 57 CE; his letters as a whole are the earliest work in the New Testament, which is itself the earliest source for Mary, and the only one with any claim to historical validity."[7] Warner goes on to say that, "it is a very quiet entrance for the Virgin Mary."[8] Paul, the earliest writer to mention Jesus's birth, does so without ever having named the Mother of God. The Dayton encyclopedia of Mary cites eight references in all, but none of these is more specific than Jesus "being found in appearance as a man." (Philippians 2:8) The inference among all the Pauline citations offered by Dayton is that the text describing Jesus

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[6] Ibid., 9-22. Concerning the Book of Revelation, the editors write that most scholars accept that an early form of the book existed in the late 60s CE contemporary to the reign of the emperor Nero; however, late revisions to account for the rule of Domition, who reigned from 81 to 96 CE, indicate that the book as is now known was not complete until after 100 CE.

[7] Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (New York: Vintage Books, 1976), 3.

[8] Ibid.

as a man, or as being human, implies by inference that he had a mother.[9] While Jesus is referenced in Paul as "the Christ" more than 150 times, Mary is all but absent from his letters and those attributed to the Pauline school.

The first, small step towards developing a fuller character for Jesus's mother comes in the Gospel of Mark. In the third chapter, this text describes Jesus as beginning to draw crowds and disciples—his success rising to the point of being noticed by "teachers of the law" (Mark 3:22) who suggest Jesus might be possessed by demons. Apparently, his family and friends arrive at the moment of fresh accusations.

> Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you." "Who are my mother and my brothers?" he asked. Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother." (Mark 3:31-35)

Warner interprets the passage as a broadening of his outreach: "Thus Jesus rebuffs his earthly family to embrace the larger family of his spiritual fellowship."[10] Interesting, this is the first encounter with Jesus's mother, still unnamed. As Warner goes on to point out, "Mary his mother never appears again" in the gospel of Mark. This figure who would inspire generations of regard is of so little interest to the author of Mark that he never reprises her character as an active participant in the narrative. In the remainder of Mark, there is a single reference to her, and that reference comes in a rephrasing of events described in chapter 3 in which a crowd derides Jesus: " Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him." (Mark 6:3) Although actually absent from the scene, the mother of Jesus is finally recognized by name: Mary.

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[9] "Pauline Foreshadowing of a Jewish Woman," accessed May 16, 2016, http://campus.udayton.edu/mary/resources/bible1.html#paul.

[10] Warner, 14.

Once this gate is open, the book of Matthew sees a proliferation of the use of the name. Mary is specified six times in the text—five times beginning with the nativity narrative and concluding with the visit of the Magi (Matthew 1:1 through Matthew 2: 12). Here for the first time, Mary's husband makes his appearance: "His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph." (Matthew 1:18) Additionally, the heavenly intervention of the Annunciation makes its first appearance; here, however, the angel appears exclusively to Joseph: "an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 1: 20) Finally, the notion that Mary was a virgin at the time of conception becomes an essential part of the narrative: "The Virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel." (Matthew 1: 23) In regard to the last biblical citation, "modern Catholic theologians point out that the [passage] does not imply that later Joseph did know Mary; it only emphasizes that he did not consummate his marriage with her before the birth of Jesus, without implying at all that afterwards it was consummated."[11] Though her unspoiled condition becomes a portion of the mystique surrounding Mary, the exact nature or longevity of her virgin condition becomes a part of the debate concerning Mary even to this day.

In the Gospel of Luke, Marian references reach their zenith. Luke mentions her by name twelve times; moreover, he moves her to the forefront of the nativity narrative, elaborating on her role and on her inner nature. This book takes on the shape of a mature narrative that builds on previous accounts, adding details such as identifying the Annunciation taking place in "the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy" (Luke 1:26)—a narrative motif that lends verisimilitude to the entire story. Here, Gabriel is named as the angel, and he comes not to Joseph, but to Mary

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[11] Hilda Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 2009), 10.

herself, elevating her position to greater status. The authors of Mary in the New Testament agree that the appearance of Gabriel in the Lucan version creates important links to the annunciation to Zechariah.[12] Additionally, Luke claims that Mary reacted to the angel's famous salutation with some thoughtfulness: "Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be." (Luke 1:29) Since this phrase actually appears twice more the in Lucan text, some scholars make the claim that Luke is drawing upon a memoir that relies on Mary as a source or that Luke is laying an implicit claim on having interviewed a source who knew Mary.[13] At the very least, crediting a woman with the ability to maintain an inner dialogue about events—to ponder these things in her heart—complicates and humanizes her character beyond any previous texts.

Most important for this study, Luke takes Mary from the Annunciation to another visit to her relative, Elizabeth. When John leaps in Elizabeth's womb, one of the two women—the text is unclear whether it is Mary or Elizabeth, though the ensuing song is usually attributed to Mary—utters a poetic passage that would come to be called the Magnificat.

> My soul glorifies the Lord
> and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
> for he has been mindful
> of the humble state of his servant.
> From now on all generations will call me blessed,
> for the Mighty One has done great things for me—
> holy is his name. (Luke 1:46-49)

These first lines of the song demonstrate the poetic nature of the passage—certainly a passage that was deliberately crafted and not one intended to represent an on-the-spot composition of either woman, Elizabeth or Mary. Indeed, the Old Testament and ancient literature in general maintain a long tradition of inserting songs into texts that are intended to represent the character,

[12] Brown, et al., 112-113.
[13] Brown, et al., 147-152.

the tone, and theme of a work or person and were not mistaken by contemporary readers for actual historic dialogue. Brown, et al provides copious examples of Old Testament songs on which the Magnificat was modeled.[14] Using words such as “bellicose and triumphalist” and “cryptic,” Warner finds the passage intrusive and opaque.[15] Brown, et al find a greater thematic significance; they note the juxtaposition of the poor and the rich—“the humble state of his servant” in verse 48 with the “rulers from their thrones” who are “brought down” in verse 52. They suggest that Luke is building an intentional bridge between Mary and Jesus in establishing the “Poor Ones” theme that is represented more fully in Jesus’s words throughout the New Testament.[16]

For ensuing chapters, the identification of Mary structurally with song and thematically with common people becomes seminally important. As Mary drifts across time, she will become the topic of hymns of praise, and she will become a character in narrative songs that elaborate on her character and attach her to popular themes and events integral to the lives of ordinary people. Indeed, Luke provides the framework for the emergence of Mariology that is reflected in these later works. In his texts, both Luke and Acts, he presents Mary prior to Jesus’s birth, at the birth, present at his circumcision in the Temple (Luke 2:21-40), tracking him down as a twelve-year-old in the Temple (Luke 2: 41-52), and, finally, in the Upper Room with the eleven disciples following Jesus’s Ascension. Despite bracketing the events in Jesus’s life, Mary is clearly subordinate to Christ’s message: “As Jesus was saying these things [talking with a large crowd about purity], a woman in the crowd called out, ‘Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you.’ He replied, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it’.”

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[14] Brown, et al., 139-140.
[15] Warner, 3.
[16] Brown, et al., 141-143.

(Luke 11:27-28) In Jesus's own words, his mother is second to the message that he himself is set on earth to convey.

The fourth Gospel, the book of John, emerges comparatively late to the rest of the canon—near the end of the first century and at least sixty years after the death of Christ. In John, Mary's role is curiously diminished and yet supplemented. Like the earliest books of the New Testament, Mary is never referred to by name; Jesus addresses her twice simply as "woman." Similar to the Gospel of Mark, John omits the nativity narrative and its various turns—the trip to Egypt or the circumcision in the Temple. Nevertheless, in her two appearances, John adds substantially to the course of Mariology. John begins his book famously with "In the beginning was the Word," a line surely intended to connect the introduction of Jesus's life with the creation as described in Genesis, "In the beginning God . . . ." This allusive introit is followed by John the Baptist introducing Jesus to his followers as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world." (John 1:29) Then, Jesus introduces himself to his disciples in his recruitment effort. Certainly, the writer of John understood how to build tension in a story; not until the second chapter does Jesus demonstrate his abilities or his capacity to institute change.

The first episode in which the reader is introduced to Mary, a tale unique to John, there is a wedding with a problem:

> On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine." "Woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied. "My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." (John 2:1-5)

Jesus continues in the tale to convert water into fine wine, but the focus here is on Mary's intervention on behalf of the wedding party. It is curious that Jesus addresses his mother as "woman." Seemingly impersonal, the manner of address is seen by Jaroslav Pelikan as

representative of their relationship; against the backdrop of a wedding, identifying Mary's gender reinforces "the mystical view of Mary as an archetype of the church, and of the church in turn as the spouse of Christ."[17] Brown, et al point out that among Roman Catholics, "the story is an example of Mary's power of intercession: the first miracle worked by Jesus was at the behest of his mother, and this is meant to teach us to pray to Jesus through Mary."[18] On an authorial note, the writer of John demonstrates his keen sense of drama by withholding Jesus's first miracle until this deep in the narration and within the setting of his mother's appeal.

The second episode in which Mary figures significantly in the text of John occurs at the foot of the cross. Jesus, pinioned on the cross of Calvary, sees his mother in this consummately dolorous moment: "When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, 'Woman, here is your son,' and to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' From that time on, this disciple took her into his home." (John 19:26-27) From Origen Adamantius (185-254) to modern theologians, interpretations for this passage center on Mary as the church and the unnamed disciple as the devotee who received the church into his care.[19] The author of John, whose technique clearly demonstrates a keen sense of literary awareness, brackets his narrative of the life of Christ—from his first miracle to his death—with an image of Jesus side-by-side with Mary.

One final possible reference to Mary occurs in the book called Revelation. When an angel blows a blast from the seventh trumpet, the elders give thanks to the Messiah and herald a new vision: "A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head." (Revelation 12: 1) The woman is

[17] Jaroslav Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 122.

[18] Brown, et al., 193.

[19] Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church*, 71. Gambero sites Origen from *Paedagogus* I, PG 8, 300-301 12, 115.

pregnant, and, though threatened by a great red dragon, she gives birth to a son who is subsequently "snatched up to God and to his throne." (Revelation 12: 5) Following the war in which the dragon is vanquished, chapter 21 reveals that the woman is the church and all God's children belong to her as well. The extent to which this woman is Mary—or that she was, at least, interpreted as such—is well-represented in Medieval and Renaissance art. From unnamed medieval artists from Giotto to Rubens to Murillo, Mary has been depicted as described in Revelation complete with a corona of twelve stars. Giles Constable indicates that the importance of Mary in the Revelation became of prime importance to theologians in the eleventh and twelfth centuries; in particular, Giles Constable discusses Joachim of Fiore as elevating Mary to the status of intercessor in the midst of the Apocalypse.[20]

Although these later manifestations of Mary would become well known, first-century society knew relatively little about the Virgin. Chris Maunder agrees that "there is little evidence to suggest that there was anything like a fully developed 'cult of Mary' until at least the late fourth century."[21] In his article, Maunder reduces the role of Mary in the New Testament to three functions: virgin mother, eyewitness to important early moments in the life of Christ, and pathetic witness at the crucifixion.[22] Although significant, not one of these roles could be construed as primary in relationship to the acts of Jesus; they are generative but primitive moments in a larger text. Michael Grant agrees that there is no evidence of an early cult despite Mary's importance in Matthew and Luke in the Nativity narrative.

> The story of the Virgin Birth has been of overwhelming historical significance owing to its acceptance by millions of Christians throughout the ages. There is no great likelihood,

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[20] Giles Constable, *Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought: The Interpretation of Mary and Martha; The Ideal of the Imitation of Christ; The Orders of Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 94.

[21] Chris Maunder, "Origins of the Cult of the Virgin Mary in the New Testament," in *Origins of the Cult of the Virgin* Mary, ed. by Chris Maunder (New York: Burns & Oates, 2008), 23.

[22] Ibid., 33.

> however, that this idea had already come into being in Jesus' own lifetime. Indeed, even thereafter the New Testament writers do not speak with one voice on the subject.[23]

Compared to Jesus, Mary the mother languished in comparative obscurity in their own century.

2.3 Mary in the Patristic Period

By the end of the first century, the handful of biblical references to Mary represented the totality of biographical information concerning the Mother of God. Given the importance that later centuries would place on her, Pelikan insists that the presence of the Virgin in New Testament texts "is tantalizingly brief," and readers searching for references to Mary in order to discover doctrinal precedence for her later devotion "must be surprised or even shocked to discover how sparse they are."[24] Warner agrees that the paucity of information is almost astonishing:

> The amount of historical information about the Virgin is negligible. Her birth, her death, her appearance, her age are never mentioned. During Christ's ministry she plays a small part, and when she does appear the circumstances are perplexing and often slighting. She is never referred to by any of the titles used in her cult; in fact, she is not even always called Mary.[25]

The fact is that the New Testament was never intended to be *about* the Virgin Mary. Far from providing detailed background information about her, the text uses her like a flattened stone to skip across the deeper theological waters of Jesus and his message. Far from answering specific questions about Mary, her origin, and her innermost nature, the New Testament has left generations of readers asking questions about her. Who were her parents? What was the nature of her virginity? Who was her husband? How did they meet, and what was their relationship

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[23] Michael Grant, *Jesus: An Historian's Review of the Gospels* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1977), 71.
[24] Pelikan, 8.
[25] Warner, 14.

like? Why does her husband disappear from the narrative at its onset, how did she maintain contact with Jesus, and what was his intent, if any, for her?

Answering these questions and exploring Mary's role in the biblical texts opens a second phase of writings about her. Ronald F. Hock addresses the impetus for writing follow-up explanations that filled in the narrative gaps.

> Questions like these were not likely to go unanswered because Greco-Roman narrative conventions required that only plausibility, not accuracy, of information be maintained when writing history. Consequently, starting in the second century, a whole new set of Christian writings arose to answer these questions.[26]

As the introduction of this chapter indicates, historical and literary characters have always been subject to re-interpretation, speculation, and expansion by later generations of readers and followers. In some modern instances, this phenomenon has been given a name—fan fiction. This is a difficult term to apply here because there is some prejudice against presumed low-culture pursuits such as fan fiction in opposition to high-culture academic analysis. Nevertheless, this dissertation is itself an investigation of comparatively low-culture sources, such as popular songs and stories of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, so it seems an appropriate risk to compare the works that followed the New Testament to fan fiction hoping that readers will refrain from applying pejorative views. In his critical work *S/Z*, Roland Barthes applies his brand of structuralist linguistic analysis to Honore de Balzac's short story, "Sarrasine." Barthes identifies two types of texts: *writerly* and *readerly* texts. His so-called writerly texts are opaque or solidly self-contained and do not open many points of access for the reader. On the other hand, readerly texts operate in "a perpetual present;" they are "ourselves in writing, before the infinite play of the world is traversed, intersected, stopped." Readerly texts

[26] Ronald F. Hock, *The Infancy Gospels of James and Thomas* (Santa Rosa, California: Polebridge Press, 1995), 3.

are characterized by "the plurality of entrances, the opening of networks, the infinity of languages."[27] The New Testament and, in particular, the intriguingly incomplete characterization of Mary have historically provided many "entrances" that invite expansion.

In exploring the theoretical underpinnings of fan fiction, Hellekson and Busse write that occasionally a text "invites responses, permits shared authorship, and enjoins a sense of community"; such a text invites the viewer to enter, interpret, and expand the text." The universe of the text expands under such engagement, and "the fan not only analyzes the text but also must constantly renegotiate her analysis."[28] A foundational academic work in fan fiction, *Textual Poachers* by Henry Jenkins suggests that re-reading, re-contextualizing, interpreting, and expanding the universe of a text has an inherent community-building effect.[29] In a second stage of Mary's stories, authors reached into the New Testament references to Mary and built an expanded narrative. This stage takes two different approaches to this discovery process concerning her character. First, second-century and late antiquity biographers compile histories for the Virgin that attempt to answer the many questions that had been opened by the New Testament. Second, theologians attempt in church councils and through theological tracts to dogmatize her place in the church. Of this latter group of writings, Luigi Gambero's work on *Mary and the Fathers of the Church* offers a comprehensive study, and only a very few references will suffice as an introduction here.

There are several biographical and historical writings associated with New Testament narratives, many of which are anthologized in the New Testament Apocrypha. Modern

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[27] Roland Barthes, *S/Z: Essai*, trans. by Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), 5.

[28] Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse, "Introduction: Work in Progress" in *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet: New Essays,* ed. by Karen Hellekson and Kristina Busse (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2006), 6.

[29] Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture* (New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc., 1992), 9-12.

interpretations of these non-canonical works tend to sensationalize the material with alluring titles such as *The Jesus Dynasty: The Hidden History of Jesus, His Royal Family, and the Birth of Christianity* or *The Lost Books of the Bible*. The notion that these texts are "hidden" or "lost" seems somehow attractive to modern readers. Nevertheless, in many cases the material of these texts was neither hidden nor lost; in fact, much of it has been incorporated into modern Christian belief and practice. The most influential early biography of Mary is the *Protoevangelium of James*. Today relegated to the apocryphal New Testament, the Protoevangelium, originally titled "The Nativity of Mary," in its earliest form is found in the Bodmer Papyrus V.[30] Written in the middle of the second century, according to Gambero, "notwithstanding the limits and shortcomings that a work of this genre exhibits, we must recognize that it cast an undeniable spell over the Christian mentality of the first centuries and that it had profoundly conditioned Christian liturgy, preaching, popular devotion, and art."[31] J. K. Elliott offers evidence that, far from being lost or hidden, the *Protoevangelium* was omnipresent:

> Over 150 manuscripts of it [the *Protoevangelium*] in Greek have survived. These are dated from several centuries, thus indicating its long-standing popularity. It was translated into several early versions (Coptic, Syriac, Georgian, Armenian, Ethiopian, and Slavonic), showing that it was popular in a wide geographical area.[32]

The influence of the text and the widespread impact of its elements are thus reflected in the dissemination of it in early manuscripts.

Why devote time and effort to developing Mary's backstory? Raymond E. Brown's exhaustive, scholarly analysis of the birth narrative, *The Birth of the Messiah*, approaches this question from a Christological point of view. Brown notes that the birth narratives, and the accompanying first expansion of the role of Mary, arrive very late in New Testament

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[30] Michel Testuz, *Papyrus Bodmer V: Nativite de Marie* (Cologne-Geneva: Biblioteca Bodmeriana, 1958).
[31] Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers*, 35.
[32] J. K. Elliott, "Mary in the Apocryphal New Testament," in *Origins of the Cult of the Virgin Mary,* 59.

chronology, a fact that brings him to ask two questions: "Why were infancy narratives composed and why were they finally brought into the Gospel outline in the instance of Matthew and of Luke?"[33] Brown comes to the same conclusion that fan fiction theorists might; namely, "Christians wanted to know more about their master: his family, his ancestors, and his birthplace. And, on the implicit principle that the child is the father of the man, the marvelous aspects of Jesus' public life were read back into his origins."[34] Thus, the extended story of Mary was swept up with that of Jesus—even to the point of reaching as far back as Mary's origin itself. The manuscript of the *Protoevangelium* serves not only to provide answers to many of the questions about Mary's origin, but it also affirms emerging doctrinal ideas about Mary as well as reconciles differences between narratives in the synoptic Gospels.

The *Protoevangelium* consists of twenty-four chapters and is divisible into three equal sections of eight chapters each. In the first section, the reader is introduced to the parents of Mary, Joachim and Anna. In a clear reference to the biblical story of Abraham and Sarah, Joachim and Anna are childless and advancing in age, but an angel visits them as they pray and says, "you shall conceive, and shall bring forth; and your seed shall be spoken of in all the world."[35] Anna subsequently conceives and gives birth to Mary. At six months of age, Mary is set on the ground; she takes only seven steps before Anna takes her up again and keeps her from touching the profane earth again until she is presented at the Temple. This episode explains the many works of art that represent Mary's first steps. At age three, this child joins the temple virgins, and signs indicate that she is special to God as she dances at the altar. The feast of the

[33] Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 27.

[34] Ibid.

[35] "CHURCH FATHERS: Protoevangelium of James," 2009, accessed May 12, 2016, http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0847.htm. The complete text of the *Protoevangelium* as available on the *New Advent* website is translated by Alexander Walker, From *Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 8.*, edited by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886.) and is revised and edited for *New Advent* by Kevin Knight.

Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary is based on this description as are works of art by Giotto, Taddeo Gaddi, Fra Carnebale, Hans Holbein the Elder, and Titian to name only a few. In the final chapter of the first section, Mary reaches twelve years of age and the high priest, Zacharias, is directed by an angel to “assemble the widowers of the people, and let them bring each his rod.”

The second section of the *Protoevangelium* explains some problematic elements concerning Jesus’s family. The New Testament had mentioned brothers, leaving open the possibility that Mary did not retain her virgin status. Here, however, an elderly Joseph unwillingly shows up at the Temple and proclaims, “I have children, and I am an old man, and she is a young girl. I am afraid lest I become a laughing-stock to the sons of Israel.” When, through a series of miracles, it becomes plain that God has chosen him as Mary’s spouse, he promises to keep her as God’s virgin. After the Annunciation, a pregnant Mary visits Elizabeth, and the text indicates that she is sixteen. When he discovers her condition, Joseph becomes concerned in two specific ways: first, he worries that the community will think that he violated the virgin with whom he had been entrusted; and, second, he wonders who could be responsible for so evil a deed. Concerning the latter, Joseph links the narrative to Genesis: “Has not the history of Adam been repeated in me? For just as Adam was in the hour of his singing praise, and the serpent came, and found Eve alone, and completely deceived her, so it has happened to me also.” This text becomes one of the earliest to compare Eve to Mary; the former brought sin into the world, and the latter conceived the Redeemer. Joseph attempts to hide Mary, but then

the elders discover her condition. Claiming their innocence, both Joseph and Mary successfully undergo the ordeal of bitter water as described in Numbers 5: 11-31.[36]

The final section of the Protoevangelium begins with an echo of Luke, "And there was an order from the Emperor Augustus, that all in Bethlehem of Judaea should be enrolled." The nativity story from the second century combines elements from both Matthew and Luke with only a few, significant differences. Joseph left Mary in a cave with his two sons to watch over her and sought a midwife in town. After delivering the Jesus, the midwife found a friend, Salome, and told her that Mary's hymen was intact after the birth of the baby. Salome refused to believe that such a thing could be possible and insisted they return to the cave: "And Salome put in her finger, and cried out and said: 'Woe is me for mine iniquity and mine unbelief, because I have tempted the living God; and, behold, my hand is dropping off as if burned with fire." After she fell to her knees and proclaimed the truth of the virgin birth, Salome found that her finger was restored. Meanwhile, the magi, having followed the star to the locale, visited Herod who asked them to seek the new king and to return. When they did not return, Herod understood their trickery and ordered the deaths of all children under the age of two. Joseph moved Mary to a manger where they eluded Herod's death squad, and Elizabeth and John were safely hidden by an angel. In a rage, Herod had Zacharias, John's father and the head priest, murdered.

The differences between this text and those of the New Testament are certainly not happenstantial. Indeed, the author of this later work addresses very specific problems in the previous texts. First, for example, the he mentions the conundrum concerning the brothers of Jesus. Jesus does indeed have siblings—all half-brothers by Joseph's first wife. The divergence between Matthew and Luke concerning the birthplace is resolved; Matthew indicates he had

[36] According to priestly law, a woman suspected of having committed adultery could undergo this trial which, in effect, meant taking a draught of poison. If adulterous, the woman would find that her womb would swell and burst. Descriptions and allowances for this procedure are also found in the Mishnah and in the Talmud.

been birthed in a cave, while Luke indicates a manger. The *Protoevangelium* affirms that both are true; he was born in a cave and immediately moved to a manger for safety. Additionally, readers finally understand how John the Baptist escaped Herod's purge and what happened to his father, Zechariah; an angel hid John and Elizabeth while his father was murdered.

Most importantly, the *Protoevangelium* focuses on the nature of Mary and her family. Just as Abraham and Sarah birthed nations, Joachim and Anna give birth to the mother of Christianity; this parallel plot structure would not have been lost on second-century audiences. The conditions of Mary's birth and early childhood reveal why she would later be called *la Immaculada*. Not only was she born by divine intervention, but she was held apart from all contamination. Even among the virgins, favor fell on her through wondrous signs. Indeed, the holistic nature of her virginity becomes clear in the text. Joseph, an old man, took an oath to keep her inviolate, and even after giving birth, her perpetual virginity was confirmed literally by vaginal examination.

What is never examined in the *Protoevangelium* is how Mary felt about these events. Mary utters very few words; Joseph and Zacharias have more to say in both direct and indirect discourse. The Lucan text offers Mary a more substantial self-expression in the manner by which she contemplates matters in her heart. Mary Foskett agrees that, "in comparison to the Lucan Mary, the virgin of the *Protoevangelium* is presented in rather an austere light. From beginning to end, she is the holy one of God destined to give birth to a son who, in turn, will be called holy."[37] The fact that Mary is a pure vessel, the delivery conduit for divine birth, is made patently clear; her bodily purity is addressed by Joachim, Anna, the high priest, the priests collectively, Elizabeth, Joseph, and the crowd at the ordeal of bitter water. Even a doubtful

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[37] Mary F. Foskett, *A Virgin Conceived: Mary and Classical Representations of Virginity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 160.

midwife, who can only be described as surly, is offered access to Mary's private parts to prove her purity. Afterwards, Salome broadcasts the news to all in town as if Mary's vagina was a topic of public concern—in fact, it is. Again, Foskett notes the emphasis placed on Mary as object: "She is often cherished by those who bear responsibility for her, yet she also poses a burden. Finally, she is a passive character whose bodily integrity is of paramount concern."[38]

Despite Mary's objectification, it is not difficult to understand why the *Protoevangelium* quickly and deeply influenced Christian culture and dogma. The narrative is seductive in as much as it satisfactorily gratifies so many gaps, often linking together New Testament narratives into a cohesive whole. There is a certain irony, however, that a work intended to unify the New Testament nativity narratives draws upon curiously divergent sources. The ordeal of bitter water, for example, is admittedly intended to show continuity from ancient Jewish culture to the contemporary culture, but it use was buried in Israel's ancient past from even a first-century perspective. Additionally, the notion that Joseph and Anna promise Mary as a servant among the [39]temple virgins is very curious indeed. The Jewish temple did not allow female attendants; this convention is certainly drawn from Greco-Roman culture—a reference, for example, to the Vestal virgins in Roman tradition. Gambero states, "These writings traced an itinerary through which the believing people sought to draw near to the unfathomable mystery of a virgin mother. Such an arduous goal can justify a text in which varied and, at time, contradictory elements are mixed together."[40] The text is a gathering of what was known and what could be surmised; perhaps, after all, it was most important that believers were seeking more information, however dubious. Mary Clayton submits that "the Protoevangelium's interest does not lie only in its

[38] Ibid.

[39] Mary Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 4.

[40] Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers*, 41.

narrative: it also testifies to the development of nonbiblical Marian beliefs even at this early date." The *Protoevangelium* may be a pastiche of contrary sources, but its impact would continue to simmer for centuries.

Indeed, the importance of Mary in Christian culture and dogma would likewise simmer throughout the ensuing centuries. At about the time that the *Protoevangelium* appears, Justin Martyr makes the first direct comparison between Eve and Mary in the *Dialogue with Trypho*.

> For Eve, who was a virgin and undefiled, gave birth to disobedience and death after listening to the serpent's words. But the Virgin Mary conceived faith and joy; for when the angel Gabriel brought her the glad tidings that the Holy Spirit would come upon her and that the power of the Most High would overshadow her, so that the Holy One born of her would be the Son of God, she answered, "Let it be done to me according to your word."[41]

By the end of the second century, Clement of Alexandria affirmed his faith in Mary's perpetual virginity: "It appears that even today many hold that Mary, after the birth of her Son, was found to be in the state of a woman who has given birth, while in fact she was not so. For some say that, after giving birth, she was examined by a midwife, who found her to be a virgin."[42] Clement references the *Protoevangelium*, a source that this early church father was willing to accept as valid. Others will follow in proclaiming Mary's perpetual virginity—Origen, Jerome, and Augustine.

Despite so momentous and impactful a work as the *Protoevangelium*, the cult of Mary was slow to develop. To be sure, interest in Mary had slowly risen since the end of the second century; the University of Dayton timeline provides an excellent overview and Gambero's collection concerning Mary in patristic writings testifies to the formation of dogma. Nevertheless, substantive acknowledgements of Mary tended to be framed in Christological

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[41] *Dialogue with Trypho* 100; PG 6, 709-12.
[42] Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers*, 70.

terms—Christ was human (because his mother was human) or Christ is God (because his mother was a pure vessel). As a further example of the manner in which Mary existed in comparative anonymity, one aspect of Marian veneration that is almost completely absent from these first centuries involves her image. Although some sources claim to have found images of Mary in the Roman catacomb of Priscilla near the Via Salaria in Rome, this analysis is speculative. Geri Parlby describes modern guidebooks that make the claim that the Priscilla Mary is authentic, but she demonstrates its relative dubiousness and writes that Mary or not, the image is relatively minor: "far from commanding pride of place in the underground cemetery, this relatively small image was originally painted vertically in an inconspicuous corner of one of the oldest parts of the Catacomb . . . . It plays second fiddle to a far more prominent stucco image of a good shepherd figure that once formed part of a pair."[43] Nicola Denzey mentions the possibility of a second-century Mary in her work *The Bone Gatherers: The Lost World of Early Christian Women*, but Denzey goes on to say that the earliest verifiable image of Mary occurs in the Catacomb of Thecla, a late fourth-century tomb.[44] Averil Cameron agrees that it was not until "the fifth-century context in which the Virgin became for the first time a real focus of attention, with a number of studies relating to the context of the Council of Ephesus in AD 431, when the Theotokos title became the issue in contention."[45]

In late antiquity, Mary's place in culture took a leap forward at the Council of Ephesus in 431 CE; however this advance in her status was not accomplished without some great difficulty.

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[43] Geri Parlby, "The Origins of Marian Art in the Catacombs and the Problems of Identification" in *The Origins of the Cult of the Virgin Mary*, 41.

[44] Nicola Denzey, *The Bone Gatherers: The Lost Worlds of Early Christian Women* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007), 107.

[45] Averil Cameron, "Introduction," in *Images of the Mother of God: Perceptions of the Theotokos in Byzantium* ed. by Maria Vassilaki (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), xxvii.
Concerning the impact of the Council of Ephesus, Cameron includes footnote references to J. A. McGuckin, *Cyril of Alexandria, The Christological Controversy: Its History, Theology, and Texts* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), L. M. Peltomaa, *The Image of the Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn* (Leiden: Brill, 2001, and S. J. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption* (Oxford: Oxford university Press, 2002).

The Council of Ephesus broiled in political factions and accusations of heresy all around. Controversy and divergence was promulgated by a sermon written by Proclus and delivered in 428 CE. Hilda Graef quotes Proclus extensively, but the following portion illuminates Proclus's point.

> I see the miracles and proclaim the Godhead: I see the sufferings and so not deny the manhood. Emmanuel has, indeed, opened the gates of nature, because he was man, but he did not break the seals of virginity, because he was God. As he entered through the hearing [the Annunciation], so he went out from the womb [i.e., without violating it] . . . . Behold, an exact description of the holy Theotokos Mary![46]

The controversy opened by Proclus had to do with the duality of Jesus—coexisting as human and divine—and with Mary's role as proof of the conjoining. As Graef writes, "If we would grasp the theological significance of the ensuing controversy we have to keep one thing in mind, which comes out quite clearly in the sermon by Proclus: the insistence on the title Theotokos is not due to any inclination of "Mariolaty"; its significance is wholly Christological, and as such it was regarded" by all parties.[47] Although Mary was still quite overshadowed by Jesus, her role in Christ's story was about to undergo a revision.

On the question of Christ's corporal nature, the splintered Christian church was divided between three primary players— Rome, Constantinople, and Alexandria—with other lesser sees taking sides. The voice of Alexandria, Cyril, considered Jesus both God and man and, therefore, considered Mary to be the *Theotokos*, Greek for "God bearer." The Roman church and Pope Celestine I agreed with this analysis, but the patriarch of Constantinople, Nestorius, disagreed. Joseph F. Kelly explains Nestorius theological analysis.

> Nestorius's reasoning ran thus: for all her wondrous qualities, Mary was a human being and thus could not be accurately referred to as the Mother of God, that is, of the

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[46] Hilda Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Ave Maria Press, 2009), 80.

[47] Ibid.

> omnipotent, omniscient, eternally existing deity. Mary could legitimately be called *Christotokos* or Mother of Christ. This makes sense logically, but . . . theology deals with the mysteries of faith, not logical propositions.[48]

Had Nestorius pressed his argument with calm logic, that the Christ must be human because Mary was human, he might have had greater success, but Kelly rightly mentions his arrogant personality; Nestorius "had a strong sense of his own rightness and righteousness."[49] Cyril of Alexandria pressed his claims in open letters to Nestorius.

> We must not think that the holy Virgin gave birth to some unspecified man, into whom the Word descended later; no, we must believe that there was one single reality from the first moment in his Mother's womb and that he was born according to the flesh, accepting the flesh of his own body . . . . That is why they [orthodox believers] do not hesitate to call the Virgin *Theotokos*, not in the sense that the divine nature of the Word took its origin from the holy Virgin, but in the sense that he took his holy body, gifted with a rational soul, from her.[50]

Essentially, Cyril declared that Christ was both man and God on earth. Nestorius considered the divine and the human aspects to be separate, but, as Kelly expresses, "Nestorius could not come up with a terminology for expressing their union, and he never really explained what constituted this one person."[51]

The Council of Ephesus turned out to have multiple, coexistent sessions. The two sides on the Mary question came to two conclusions; however, Nestorius was ultimately removed by Emperor Theodosius and Cyril's canons became those of the council. It may be as Kelly writes that "Ephesus was either a disgrace or a circus or some of both," but at its end, Mary was Theotokos ever after.[52] Following the Council of Ephesus, Mary would never be considered in

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[48] Joseph F. Kelly, *The Ecumenical Councils of the Catholic Church: A History* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2009), 38.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers*, 239.
[51] Kelly, 39.
[52] Ibid., 41.

the same light, as merely the conveyance for Christ and as a minor plot convenience. Richard M. Price affirms that, "most historians have accepted . . . that the issue in the Nestorian controversy was primarily Christological rather than Mariological. It has, however, repeatedly been asserted that Marian devotion received a powerful stimulus."[53]

Until the end of the first millennia, then Marian interest underwent a slow, but steady ascendency. This burgeoning interest manifested itself in several ways. Citing the Empress Pulcheria's quest to find the body of Mary in 451, Graef establishes that "with the ever-growing veneration of the Theotokos, especially in the Christian East, there emerged also a cult of her relics. Her veil was venerated in the sanctuary of Blachernae, near Constantinople from the middle of the sixth century."[54] The most impressive expression of the new Marian devotion comes in the form of sermons. Homiletic literature focusing on Mary begins, as might be expected, with Cyril of Alexandria who is unabashed in his praise in Homily 11: "I salute you, O Mary, Theotokos: through you the prophets speak out and the shepherds sing God's praises …, the angels dance and the archangels sing tremendous hymns …, the Magi prostrate themselves in adoration."[55] Romanos the Melodist (d. ca. 560) wrote a series of homilies depicting Mary at the Cross and discussing her being weighted with grief. Gregory of Tours (d. 594) preached on the Assumption of Mary. Clearly, there was no shortage of Marian topics for these preachers; in addition to visiting biblical references, homilists used the opportunity to valorize the first feast days celebrating events in Mary's life and works:

> Fundamental to the development of preaching on the Mother of God was the introduction of special feast-days in her honor into the liturgical calendar. This process is unfortunately difficult to reconstruct, owing to the lack of liturgical and historical sources

[53] Richard M. Price, "The Theotokos and the Council of Ephesus," in *The Origins of the Cult of the Virgin Mary*, 93.
[54] Graef, 107.
[55] Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers*, 244.

> for the period before the ninth century. Historians have mostly used homilies and hymns as evidence.[56]

Following the Council of Ephesus, the number of feasts, including the Feast of the Annunciation and the Feast of the Dormition, began to be celebrated in various Christian cultures. Mary Clayton offers an extensive background on the Marian feasts; Clayton finds that there was a separate feast for Mary associated with Christmas celebrations in the Eastern Empire, but she affirms that all others, beginning with the Feasts of the Dormition/Assumption commenced no earlier than 600 CE.[57]

Homily led to hymnody—to praise the Virgin in spoken words turning to music through verse. The "Akathist" hymn emerged from an anonymous author between the fifth and sixth centuries. Its title derives from the Greek *akathistos* or "not seated," indicating that the song was meant to be recited standing in deference to the Queen of Heaven. This is a hymn of praise whose format will be repeated throughout the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* a few hundred years later. Another source of Marian hymns is the poet Venantius Fortunatus (d. ca. 600). Fortunatus actually wrote a wide range of verse in Latin—from epithalamia to epitaphs to panegyrics. In her introduction to a collection of his poetry, Judith George writes that the "study of Fortunatus' poetry gives us insight at a general level into an important link in the transmission of the Latin literary tradition . . . . They [his poems] provide a rich and unique source of historical information about the individuals Fortunatus wrote for, and the society within which he

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[56] Mary B. Cunningham, *Wider Than Heaven: Eighth-century Homilies on the Mother of God* (Yonkers, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2008), 4.

[57] Mary Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 26-28.

worked."[58] Fortunatus's religious verse frequently focused on the praise of Mary; the Incarnation captured much of his attention.

> The God, whom earth and sea and sky
> Adore and laud and magnify,
> Whose might they own, whose praise they tell,
> In Mary's body deigned to dwell.
>
> O Mother blest! The chosen shrine,
> Wherein the Architect divine,
> Whose hand contains the earth and sky.
> Vouchsafed in hidden guise to lie.[59]

Writing in the Merovingian court, Fortunatus carried the praise of Mary in verse into Gaul and Frankish culture; his works were so popular that he was generally known as Saint Fortunatus throughout the medieval period, though he was never formally canonized.[60]

Two additional literary sources give witness to the expanding role of Mary in the latter part of the first millennium. First, the Mary makes her appearance in the Qur'an. In the mid-seventh century, the Qur'an, containing 114 sura, appears with sura 19 bearing the title, "Maryam." The only sura named for a specific woman, the chapter draws on material from the gospels, most especially from Luke. Jaroslav Pelikan believes that Mary is important to Islam because of her connection to the family of David and, by that linage, to texts of the Jewish past: "Because the Quran could be read as the restoration of Jesus to the history of Israel, Mary had to be the decisive hinge in its campaign, for she was, also for Christians, the point of connection between Jesus and the history of Israel."[61] The portrait drawn of Mary in the Qur'an is endearing and vibrant. In *Islam and the West*, Norman Daniel writes that "there is nothing else in all the

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[58] *Venantius Fortunatus: Personal and Political Poems,* trans. by Judith George (Liverpool: Liverpool Press, 1995), xviii.

[59] Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers,* 365.

[60] Judith George, *Venantius Fortunatus: A Latin Poet in Merovingian Gaul* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 34.

[61] Pelikan, 76.

Qur'an to parallel the warmth with which Christ and His mother are spoken of. Christ is presented as a unique being, but His mother's personality appears more vividly."[62] The primary points of divergence between early medieval Christians and Muslims concerning the Virgin are her physical representations in icons and in her title, *Theotokos.*

A second text that expands upon the vapid character of Mary as presented in the *Protoevangelium* is a work that actually relies, in part, on that early text. *The Life of the Virgin* is a seventh-century biography that builds upon the much earlier work and provides a chronology though the end of Mary's life. It has been attributed to Maximus the Confessor (580-662), a functionary in the court of the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius. It is believed that Maximus retired from this political life to travel to North Africa with a sect of monks. The details of his life remain sketchy, as Andrew Louth describes in his study of the author. Louth writes that the standard biography for Maximus had for centuries been "the Greek *Life of St. Maximus*, composed by the Studite Monk, Michael Exaboulites" which is pieced together from diverse sources including "the beginning of the *Life* of the eighth-century reformer of the Stoudius monastery, St. Theodore the Studite." [63] Michael Exaboulites reports that Maximus had been born of a noble family in Constantinople and had begun working at a young age in the Imperial Chancellery. Louth goes on to indicate, however, that in the mid-1970s "a Syriac *Life* of Maximus was discovered in the British Museum by Dr. Sebastian Brock, which tells rather a different story."[64] In this earlier *Life*, Maximus was "the result of an adulterous union between a

[62] Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1960), 175.
[63] Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (London: Routledge, 1996), 4.
[64] Ibid., 5.

Samaritan man and a Persian slave-girl."[65] This biography, however, may have been intended to discredit Maximus and, thereby, cast aspersions on his theological ideas.

Christologically, Maximus was a Dyophysitist; that is, he believed that the dual nature of Jesus, both human and divine, coexisted in the one body of Christ. This theological perspective walks a fine line; to cross that line would have aligned Maximus with Nestorianism and heresy. Stephen J. Shoemaker suggests that Maximus was strongly influenced in this belief by Sophronius of Jerusalem (c. 560-638); Sophronius served as Patriarch of Jerusalem from 634 until 638 and authored an anthology of works that supported Dyothelitism. Shoemaker affirms that "Maximus' close relationship with Sophronius is quite certain, and Maximus himself describes Sophronius as his master, father, and teacher in his letters.[66] Interestingly, while Dyophysitism placed emphasis on the divinity of Jesus, it seems to have also placed importance on the humanity of Mary. This perspective is certainly reflected in Maximus's biography of the Virgin.

The Life of the Virgin, many times over the length of the *Protoevangelium* and ending after Mary's death, is a work of devotion, and, in the theoretical backgrounding of this chapter, a quintessential piece of fan fiction. Writing six centuries after these events had been obscured by the dust of time, Maximus claims "with the grace and assistance of the all-holy Theotokos" to be able to examine "when she appeared, and who her parents were, and how her upbringing and immaculate conduct were, and what great glorification was accomplished in her from her birth until her Dorminion."[67] He begins in the first chapter with a poetic call to all Christians: "Come all believers and gather all lovers of God, kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all

[65] Ibid., 6.
[66] Stephen J. Shoemaker, *The Life of the Virgin by Maximus the Confessor* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 9.
[67] Ibid., 37.

judges of the earth, boys and girls, the old with the young . . . let us hymn, praise, and glorify the all-holy, immaculate, and most blessed Theotokos and ever-virgin Mary."[68] Seemingly in a single sentence, Maximus manages to offer a summative statement for six centuries of Marian doctrine.

Throughout the narrative, Maximus fuses the gospel accounts with other sources and, at the same time, manages to build a powerfully empathetic character in the person of Mary. In describing Christ at age twelve at the temple, for example, he writes "more than anyone else, her holy soul was full of benevolence and compassion, and in this way she was more than anyone else an imitator of her good and benevolent son, having a tranquil and humble mind with such an abundance of virtue and excess of grace."[69] Note that Mary and Jesus are exactly aligned in disposition and thought. Furthermore, she was "frightful to demons and the desire of angels—wonderful and terrifying to the angels, but virtuous and chosen by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."[70] Again, the biblical narrative indicates that Christ commands angels and banishes demons, but no such powers are allowed to Mary in a previous text.

Nor is Mary's influence limited to angels and demons; rather, she holds influence over Jesus and his followers. Maximus indicates that even into Jesus's thirtieth year "she was always inseparable from her Lord and king and son. And she held authority: as the Lord did over the twelve disciples and then the seventy, so did the holy mother over the other women who accompanied him."[71] Moreover, Mary is credited with a depth of emotion and an indelible spirit not unlike that of the Messiah himself: "This solitary virgin woman was unaccustomed to a throng of people, especially of such people as thieves and troops of armed soldiers, but she went

[68] Ibid., 36.
[69] Ibid., 44.
[70] Ibid., 45.
[71] Ibid., 102.

everywhere fearlessly. And she was not separated from her beloved Lord and dear son, not even for a single moment, because she was bound to him in soul and body."[72]

Finally, after the Passion, Mary retires to the home of the beloved disciple, as indicated in the Gospel of John. While there, she takes Jesus's place on earth, directing the movements and development of the infant church:

> She sent forth the other disciples to preach to those far and near . . . . For his sake [her son's] she opposed and fought against the adversaries, the wicked Jews, and once again she was an intercessor and mediator with him on behalf of all, not only on behalf of the believers, but also on behalf of the enemies that he might have mercy on them and they would be brought to knowledge and repentance.[73]

This passage is replete with anachronism—from the blanket condemnation concerning the "wicked Jews (Mary, Jesus, and the disciples were, after all, Jews) to her role as "intercessor" and "mediator." Nevertheless, the excerpt firmly establishes Mary's responsibility as director of operations for the church. Throughout the remainder of her life, according to this biography, Mary assumed the role of teacher of the disciples, leader of the church, and interpreter of Christ's words.

Near the end of the work, Maximus describes Mary's Dormition, her "falling asleep" and translation to heaven. The text makes no mention of Mary growing old; instead, it simply says that God decided to bring the immaculate mother to heaven. Her Dormition was foretold to Mary in what can only be described as an expected fashion:

> And he [God] sent the archangel Gabriel to her again to announce her glorious Dormition, as he had before the wondrous conception. Thus the archangel came and brought her a branch from a date palm, which is a sign of victory: as once they went with branches of date palms to meet her son, the victor over death and vanquisher of Hell, so

[72] Ibid., 103.
[73] Ibid., 123.

> the archangel also brought the branch to the holy queen, a sign of victory over suffering and fearlessness before death.[74]

Again, one function of such works is to tie up the loose ends of previous narratives and to answer questions. Maximus creates a circular plot linking the Dormition to the Annunciation; additionally, he exchanges the irony of the date palm that welcomed Jesus to his death for the new reality of the date palm that heralds victory over death. Nor do the parallels with the gospels end here. Mary goes out of Jerusalem to pray and talks first with Jesus and then, at her request with John the Baptist who rides down from heaven on a cloud. Additionally, she is instructed to adorn her room like a bridal chamber and await a painless death.

The end of Mary's life may arrive quickly in terms of time, but the text draws out the description for fifteen chapters. Of course, the disciples and other followers beg her not to go, but the Virgin is relentless. Jesus finally appears to those gathered in her house in order to comfort them, and the Holy Spirit descends into them and they begin speaking in tongues and singing hymns. Mary gathers the disciples around her one last time and offers them and the new church her blessing (in verse). At last, she underwent the Dormition.

> The all-holy mother of the Lord entrusted her blessed and immaculate soul to her Lord, king, and son, and slept a sweet and pleasant sleep. As she escaped the pains of childbirth in the ineffable Nativity, so the pains of death did not come upon her at the time of her Dormition, but both then and now the king and Lord of natures altared the course of nature.[75]

After the death—or more properly, the falling asleep—of Mary, the book continues for another ten chapters delineating the many miracles of healing and demon-dispelling that occurred. Additionally, the disciples—in particular Peter, Paul, and John—prepare a burial shroud of pure gold. They place the holy body in a tomb for final resting; however, an un-named disciple

[74] Ibid., 130.
[75] Ibid., 136.

arrived three days later and asked to receive a blessing from viewing the body. When the stone is removed, all is as they left it, but Mary's body is gone. Maximus concludes with a long hymn of praise for the many virtues and roles of the Virgin.

The Dormition is more typical of Eastern Christian practices, the preferred method of translating Mary to heaven in the West being by Assumption.[76] Scholars generally agree that the first church theologian to explore the death of Mary was Epiphanius of Salamis writing near the end of the fourth century. Although he was born in Gaza, traveled extensively in Palestine, and served as a bishop in Cyprus, Epiphanius seemed unaware of the surrounding adoration of Mary's cave in Jerusalem and, therefore, ignorant of traditions that she was interred there. In his work, *Panarion*, Epiphanius admits some surprise that there was no definitive account of Mary's death. Through research, "he formulates some hypotheses that may correspond to convictions some early Christians held about the end of Mary's earthly life."[77] He suggests, for example, that Luke may imply that she was martyred with a sword—an interpretation of Luke 2:35. John's Revelation and the description of the woman with stars for a crown, however, seemed to suggest to Epiphanius that Mary remained immortal, moving between heaven and earth. Additionally, he had accounts that she simply died or that she had traveled to Asia in order to spread the gospel. He speculates that somehow, she entered heaven in the flesh since she was stainless, but he still admits that he simply does not know.

> I dare not affirm this [that she was immortal] with absolute certainty, nor do I say that she remained untouched by death, nor can I confirm whether she died. The Scriptures, which

[76] The Assumption is defined and extolled in a variety of sources including John of Damascus, Germanus of Constantinople, Andrew of Crete, and John Damascene—all eighth-century writers. The Feast of the Assumption was and still is widely celebrated and generally coincides with or overlaps the Feast of the Dormition on August 15. There are a number of churches dedicated to the Assumption including the Cathedral of the Assumption in Cordoba, Spain, built on the site of the famous Mezquita Mosque. The Catholic Church did not officially recognize the Assumption with a doctrinal statement until November 1, 1950 when Pope Pius XII published *Munificentissimus Deus*. More will be said about the nature of the Assumption and its importance to Marian songs in a later chapter.

[77] Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers,* 125.

> are above human reason, left this question uncertain, out of respect for this honored and admirable vessel, so that no one could suspect her of carnal baseness. We do not know if she died or if she was buried; however, she did not ever have carnal relations. Let this never be said!

In the end, he simply fell back on the one truth that felt safe: Mary was a Virgin. Shoemaker concludes that "Epiphanius' indecisive reflections themselves suggest that some difference of opinion had already arisen among Christians as to whether Mary actually died or remained immortal, a difference Epiphanius could not resolve through recourse to either biblical or church tradition."[78]

Maximus's *Life* and the infusion of material such as the apparitions of angels, reappearance of long-dead biblical figures, performance of miracles, and suggestions of divine transition into heaven are typical of the direction of Marian interest. Epiphanius and others lent a scholastic seriousness to investigating these elements. However, it is important to note that these outpourings of faith and thought are essentially rooted in the tradition of the Eastern Church. The West took a different path to Marian piety. In the introduction to his work, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, Gambero indicated that, although obviously influenced by the East, Western traditions developed along a rough path.

> In the West, by contrast [to the East], life was badly shaken by historical events that radically altared the religious situation of Europe. Over a period of several centuries, successive barbarian invasions led to continuous political, social, and economic transformations, which finally coalesced in the formation of the Holy Roman Empire and the Carolingian renaissance.[79]

Gambero and others identify, in particular, the monastic tradition as providing the breeding ground for Marian piety in the West.

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[78] Stephen J. Shoemaker, *The Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 14.

[79] Luigi Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages: The Blessed Virgin Mary in the Thought of Medieval Latin Theologians* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 19.

It is tempting, therefore, to leap, as Hilda Graef does in her history of Mary, to an immediate consideration of twelfth-century scholasticism; however, at least one brief stop must be made in Spain to assess the genesis of Marian veneration that would one day contribute to the cultural milieu resulting in the collection called *las Cantigas de Santa Maria*. Two pre-scholastic writers influenced the growth of Marian devotion both in Spain especially and in Europe generally. These Spaniards are Isadore of Seville (ca. 560-636) and Ildephonsus of Toledo (d. 667). Emerging from the comparative chaos of the declining Roman Empire, Spain would become one of the centers for Marian veneration.

The northern pass into Spain from France—from St. Jean Pied du Port to Roncesvalles—has seen the literal march of history. Called the *route de Napoleon* in the nineteenth century, it was the pass that Napoleon's troops used in traversing the border between the two countries during the Peninsular War. Since the tenth century, it has been the pass that pilgrims took on the long walk to Santiago de Compostela, and it was the pass defended by Roland in Charlemagne's retreat from Zaragoza in 778. This was also the pass over which the Vandals, Alans, and Suevi ambulated into Spain in the fifth century. A tumultuous 160 years followed in which Roman rule succumbed to the splintered, tribal influence of Germanic clans; the Vandals moved on to Africa, and, ultimately, the Visigoths swept in from the east and north: "With the accession of Leovigild in 569 the Iberian kingdom of the Visigoths was to become the vehicle for the creation of a new century during the next century and a half."[80] Despite their victory, the Visigoths faced staggering challenges. David Levering Lewis rightly points out their greatest disadvantage: "The new rulers were a minuscule percentage of the total population by the end of the seventh century; at most, some four hundred thousand Visigoths among no fewer than five million Hispano-

[80] Bernard F. Reilly, *The Medieval Spains* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 17.

Romans, Jews, and Greeks, along with Galicians, Basques, and Celts."[81] The invaders quickly adopted many of the ways of their conquered population; Visigoth leaders began speaking the local version of Late Latin. Bernard F. Reilly points out an even more pervasive change: "The most profound transformation in the process during that 150 years [of Visigoth rule] was the Christianization of the Iberian population."[82]

The conversion itself was not without its tumultuous aspects. The Visigoth bishops were Arians, a non-Trinitarian heresy that had been declared anathema at the First Council of Nicaea in 325. As described in Rachel L. Stocking's *Bishops, Councils, and Consensus in the Visigoth Kingdom, 589-633*, the Catholic Bishop of Seville, Leander, contrived to call what is now termed the Third Council of Toledo in order to settle differences between the Catholic and Arian Bishops. In fact, Leander was strongly influenced by Eastern Orthodoxy due to visits to Constantinople, and he had already laid the groundwork for a successful outcome in the council by converting King Reccared of the Visigoths to Romanism by pointing out that no Arian bishop had ever performed a healing miracle.[83] Eventually, the Arian bishops converted to Catholicism and their signed declaration of faith, along with those of Reccared and his queen, were made public.[84]

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[81] David Levering Lewis, *God's Crucible: Islam and the Making of Europe, 570 to 1215* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2008), 111.

[82] Reilly, 17.

[83] Rachael L. Stocking, *Bishops, Councils, and Consensus in the Visigoth Kingdom, 589-633* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 60-61.

[84] It should be mentioned that the conversion of the Visigoth bishops was only one of the important aspects of the Third Council of Toledo that will later influence the Marian songs and tales that evolve out of the Spanish tradition. The council passed constitutes banning Jews from having Christian wives, requiring children of mixed Christian-Jewish marriages to be baptized, and requiring conversions of Jews in many positions of importance. The final important aspect was the Spanish church's engagement with the controversy over the *filioque* clause. By affirming the creed of Constantinople with the word *filioque*, "and the Son," the Council allied itself with the position that the Holy Spirit comes from the Father and Son, an interpretation that was rejected by the Orthodox Church and helped cause the Great Schism (1054).

Bishop Leander's brother, Isidore, wrote his sermon, *Homilia de triumpho ecclesiae ob conversionem Gothorum*, chronicling and commenting on the results of the council. More importantly for future Marianists in Spain, he had "one of the leading parts in the choir of Western Marian piety. Its liturgy praised the Virgin Mary, especially in her role as model of the Church."[85] One of Isidore's most important contributions came in his work *Etymologies* in which he examined the meanings of the name "Mary": "Mary signifies Light-giver or Star of the Sea; for she gave birth to the Light of the world. In the Syriac tongue, however, Mary means "Lady', and beautifully so, since she gave birth to the Lord."[86] Pelikan indicates that Isidore's analysis may not be accurate. The Spaniard offers a mistaken translation whose "Origins seem to lie in Jerome's etymology for the name 'Mary' as 'a drop of water from the sea [stilla maris]', which he preferred to other explanations. This translation was taken over…, but in the process 'drop [stilla]' had become 'star [stella]'."[87] The ninth-century poem *Ave Stella Maris*, then, apparently emerged out of a case of mistaken identity. Later poems and tales including several of the Cantigas will carry on this manner of address, calling Mary, "the Star of the Sea."

At least the equal of Isidore in terms of his impact on Marian veneration, Ildefonsus of Toledo contributed not only theological material to the cause of Mariology, but he also contributed directly to the tales that would recount supposed events of his ministry. A Benedictine monk and, later, archbishop of Toledo, Ildefonsus produced a number of theological reflections, the most famous of which is *Libellus de cirginitate perpetua sanctae Mariae contra tres infidels*.[88] Perhaps it is true, as Roger Collins points out, that Marian observance "was taken

[85] Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers*, 373.
[86] Ibid., 374.
[87] Pelikan, 94.
[88] The three infidels, or heretics, against which the treatise is directed are identified in the text. The first two are Jovinian (d. c. 405) and Helvidius. Although a monk early in his service, Jovinian turned against asceticism and would write a treatise attacking the special status of virginity. Helvidius wrote a work challenging the belief in

to a new extreme by bishop Ildefonsus of Toledo in his 'On the Perpetual Virginity of the Blessed Mary'''[89]; however, the hold on Spanish literature that this work still maintains cannot be underestimated: "This treatise had an enormous influence on all subsequent Marian literature in Spain. It won Ildephonsus the title 'The Virgin's Chaplain'."[90] Indeed, this work against the three infidels is cited in Gonzalo de Berceo's *Milagros de Nuestra Senora* of which more will be said later.[91]

Other than his literary output, Ildefonsus contributed the depth of his own convictions to European notions and practices concerning Mary. The Spaniard found no limits in his personal devotion to the Virgin: "Blessed are you for my faith; blessed are you for my soul; blessed are you for my delight; blessed for my heraldings and preachings. I would preach you as much as you should be preached, love you as much as you should be loved, praise you as much as you should be praised, and serve you as much as your glory should be served."[92] It may be because he pledged his service and his sermons to Mary that a story was told about his having received his vestments directly from her. In the tale, Ildefonsus was walking with King Reccesbvinth when the pair observed the apparition of St. Leocadia who said that the Virgin lived through Ildefonsus's words. Later, he had a dream in which Mary appeared, handed him an alb, and indicated that no one other than Ildefonsus should sit in the bishop's chair wearing that alb. When Archbishop Siagrio put on the alb after Ildefonsus's death, the former died instantly. This legend is told not only in Cantiga 2 (the very first narrative song in the entire collection

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Mary's perpetual virginity which was answered by Jerome in a work that cites, among other sources, the *Protoevangelium*. The third heretic in Ildephonsus's discourse is an unnamed Jew, intended to stand for all Jews. The archbishop characterizes Jews as inherently in opposition to the life and wishes of Mary.

[89] Roger Collins, *Visigoth Spain, 409-711* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 163.

[90] Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 27.

[91] The work is referenced in the last line of stanza 51 of the first of the tales, "The Chasuble of Saint Ildephonsus."

[92] Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 33.

following the song of praise that is Cantiga 1), but it is also repeated, among others, in Berceo, Gil de Zamora, the Lisbon Mariale, John of Garland, Gautier de Coinci, William of Malmesbury, Nigel of Canterbury, Bartholomew of Trent, and in the Anglo-Norman Miracles of the Virgin. These sources, some of whom are monastic writers and others troubadours, trouveres, jongleurs, or minstrels, will bridge the patristic with the medieval periods in Mariology. Even as the scholastic movement contributes to and expands the veneration of Mary, her adoration will make its way into popular culture to be manifest in tales, songs, visions, and apparitions.

2.4 Mary and Popular Culture in the Middle Ages

As Mary passed into the second millennia, she was handed over to Christians whose needs and devotional practices diverged from those of the patristic period. Mary began to grow into new roles in order to answer these new generations of devotees. It is needful to keep in mind that this evolutionary process occurred almost without the notice of those persons who brought about changes in Mary's image; Hilda Graef writes "there is no well-defined demarcation line between the patristic period . . . and the so-called Dark Ages."[93] Graef, herself an academically-trained theologian, privileges academic writers of the Middle Ages in following the paths of Marian study and veneration. For example, she suggests that the Spanish theologians Leander, Isidore, and Ildefonsus "say nothing new. Their main theme is the virginal motherhood."[94] She does, however, go on to comment on the close, personal relationship that Ildefonsus elucidates between himself and Mary: "the idea of personal service, of the mistress-servant relation between Mary and the Christian is something new; it involves a personal

[93] Greaf, 127.
[94] Ibid., 109.

consecration which goes beyond theological speculation and liturgical devotion."[95] Indeed, this "personal consecration" that exceeded the bounds of customary devotion was to be the building block of eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth-century popular veneration of Mary.

The problem with trying to assess popular culture is almost always found in the nature of the sources—though, as with many cases when dealing with pop culture, it is probably more accurate to say artifacts rather than sources. David A. Flory outlines this divergence of form in relation to Marian tales: "The miracle *tale* [sic] can take many forms, hence the difficulty of defining the genre. It may be recited aloud as poetry; told as a story; sung; performed on stage; depicted in miniatures, tapestries, frescoes, and stained glass; or read in silence."[96] John Esten Keller discusses this problem in his introduction to a study on pious narrative in twelfth and thirteenth centuries; Keller outlines that the examination of sources is not limited to written material—stories, exempla, sermons, histories, and law—but extends to "songs, paintings and miniatures, sculptures, carvings in wood and ivory and other materials, figures molded or cast in metals" and other elements. The problem with written sources is, of course, that they are written: "writers are grammatical, or purport to be, and folk singers and tellers of tales generally are not. Writers, especially those who would employ tales for a didactic or religious purpose, have a tendency to alter an oral tale to make it fit the pattern."[97] As Mary transitioned into the dual realms of literacy and orality—into formal, written art and popularly told tales—she undoubtedly absorbed elements of both cultures. Although the oral tales have long since dissipated, the resonance of immediacy within these stories may still be discerned through the texts that remain.

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[95] Ibid., 110.

[96] David A. Flory, *Marian Representations in the Miracle Tales of Thirteenth-Century Spain and France* (Washington, The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 16.

[97] John Esten Keller, *Pious Brief Narrative in Medieval Castilian & Galician Verse, from Berceo to Alfonso X* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1978), 1.

The irony of Mary's development in early medieval culture is that she grows in inverse fashion when compared with most topics, characters, or themes generally found in the orality-literacy continuum. For example, Waltar J. Ong, perhaps the father of orality-literacy studies, uses Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as archetypes of oral tales.[98] Dating from the 1100s BCE but not written down until during or after the 8th century BCE, these epics were conceived and developed in oral cultures and subsequently studied by generations of literate analysts. Ong examines these epics to demonstrate that not only are oral cultures capable of generating "sophisticated verbal art forms" but also to show that fundamental vestigial elements of oral cultures remain even in the filtration that occurs when they are transcribed into written language.[99] Essentially, Ong postulates that literate cultures examine texts exclusively from a literate perspective and often fail to note or to acknowledge the oral remains in the text: "For over two millennia literates have devoted themselves to the study of Homer, with varying mixtures of insight, misinformation and prejudice, conscious and unconscious. Nowhere do the contrasts between orality and literacy or the blind spots of the unreflective chirographic or typographic mind show in richer context."[100] Readers began to reappraise, for example, the oral redundancies inherent in Greek epics; the use of epithets, formulaic phrasing, or the common trope of introducing chapters with the goddess Aurora, which began to be understandable as being mnemonic devices common to oral cultures.

Interestingly, the inverse is true with Marian tales of the later medieval period. Having been developed in a literate culture—in the New Testament and in subsequent biographies and

[98] Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (New York: Routledge, 1982). Ong's chapter on the subject of the Greek epic and oral tradition relies on previous work undertaken by Milman Parry in the 1920s. Parry's doctoral dissertation postulated the idea of oral formulaic development based on his study of the Greek dactylic hexameter and the use of phrasing that easily adapted to the metric requirements.

[99] Ibid., 17.

[100] Ibid.

tales in patristic and early monastic writing—the tales passed through a variety of mechanisms into popular, oral culture. Once in the hands, or perhaps mouths, of non-literates, Mary's role expanded in ways that were not controlled by theologians or by the fathers of the church. With Christ in heaven, Mary the intercessor was taken up and carried forward on a tide of popular veneration.

Mary's ascendency in popular culture arrived through a variety of conduits. Consider first the rise of churches dedicated to her service and veneration, which overwhelmed dedications to other saints. Writing about religion among common medieval folk, Rosalind and Christopher Brooke claim that popularity could be gaged by assessing church dedications: "if one takes a simple test of how the saints stood in popular esteem, one can compare the relative frequency of the dedications of churches to Mary and the other saints." Although local saints prevailed up until the tenth and even the eleventh centuries, "Mary was still the favourite of all. In the 12th and 13th centuries her long reign came to its climax, not only in the popularity of her cult and of dedications to her, but in the artistic theme of her Coronation, which spread from Reading and Saint-Denis all over Christendom."[101] A common person entering a church could not help but be overawed by the importance of the Virgin, the namesake of so many impressive building projects.

In and around the environment of medieval churches, tympana, statues, frescoes, and other architectural and pictographic representations of Mary abounded. While Miri Rubin affirms the importance of Marian art, she does describe one problem: "Mary's veneration is intimately tied to her physical image. The intersection of art and faith has long been an uneasy

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[101] Rosalind and Christopher Brooke, *Popular Religion in the Middle Ages: Western Europe 1000-1300* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1984), 33.

one. It has been shadowed by iconoclasm, or icon destruction."[102] Once the Second Council of Nicaea (787) settled the troubling problem of iconoclasm, her image bloomed through Christendom. In the twelfth century, while Bernard of Clairvaux (1091-1153) sermonized about the Virgin and dedicated considerable poetry to her praise, stone masons constructed Marian images that would influence far more people than Bernard's verses. Examples are too numerous to describe, but a few may suffice to demonstrate the widespread importance of Marian public illustrations. Rubin points to "a creeping 'marianization' of religious culture" and uses the marianized statue of Rachel in the abbey of St. Martial of Limoges; here, Rachel takes on the pose of the grieving mother and becomes "a prefiguration of Mary."[103] The fact that Mary subsumes the roles of many saints—in this case, the image of Rachel—proves important in the development of songs and tales in which Mary will take on the roles of Christ.

This single example in Limoges cannot fully disclose Mary's conquest of church imagery. Rubin mentions in particular the dominance of Marian imagery in Spain and France: "The twelfth century produced in large parts of France and Iberia, along the routes of trade and pilgrimage, a powerful sense of Mary's grace majesty. She was a figure imaged above all through liturgy and prayer."[104] Indeed, the pilgrimage to Santiago featured routes that laced throughout France with major starting points in Amiens, Reims, Vezelay, Le Puy, and Arles—all of which have cathedrals with significant Marian art. Many of these routes coalesced at St. Jean pied du Port where the mountain pass took hundreds of thousands of pilgrims to the Royal Collegiate Church of Roncesvalles. The current church, one of several on this site in the pass,

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[102] Miri Rubin, *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 174.

[103] Ibid., 177.

[104] Rubin, 181.

was built by “Sancho VII el Fuerte and consecrated in 1219.”[105] The moment that a pilgrim approached, he or she would be faced with an impressive tympanum featuring an austere, upright Mary holding Jesus in her lap. Inside the “Virgin of Roncesvalles,” a silver covered wooden statue stands at the center of the altar and is, even today, considered to be the patron of Navarre.

Just as images of Mary confronted pilgrims even before they entered the church, the interior offered a Marian tribute as well. Chapels dedicated to the Virgin came to be the norm in late Romanesque and Gothic churches; called “lady chapels” in the English tradition, these proliferated in European cathedrals. A lady chapel in Westminster Abbey was built by Henry II, but it is most famous for the expansion undertaken by Henry VII. More that forty such chapels still exist in English churches. One of the most highly illustrated is the lady chapel behind the main altar in Winchester Cathedral. This chapel is decorated with floor-to-ceiling paneled illustrations in fresco that narrate popular Marian miracles, many of which are duplicated in the pages of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*.

With their lives thus circumscribed by the feast days, sermons, and images that feature Mary, it is little wonder that Christians began to see the Virgin intercede personally in their daily lives. Miraculous visions of Mary relate directly to the nature of Mary herself: “Miracles were manifestations of Mary’s power: she bore her son miraculously, she remained a virgin miraculously, even her passing from the world was a miracle.”[106] Marian apparitions began to proliferate throughout Europe; Rene Laurentin has provided a graphic analysis of these apparitions. There are no more than fourteen apparitions per century from the fourth through the tenth; however, there are 30 in the eleventh, 275 in the twelfth, and a peak of 772 in the

[105] David M. Gitlitz and Linda Kay Davidson, *The Pilgrimage Road to Santiago: The Complete Cultural Handbook* (New York: St Martin’s Griffin, 2000), 60.

[106] Rubin, 183.

thirteenth.[107] In some cases, significant shrines were erected in concordance with these appearances of the Virgin; the Spanish Basilica of Our Lady of the Pillar enshrined a supposed appearance of Mary to James the Greater in 40 CE, and the shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham marked the apparition of Mary to Richeldis de Faverches. Both became important pilgrimage sites. Even more interesting, both are associated with subsequent miracles performed, for the most part, on behalf of pilgrims.

Indeed, it is this cascade of miracles that helps engender the hundreds of Marian tales that arise during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Essentially, a miracle of Mary could beget a miraculous appearance of Mary and that begat a subsequent series of miracles for the pilgrims or devotees. A perfect example of this waterfall effect of Marian miracles and the link to the tales may be found in the town of Villalcazar de Sirga. According to Gitlitz and Davidson, the town was established in the eleventh century; "in the 12th [century] it belonged to the Order of San Juan, and in the 13th it was held by one of Alfonso X's brothers, don Felipe."[108] Sirga lies about four miles from Carrion de los Condes, the town associated with the evil "Counts of Carrion," the antagonists in the epic poem *El Cantar de Mio Cid*, or *The Song of My Cid*. Sirga was a stop along the *Camino de Santiago*, the Spanish pilgrimage route. The primary church in Sirga is *Santa Maria la Blanca*, or Holy Mary of the White, so named not only because of Mary's renowned purity but also because of the single, large rose window with its polished alabaster insets. The effect of the translucent, pallid onyx-marble is such that the entire nave is flooded with an iridescent, white glow. Although there are several images of Mary within the church, including Mary and the three wise men featured in the sub-row at the outer porch, the most important image is the statue of the Virgin Blanca that rests on a column to the left of the

[107] "Apparitions of the Past: A Statistical Study," accessed May 16, 2016, http://campus.udayton.edu/mary/resources/aprgraph.html.

[108] Gitlitz and Davidson, 212.

sixteenth-century retablo. This statue was associated with both Marian apparitions and Marian miracles.

The pilgrimage to Santiago attracted many pilgrims not only because of the miracles and indulgence found at the end of the trail but also because of the many religious shrines along the way. According to the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, one of the most efficaciously miraculous shrines was to be found in Sirga. The Virgin Blanca accounts for twelve of the songs in the collection of the *Cantigas*. Cantiga 268 is typical. In this song "a noble lady who was native of the land of France had great trust in the Virgin. While serving her willingly and unfalteringly, she suffered severe pains, the like of which we all dread, in her body." The woman decides to attempt the pilgrimage to Santiago by riding in a cart, but the journey proves almost impossible. In her distress, she "wandered from shrine to shrine" until "some pilgrims returning from Santiago began to tell her of the miracles the Virgin performs in Villa-Sirga." The crippled woman traveled directly to the town and began praying fervently at the foot of the statue of the White Virgin. Before finishing her prayer, she was miraculously healed. In the tale's epilogue, the poet writes, "After this lady was cured of the affliction she had, she returned to her land and was Holy Mary's servant as long as she lived. Hence let us ever serve and praise her for such a beautiful miracle."

Cantiga 268 provides a window into the reciprocating world of event and narrative in the Middle Ages. Mary's ability to offer miraculous healing to her devoted followers was recounted in these narrative songs. The renown of such healings and, in fact, the songs themselves spread across Europe. One clear method of transmission was along the pilgrimage routes themselves that laced across the countryside. Inspired by pilgrimage tales, filled with images of the Virgin in her many manifestations, augmented by the feast days that served as constant reminders of the

events in her life, and even supplemented by the official sanction offered by way of sermons, the common person adapted quickly to the proliferation of narrative surrounding their Blessed Virgin.

2.5 Collections of Marian Tales

The collections of Marian tales, called *mariales*, have been labeled and catalogued by two researchers working in the past 150 years: Adolphe Mussafia (1835-1905) and Albert Poncelet (1861-19112). The most effective starting point for the study of the *mariales* is the database maintained by the Centre for the Study of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* at Oxford University.[109] Founded in 2005, the Centre provides an online resource that lists all of the songs in the Cantigas, includes a Spanish/English synopsis of each, and has an exhaustive bibliography of research into these works. Additionally, the site offer the "Electronic Poncelet." Although Mussafia's work was beneficial, the definitive catalogue of *mariales* was completed by Poncelet in 1902.[110] The database maintained by the Cantigas Project uses Poncelet and other more modern sources to cross list the Latin and vernacular collections of *mariales*.

As mentioned above, the collections of Marian tales moved organically back and forth between high and low culture. In all cases, the earliest collections were written in Latin by church scholars, but later collections are vernacular in as much as they rely on popular sources or were intended for popular audiences. It should not be surprising since Mariology began in the East that the earliest collection of tales are of eastern origin, but they were told by the Gallo-Roman, Gregory of Tours (c. 538-594), in his *Liber miraculorum* that include six stories of

[109]"The Oxford Cantigas de Santa Maria Database," accessed February 2, 2016, http://csm.mml.ox.ac.uk/?p=home.

[110] Index miraculorum B.V. Mariae quae saec. VI-XV latine conscripta sunt', *Analecta Bollandiana*, 21 (1902), 242-360.

Mary's life. Mussafia indexes several collections that date from the first decades of the 1100s; Evelyn Faye Wilson comments that these are collected for local churches to be held in their collections. These gatherings of stories often contain variations of earlier Marian narratives that have been specially adapted, placing the setting of the tale in the immediate locale for local readers and tellers.

> Such are those [collections of local tales] compiled for the Mary churches of their respective towns by John of Coutances at the very beginning of the twelfth century, by Guibert de Nogent (d. 1124) and Herman of Laon (compiled c. 1150), by Hugo Farsitus of Soissons, and by the abbot Haimon writing for the Mary church of St. Pierre-sur-Dive in Mormandy. Rocamador in Guienne, Chartres, and Fecamp also had their collections made by anonymous compilers in the twelfth century.[111]

In in the early Middle Ages, every church needed to have a relic to call its own; by the twelfth century, churches of substantial self-worth, especially those that fashioned themselves pilgrimage sites, had to have a collection of Marian tales that featured local connections.[112] Actually, Evelyn Wilson finds two causal links to the spread of these collections throughout Europe: "The network of Cluniac monasteries and the pilgrimage routes offered new and broader avenues along which Mary legends could make their way." After Odo privileged Mary as the Mother of Mercy at Cluny, "not only did the number of Mary legends increase rapidly, but the same legends came to be known far from their original home."[113]

The Oxford University Cantigas Project cross references 57 different collections of Marian tales. There are many more, but these tales are proximal to the Cantigas in date and

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[111] Evelyn Faye Wilson, *The Stella Maris of John of Garland: Edited, Together With a Study of Certain Collections of Mary Legends Made in Northern France in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Medieval Academy of America, 1946), 3.

[112] In fact, the Second Council of Nicaea (787) *required* that churches have a relic laid down with the altar stone prior to consecration. This prerequisite can be interpreted as a part of the anti-iconoclastic movement. The seventh session of the council affirmed that images of Jesus, Mary, angels, and saints could be employed in worship and to inspire veneration. This constitute of the council was repudiated by Reformation leaders—most famously by John Calvin in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559).

[113] Wilson, 4.

contain locally divergent tales. The five most substantial in terms of number and influence are Nigel of Canterbury's *Miracula Sancte Dei Genitricis Virginis Marie*, John of Garland's *Stella Maris*, Gautier de Coinci's *Miracles de Nostre Dame,* Gonzalo de Berceo's *Milagros de Nuestra Senora*, and the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* compiled and, in part, authored by Alfonso X. A brief overview of their origin and content will reveal their importance and highlight the expanded role that Mary played in medieval culture.

Nigel of Canterbury (d. ca. 1200), also called Nigel de Longchamps and Nigel Wireker, was a monk in Christ Church, Canterbury; although known for several works including a collection of Marian tales, he is most famous for his work *Speculum stultorum*, or *The Mirror of Fools*. That work is a satire on the life of an ass named Burnel who goes in search of a longer tail for himself. A series of misadventures take Burnel to the University of Paris and even into orders. A picaresque parody, it is difficult to read the *Speculum* and not be reminded of Apuleius's *Asinus aureus*, *The Golden Ass*, in which the protagonist is transformed into an ass and through a series of misadventures, rediscovers his humanity. Not unlike Apuleius's work, the *Speculum* incorporates several tales in its 4,000 lines; in his introduction to a collection of Nigel's work, Jan M. Ziolkowski comments on the structure of the ass's tale: "the narrative of Burnel's quest is supplemented by five long anecdotes and various shorter reminiscences, dreams, and visions."[114] The fact that Nigel's work was well known is witnessed by Chaucer's Nun's priest who mentions, "I have wel rad in 'Daun Burnel the Asse'."[115]

Ziolkowski provides what is probably the best biographic information about Nigel of Canterbury's life and certainly offers an excellent study of the author's works. There are, in fact, few mentions of him outside of histories of Canterbury—and that occurs because his family lived

[114] Nigel of Canterbury, *The Passion of St. Lawrence Epigrams and Marginal Poems,* ed. and trans. by Jan M. Ziolkowski (New York: E.J. Brill, 1994), 1.
[115] Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, ln. 3312.

and owned property in the area.[116] Ziolkowski identifies the manuscript of almost all of the author's works: "Most of Nigel's verse is religious verse contained, in many cases uniquely, in London, British Library, MS. Cotton Vespasian D. xix, folios 1-53."[117] Although Ziolkowski claims that Nigel's *Miracula Sancte Dei Genitricis Virginis Marie* "is the earliest surviving collection of versified Marian miracles in Latin," such a statement requires clarification.[118] Of the seventeen tales in the collection, fifteen are also found in William of Malmesbury's Latin prose work, *De Laudibus ed miraculis Sanctae Mariae*; where Nigel's versions stand alone is in their alliterative versification. All of Nigel's poems are collected in the *Cantigas*.

Unlike his predecessor Nigel, the author of *Miracula beatae Mariae virginis, sive Stella maris, sive Liber metricus*, otherwise called the *Stella Maris*, is not a monk, but he is, rather, a layman and a teacher. John of Garland (1190-1270) demonstrates the migration of Marian tales across cultural strata. A teacher at the University of Paris and, later, at the University of Toulouse, Garland collects and transcribes the tales for didactic purposes that went beyond those of his antecedents. In the first lines of the preface to *Stella Maris*, he describes taking his source "*ab armario Sancte Genoveve Parisiensis*" (from the collection of St. Genevieve of Paris).[119] Unfortunately, the collection from St. Genevieve was dismantled and partially destroyed in the sixteenth century, so John's exact source remains a mystery.[120] Like Nigel's work, the *Stella Maris* has never been translated from Latin; in the case of John of Garland's collection, there is no pressing need. He declares in the preface that the work is intended for use by his students—to educate them concerning the life and labors of the Virgin and to improve the quality of their

[116] Ziolkowski, 9.
[117] Ibid., 3.
[118] Ibid., 1.
[119] Wilson, 87.
[120] Ibid., 59.

lives. As such is his intent, the Latin is fairly simple and clearly fashioned as a tool to teach both linguistic and theological content.

The sixty-one tales in the *Stella Maris*, "The Star of the Sea," do not stand alone in the text; rather, they are facets in the broader context of Mary's life that John relates to his pupils. Following the preface, the text begins "*De Patre ed Matre Gloriose Virginis*" (About the Father and Mother of the Glorious Virgin); clearly relying on the tradition established in the *Protoevangelium*, the first poem describes Ioachim and Anna, the Virgin's parents. Also included are descriptions of feast days and hymns to Mary; certainly, the intent is to provide as complete a Mariorum as can be packaged for young learners. John offers a whirlwind of Marian ideas, including the concept that plain, unadulterated praise for the Virgin was a necessary supplementation to the narratives themselves. Interjected among the tales are verses of adoration; this practice of intermixing tale with laude would be adopted by Alfonso X in the *Cantigas*. The idea behind this technique was an ancient one; as early as the early fifth century, Maurus Servius Honoratus (called Servius Grammaticus for his work *Ars grammatica*) had written that Virgil's intent in writing the *Aeneid* was to imitate Homer and to praise Augustus. The juxtaposed notion of *imitatio* and *laudatio* naturally connected with religious literature as well—in the case of the Marian tales, the function was to imitate Mary as well as to praise her. In her introduction to the *Stella Maris*, Wilson suggests that the inclusion of the canticles of praise in Alfonso's later work may be attributable to John.[121]

With John, the Marian tales move into the laity, but with Gautier de Coinci (1177–1236) the songs of Mary make the leap into the vernacular world of the medieval troubadour. Unlike his authorial peers and owing in part to his expansive and popular writings, Gautier's life has been well documented. Considered the definitive edition of Coinci's collected works, V.

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[121] Ibid., 68.

Frederic Koenig's *Las Miracles de Nostre Dame par Gautier de Coinci*, 4 vols (Geneva: Droz, 1955-70) is unfortunately unavailable in translation. Tony Hunt offers an apt appraisal of Coinci's contributions:

> Few medieval writers showed a more single-minded devotion to the Virgin Mary than the northern-French Benedictine monk Gautier de Coinci, whose two books of Marian miracles contain 58 narratives, 18 *chansons* and total approximately 35,500 octosyllabic lines, an astonishingly generous sample of literary Old French which qualitatively puts him on a part with the output of so celebrated a writer as Chretien de Troyes and quantitatively exceeds the entire medieval production of *fabliaux*, or of the *Roman de Renart* in its fullest extent.[122]

Hunt goes on to record the impressive leavings of Coinci's output: "the survival of his work, in part or whole, in 114 manuscripts (17 of which transmit the complete *Miracles*), with 61 deriving from the thirteenth century, cannot fail to impress, for its extent is exceeded only by the *Roman de la Rose*."[123] The structure of his *Miracles* reflects that of John of Garland's *Stella Maris* with its interspersed tales and songs of praise, but Coinci's work was far more popular.[124] Krijnie Ciggaar indicates that Coinci's collection traveled not only to the Christian East but also into Muslim-controlled areas of the east including Palestine.[125]

Gautier was popular because he combined the excellent literary style with popular music. He had a "keen interest in the work of the troubadours and in the latest poetic fashions" relying on "the elegant . . . *amour courtois*."[126] Julie Nelson Couch makes the point that Gautier represented the pinnacle of a change that occurred in the nature of the Marian tale: "In their

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[122] Tony Hunt, *Miraculous Rhymes: The Writing of Gautier de Coinci* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewster, 2007), 3.

[123] Ibid., 4.

[124] By comparison, Garland's *Stella Maris* exists in just two manuscripts: *MS British Museum Royal 8c iv* (usually referred to as the "M" manuscript) and *MS Bruges 546*, fol. 76-76v (called the "B" manuscript).

[125] Krijnie Ciggaar, "Manuscripts as Intermediaries: The Crusader States and literary Cross-fertilization" in *East and West in the Crusader States: Context – Contacts – Confrontations* edited by Krijnie Ciggaar, Adelbert Davids, and Herman Teule (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters Press, 1996), 141.

[126] David A. Flory, *Marian Representations in the Miracle Tales of Thirteenth-Century Spain and France* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press), 50.

earlier Latin forms, miracle tales were often given only in brief synopsis." Later vernacular versions "add literary characteristics more familiarly associated with metrical romances: fuller characterization, direct dialogue, and enhanced dramatic unity."[127] Many of the songs show how Mary actively guides men and women in the affairs of love. A group of them have a decidedly local flair; born in the vicinity of Soissons, Gautier sets several of the stories from the second volume in that locale. As a result, his songs mix miracle with verisimilitude and traditionalism with contemporary styling.

Like Gautier, Gonzalo de Berceo (ca. 1197 – before 1264) also wrote in his vernacular language; in Gonzalo's case the language is Riojan, a local variation on Castilian Spanish. Gonzalo is often cited as "the first important Spanish poet known to us by name."[128] Born in the autonomous region of La Rioja in the small village of Berceo, Gonzalo became a monk at San Millan de la Cogolla and probably spent his life between the two monasteries of Yuso and Suso. In describing his artistic style, translators Mount and Cash relate Gonzalo's work to an emerging art form: "Berceo wrote in the erudite poetic form of *cuaderna via* (four-fold way), a form derived from a similar medieval Latin verse and utilized by the writers of the *mester de clerecia* (scholars' art). This poetry was didactic and developed through French cultural influence in monasteries and emerging universities."[129] *Mester de clercia* was a genre of Castilian poetry somewhat in opposition to *mester de juglaria*, or minstrels' art, which was associated with the singing of common tales; the latter of these, the *juglaria*, derived its name from the fact that this literature was often performed accompanied in tandem by other ludi such as plays, animal acts, or juggling.

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[127] Julie Nelson Couch, "'The Child Slain by Jews" and 'The Jewish Boy'" in *Medieval Literature for Children* ed. by Daniel T. Kline (New York: Routledge), 206.

[128] Gonzalo de Berceo*, Miracles of Our Lady* trans. by Richard Terry Mount and Annette Grant Cash (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 1.

[129] Ibid.

Despite the fact that he writes in the *clerecia* form, his tales often draw upon the *juglaria* tradition. His twenty-five narratives regularly contain bawdy allusions, raucous puns, and can be "both simple and sagacious, the embodiment of the duality of the model scholar-cleric."[130] By comparison, his Latin sources are relatively devoid of such qualities: "Berceo responded to his Latin sources creatively. The Latin originals are sparing in visual, audible, and tactile details, and they provide comparatively little in the way of dramatic monologues or interchanges among the characters. Berceo can be expansive in these things."[131] In fact, Richard Burkard points out that "one of the goals of the . . . Milagros was to further the interests of the monastery of San Millan de la Cogolla."[132] Berceo's works were clearly intended to be read aloud in order to entertain a general, or mixed audience of listeners.

The need for entertainment was bound up in the time and in San Millan's location. By the late twelfth and early thirteenth century, a social shift was underway in Spain. Francisco Rico describes the ways that monasteries were declining in their influence over Spanish politics and economics.[133] The various Spanish kings and nobility began to seize control over income streams as their sources of income from conquest began to recede; San Millan found itself in need of a revised economic strategy. Fortunately for Yuso and Suso, they were located just a few miles south of the Santiago pilgrimage trail. By the eleventh century San Millan opened pilgrim hostels on the route with the intention of encouraging the excursion to their monastery. Thus, many scholars conclude that the Milagros were "written to be read or recited and even acted out for an audience of religious pilgrims."[134] Although Gonzalo intended that the *Milagros*

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[130] Ibid., 2.

[131] Ibid., 97.

[132] Richard Burkard, The Cult of the Virgin in the Milagros of Gonzalo de Berceo: Its Type and Purpose (Newark, Delaware: Juan de la Cuesta, 2011), 121.

[133] Francisco Rico, "La clerecia del mester," *Hispanic Review* 53, no. 1 (1985): 1-23, 8-9.

[134] Mount and Cash, 14.

have a didactic purpose, he wrote vernacular poetry for mixes reasons—"for the entertainment and edification of both laity and clergy, be they monks, pilgrims, or the people of his bishopric."[135]

Gonzalo's Marian tales serve several purposes with multiple audiences; the work that it, in part, inspired, the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, grew out of the same environment. More than sixteen times the number of tales and songs of praise, the *Cantigas* rest atop the list of important collections of *mariales* in terms of size and cultural outreach. The development of a cultural and political self-concept—all the minutiae that customarily delineate the term *nation*—was severely constrained in twelfth- and thirteenth-century medieval Spain. Having been occupied and influenced in the early part of the first millennium initially by the Romans and then by the Visigoths, the central Iberian Peninsula quickly found itself under the control of Moorish forces early in the eighth century. Almost immediately, Christian kings from a variety of loosely-related, though competitive, northern provinces began the Reconquista, a sporadic and non-systematic attempt to impose Christian control over Spain lasting from the Battle of Covadonga in 722 to the conquest of Granada in 1492. Though occasionally blurred both culturally and politically, the lines between Moorish al-Andalus and the geographically narrow Christian North remained distinct enough to prompt Bernard F. Reilly to title his history of the region *The Medieval Spains*; the plural nature of the title reflects the geographic, religious, and political fragmentation that Spain underwent in its long (and some would argue, still incomplete) road to cultural unification. Reilly indicates that not until a papal bull allowed the marriage of Isabel and Fernando in 1469 could historians assert that "a single dynasty had gained the power of

[135] *Gonzalo de Berceo and the Latin Miracles of the Virgin: A Translation and a Study,* edited by Patricia Timmons and Robert Boenig (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing, 2012), 96.

direction over both Castile and Aragon and the further consolidation of the peninsula under its government was all but inevitable."[136]

If there once existed multiple Spains, then the history of Spain might be discussed in terms of how successfully a given religious or political entity or leader came to achieving unity in the area; indeed, according to Joseph F. O'Callaghan, "reflecting upon the history of medieval Spain, one can perceive as the recurrent theme the persistence with which men strove to unify the peninsula."[137] In the mid-thirteenth century, a Spanish king, Alfonso X, attempted to do just that—unify the kingdoms and provide some social stability through statecraft and scholarship. Admittedly, the political achievements of Alfonso "were less than distinguished," but even O'Callaghan, an Alfonsine critic, affirms that "from a cultural standpoint the reign has exceptional significance because of the work that he and scholars associated with him accomplished in the fields of literature, history, and law."[138] Called *El Sabio*, "The Wise," because of his scholarly pursuits and his tolerance for both Mudejar and Jewish artists, Alfonso contributed to the cultural and social welfare of Spain through the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, a labor of love that combined Alfonso's piety with his troubadour's skills.

Of the four, thirteenth-century manuscript version of the *Cantigas*, the two held in the monastic library at El Escorial draw the most critical attention. The so-called "Escorial J.B.2" manuscript contains the greatest number of songs, 427, while the "Escorial T.I.1," also called the *Codex Rico* or "Rich Text," is the most lavishly illustrated.[139] Both manuscripts pose a media gold mine since they contain elements of three arts—literature, music, and visual art. The stories of Mary are included, to be sure, but also present is musical notation hinting at, through

[136] Bernard F. Reilly, *The Medieval Spains*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 209.
[137] Joseph F. O'Callaghan, *A History of Medieval Spain* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), 21.
[138] Ibid., 359.
[139] Connie L. Scarborough, *Women in Thirteenth-Century Spain as Portrayed in Alfonso's Cantigas de Santa Maria*, (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1993), 3-4.

providing an incomplete picture of, the way in which these narratives would have been sung. On the recto side of the folio, the story contained in the song is illustrated in panel-narrative form in much the same way as a modern comic book relates a narrative through sequential images.

The language and poetic forms of the *Cantigas* themselves is almost as remarkable as the marvels posed by the high art of the bookcraft. Rather than write in Cantilian, the language of Alfonso's other works, including his law code, *Las Siete Partidas*, the king chose to compose in Galician-Portuguese, the language used by Spanish and Portuguese troubadours. His choice becomes all the more unusual by the fact that his "use of the troubadour tongue for the writing of sacred song was a unique phenomenon since Galician-Portuguese was the language employed by poets for the more worldly subject matters of the *Cantigas de Amigo*, *De Amor*, and *De escarnio* or *De Mal Dizir*."[140] Furthermore, John Esten Keller and Annette Grant point out that "the *Cantigas* preserved every verse form then known in Spain before the Golden Age except the sonnet."[141] Alfonso had a poet's heart and a musician's ear; he combined these talents with his love of Holy Mary. His use of a language most often associated with love songs is inspired by Gautier de Coinci and constitutes an attempt to embrace Mary not only as a venerated saint but also as a woman capable of love and redemption.

The *Cantigas* embrace more tales from more traditions than any other single collection—and more than most collections combined. Of the 427 songs, every tenth song is a *cantiga de loor*, a song of praise. The nine songs in between these hymns of praise come from all over Europe. Alfonso's scholars collected and transcribed them; he is called "El Sabio" because he used Christian, Jewish, and Moorish scholars, artists, and musicians in this work. His use of so

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[140] Ibid., 4-5.

[141] John Esten Keller and Annette Grant Cash, *Daily Life Depicted in the Cantigas de Santa Maria* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1998), 2.

many scholars does beg the question of authorship. John Esten Keller summarizes what most modern scholars confirm in the world of Alfonsine inquiry.

> In the *Cantigas* we can see the king actually pictured, we can read one of the Cantigas . . . which is listed under his mane and recognized as his composition, along with scores of other poems, and we know from the prologues to his works that the king oversaw and edited all the books produced under his patronage. It is therefore necessary to insist, when one speaks of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* of Alfonso X, that these songs may well be his own compositions, either in toto or in part.[142]

What must be understood here is the high degree of intentionality with which Alfonso infused the text. Even the border illustrations of the first songs in the Codex Rico reflect his election as Holy Roman Emperor; the paneled illustrations carry the crest and colors typical of that high office. The songs are infused with political, social, economic, and religious intention.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has examined how Mary came to be in thirteenth-century culture. Her story begins with a few, scant verses scattered throughout the New Testament—verses that frequently do not refer to her by name, nor do they give her a voice or much in the way of character development. There are too many holes in the narrative, and generations of readers have discovered ways to fill in the holes for themselves. From that meager foundation, a profusion of feast days, observances, shrines, apparitions, prayers, sermons, songs, and tales proliferated in the fertile soil of her many admirers' imaginations. The phenomenon is not unlike modern fanfiction.

> In fanfiction, authors artfully draw from their favorite media, such as books, movies, video games, and television shows, to create alternate plotlines, introduce new characters or refocus attention on peripheral characters, transfer the action of the series to different

[142] Keller, *Pious Brief Narrative in Medieval Castilian & Galician Verse*, 84.

settings, develop prequels and sequels, and extend or realize relationships between various characters.[143]

The fanfiction singularity takes hold of an author like Jane Austen and generations later, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* by Seth Grahame-Smith become a bestseller. The many new Sherlock Holmes stories appearing years after the death of Arthur Conan Doyle, or the modern websites dedicated to discovering new tales of the *Hunger Games* never imagined by Suzanne Collins testify to this effect. Simply put, readers, listeners, and viewers want *more*.

But "more" comes at a cost. As the story and the characters are handed over to new generations of authors, original authorial control is lost. Charles Dickens discovered that sending installments of his novels out to an adoring public frequently meant loss of control over the plot and its characters. Pirated versions of his works—complete with conclusions—appeared before Dickens could complete a given novel.[144] Once a popular character runs loose in the world, anyone's imagination can carry the character forward.

Mary is just such a character. Generations of fans have explored the untold parts of her story and provided her with, in fanfiction terms, a backstory. More than that, generations of theologians looking to forestall a heretical notion about the nature of Jesus have created additional Marian narratives and character features in order to provide an argument. Church councils have validated expanded roles for her, and these expanded roles were taken up by an all-too-willing set of admirers. Some needed her to offer hope for cures when plagues decimated populations. Others needed Mary to be the standard bearer in the *Reconquesta*, and still others

[143] Rebecca Ward Black, "Just Don't Call Them Cartoons: The New Literacy Spaces of Anime, Manga, and Fanfiction" pp 583-610 in *Handbook of Research on New Literacies,* edited by Julie Coiro, Michele Knobel, Colin Lankshear, and Donald J. Leu (New York: Routledge, 2008), 593.

[144] In the case of *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens resolved to track down and demand reparations from the pirates. He was frustrated with the legal system that required he spend a small fortune in fees defending his works, but he did have a measure of revenge. His novel *Bleak House*, featuring the law case of Jarndyce vs. Jarndyce satirized the many inefficiencies with the English legal system.

took advantage of apparitions to build shrines and generate income in shifting economic times. Mary herself, however unintentionally, trespassed on heresy; some of Gautier's songs were called questionable by a papal investigation. The miracles attested to were almost never validated by official church inquiry, and Mary frequently exhibits powers that subvert church doctrine. The notion that she could absolve sins of the most egregious sort pleased listeners but worried some churchmen.

As Mary's power on earth expands in the tales—she can heal, resurrect, dispel demons, judge, and absolve—what happens to the role of Christ? Mary's narrative not only expands from the launching point of the Bible, but she also subsumes. Even as the deified Christ fades into distant heaven, her fans on earth embrace the Virgin with newly imagined roles.

CHAPTER 3

MARY AS PHYSICIAN: HEALING THE SICK AND HEALING THE SINFUL IN MARIAN TALES

Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is there no healing for the wound of my people?

Jeremiah 8:22

3.1 Chapter Introduction

According to song number 209 from King Alfonso X's collection of thirteenth-century Marian tales titled *Las Cantigas de Santa Maria*, the *Songs of Holy Mary*, Alfonso, called *el Sabio* for his great wisdom, was in the town of Vitoria in the province of Alava, Spain when he became debilitated by a severe illness. All those who saw the king were convinced that the sickness would take his life, but the chorus of this song portends a different outcome: "He who denies God and His blessings commits a great error and is grievously in the wrong."[1] The cantiga is told in the first person and intimately reveals don Alfonso's faith in the healing power of his patroness. In the second stanza, the king proclaims his fealty to Mary: "I shall never fall into this error [the denial described in the chorus]."

Alfonso himself takes delight in recounting the story of his rescue: "I shall tell you what happened to me while I lay in Vitoria." Although he was afflicted by such mortal pain that he believed that he might die, Alfonso called upon the Virgin. The doctors, who apparently operated in a more pragmatic medical universe than their lord, ordered hot compresses to be applied to the king's body. However, the king sent them away and, instead, ordered that the

[1] Alfonso X and Kathleen Kulp-Hill, *Songs of Holy Mary of Alfonso X, the Wise: A Translation of the "Cantogas de Santa Maria"* (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval & Renaissance Studies, US, 2000), 251. As indicated in Chapter 1, ensuing references to individual *Cantigas* will be made simple by the song as numbered in the Kulp-Hill edition. Since most songs are between one and three pages in length, scholars simply refer to the song with the understanding that it will be referenced according to the edition indicated. It is unnecessary and redundant to refer to page numbers in much the same way that references to the Bible are made by book, chapter, and verse without reference to a page number in a particular text.

book of the *Songs of Holy Mary* be brought forth. From the moment that the book touched his body, Alfonso felt perfect peace, and all pain left his frame. Alfonso never experienced a moment of doubt as to the source of his deliverance: "I gave thanks to Her for it, for I know full well She was dismayed at my affliction." Indeed, all those around him fell to the earth praising the Lady of Great Worth for having delivered their king.

CSM 209 has been one of the most discussed of all the songs in the collection for several reasons. First, it is remarkable for having almost certainly been written by the troubadour king himself. Its authorship, the high probability that it was actually composed by Alfonso, brings modern scholars tantalizingly close to the utterances of the wise king. The use of the first person point of view accomplishes this heightened intimacy. Connie L. Scarborough agrees that "The King's voice can also be discerned in those poems in which he claims to have personal knowledge of the miracle and for those he has personally witnessed."[2] While Scarborough admits that "we cannot claim that these songs were unquestionably penned by Alfonso, we can examine how he uses the first-person narrative voice to maneuver and manipulate a religious event."[3] Writing in the first person—bearing witness to events that actually occurred to the narrator—brings a level of veracity to the text.

Indeed, a second reason why so many scholars have been drawn to this song is the historicity that emerges. It recounts events that, although not directly mentioned in the *Chronicle of Alfonso X*, nevertheless have upon it the legitimacy of history. In his biography of Alfonso, H. Salvador Martinez cites the worth of CSM 209 in examining the historic particulars of the age; Martinez speaks for other scholars in writing that "the common opinion is that his poetic works reveal historic reality in images and words much more faithfully than the documents [official

[2] Connie L. Scarborough, *A Holy Alliance: Alfonso X's Political Use of Marian Poetry* (Newark, Delaware: Juan de la Cuesta, 2009), 41.

[3] Ibid.

court histories] themselves."[4] In particular, revealing intimate details about the king's physical state and his devotional life mean that "the *Cantigas* are thus an invaluable historical source to learn about certain aspects of Alfonso's life."[5] The revelatory nature of the tale, that it provides a window into the king's health and the depth and character of his religious faith, invites speculation about his inner self. CSM 200, 209, 235, 279, 366, and 367 all relate aspects of the king's health and may be cross-matched with Alfonso's movements as documented in the *Cronica*.

A third reason for the gathering interest in this particular song rests in the manner in which the king makes use of the text of the *Cantigas*. In his study of textual amulets, Don C. Skemer calls attention to CSM 209. Generally, Skemer's study looks at the use of text written or reproduced on a small piece of paper and usually worn by a believer as a talisman: "When worn around the neck or placed elsewhere on the body, they were thought to protect the wearer against known and unknown enemies, to drive away or exercise evil spirits, to heal specific afflictions caused by demonic invasions of the unprotected self, and to bring people good fortune, even at the expense of others."[6] Skemer mentions the manuscript illustrations for CSM 209 that depict Alfonso holding the text to his heart, kissing the book, and sitting up and resting it on his knees. The priests who reverentially handle the book "facilitated the application of sacred word therapy."[7] Skemer concludes "since the king's book was devoted to the miracles of the Virgin Mary, who was often the intermediary in appeals for divine blessing, its healing powers might have had the aspect of both a relic as well as an amulet." Clearly, these songs are more than

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[4] H. Salvador Martinez, *Alfonso the Learned: A Biography* (Leiden, Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2010), 229.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Don C. Skemer, *Binding Words: Textual Amulets in the Middle Ages* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 1.

[7] Ibid., 57.

records of miracles and they are more that works of art for instruction and entertainment; they are works of pure devotion imbued with a magic of their own capable of working a miracle.

Finally, scholars and readers for centuries have been captivated by the quality of the manuscript illustrations. The six panels follow the narrative precisely; moreover, they convey a lavishness of color and clothing as well as relate the emotions of the king and those around him with touching tenderness. The manuscript illustrations engender a level of personal, regal intimacy rarely found elsewhere in Marian songs—bedroom depictions of a vulnerable person in distress that strip away some of the grandeur of his title. Keller and Kinkade provide a description of each panel in their book *Iconography in Medieval Spanish Literature*.[8] They provide a panel-by-panel summary of the emotional impact of these illuminations.

> In the king definite character emerges: his disdain for worldly cures; his confidence in the divine; his belief in Our Lady's power and willingness to heal him; and his pious respect for the wondrous book he has caused to be written and illuminated in her honor; even his deep love for his patroness is apparent as he lifts the volume in his hands and kisses it.[9]

In the final panel, Alfonso, his hands pressed together in prayer, lifts his eyes up to heaven, praising Mary. As the final line of the text indicates, members of his court and attending doctors are on their knees with their hands and eyes likewise uplifted.

Clearly, the king had faith in Mary's curative powers, and he was alone in this expectation—a loneliness that makes his faith all the more potent. Throughout the *Cantigas*, lay persons and clergy alike credit the Virgin with almost every sort of cure imaginable. On what basis does she receive this gift of healing, and how does her ability to mend even severed limbs compare with the restorative powers of Christ? Of course, illness and healing are metaphors for sin and redemption, but are there criteria for receiving Mary's blessing? This chapter looks at

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[8] John E. Keller and Richard P. Kinkade, *Iconography in Medieval Spanish Literature* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1984), 30-32.

[9] Ibid., 31.

the ways that illness and cures are represented in early sources—the Bible and among the early church fathers, in later theological works, and in the Marian tales. The representation of illness and healing through these tales reveals a systematic and symbolic representation of health.

3.2 Traditions of Healing in the Bible

The connection between illness, affliction, and sin in the Christian consciousness of the Middle Ages is deeply rooted in biblical literature. Some fundamental elements are made clear in the texts of the Old Testament: God created human beings; bodily sickness, pain, and death result from transgressions in the Garden; God uses illness and disease as a measure of control or chastisement; God can relieve the suffering of all maladies. Throughout the Old Testament, healing becomes one of the archetypal events that delineate the signs and wonders associated with the judgement and the redemptive purpose of God's covenant with His people. Howard Clark Kee agrees that "a central image for depicting God's work in the creation—in what moderns might refer to as both nature and history—is that of healing."[10] In particular, Kee points to a passage in Exodus that illustrates God's centrality in dealing with disease: "If you listen carefully to the Lord your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, who heals you."[11] From the first book of the testament to the last, God's people are given ample evidence to believe that, although God permits illness to ensue, "the powers of evil will be overcome, and the final restoration of creation will occur."[12]

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[10] Howard Clark Kee, *Medicine, Miracle and Magic in New Testament Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 12.

[11] Exodus 15:26

[12] Kee, 23.

In the moment that Adam and Eve are cast out of the Garden of Eden, God makes plain the idea that their sin will be manifest on their flesh in the form of affliction: "To the woman he [God] said, 'I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labor you will give birth to children'."[13] When Abram went into Egypt because of a famine in his own land, he hoped to trade upon Sarai's beauty and introduced his wife to the pharaoh as his sister. When the Pharaoh took the woman into his palace, "the Lord inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh and his household because of Abram's wife Sarai."[14] The message very early on is that transgression against God's wishes brought pain and illness. Moreover, being free from any physical malformation or disease was required of priests who had the care of worship practices. In discussing who may preform religious services, the Old Testament provides prejudicial guidelines.

> The Lord said to Moses, "Say to Aaron: 'For the generations to come none of your descendants who has a defect may come near to offer the food of his God. No man who has any defect may come near: no man who is blind or lame, disfigured or deformed; no man with a crippled foot or hand, [20] or who is a hunchback or a dwarf, or who has any eye defect, or who has festering or running sores or damaged testicles.[15]

Priests had to be ritually pure and clean; apparently, this mandate implied that physical illness or blemish portended spiritual imperfection.

This association between illness and sin was not lost on people in the Middle Ages, especially as it was, in their minds, demonstrable in the most dire of diseases—leprosy. Relying on sources such as Chaucer's "The Summoner's Tale" and John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, Byron Lee Grigsby specifies, "causes of leprosy in both medieval literature and medical manuals vary greatly, but the Old Testament, primarily the Book of Leviticus, provides the authoritative

[13] Genesis 3:16
[14] Genesis 12:17
[15] Leviticus 21: 16-20

belief that leprosy was a punishment for simony and envy."[16] Moreover, Grigsby notes that leprosy is inherently a malady of the individual. A single person contracts leprosy; it is not conceivably the chastisement of a collective. Assigning blame in a case of leprosy was not a difficult task: "There is no need in medicine, theology, or literature to explain the punishment of innocent victims, because all individuals who get leprosy must be guilty of sin."[17]

Very early, the Bible establishes the precedent that wellness and spiritual purity are connected. Additionally, the Psalms are full of praises for God's healing powers. Psalm 41: 3-4, for example, reinforces this connection between sin and illness: "The Lord sustains them [the weak] on their sickbed and restores them from their bed of illness. I said, 'Have mercy on me, Lord; heal me, for I have sinned against you'." Apparently, it is good to pray to the Lord and seek healing through him, because ignoring him or transgressing can being down a terrible consequence. Near the end of Deuteronomy, it is clear the magnitude of not obeying the law;

> If you do not carefully follow all the words of this law, which are written in this book, and do not revere this glorious and awesome name—the Lord your God—the Lord will plague you with diseases until he has destroyed you from the land you are entering to possess. The Lord will strike you with wasting disease, with fever and inflammation, with scorching heat and drought, with blight and mildew, which will plague you until you perish**."**[18]

Thus, if the adherent fails in perfect fidelity, not only might his or her body be struck with illness but also the land could likewise be brought to waste. One final idea presented in the Old Testament is that the Jewish people expected to be restored to full health in the end time. In this eschatological view, their Messiah will be a Great Physician, capable of restoring believers to complete wellness. This idea makes its presence felt throughout the prophesy of Isaiah; when the savior arrives, expectations were high.

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[16] Byron Lee Grigsby, *Pestilence in Medieval and Early Modern English Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 13.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Deuteronomy 28: 58-61

> Then will the eyes of the blind be opened
> and the ears of the deaf unstopped.
> Then will the lame leap like a deer,
> and the mute tongue shout for joy.[19]

Furthermore, the Bible indicates that the Messiah would suffer maladies and, through that suffering, would offer healing to all the faithful.

> But he was pierced for our transgressions,
> he was crushed for our iniquities;
> the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
> and by his wounds we are healed.[20]

When Christ arrives in the New Testament narrative, the types and diversity of healings reveal that illness was a powerful metaphor, a consistent trope, and foremost in the minds of contemporaries much as it will be evidenced in the Middle Ages. Throughout the Gospels there are more than twenty healing events, many with ritualistic elements associated with them. Additionally, many of these events would reflect the same attitude as evidenced in previous biblical literature towards those who would transgress against the laws of God or against the dictates of God's followers; that is, sickness is directly frequently connected to sin and healing comes only with acknowledgement or repentance.

It should be stated that there are obstacles in delving into the topic of medicine two millennia ago. One of the difficulties with trying to assess early Christian ideas about healing in order to compare or to relate these ideas with medieval notions on the topic is the relative lack of sources. Aside from the Bible, few Christian writings on this subject exist. In his work on early Christian medicine, Gary B. Ferngren acknowledges this difficulty: "Anyone who attempts to understand concepts of illness and healing in the early Christian world is confronted at once with the paucity of sources. While we possess a good deal of Christian literature from the first

[19] Isaiah 35: 5-6
[20] Isaiah 53: 5

through the fifth centuries, we find little that speaks directly of Christian views of healing."[21] A second problem is that the purposes and functions of New Testament literature do not always lend themselves to rational analytics. Again, Ferngren points out that "the New Testament does not yield unambiguous answers to the kinds of questions we ask about sickness and healing because its authors' intention was not to provide information about them but to place them within the context of their intended purpose."[22]

The list of illness and infirmities that Christ heals is lengthy. First, the writers of the Gospels loved a good healing-the-leper story, as did, apparently, General Lew Wallace, the author of *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ*, in which the healing of lepers prominently figures. The story of the man cured of leprosy appears in three of the Gospels (Matt. 8:2-3, Mark 1:40-42, and Luke 5:12-15). This particular treatment involved an oral formula that required a profession of faith: "A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, 'If you are willing, you can make me clean.' Jesus was indignant. He reached out his hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be clean!' Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed."[23] Clearly, the declaration of belief opens the opportunity for healing; much as with some Old Testament restoratives, the disease becomes an opportunity for discipline and instruction. Additionally, the story in Luke adds an element of proselytism: "Then Jesus ordered him [the healed leper], 'Don't tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.' Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses."[24]

Indeed, almost everywhere Jesus went, there seemed to be crowds waiting to be healed.

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[21] Gary B. Ferngren, *Medicine and Health Care in Early Christianity* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 2.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Mark 1:40-42

[24] Luke 5:14-15

Those requesting help frequently had a laundry list of needs: "Great crowds came to him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at his feet; and he healed them. The people were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled made well, the lame walking and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel."[25] Jesus cured paralysis (Matt. 8:5-17; Mark 2:3-12; Luke 5:17-35), blindness (Matt. 9:27-30), shriveled limbs (Matt. 12:10-15; Mark 3:1-5; Luke 6:6-10), the inability to talk (Matt. 12:22), seizures (Matt. 17:14-20; Luke 9:38-42), fever (Mark 1:30-31; Luke 4:38-39), and a twisted spine (Luke 13:10-13). Famously, he reattached the ear that was severed by one of his disciples during his arrest (Luke 22:50-51). Note not only the number of different types of maladies, but also consider the number of these repeated throughout the synoptic Gospels. The iterations indicate the importance placed on physical healing as well as other more spiritual elements such as affirmation of fidelity to Christ's mission and abnegation of sins.

Next to the Gospels, a great number of curative events take place in the book of Acts. Jesus had previously declared that his disciples had the power to restore the sick to wellness: "Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness."[26] As evidenced in this passage, the ability to cast out demons accompanies the ability to provide health. As is discussed in Chapter III of this dissertation, exorcism and wellness often went hand-in-hand even in the *Cantigas*. In the book of Acts, the disciples began to exercise this power of healing that they received from their Messiah. As early as chapter three, Peter and John entered the temple of Jerusalem for prayer when Peter noticed a beggar. When Peter stopped, the beggar expected to receive some alms in the form of money, but Peter surprised him: "Then Peter said, 'Silver or

[25] Matthew 15:31
[26] Matthew 10:1

gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk'."[27] Peter, Philip, and Paul are described by the author of Acts as having performed works of healing. According to the narrative, their reputation became so great that even the inference of their presence seemed enough for people to believe in their curative powers: "As a result [of their reputation for healing], people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed."[28] These incidents set a precedent for later healing, in particular those undertaken by saints into the Middle Ages and afterward.

Additional concepts about the relationship between health, sin, and divine cures are scattered throughout the New Testament. Indeed, the writers of these texts demonstrate a relationship between temporal medicine and divine healing. For example, Paul identifies one of his own co-believers as a medical man: "Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings."[29] This is not the only time that Luke is identified as a doctor. Apparently, some diseases and infirmities are meant to be healed by earthly physicians, while others fall within the purview of God. Additionally, Paul even attempts to offer some medical advice in the case of an ailing friend, Timothy: "Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses."[30] This seems practical advice even for students writing dissertations. Despite these references to practical medicine, the connection between the body and the soul was never lost; furthermore, this important connection was never more clear than in a passage from the book of James.

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[27] Acts 3:7
[28] Acts 5: 15-16
[29] Colossians 4:14
[30] 1 Timothy 5:23

> Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.[31]

These ideas would provide the foundation for expectations about the character and benefit of faith and saints' veneration for ensuing generations.

For the purpose of the present discussion, two final points should be made about the biblical discussion regarding sickness, healing, and sin. First, curative acts in the Bible have a social aspect; healing takes place in the public eye, frequently under scrutiny of an authority, and is celebrated throughout the community. In the New Testament all of the events of healing were shared—even when they only affected an individual. When Jesus attempted to keep the miracle quiet, the news leaked. This same aspect is present in the *Cantigas*. In the songs, even when the healing occurs only to a single person, the tale is, nonetheless, shared with other characters and outside of the tale via disclosure in song, reading, or illustration. Second, the biblical stories of healing never involve Mary. In the Old Testament the Great Physician is God or God's agent; in the New Testament Jesus effects cures as do his disciples—most prominently Peter and Paul. At no time does Mary bring forth a cure in any biblical text.

So, how and when did Mary appropriate Christ's role as the Great Physician? First, it is important to recall that there was a developing rationality in Jewish medicine. Just as Paul reminds the reader that there is room in the world for doctors like Luke and a place for medicinal advice, subsequent Christians have sought out medical advice and remedy. The pragmatic attitude that some medicines and treatments did not require miraculous intervention may have been created out of a cultural fusion between Jewish and Greek attitudes towards healing. Paul's reference to Luke, for example, may have been representational in as much as the Evangelist's

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[31] James 5:14-16

Greek origins were a matter of public assertion. In his study on the life of Luke, Rick Strelan argues that there was little difference between Jewish and Hellenistic culture in the first centuries of Christianity: "It is well known, also by those who make the dichotomy that many, in fact probably most, Jews were Hellenized in the first centuries of the Common Era."[32] Along with many historians, J. Julius Scott, Jr. places the "crisis" of Jewish culture as early as the fourth century BCE. The Jews faced a crisis of cultural and social identity; their ways of thinking about fundamental constructs altered when they encountered Hellenistic culture. One famous example would be concepts concerning an afterlife. Jewish culture and the Old Testament lacked ideas concerning resurrection, rebirth, or a spiritual life after death; Hellenistic culture maintained a complex, tiered system of life after death including a tradition of venerating passed family members.

While Scott admits that "the major characteristics of any historic period or movement can hardly be traced solely to a few specific causes," he goes on to write that "the rise of the diversity which was such an important part of Intertestamental Judaism was undoubtedly affected by personal and group dynamics as well as by geographical, sociological, and economic factors."[33] In the aftermath of Alexander the Great's conquest and expansion of Greek culture, Scott points out that it was the Jews themselves who founded the first gymnasium in Jerusalem for the study of mathematics, rhetoric, and medicine.[34] These Hellenistic attributes were easily transferred to early Christian culture. Indeed, the proximity of the two cultures cause David C. Lindberg to write that in the "Christian doctrine and Greek natural philosophy must be viewed not as

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[32] Rick Strelan *Luke the Priest: The Authority of the Author of the Third Gospel* (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2008), 103.

[33] J. Julius Scott, Jr. *Jewish Backgrounds of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 103.

[34] Ibid. 104-106.

independent, unchangeable bodies of thought situated side-by-side in the patristic period, but as interacting and transformative views of the world."[35]

It should come as no surprise, then, that early Christians did place some credence in medicine as opposed to moving entirely to the intervention of God, Jesus, or the saints. For example, Andrew Daunton-Fear indicates that Origen "has a positive attitude to various branches of knowledge including medicine."[36] Daunton-Fear quotes Origen on the value of a good diet and concludes that Origen "describes the science of medicine and 'useful' and 'necessary' to the human race."[37] Ferngren summarizes the types of medicinal cures most frequently sought by the people of the New Testament.

> Christians of the first five centuries held views regarding the use of medicine and the healing of disease that did not differ appreciably from those that were widely taken for granted in the Graeco-Roman world in which they lived. They did not attribute most diseases to demons, they did not ordinarily seek miraculous or religious cures, and they employed natural means of healing, whether those means involved physicians or home or traditional cures.[38]

Christians did not reach into the world of faith healing because they had temporal means of treatment close at hand. Indeed, three major schools of medicine—Dogmatists, Empiricists, and Methodists—argued amongst one another to establish optimal treatment plans and preventive care. Owsei Temkin traces the rise and fall of Hippocratic medicine in his work *Hippocrates in a World of Pagans and Christians*. Temkin indicates that "these three sects represented only the main division between medical beliefs."[39] Temkin concludes that individual physicians tended to move with some ease between schools depending on the disease or infirmity at hand.

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[35] David C. Lindberg "Science and the Early Church" in *God and Nature: Historical Essays on the Encounter between Christianity and Science* ed. By David C. Lindberg and Ronald L. Numbers (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 41.

[36] Andrew Daunton-Fear *Healing in the Early Church: The Church's Ministry of Healing and Exorcism from the First to the Fifth Centuries* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009), 109.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ferngren, 13.

[39] Owsei Temkin *Hippocrates in a World of Pagans and Christians* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 6.

Christians in general had diverse treatment choices inspired by the medical debates among Greco-Roman doctors.

3.3 Healing in the Marian Tales

After the first centuries of Christianity, however, Christian theologians began to cast a hostile gaze on medicine that had been inspired by non-believers. Even as Christian status began to rise under Constantine, the positive reception of the medical arts turned sour. Grigsby traces the awakening of a new treatment method to the late fourth century: "The image of Christ as the perfect doctor finds a permanent place in Christian thought with the writing of St. Ambrose (339-97 CE) and St. Augustine (354-430 CE). Christ was both the savior of souls and healer of bodies."[40] Grigsby goes on to quote Augustine from his work *On Christian Doctrine*.

> But you, oh Lord, abide forever and you will not be angry with us forever, for you have mercy on earth and on ashes, and it has been pleasing in your sight to reform my deformities. By inner goads you arouse me, so that I did not rest until you stood plain before my inner sight. By the secrete hand of your Physician [Christ] my swelling wound subsided, and day by day my mind's affliction and darkened eyes grew sounder under the healing salve of sorrow.[41]

By the 400s, Christ stepped forward as a prominent source of curative power among Christians.

The shift was never complete and nor was it rapid; as late as the seventh century, Isidore of Seville's work *Etymologiae* correctly identifies the three schools of physicians and lists several types of skin diseases, cancers, internal maladies, and the like. Isidore believed that the study of the medical arts should be all-inclusive.

> Some ask why the art of medicine is not included among the other liberal arts. It is because whereas they embrace other individual subjects, medicine embraces them all. The physician ought to know literature to be able to understand or to explain what he reads. [Isidore goes on to add rhetoric, dialectics, arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy.] Hence it is that medicine is called a second philosophy, for each discipline

[40] Grigsby, 21.
[41] Ibid.

> claims the whole of man for itself. Just as by philosophy the soul, so also by medicine the body is cured.[42]

Based on this definition of the medical arts, Isidore held physicians with appropriate schooling and training in very high esteem. Ronald C. Finucane points out that most medieval persons who set out on pilgrimages seeking a miraculous cure "had already sought some sort of medical assistance. They started with other possibilities in what medical men call 'the hierarchy of resort', but these alternative therapies had not cured them."[43] According to Finucane, these travelers, having arrived at their destinations, "found eager listeners in the registrars at the shrines to whom they described the indignities inflicted upon them by would-be healers at great expense, all to no avail."[44] The shrine registrars were, of course, biased chroniclers whose purpose was to validate their particular saint or shrine's claim to wondrous remedies. Pilgrimage was business, and the sale of special masses, shrine badges and other mementos, and, if nothing else, food and lodging, comprised a steady flow of cash that everyone associated with a shrine wanted to see surge without interruption.

Finucane's work provides a good transition into the period of the Marian tales, the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This historian studied more than 3,000 cases of pilgrims who traveled to saints' shrines and claimed to have received a miraculous healing. Of these descriptions, "over nine-tenths of the wonders [described or experienced by pilgrims] were cures of human illnesses. In modern terms, shrines were faith-healing centres."[45] No doubt, some pilgrims undertook their journeys for other reasons. For example, pilgrimage was a penitential journey—sometimes undertaken voluntarily and sometimes assigned as punishment. As another

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[42] "Isidore of Seville: The Canon of Medicine" in *Medieval Medicine, A Reader* ed. By Faith Wallis (Toronto: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 2010), 9-10.

[43] Ronald C. Finucane *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 59.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid., 58.

reason for making this arduous journey, the indulgence offered for a pilgrimage to Santiago could be an attractive inducement; who is without sin? If for no other motive, a pilgrimage was an adventure—however dangerous the road. John Ure writes that such an undertaking had the thrill of a daring exploit:

> To go on a pilgrimage was an opportunity for distant—particularly foreign—travel. Lords of the manor might occasionally go to court or join a crusade, but more usually they felt obliged to stay at home managing their states. And for all others—clerics and lawyers, guildsmen and shopkeepers, craftsmen and apprentices, yeomen and peasants—a pilgrimage was even more surely the only chance of a real adventure, of seeing what was the other side of the hill.[46]

Aside from experiencing new places by indulging in the joy of travel, the pilgrim also received agency in his or her community along with the blessings of God. Robert Worth Frank, Jr. calls this "sacral power": "a pilgrim badge employed as the catalyst for cure, the pilgrimage route travelled metaphorically by gesture in quest of aid—here we see the elevated status of pilgrimage clearly revealed and see it sharing the miraculous power of shrine and Virgin."[47] If a person could travel the route, receive its blessings, and return, the rewards ran beyond the personal and were shared with the community.

While the reasons for travel are varied, the types of cures that any individual might receive were equally divergent. Among the accounts of events in the collection of songs in the *Cantigas*, songs of healing make up a strong plurality; yet, readers might be drawn to much the same conclusion about topics such as clerical misbehavior, pilgrimage, or law-breaking. The truth is that the tales have many intersecting elements and themes that simply cannot be separated; there are too many songs about an errant cleric who becomes ill from food poisoning

[46] John Ure *Pilgrimages: The Great Adventure of the Middle Ages* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2006), 2.

[47] Robert Worth Frank, Jr. "Pilgrimage and Sacral Power *in Journeys Toward God: Pilgrimage and Crusade* ed. By Barbara N. Sargent-Baur (Kalamazoo: Western Michigan University, 1992), 39.

or a devout pilgrim who is injured in a robbery to successfully separate and categorize these plot, character, or thematic elements.

Attempting to discern a pattern in the healing of Mary is likewise almost impossible. By what criteria should these diverse tales of healing be segmented? Perhaps one method would be to distill them out according to the type of illness cured, but this seems like a fruitlessly fragmentary task. There are a multitude of maladies—communicable disease, severed limbs, deafness, blindness, the inability to speak, insanity, leprosy, birth defects, stab wounds (inflicted in brawling, domestic dispute, and war), sword wounds (inflicted in both dueling and war), arrow wounds (inflicted in both hunting and war), kidney stones, fever, cancer, self-mutilation, choking from swelling, choking from chicken bone, uncontrolled bleeding, combinations of the above—and a couple of folks just hit on the head with a rock. Other organizational patterns could be types of themes, similar structural patterns in the narratives, contrasting characters between lay persons and clergy, types of occupations, or those performing certain deeds or tasks (pilgrimage, war, revenge, contending with demons). Again, there are too many divergent types of maladies, ways to receive them, attitudes on the part of characters towards them, or methods though which healing was accomplished for there to be a single organizational pattern.

An additional problem is that there are simply too many tales to treat in this limited space. Rather, the remainder of this chapter will strike at two purposes: one, to illustrate specific powers of Mary through selected tales; and two, to demonstrate the primacy of Mary as a source of healing over even the power of her Son. First, this chapter began with a description of healing that affected Alfonso X himself; it would be profitable to return to consider other tales and miraculous cures that directly affect Alfonso and his family. Second, since Mary and Marian shrines were competing with other saints for notice, devotion, and money with those of the other

saints, the discussion will turn to songs that proclaim her superior position in regard to the other, venerated intercessors. Third, a series of songs reflect the persistent problem of ergotism in medieval society; the communal nature of healing and sharing in Mary's powers is evidenced in the ways that ordinary people sought out and witnessed her miraculous powers. Fourth, these tales never move far from a fundamental representation of Mary as female and mother; thus, Mary's milk figures as a curative in several of the songs and drew a varied reaction from ecclesiasts during and after the age of the *Cantigas*. A final series of stories will serve to remind the modern reader how differently the medieval audience would have received tales of healing.

In returning to the songs of healing that most closely affect the king who oversaw the collection, a few commonalities of placement, structure, and tone immediately emerge. Of the 427 songs in the collection of the *Codex Rico*, the earlier, lower-numbered, texts tend to rely on material gathered from the many sources for Marian tales from across Europe. The more original poems—those most possibly penned or certainly inspired or commissioned by Alfonso himself—are found among the later contributions. The structure of these tales tend to be more direct, employing fewer of the classic fairy tale motifs with fewer acknowledgments or embellishments. These tales lack the advantage, if it is such, of having developed over time, submitting to multiple retellings and revisions and additions by multiple authors. These songs are biographical and autobiographical. Please understand, the personal narrative-historical perspective does not make them more or less *true*, but it does mean that they were the truth as Alfonso and his family understood truth to be.

A perfect example of this style of tale is CSM 279 in which King Alfonso is healed "of a grave illness." Unidentified by place or time, this seems to be an unspecified illness for which Alfonso sought a healing intervention by Mary. The details are few and the song only has five

stanzas and a refrain—one of the shortest of the narrative songs. Alfonso calls upon the Virgin in the brief refrain saying, "Holy Mary, have mercy, My Lady, and come to the aid of your troubadour, for he has need." He self-identifies not as the king but as a "troubadour"; it is in this service that he honors Mary most directly. Note that the specific "need" is absent from the refrain; in fact, it may be more a convenience than anything—a vehicle for seeking a closer, reciprocal relationship with his patroness. In the poem, the reader is privilege to a prayer: "Since God made you best of all his things, and grace you as our Advocate, Holy Mary, have mercy, My Lady, and be now my kind benefactor in this struggle with death, which I sorely fear, and is this illness which has me in its grip and makes me green as Cambrai cloth." Of course, the Virgin could not deny her poet: "She took away his fever and the vile and noxious humor." One interesting note is that the expression "green as Cambrai cloth" might be idiomatically translated, "As green as my shirt." According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the oldest know use of the word in English occurs in 1530. The word actually appears in the Galicia-Portuguese text in the thirteenth century and serves to link Alfonso to his royal heritage as chambray cloth is fine linen usually reserved for wealthier classes in the Middle Ages.

The text is straight-forward and unpretentious, but do not mistake those qualities for simplicity. In his article, "Alfonso as Troubadour," Joseph T. Snow points out that in those poems that he wrote, Alfonso is, in fact, using himself as a complex metaphor "in transposing the troubadour quest to a divine or spiritual plane, and in identifying this song-making activity with himself as king."[48] From Phemius and Demodocus in the Odyssey to John Keats in "Ode on a Grecian Urn" to "Poetry" by Marianne Moore, poets have always wondered about the nature of poetry, sought to discover its sources, and pondered on the quest to catch truth or beauty. For

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[48] Joseph T. Snow, "Alfonso as Troubadour" in *Emperor of Culture: Alfonso the Learned of Castile and His Thirteenth-Century Renaissance* ed. By Robert J. Burns, S.J. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1900), 126.

Alfonso, these musings serve double duty as he additionally contemplated his own kingship—how to catch truth or beauty. In her excellent work on *A Holy Alliance: Alfonso X's Political Use of Marian Poetry*, Connie L. Scarborough devotes a chapter to "Alfonso and Troubadour and the Cantigas as Historical Record." Scarborough agrees that Alfonso serves two purposes: "Composing religious poems which served to honor the Holy Virgin, as well as the practical interests of Alfonso, combined to evoke powerful symbolic associations at the planes where Heavenly and earthly power intersect."[49] In CSM 279, the man, Alfonso, is petitioning for healing from Mary, but he may be asking another question: who is the man—king or poet?

Just as Alfonso wrote about his own experiences with the healing hand of Mary, he also composed poems about how his father and mother had received similar graces from the Virgin. In CSM 221 King Fernando III is healed by the Virgin long before Alfonso was born. According to the song, when Fernando was a young boy in 1209, he fell ill in Castile while with his grandfather, King Alfonso VIII, and his grandmother, Eleanor of England (daughter of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine for whom she was named). They were in Burgos, a town in north, central Spain and the historic seat of the kingdom Castile. Fernando's mother became fearful for his life and insisted that they travel north to a shrine of Mary in the small town of Ona. Even as they were on the road to Ona, all who saw him despaired because Fernando was in a bad way: "For he could not sleep at all nor eat the slightest thing, and many large worms came out of him, for death had already conquered his life without much struggle." On arrival, they laid the body down before the altar of the Virgin Queen who immediately effected a cure. "Before fifteen days had passed," Fernando was quite well. His grandfather was so overtaken by the miraculous cure that he set out on pilgrimage to Ona himself.

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[49] Connie L. Scarborough, *A Holy Alliance: Alfonso X's Political Use of Marian Poetry* (Newark: Juan de la Cuesta, 2009), 41.

For Alfonso, this poem confirms that the poet's family had been devoted to veneration of Mary throughout its history. The lines testify that his grandmother and grandfather chose to call upon the Holy Queen for the preservation of young Fernando. By implication, the healing grace that fell on Fernando also fell on Alfonso; without preserving the father, Mary would have been deprived of her poet. A similar message is inherent in another song, CSM 256. Fernando III's wife and Alfonso's mother, Queen Beatriz, fell ill while the king was heavily engaged in waging war in the *Reconquesta*. Alfonso writes, "Although I was a little boy, I remember it happened like this, for I was present and saw and heard everything."

Fernando was on his way to attack Capilla, a town in the province of Badajoz, Spain. He had sent his wife to Cuenca to place her out of harm's way during the campaign. By the time she arrived, she was terribly sick. Doctors were summoned, but they held out no hope, predicting that she would soon die—especially because she was pregnant and suffered from a high fever. Nevertheless, the devout Beatriz who was dedicated to Marian veneration had a metal statue of the Virgin placed at her bedside where she could kiss and honor the image. Her devotion was repaid when "the queen recovered from all those afflictions so completely that she felt no effects from them." The narrative makes no mention of the fact that the child born soon afterwards, Eleanor, would not live more than a few months.

CSM 256 has a tone of intimacy and sweetness. Alfonso sifts through his childhood memories and invites the reader to the queen's bedside where she continues her practice of Marian devotion. Alfonso's witness brings a sense of verisimilitude to the poem. In fact, both Beatriz and Fernando traveled with statues of Mary. The cathedral museum in Seville has on display "Mary of the Battlefield," an elephant tusk that Fernando had carved with an image of Mary and with which he conducted his devotions prior to major campaigns. Additionally, there

is a diptych with scenes of Mary's life and work that Fernando traveled with. Unfortunately, the images are now obscured because of the impermanence of the pigments used in the work. These, however, testify to Alfonso's heritage—an inheritance of devotion that he exercises his poetic talents in expanding.

As stated above, there are many songs that related to historical and biographical moments in Alfonso's life. Perhaps none have been written about more than CSM 235, a song in which Alfonso was stricken with an extended illness during the revolt of the Spanish nobles between 1272 and 1274. According to his claims in the song, the virgin allowed him to continue to function throughout much travel and campaigns of war. At least three different times in the narrative, Mary is described as providing a healing intervention in order that the king might continue to rule and maintain his kingdom. Finally, on Easter, just after the paschal candle was lighted, "She began to relieve him, for he had suffered greatly, and delivered him peacefully and fully from all his torments, stroking him with Her hands. She did not wear a veil and seemed more bright than ruby or crystal." An extended treatment of this important song is included as an entire chapter in Connie Scarborough's book on politics in the *Cantigas*.

Two of these personal *Cantigas* provide an appropriate transition into the next type of healing songs, those cures that drew crowds (paying customers) to shrines and churches. CSM 292 tells the story of the joining of Fernando and Beatriz in death. In life they had been devoted to one another and to the veneration of Mary, so Fernando prayed to his patron saint that he and his wife, who had predeceased him, could be interred together. Although Burgos had been the capital of Castile, Fernando had made Seville the site of his court since he had conquered that city from the Moors. Alfonso built a Marian chapel attached to the cathedral of Seville with a decorous sepulcher. In transporting the remains of Beatriz from Burgos to Seville and it placing

them together in the new location, Alfonso "found him [Fernando] and his mother completely uncorrupted, for God would not allow them to decompose because both were favored by Him and also by the Virgin, who is Light and Torch of the world, as Saint Mark and Saint Matthew were never more favored." As an unintended extension of this storyline, CSM 324 tells the story of a statue that cured a mute in Seville. In the song, Alfonso was engaged in a cleaning and renovation of his parents' burial place, the Marian chapel attached to the cathedral in Seville. The dutiful son was having a statue of Mary installed in the chapel and had gone to see to its placement; the image of the Virgin was being installed intentionally on September 8 during the Feast of the Glorious Virgin—that is, her birthday. A mute who had not spoken for two years approached the statue and was instantly healed; he began to praise the Virgin and "raise his hands toward Heaven."

Combined, these two songs make the case for turning his parents' interment site into a shrine ready for pilgrims. First, if the bodies are uncorrupted, they must be saints; Alfonso even compares the two of them to the apostles Mark and Matthew. Second, the statue of Mary already had produced it first miracle, and the mounting plaster was not even dry. If these stories could take hold in popular piety, Seville, his father's favorite city, could become a major pilgrimage site. There was often intense competition between such shrines, and Seville could have a difficult time establishing itself as such a destination as comparted to the city from which Beatriz's body had been relocated. Burgos, the city of Alfonso VI and El Cid, had several Marian sites, not the least of which was and is the Cistercian monastery of Santa Maria la Real de Las Huelgas. Additionally, Burgos was a major stop, recorded as such in the Codex Calixtinus, on the Camino de Santiago de Compostela. Alfonso would have wanted the prestige of elevating Seville to such status.

Simply put, healing in the Middle Ages was big business. Pilgrimage to saints' shrines or to view relics for healing engendered competition in many directions—some predictable and others rather surprising. Davidson and Gitlitz reduce the phenomenon to its most fundamental terms: "Travelers spend money. This truism is at the heart of economic activities that both sustain and profit from pilgrimages . . . . At the very least they [pilgrims] must acquire essential goods and services and this creates markets and merchants."[50] The search for healing and other benefits of pilgrimage stimulated, at its most basic center, the industries of food and lodging. In another chapter, this work treats the many laws that were necessary to attempt governance of these industries as price gouging was a problem in the Middle Ages as it is today.[51] Book V of the Codex Calixtinus concludes with stories intended to stimulate locals into providing appropriately priced food and lodging; "Pilgrims, whether poor or rich," this source indicates, "must be received charitably and respectfully by all."[52] Indeed, the poor and rich both traveled the pilgrim road. The catalogue of royal pilgrims to Santiago, for example, is so long as to defy listing; "Upper-class pilgrims travelled in far greater comfort, even with elegance, and generally continued to be surrounded by at least the core of their protective retinue."[53] And the many more who were poor—who spent smaller amounts of money—nevertheless gained from the experience. Peter Brown, who studies the work of Gregory of Tours, speaks to this elevation of the masses: "The *potentia* of the saint was made plain . . . . frequently in the work of Gregory of Tours, we find that those who had been healed at the shrine gain from this healing a change of

[50] Linda Kay Davidson and David M. Gitlitz, *Pilgrimages: From the Ganges to Graceland* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, Inc, 2002), 155.

[51] A personal note. While walking the pilgrimage trail from St. Jean Pied du Port, France to Santiago de Compostela in Glaicia, I was unfortunate enough to be caught when Hurricane Gordon hit northwestern Spain. As all the walking hostels filled, hotel prices doubled. They remained inflated for three days while pilgrims were caught in the ensuing torrent of rain. As I say above, price gouging was and is an apparent staple of the pilgrim road.

[52] William Melczer, *The Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela* (New York: Italica Press, 1992), 132.

[53] Margaret Wade, Lebarge *Medieval Travellers* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 1982), 68.

social status. Serfs are emancipated from their former owners, and become part of the *familia* of the saint."[54] Shrines that could effect this change in status healed more that the body; they healed the human condition.

Other areas of industry, other possibilities for monetary gain, focused on the little piece of the shrine that a pilgrim could bring home. Just as so many ancients had brought home small clay statues of the Ephesian Artemis from the great temple of Artemis in Asia Minor, so did these medieval pilgrims seek out badges and other souvenirs.

> People bring a cross back from Jerusalem, a Mary cast in lead from Rocamadour, a leaden shell from St. James; now God has given Sr. Thomas this phial, which is loved and honoured all over the world, to save souls; in water and in phials he has the martyr's blood taken all over the world, to cure the sick. It is doubly honoured, for health and as a sign.[55]

Diana Webb writes a documentary history of pilgrimage in which she finds that "legal rights were claimed and contested by different parties who wished to control or to have some share in a profitable business. Monopolies were often claimed by the authorities of the church where the cult was located, who were, however, often dependent on lay craftsmen actually to produce the objects."[56] Thus, in order to purchase an ampule of water from Becket's spring, a pilgrim had to pay a licensed vendor—who had to pay the cathedral.[57]

And still other industries peripheral to the healing ministry of the shire sprang up. Webb cites laws from the court of Edward III in England that regulated the sale of pilgrim licenses to allow passage out of the country[58] and still other licenses for ships to carry pilgrims from

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[54] Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 131.

[55] Janet Shirley, *Garnier's Becket: Translated from the 12th-Century Vie Saint Thomas le Martyr de Cantorbire of Garniew of Pont-Saint-Maxence* (London: Phillimore & Co Ltd, 1975), 157.

[56] Diana Webb, *Pilgrims and Pilgrimage in the Medieval West* (New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2001), 126.

[57] Ibid., 128.

[58] Ibid., 183

England to Spain.[59] Donald Howard points out that even writing was stimulated by the interest in pilgrimage: "It is not surprising that writers wrote book about such a popular institution. More—many more—were written about the pilgrimage than about comparable medieval institutions."[60] Finally, ecclesiastical building programs were influenced by the ponderous stream of pilgrims. Claude Marks makes an interesting comparative: "In many ways the organization regulating the pilgrimage routes anticipated the modern travel agency, but its activities were on a larger scale. The monasteries that took in pilgrims were the 'luxury hotels' of the period."[61] According to Marks, most poorer pilgrims stayed in hotels, private homes, or slept on a local haystack. Additionally, "the popularity of pilgrimages contributed to the extraordinary architectural inventiveness displayed by the builders of the many churches large and small."[62] Not only were cathedrals and chantries expanded to accommodate throngs seeking cures, but the right to build roads and bridges (and to receive the tolls they brought) was often wrangled over by churchmen, local burgers, and local lords.

With so much at stake in terms of prestige and money, it makes perfect sense that several of the songs in the Marian collections make the claim that Mary, above all saints, is the supreme physician. CSM 333, for example, begins with the proclamation that not only can Mary cure "all pain and sickness," but she also has "advantage over all the saints" in this regard. In the story a poor man had had to be carted about for fifteen years because his limbs were twisted about; he was lame, and "his arms twisted backwards, as well as his hands and fingers." His deformity was thoroughly documented: "Christians, Jews, and Moors alike saw this, and his affliction was

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[59] Ibid., 184.

[60] Donald R. Howard *Writers and Pilgrims: Medieval Pilgrimage Narratives and Their Posterity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 16.

[61] Claude Marks *Pilgrims, Heretics and Lovers: A Medieval Journey* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1975), 113.

[62] Ibid., 114.

apparent to all." Although a number of saints and shrines were tried by the man, no healing seemed possible. Finally, he came to the Marian church in Terena where he lay in church "continually moaning and weeping to the Holy Virgin Mary and praying fervently . . . . from Easter until mid-September." Finally, on the night that a large number of pilgrims were holding a vigil, Mary miraculously worked a cure; at once, he rose and praised the Virgin. "All the people awoke at those cries, and when they found him sound, they praised the Holy Virgin Mary."

This song is a virtual advertisement specifically for the Marian shrine in Terena and generally for all Marian shrines. The unequivocal and comprehensive claim that Mary can remedy "all pain and sickness" and has primacy over "all the saints" in this regard leaves little to be argued. The story goes to great lengths to witness that the deformity of the poor man was one of long standing—going so far as to indicate that the man had to be brought to the shrine in a wheelbarrow. This is not a momentary illness from which he has the possibility of recovering, nor is this a fabricated claim. Indeed, the man's condition was witnessed by all three available religions and ethnicities represented in Spain—Christians, Jews, and Moors. He even admits to having tried other saints' shrines—none of which worked. This admission is tantamount to the "why try other brands" pitch of a laundry soap commercial. Note also that the healing might take some time—in this case, from Easter until September. Assumedly, so long a stay would ring up quite a hotel and grocery bill. Finally, the miraculous cure was beheld and verified by a crowd who carried forth their witness.

Another element in CSM 333 that must be noted is its location. Clearly, the song is trying to steer pilgrims to Terena. In her translation of the Cantigas, Kathleen Kulp-Hill indicates that "this is a city located in the district of Evora in the province of Alto Alentejo,

Portugal."[63] According the Kulp-Hill's note, this location had been a healing shrine even in Roman times, and a "hermitage was built dedicated to Saint Michael, the archangel protector of medicine" prior to the Marian shrine.[64] Terena is admittedly one of several shrines mentioned throughout Alfonso's collection, but its omnipresence is significant. Although there is nothing left of the shrine today, it must have been a place toward which Spanish and Portuguese authorities and clerics wanted to stimulate pilgrimage. In the index of songs compiled by Albert Poncelet, there is no source for this song outside of Spain or Portugal. Additionally, this is one of thirteen miracles recorded in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* that name the shrine at Terena. Clearly, this is an overt commercial—a travel inducement suggesting that what worked for the poor, twisted man could work for others.

Carlos Andres Gonzalez-Paz mention Terena in a list of other locations that were particularly attractive to female pilgrims: "all of these places are a setting for the execution of different miracles, and where we find our female pilgrims."[65] Mary, as rendered clear through a multitude of tales, takes care of women. In the case of CSM 127, she reaches out as a mother to a mother who was wronged by her son. According to the narrative, a young man kicked his mother who subsequently "besought the Glorious Virgin that She demand reparation of him for that outrageous wrong." Mary responded by sending "a great attack of pain" on the young man who went to make confession. As a penance, he had to perform two acts. First, he must go "on his knees to beg pardon of his mother"; second, he and the mother were to go on pilgrimage to the church in Le Puy, France. All went well with the first part of the penance; he asked for his

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[63] Kathleen Kulp-Hill *Songs of Holy Mary of Alfonso X, The Wise: A Translation of the Cantigas the Santa Maria* (Temple, Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2000), 236, n. 1.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Maria Victoria Chico Picaza "Life, Pilgrimage, and Women in Alfonso X's *Cantigas de Santa Maria*" *Women and Pilgrimage in Medieval Galicia* ed. By Carlos Andres Gonzalez-Paz (New York: Routledge, 2015), 152.

mother's mercy and that she accompany him on the pilgrimage, and his mother forgave him. However, he was not so fortunate in the second part. On arrival in Le Puy, his mother was able to enter the church, but the son was not. He was stuck in place even though "the people came out to see him and tried to pull him into the church by force." Finally, the cathedral priests were called to action, but their only advice, after additional confession failed to lend him any mobility, was to cut off his foot. When he entered the church thus mangled, his mother cried out and immediately began praying: "Holy Mary, My Lady, since I came to you for help, do not let my son go from here without his foot." The mother repeated the prayer until she fell asleep exhausted before the altar. In a dream, Mary explained that the mother could restore the foot if she placed it next to the leg and pass her hand over the severed limb while uttering Mary's name. On waking, the mother performed the deed, and the foot was reattached. Everyone, of course, saw the miracle and proclaimed its greatness while the cathedral priests rang out the bells.

CSM 127 demonstrates several ideas and practices surrounding sin and illness, penance, and communion; the gender and family politics involved are also illuminating concerning the nature of medieval life. First, the act that begins the tale is, in itself, reprehensible. The son kicks the mother and is initially unconcerned and unrepentant. At the beginning of the text, the poet remarks that the young man was of "base character." Nevertheless, such base behavior against women was not uncommon in the Middle Ages. Lisa M. Bitel places women in an unenviable positon early in the medieval period: "All acts of violence, whether willful or accidental, domestic or public, were gendered. The infrastructure of Christendom, based on the theoretical superiority of men and the political invisibility of women, necessitated such a state. Women were more subject to violence and more helpless to prevent it; more plagued by disorder

and less able to correct it."[66] Bitel goes on to discuss a cultural irony; namely, medieval Christians acknowledged Mary as mother and venerated her as such, but they were willing to allow violence to be perpetrated against women in general: "The Virgin Mother's status as virgin childbearer was one signal that human motherhood was not all it was cracked up to be. Mary was the ideal, escaping normal conditions of wifedom and motherhood, which fell without exception upon ordinary women."[67] Barbara Hanawalt confirms Bitel's findings in referring to the literary use of Mary as an idealized mother: "The mother's role . . . received considerable emphasis in song and advice manuals. Analogies to Mary as the ideal mother were constantly drawn in story and statuary."[68] Hanawalt, however, wants to avoid becoming too over-generalized in respect to violence against women: "Such a sentimental picture of motherhood could not have been completely removed from reality, even for the hard-working peasant women. Although there was much misogynistic literature in the Middle Ages, the role of women as mothers received respect."[69] In the tale of the kicked mother, the son was unconcerned with his act against his mother until Mary struck him with a painful illness. Clearly, his own misogynistic nature dominates his character; this tale implicitly opposes such an attitude. As Hanawalt indicates, despite the vulnerability to abuse, in many cases women received empowerment through wills: "fathers will provide inheritances for a son provided 'he be good to his mother,' or 'yff he please hys modr well,' or if he 'wyzely behve hymselfe . . . with owte any vexing or troblyng' his mother."[70] Unfortunately, the son was expert at being vexatious.

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[66] Lisa M. Bitel *Women in Early Medieval Europe, 400-1100* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 194.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Barbara A. Hanawalt *The Ties That Bound: Peasant Families in Medieval England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 185.

[69] Ibid., 186.

[70] Ibid.

The importance places on confession and penance in the story is perfectly in tune with the time. In 1215 the Fourth Lateran Council revitalized the importance of confession in its Canon 21.

> All the faithful of both sexes shall after they have reached the age of discretion faithfully confess all their sins at least once a year to their own (parish) priest and perform to the best of their ability the penance imposed, receiving reverently at least at Easter the sacrament of the Eucharist, unless perchance at the advice of their own priest they may for a good reason abstain for a time from its reception; otherwise they shall be cut off from the Church (excommunicated) during life and deprived of Christian burial in death.[71]

This canon from the Fourth Lateran has been much discussed by historians. Phillipp R. Schofield addresses its significance to ordinary Christians: "Most importantly, by encouraging a regular regard for the sacraments, especially the eucharist but also confession, the Council promoted a religiosity which was given new energy and direction by secular society."[72] A renewed importance on the act and value of confession led to another consequence—the need to affirm authentic resolution following confession. The intention of the sacrament is not only to resolve the sins of the individual to God but also to resolve the sins with the church and with the community. In his paper that focuses on the social history of confession in part through a review of manuals and penitentials, John Bossy indicates that the newly imposed yearly requirement on confession was as likely to result in one neighbor complaining about the failings of another neighbor to priests as it was to result in personal confession. More importantly, he states that "the actual practice of pre-Reformation confession did in fact incorporate the social dimension

[71] "Internet History Sourcebooks Project," Medieval Sourcebook: Twelfth Ecumenical Council: The Canons of the Fourth Lateran Council, 1215 From H. J. Schroeder, *Disciplinary Decrees of the General Councils: Text, Translation and Commentary*, (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1937), 236-296. Accessed March 22, 2016, http://legacy.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/lateran4.asp.

[72] Phillipp R. Schofield, *Peasant and Community in Medieval England, 1200-1500* (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2003, 191.

that had been abandoned by the dominant scholastic tradition."[73] Simply put, an individual had to acknowledge his or sin and make an act of contrition public, and it would follow that the individual was genuine in a desire to be reunited with the community. Bossy affirms this point by writing that contrition was not just an internal sentiment.

> One thing we do know that people knew about confession was that priest could not absolve a person from his sins if he proposed to remain in a state of total hostility . . . . abandoning such hostilities was not merely a matter of the heart, the commentators were clear that a man was required to show forgiveness by performing the social acts of recognition and salutation which the relation of charity implied.[74]

Thus, the moment that the son in CSM 127 felt his foot stick in its place, the listener knew that all was not well with his penance. Either the insincerity in his heart when confessing before his own priest—he was, after all, driven to the priest by illness, not by his own volition—or the disingenuousness with which he conducted his pilgrimage had failed to impress the Virgin and had failed to reunite him with his church and community. His own artificiality left him unable to enter the Cathedral of Our Lady in Le Puy and stand before the famous statue—the Virgin was unconvinced or undeceived.

All of this is to say that, in the case of the kicking son, what was wanting was a public defamation as part of his penance. In their introduction to a collection of essays on *fama*, Thelma Fenster and Daniel Lord Smail write that "*fama* most closely parallels the kind of honor that could be bestowed only by other people, one that had to be plainly visible. It could be made so by material signs and through the performance of acts agreed on a honorable. This honor therefore required witnesses, who carried reports of *fama* to others."[75] If there is *fama*, then it follows that there is *infamia*. In fact, Jeffrey A. Bowman discusses the legal categories of fame

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[73] John Bossy "The Social History of Confession in the Age of the Reformation" in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, Vol. 25 (1975), 21-38 (Cambridge University Press), 24.

[74] Ibid., p. 25.

[75] Thelma Fenster and Daniel Lord Smail "Introduction" in *Fama: The Politics of Talk and Reputation in Medieval Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 4.

and disreputation in his article on *fama* in medieval Spanish legal codes: "In both legal and literary culture, the intertwined ideas of *fama* or *infamia* played an important role in determining one's fate in court and one's place in the world."[76] The son simply had not paid a debt in terms of his own *infamia*. Mary stuck him to the pavement in front of her church and the people came running, and the priests were called, and the son paid by having his foot excised. Only the forgiveness of the mothers—both his own mother and the Holy Mother—released him. Thus, he was healed both in body by having his foot reattached and in spirit by having his *fama* repaired by being the subject of a Marian miracle.

Finally, the location of CSM 127 is worthy of remark. Although the town where the mother and son live is not named in the story, the pilgrimage destination would certainly have been well known. Le Puy-en-Velay in south, central France was a major pilgrimage site and an important place for the veneration of Mary. The present Cathedral of Our Lady of Le Puy is twelfth-century in its main body, but it was built on an older church foundation. Before that, the spires of rock that jut out of the plain were sacred to pre-Christian peoples. Indeed, during its construction the current cathedral incorporated a dolmen, a large stone of ancient worship that has been deconsecrated as "the Throne of Mary." But this heathen object is not what brought St. Louis IX and countless others to Le Puy: "Le Puy became a pilgrim centre on the strength of a statue of the Virgin Mary said to have been brought from Egypt and donated by St. Louis of France. The statue was an object of deepest reverence, and inspired a cult all along the pilgrim route to Santiago where chapels devoted to the Virgin of Le Puy have sprung up."[77] Doubtlessly, this was the statue that spoke to the mother of CSM 127 through a dream. Today a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Le Puy was one of four major starting points for the pilgrimage to Santiago

[76] Jeffrey A. Bowman, "Infamy and proof in Medieval Spain" in *Fama: The Politics of Talk and Reputation in Medieval Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 117.

[77] Edwin Mullins, *The Pilgrimage to Santiago* (New York: Interlink Books, 2001), 104.

in the Middle Ages. The cathedral is named in the first chapter of Book V of the Codex Calixtinus,[78] and it can lay claim to having been the starting point for a notable pilgrim to the shrine of St. James: "there is evidence that the first pilgrim to Santiago de Compostela, whose name we know and about whom we have some, very modest, detail, was a French Bishop from LePuy, Gotescalc, who traveled to the shrine in 950.[79] The writer of CSM 127 could hardly have chosen a more important pilgrimage site or one more charged with the holy power of the Virgin.[80]

In CSM 127 causing injury by bringing painful illness and severing a limb and curing those same maladies are not only in the purview of the Virgin, but such actions can also be most instructive. In several of the songs, a particular disease is likewise employed as a didactic tool. Whether by accident or by intention, several characters in the Marian tales suffer from St. Anthony's Fire, a debilitating disease that inevitably led to or contributed to death in the Middle Ages. Fielding H. Garrison provides a description of the disease along with some historical background. Also called ergotism, *ignis sacer* ["holy fire"], or "dancing mania," St. Anthony's fire "was a characteristic disease of the Middle Ages, due to the formation of the fungus *Claviceps purpurea* in spur-shaped masses upon rye, the common bread-staple of the poorer masses."[81] Although this particular fungus can form on rye, other grains including wheat are also susceptible to a lesser degree. Anticipation of recovery from this disease was dire: "the disease usually began with sensations of extreme coldness in the affected part, followed by

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[78] Melcaer, 85.

[79] Maryjane Dunn and Linda Kay Davidson, *The Pilgrimage to Compostela in the Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge, 1996), xxiv.

[80] The cathedral was also the site of an ongoing legal struggle between clergy and local merchants for the sale of souvenirs. The clergy insisted that a tertiary relic only had power if it had actually touched the statue of the virgin—access to which they had a monopoly. In Pilgrims and Pilgrimage in the Medieval West, Diana Webb includes an interesting discussion of the struggle to maintain control over the masses of pilgrims at this site (127-128).

[81] Fielding H. Garrison, *An Introduction to the History of Medicine* (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders Company, 1913), 126.

intense burning pains."[82] The indicators are more specifically defined by a group of modern doctors who have studied the disease:

> The symptoms can be divided into effects on the central nervous system, such as hallucination, mania, psychosis and seizures, and vasoconstrictive effects, which are caused by strong agonistic effects and central sympatholysis. The direct consequences are limb ischemia with paresis, impairment of sensation and ultimately loss of the affected extremity.[83]

Essentially, the alkaloids in ergotism impede blood flow and cause the limb to swell and become gangrenous. In convulsive ergotism, the alkaloids can cause spasms and convulsions along with significant nerve damage. If a person recovers from this latter effect, he or she may be significantly mentally impaired.

The hallucinogenic effects of ergotism along with its short and long-term mental consequences have been much studied. Most famously, or infamously, a popular (but illegal) drug of the 1960s was born of this: "Research on medicinal alkaloids led to the serendipitous discovery of lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), which was followed by a brief era of legitimate research on hallucinogens."[84] In the medieval period, science did not offer careful analytic methods with which to research the disease. Instead, people simple viewed ergotism as having come from God or from the devil—depending on the particular case at hand. According to chroniclers in two French provinces in 994 . . . "the disease was so violent that an occult fire (ignis occultans) in a single night attacked limbs and caused them to fall off the body. In Aquitaine, more than 40,000 people died. Holy water was said to have been effective in cooling the fiery sensations."[85] Here the disease is described as having an unnatural source—an

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[82] Ibid, 127.

[83] Georg Frohlich, Vladimir Kaplan and Beatrice Amann-Vesti, "Holy fire in an HIV-positive man: a case of 21st-century ergotism," *CMAJ: Canadian Medical Association Journal*. 182.4 (Mar. 9, 2010): 378.

[84] J. W. Bennet and Ronald Bentley, "Pride and Prejudice: The Story of Ergot," *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine*. 42.3 (Spring 1999): 333.

[85] Ibid.

attribution that may have occurred in American history. Linnda R. Caporael has suggested that convulsive ergotism may account for the hallucinations and some other activities associated with the Salem witch trials.[86] Likewise, in the Marian tales, the sources or effects of ergotism are almost always supernaturally founded.

CSM 37 provides a brief introduction to the manifestation of the disease as a plot device. The Virgin performs a two-for-one healing miracle, not just restoring the use of a limb withered by ergotism but also reattaching the severed limb. In this story, a man from Viviers suffered from St. Anthony's fire. This is what modern insurance companies would call a pre-existing condition; that is, the reader is not privy to the cause for the disease—if it is related to a particular sin or has a noteworthy cause. The man is just sick. Burning intensely from the disease, the victim visited the church of Mary, but "the fiery malady distressed him so much that he had his foot cut off." Still, he remained in the church praying for a miracle; finally he fell asleep, and the Virgin appeared and passed her hand over the man; "when he awoke, he felt himself whole again and looked at his foot. When he had made certain that is was there, he began to walk about in a spritely manner."

The focus of the story is centered squarely on Mary's healing power. The location in Viviers is not particularly noteworthy. The cathedral of Viviers is actually dedicated to Saint Vincent; there is no remarkable Marian shrine or church in the area. There are no other characters present prior to his arrival at the church or during the healing event. When he began to celebrate the results of his devotion, a crowd gathers who "gave thanks to the Holy Virgin. They exalted Her miracles as more glorious than any others." Aside from elevating the status of Mary's wonders, there is no particular after-effect of the healing. Outside of the Spanish

[86] Linnda R. Caporael, "Ergotism: The Satan Loosed in Salem," *Science,* 192 (4234). American Association for the Advancement of Science: 21–26, accessed April 2, 2016, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1741715.

Cantigas, this tale is found only in a collection of tales from Chartres and in the Marchant collection, so it is localized as a French story. CSM 37, then, is a fairly parochial representation of the dreadful nature of ergotism and of Mary's mitigating power to overcome it.

CSM 19, on the other hand, is fraught with underlying circumstances; here, the burning disease becomes a scourge of punishment from God. In the tale, three knights see an enemy whom they chase. The pursued locks himself in a church; "the captive thought that he would be spared in that church of Holy Mary. Nevertheless, the knights broke into the church, and, spurred on by the devil's influence, they killed the man. When they tried to leave the church however, God held them fast and "not one of them could grasp his sword or shield before he was struck by the fire from Heaven and was inflamed from head to groin." The knights begged forgiveness from the Virgin who cured them; she, of course, realized that they had only performed the evil deed under the devil's influence. She cured them of the burning, and they made confession to the bishop who exiled them as punishment.

Ergotism becomes the plot device that goads the knights back into the fold of God. To a medieval audience, the mention of the disease would have conjured images of madness and a terrible, painful gangrenous death. Employing this stratagem also serves to underscore the seriousness of their transgression. There is no discussion in the tale about the murder victim's relative guilt or innocence; there is only the fact that the knights disregarded the law of sanctuary. On this point, Karl Shoemaker remarks that "the blood-feud practices that thrived in the Middle Ages provided more than a few opportunities for bishops and saints to provide reminders of their political and spiritual power through intercession on behalf of sanctuary seekers."[87] Sanctuary provided not only a service to the accused, but it also provided a position

[87] Karl Shoemaker, *Sanctuary and Crime in the Middle Ages, 400-1500* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 5.

of power for the church—a power that these knights had violated. Shoemaker provides a reason why so terrible a device as ergotism might have been employed against these violators of sanctuary: "By the twelfth century the link between sanctuary, penitential discipline, and feud resolution had weakened. The church still defended sanctuary, but it defended it primarily as one of its own jurisdictional prerogatives, not as an avenue to spiritual redemption or the peaceful settlement of disputes."[88] Along with the church, the common people were concerned over losing sanctuary, a right deeply rooted in both canon law[89] and common law.[90] The threat of ergotism works like a lash in this *cantiga* to reinforce to power of the institution of sanctuary.

CSM 134 relates a similar miracle of healing on a grander scale. On this occasion a host of victims suffered from a burning disease identified in the song as St. Martial's fire. Garrison indicates that St. Martial's fire is another name for ergotism, probably so-called because sufferers called upon a local saint for help—in this case, St. Martial.[91] The group gathered around that altar of an unidentified church in Paris where they called upon Mary for help. The Holy Mother entered the church in dramatic fashion: "She of Great Goodness entered the church on a ray of light through a stained glass window." Generously, Mary made her way among the sick; as she made the sign of the cross over them, they were healed. Everyone was soon healed and ready to leave the church—everyone with a single exception: "Among them, as I learned in all truth, there lay a man so badly inflamed that he had brutally cut off his leg and thrown it into the river of that city, so I heard." Mary healed his remaining leg which was also inflamed, but the man interjected, "Blessed Lady, this other leg I have chopped off with an ax. But, by your

[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid. 154-159.
[90] Ibid. 147.
[91] Garrison, 179.

great mercy, join it on again, and restore it as it was before." Hearing his plea, she restored his missing limb.

It is perhaps tempting to speculate that the church mentioned in CSM 134 is Sainte-Chappelle. The temptation to do so rests primarily in the interesting detail that Mary descended dramatically landing amongst the sufferers "on a ray of light through a stained glass window." The royal chapel of Louis IX of France is unquestionably known for its stained glass windows. Even today, with a majority of its thirteenth-century glass intact, this enclosure is an impressive—even overwhelming—display of color and light. Additionally, the construction of the chapel and the timing of the Marian tale are sympathetic; the chapel being completed in 1248 and CSM 134 being a song original to the Cantigas de Santa Maria with a composition date sometime after the mid-thirteenth century. Nevertheless, the design and content of the glass is problematic. In her history of Sainte-Chappelle, Meredith Cohen indicates that "the interior decoration of the Sainte-Chappelle, particularly the stained glass windows of the upper chapel, also emphasized the theme of sacral kingship."[92] In her analysis of the windows, Cohen identifies them as revealing Old Testament representation of the nature of kingship with the apsidal window focusing on Christ's Passion.[93] They do not directly concern Mary; nevertheless, there is a hint at what might be considered healing. Cohen points out that some images underscore the sacred nature of kingship and provide a link between the coronation and miracles: sacral kingship, reinforced by the coronation unction and the liturgical *Laudes*, enabled monarchs to perform miracles, the most common of which became the practice of touching for scrofula."[94] Nevertheless, it seems unlikely that this practice was in use by the time the chapel

[92] Meredith Cohen *The Sainte-Chapelle and the Construction of Sacral Monarchy: Royal Architecture in Thirteenth-century Paris* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 139.
[93] Ibid., 140-142.
[94] Ibid., 143.

was completed: “Louis VI was the last king to touch for scrofula before the thirteenth century. The three kings that preceded Louis IX did not publicly express their sacral character through this rite.”[95] Thus, it may be that Notre Dame, completed some years before Sainte-Chappelle and with a greater claim on Marian links, has a strong claim to providing the backdrop to CSM 134. Finally, it should be added that there were some seventy churches in the environs of Paris at the time of the song; there are at least two claimants among the smaller churches. Saint-Nicholas in Saint-Maur-des Fosses was a site of pilgrimage interest for its statue of Mary called Our Lady of Miracles. According to legend, it was mystically refurbished in the eleventh century in the absence of a sculpture. Additionally, Neuilly sur Seine contains the statue of Our Lady of Good Deliverance, called the Black Madonna of Paris; this church no longer exists at the site.

Although the church described in CSM 134 is unknown, the idea that Mary descended on a beam of light from a stained glass window is a powerful image. The ray of light is reminiscent of other mystical beams that bore importance results. Fra Angelico’s Annunciation, the version that is on display in the Prado in Madrid, depicts a famous ray of light from heaven imposing the Christ child upon Mary’s womb. In his work on the abbey Church of Saint Denis, Abbot Suger paid special attention to the stained glass windows. According to Erwin Panofsky, Suger was fixed on the *anagogicus mos* or "the upward leading method" that tall walls adorned with color would offer worshippers.[96] Abbot Suger felt the light that illuminates worshippers through stained glass paralleled the light of Christ: “Noble is the work, but the work which shines here so nobly should lighten the hearts so that, through true lights they can reach the one true light, where Christ is the true door… the dull spirit rises up through the material to the truth, and

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[95] Ibid.

[96] Abbot of Saint Denis Suger, *Abbot Suger on the Abbey Church of St. Denis and Its Art Treasures*, ed. Erwin Panofsky and Gerda Panofsky-Soergel, 2nd ed. (United States: Princeton University Press, 1979), 65.

although he was cast down before, he arises new when he has seen this light." In CSM 134, this light brought the healing grace of Mary into the diseased lives of her petitioners.

A second element in CSM 134 worthy of comment is the use of the first person narrator. Although not unique among the *Cantigas* in itself, employing the first person here does tend to place the narrator dispassionately outside of the action and in a positon of neutrality. Twice in the narrative, the speaker (or singer in the case of a performance) uses the phrase "as I learned." Linguist and critic Roger Fowler would call this an "external perceptual" narrative in which the narrator "relates the events, and describes the characters outside of any of the protagonists' consciousnesses."[97] At the point of greatest doubt—when the narrator explains that the final sufferer has already cut his leg off and tossed it into the river—the speaker begins "as I learned in all truth" and ends with "so I heard." From his dispassionate perspective, his iteration of veracity attempts to assail his reader/listener with a double portion.

Considering the proliferation of stories about healing ergotism as representative of a broad problem, St. Anthony's fire and its variations must have been an omnipresent concern in the Middle Ages. CSM 91 tells a tale similar to that in CSM 134; a group of people suffering from St. Martial's fire made their way to the church in Soissons, France. Interestingly, this story appropriately identifies the symptoms as identical to those described by the modern doctors above: "first it seized them with chills, then they burned as with fire." The crowd conducted a pilgrimage to the Marian shrine; yet, when they arrived, they failed to find immediate release: "Their arms and legs fell off, and they could not sleep nor eat at all nor rise up on their feet." At this point, CSM 91 displays another element in common with CSM 134: "However, it happened one night that a bright light from Heaven appeared to them. Then Holy Mary descended, and the earth trembled when the Celestial Lady arrived." Curiously, the story takes a macabre turn at

[97] Roger Fowler, *Linguistic Criticism* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 135.

that point: “The peoples were taken with such fright that they tried to flee, not calmly, but as quickly as they could.” This conjures the bazaar image of a crowd of people without arms or legs and in excruciating pain trying “to flee . . . quickly as they could.” Mary cured them at once—thankfully.

Mary’s descent into the church in a bright light in both 91 and 134 is perhaps archetypal—it occurs elsewhere in the *Cantigas*. The association between Jesus and light is consistent throughout the New Testament—nowhere more famous that in the text of John 1:4-5: “In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” In Jesus’s exit from the tomb, the narratives in both Matthew and Luke describe him as having an appearance “like lightning.”[98] More than resonating with the figure of her son, Mary’s descent certainly illustrates her ability to move freely between earth and heaven, between death and life. Additionally, the image of her thus bathed in light echoes her Assumption. Of course, to speak of the Assumption in modern theology is to tread on thin ice, but theologians of later antiquity and throughout the Middle Ages accepted the concept of a living Mary transported by angels bathes in light. On the early history of this image, Gambero writes, “as far as we know, no Christian author before Epiphanius [of Salamis] had ever raised the question of the end of the Blessed Virgin’s earthly existence.”[99] Epiphanius searched earlier texts and could find no record of her death. It seemed curious to devote detailed descriptions of Jesus’s death along with those of so many of his early disciples, yet Mary disappears from the texts. His conclusion, as sited by Gambero maintains a sort of logic:

> How will holy Mary not possess the kingdom of heaven with her flesh, since she was not unchaste, nor dissolute, nor did she ever commit adultery, and since she never did anything wrong as far as fleshly actions are concerned, but remained stainless? . . . If

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[98] Matthew 28:3; Luke 24:4.

[99] Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church*, 125.

> anyone holds that we are mistaken, let him simply follow the indication of Scripture, in which is found no mention of Mary's death.[100]

Working from a Greek text, Gregory of Tours was willing to suggest a more complete narrative of events surrounding Mary's Assumption.

> Finally, when blessed Mary, having completed the course of her earthly life, was about to be called from this world, all the apostles, coming from their different regions, gathered together in her house. When they heard that she was about to be taken up out of the world, they kept watch together with her. And behold, the Lord Jesus came with his angels and, taking her soul, handed it over to the archangel Michael and withdrew. At dawn . . . the Lord presented himself to them and ordered that her holy body be taken and carried up to heaven.[101]

By the time of Ambrose, the Feast Day of the Assumption was widely celebrated throughout Europe as August 15 (in Orthodox areas, August 15 was held to be the Feast Day of the Dormition). In *De Assumptione sacntas Mariae*, Ambrose held the feast on that day to be precious and solemn: "Dearly beloved brethren, a day most worthy of honor has arrived, surpassing the feast days of all the saints. Today, I say, is a glorious day, a day of fame, a day in which the Virgin Mary is believed to have passed from this world."[102]

The Assumption of Mary remained a firm belief among medieval theologians right up to and, in some cases even among Protestants, through the Reformation. Moreover, Philip of Harveng (d. 1183) would have had a typical opinion in the age of the Marian tales: "The Mother is with her Son, not only in spirit—and of this there is not the slightest doubt—but also in body, which does not seem at all impossible to believe."[103] For modern Catholics, this belief has become doctrine. Stephen J. Shoemaker affirms that "On the Feast of All Saints, 1 November 1950, the See of St Peter exercised its rather recently identified privilege of defining doctrine

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[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid., 353.
[102] Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 46.
[103] Ibid., 179.

infallibly by pronouncing the theological dogma of the Virgin's bodily Assumption."[104] In his encyclical, *Munificentissimus Deus*, Pope Pius XII announced that "She [Mary], by an entirely unique privilege, completely overcame sin by her Immaculate Conception, and as a result she was not subject to the law of remaining in the corruption of the grave, and she did not have to wait until the end of time for the redemption of her body."[105]

If Mary was indeed called upon to heal crowds of people in both CSM 91 and 134, there would have been no more appropriate or dramatic an entrance than to invert and, by associative example, affirm the Assumption and the corporeal nature of her own body. She was, after all, in the latter part of the second story, healing a whole group of persons without arms or legs. In CSM 134, Mary's *Descention* at a point when the pilgrims were at their most vulnerable and, perhaps, at their most penitent, is enacted exactly as She intended: "She cured the sick at once, as does the Lady who never fails to respond to those who call Her, trusting in Her mercy, for She always comes when She knows She is needed."

Others of the *Cantigas* relate tales of ergotism, but the message is consistent: Mary always responds to calls for healing—as long as the conditions are right. And she reaffirms her physical presence throughout these and other Marian tales. There is no more dramatic example of Mary's physical presence in mending bodies and souls than those songs in which she employs her mother's milk in performing a miracle. Modern readers are introduced to the lactating Madonna by Marina Warner: "The Virgin in the Catholic Church represents motherhood in its fullness and perfection. Yet the Virgin as mother is exempt by special privilege from intercourse, from labour, and from other physical processes of ordinary childbearing. One

[104] Stephen J. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 9.

[105] Pius XII, "*Munificentissimus Deus" Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 42 (1950), 754; trans. Joseph C. Fenton, "*Munificentissimus Deus," The Catholic Mind*, 49 (1951), 65.

natural biological function, however, was permitted the Virgin in Christin cult—suckling."[106] Although modern readers are often a little dismayed at the image of Mary's milk being used as a salve or, even more disturbing to some, as an elixir, such healings take place before the Marian collections begin to thrive. Bryan S. Turner explains that milk was viewed by physicians in antiquity and the early Middle Ages as being processed blood; therefore, a religious comparison arose: "Christ's blood and Mary's milk in Christianity have been symbolic means of transmitting charismatic healing powers, and medieval paintings of the Virgin Mary show her breast exposed to produce life-giving and life-affirming milk."[107] Turner refers to the many works by unknown artists and manuscript illustrators who depict Mary nursing the baby Jesus, lactating freely, or offering or dispensing her milk to adults. The most consistently depicted adult may be St. Bernard of Clairvaux whose experience will be discussed later, but his *Madonna lactans* experience was painted by such artists as Perugino (d. 1523) and Filippino Lippi (d. 1504) well as Murillo in the nineteenth century.

The interest in Mary's breasts and the product thereof ran deeply in both the pictorial arts and in literature. An anonymous poet of the twelfth century venerates her/them in this stanza.

> *Tua sunt ubera*
> *vino redolentia*
> *candor superat lac et lilia,*
> *odor flores vincit et balsama*.
>
> (Your breasts are as fragrant
> as wine; their whiteness whiter
> than milk and lilies, their scent
> lovelier than flowers and
> balsam wood)[108]

[106] Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), 192.

[107] Bryan S. Turner, *The Religious and the Political: A Comparative Sociology of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 47.

[108] F. J. E. Raby, *A History of Christian-Latin Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 365.

Even earlier than this effusive panegyric to her breasts, the Venerable Bede, who believed that the milk of the heavens could be found in Mary's breasts wrote these lines: "*Beata cujus ubera / Summo replete munere* (Thou whose blessed breasts, filled with a gift from on high)."[109] Before going further concerning the influence of Mary's milk on the later Middle Ages, consider an initial Marian tale about the healing power of her milk.

The refrain from CSM 54 could be the mantra for any one or most of the cantigas: "All health comes from the Holy Queen, for She is our medicine." This is a story about a Cistercian monk who might have been a model of perfection for the cloistered clergy—in many ways comparable to Chaucer's Parson in the "General Prologue" to *The Canterbury Tales* ; the monk is described as being "learned, humble and faithful to his vows, wholly dedicated to Holy Mary and free from pride and arrogance." The monk was an overachiever who not only said prime, tierce, sext, nones, and vespers, but compline and litany. Additionally, "he was so eager to serve Her that when the community had said the hours, he stayed on in prayer in a small chapel." This Cistercian prayed every prayer in the Litany of the Hours, and he came back for extra credit. He seemed to live by the Parson's axiom: " That if gold ruste, what shal iren do?" (GP, ln. 500) Although he was living an exemplary life, he was stricken by a disease of the throat such that "it smelled worse than a cadaver." His entire face became engulfed in the disease to the point that he could no longer eat. The friars offered him extreme unction, turned his body to the east, and, believing him to be dead, covered him with a cloth. Mary would not abandon one of her own; she arrived and, after cleansing his face with a cloth, "She exposed Her Hallowed breast with which She had nursed the One who came to take on our lowly flesh and sprinkled

[109] "Adesto, Christe, vocibus" (On Our Lady's Birthday), in Brittain, ed., *The Penguin Book of Latin Verse* (London, 1962), 130.

Her milk on the monk's mouth and face." His face returned to its former state "like the swallow changes it plumage." The stunned monks rang out the bells and praised Mary for this miracle.

CSM 54 is found in a dozen different Marian collection not including the *Cantigas*. Its constant representation and repetition testifies to its popularity in its time. The choice of a Cistercian monk is appropriate and characteristic of twelfth to thirteenth-century lactation miracles. Warner points out that Cistercians of the twelfth century were most responsible for the rise in Marian veneration and for characterizing her as a source of healing.[110] The most famous Cistercian in this regard is Bernard of Clairvaux. He wrote extensively about Mary's role in childrearing, even using his own mother who nursed her seven children as an example of appropriate and nurturing behavior. According to Bernard's hagiography, he "was reciting the Ave Maris Stella before a statue of the Virgin in the church of St. Vorles at Chatillon-sur-Seine, and when he came to the words *Monstra esse matrem* (Show thyself a mother) the Virgin appeared before him and, pressing her breast, let three drops of milk fall onto his lips."[111] According to the vergers of Speyer Cathedral in Germany, Bernard's miracle actually occurred there; moreover, some of the milk splattered and dried. It was subsequently recovered after it had dried and they keep it in a reliquary.

This introduces the topic of the popularity of this particular relic. Marian relics were, of course, always in high demand. Chaucer's Pardoner carried Mary's veil in his bag: "For in his male he hadde a pilwe-beer, / Which that he seyde was oure lady veyl." (Prologue, lns. 694-695) Warner provides a laundry list of shrines that had Mary's milk in a vial or oculary of some design:

> Walsingham, Chartres, Genoa, Rome, Venice, Avignon, Padua, Aix-en-Provance, Toulon, Paris, Naples, all possessed the precious and efficacious substance. Sometimes

[110] Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex*, 198.
[111] Ibid., 197-198.

> the relic purported to ba a piece of the ground of the grotto at Bethlehem where a few drops had spilt while Mary was nursing. This place, known as the Milk Grotto, can still be visited by tourists to the Holy Land.[112]

Alastair Minnis found that Mary's milk made for a most attractive lynchpin relic at many shrines and churches. Minnis reminds readers that Our Lady of Walsingham was visited by peasants and kings alike—especially for blessings associated with motherhood, conception, and child-rearing. Touchingly, Elizabeth of York, the wife of Henry VII of England, "visited the shrine following the deaths of two children."[113] The design for this replica of Mary's home in Nazareth came to Richeldis de Faverches, and Englishwoman, in 1061. Sally Cunneen references Erasmus in discussing the fact that not everyone readily accepted the genuineness the Mary's milk relics.

> Many royal and noble benefactors left money to the Holy House, but in his colloquy 'A Pilgrimage for Reason's Sake,' Erasmus exposed the venality of those making money from the shrine and mocked the credulity of those who accepted the authenticity of the relics, in particular the drops of the Virgin's milk. There was so much of 'the heavenly milk of the Blessed Virgin' left on earth, he commented, 'it's scarcely credible a woman with only one child could have so much, even if the child had drunk none of it.'"[114]

Although Cunneen admits that the philosopher's analysis of the milk fund was "obviously . . . sound," nevertheless, she understands that Erasmus was not a social historian: "his [Erasmus's] intellectual elitism may have prevented his appreciating the community-building value of pilgrimages, which, despite inevitable abuses, were genuine expressions of popular piety."[115]

Despite Erasmus's objections, realize that he is writing 250 years after the peak of the popularity of this tale. Indeed, CSM 54 is only one of the stories that bear witness to the efficacious healing power of Mary's milk. CSM 93 takes a slightly different approach in relating how a leper was healed. According to this song, a young man, the son of a wealthy townsman, is

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[112] Warner, 200.

[113] Alastair Minnis, *Translations of Authority in Medieval English Literature: Valuing the Vernacular* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 147.

[114] Sally Cunneen, *In Search of Mary: The Woman and The Symbol* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996), 196.

[115] Ibid.

described as being “very handsome and well favored and learned and charming, but he indulged in every carnal vice without exception.” These acts, compounded by a haughty and scornful manner, drew God’s ire; the young man became afflicted with leprosy and withdrew to a sanctuary. In order to “please the Mother of God so that She might have pity and compassion and show him mercy,” he pledged to say a thousand Ave Marias. For three years, he prayed thus until the Virgin appeared and announced that she would remove his malady: “She uncovered Her breast and anointed his body with Her holy milk. The leprosy immediately left him and his skin grew back perfectly.”

Although the outcome of CSM 93 is identical to that of CSM 54, the protagonists are marked different. One is a Cistercian monk while the other is a rich boy gone awry. The latter actually follows a familiar fairy tale motif. Sometimes called the Prodigal Son motif, this involves a character who has advantages—wealth, position, appearance—but squanders them. It is closely related to elements in “Beauty and the Beast” in which the Beast had all advantage, became a grotesque, and was converted by changing his inner self. Body critics go further, suggesting that the duality of the body/spirit matrix of human existence is an often repeated motif. Barbara Maria Stafford writes that images of the body in literature can be “minimized or magnifies, reduced or aggrandized, cleansed or cosmeticized. It provided a surface for the play of invisible yearnings and visible emotions. It was a site for the display of purity and pollution.”[116] More specifically relating to the body representation in this tale, Patricia Dailey suggests, “In the Christian tradition, the body is not conceived of as a simple organic unity, but rather as a twofold entity partaking of two anthropological registers—the inner and the outer

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[116] Barbara Maria Stafford, *Body Criticism: Imaging the Unseen in Enlightenment Art and Medicine* (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1991), 16.

persons—that promises to find its true materiality in a time to come."[117] The task that Mary faces as healer in CSM 93 is to unite the young man's soul, which has a glimmer of goodness, with his putrescent body, which delights in transgression.

CSM 404 relates a final story in which Mary's milk figures as a healing agent; this tale provides affirmation of the ideas presented through CSM 93. Here, a priest "was of very good lineage and handsome of body and face and learned and of pleasing disposition so that he had no equal in his land. He knew how to sing well and read and generously gave of his wealth." He just had one, tiny flaw: "he did not let the devil outdo him in malicious deeds. Interestingly, the deeds are not identified; apparently it was enough that he performed poorly despite his advantages. Nevertheless, each time that he passed one of Mary's altars, he stopped and spoke a lengthy prayer praising her for having brought Jesus into the world: "and blessed be your breasts where he sucked, for because of them we are sure, by Saint Denis, of not going to Hell, unless it be by our own doing." Amusingly, that is almost what happens to him. His sins caught up with him, and he "fell into such a serious illness that neither Jews nor Christians" could successfully treat him. In a delirium, he ate his tongue and mutilated his own lips; as a consequence, his face swelled beyond recognition. As he lay dying, a passing angel took pity on him and called to Mary; the priest was, for obvious reasons, unable to do so for himself. Taking pity on the priest, "She uncovered Her breast and anointed his face and chest with Her milk and thus cured him and caused him to drop off into a pleasant sleep." Afterwards he realized that "he had been wise to worship Holy Mary."

Again, the poet here represents the bifurcation of the self into body and soul—inner and outer. What is intriguing about the solution to these tales is the literal use of fluid—an extension

[117] Patricia Dailey, *Promised Bodies: Time, Language, & Corporeality in Medieval Women's Mystical Texts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 2.

of Mary's body—as the healing agent. This is made even more interesting by returning to previous points made about the nature of Mary's Assumption. Catholic dogma, accepted official and affirmed culturally through the widely enjoyed Feast of the Assumption, indicates that Mary was taken *bodily* into heaven. Because she was immaculate and entirely without sin or pollution of any kind, she is uniquely qualified as a healer. She is the only human whose soul and body were entirely unified in a way that Patricia Daily writes that Medieval mystics sought all their lives. Mary is the elixir for healing—an act that involves more than physical reconstitution. True healing—the goal of medieval Christians and the climax of most of these tales of healing—is the cleansing and unity of body and soul.

A final type of healing tale must be mentioned in this chapter—these tales demonstrate that Mary cares for all things—great and small. One of the most unusual and unlikely miracles of Mary involves a mule that was cured of gout. CSM 228 relates the story of "a good man who had a mule which was crippled, its legs twisted backward." The specific malady is diagnosed in the tale: "This painful affliction of gout which the mule had in its legs and feet caused it great suffering." Gout, usually a dietary or genetic problem in which uric acid crystalizes in the joint, does not generally affect mules. Whatever the cause of the lameness, the animal was useless in as much as it "could not even walk." The owner decided to put the animal out of its misery and ordered his boy to kill and skin the beast. The mule, it seemed, had other ideas. He struggled to his feet and began walking towards the church of Mary in the town; "the Ever Blessed Virgin, as soon as it approached Her, performed a wondrous miracle. She made it well at once, without pain or impairment."

When the mule was discovered cured and walking normally, there was a discussion in town whether this was in the same animal; however, its identity was settled by careful

examination of its markings and color. None other than the mule himself credited the Virgin with the cure: "while they were gazing at the mule, it quickly walked three times around the church of the Holy Virgin Queen. The people, who observed it closely, saw it go inside, showing great humility." The fact that a mule could show "great humility" was demonstrated by the mule kneeling before the altar.

The tale of the Mule is exclusive to the Cantigas de Santa Maria; apparently, no other collector of stories found it of import enough to include. Nevertheless, miracle cures for animals are found in popular song and poetry during the Middle Ages. On the Camino de Santiago outside the town of Zubiri in Navarre, the trail crosses the bridge—the Puente de la Rabia (Bridge of the Rabies). According to local legend, a man crossing that bridge was headed into town when he noted that his mule had rabies. A poor man, he couldn't afford the loss of the animal and stopped on the bridge to pray for its improbable recover. Of course, his prayer was granted, and for generations the local people maintained the tradition of bringing sick animals to the bridge.

Finally, CSM 354 may not come fully under the topic of a cure from illness or injury, but it does certainly affect King Alfonso closely and also concerns a rescue from serious injury or death. In this song, the king was out riding when his pet ferret slipped from his grasp. Of course, this ferret was dear to the king; it was a creature "which the king loved dearly and carried with him and cared for tenderly. He hunted birds out of their nests with it . . . . It did this and many other clever things, scampering and jumping, at which the king took great delight." When the ferret escaped, it fell directly under the hooves of his horse at which Alfonso cried out, "'Holy Mary, have mercy! Save my little ferret, and do not let death take it from me'." Apparently the poor creature was trampled, but "Holy Mary, who is Gateway to Heaven, caused

it to come out from under the hoof alive by Her great mercy." Although the ferret had been crushed, Mary saw it safely back into her favorite's arms for which he and his company were thankful."

It should be noted that ferrets, very common especially in northern Spain even today, were used for hunting exactly as indicated in CSM 354. A member of the mustelidae family, ferrets can claim relatives that are both high and low. On the one hand, they are related to ermine or shoat, highly prized by medieval royalty; on the other hand, they are also related to the weasel. What seems like a comic song should actually be characterized as endearingly sentimental. Ferrets were used for rabbiting, hunting rabbits, and birds and for pest control because of their ability to find and kill mice and rats. Hannele Klemettila writes that medieval hunters even had small, leather collars made for their ferrets.[118] In his article, "The Limits of Liberty," Wordsworth Donisthorpe protests archaic laws that restrict the ordinary person's rights to pursue liberty and happiness in Victorian English; he cites the following as a law unfairly descending from medieval times:

> For as much as labourers and grooms keep greyhounds and other dogs, and on the holidays when good Christians be at church hearing divine service, they go hunting in parks, warrens, and connigries, it is ordained that no manner of layman which hath not lands to the value of forty shillings a year shall from henceforth keep any greyhound or other dog to hunt, nor shall he use ferrets, nets, heys, harepipes nor cords, nor other engines for to take or destroy deer, hares, nor conies, nor other gentlemen's game, under pain of twelve months' imprisonment.[119]

Far from being an ironic tale, a hunting animal of this type would have been an extension of his nobility. More than that, however, this an endearing story about Alfonso who simply loved his little ferret.

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[118] Hannele Klemettial *Animals and Hunters in the Late Middle Ages: Evidence from the BnF MS fr. 616 of the Livre de Chasse by Gaston Febus* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 80.

[119] Wordsworth Donisthorpe "The Limits of Liberty" in *A Plea for Liberty : An Argument against Socialism and Socialistic Legislation* ed. by Thomas Mackay (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1891), 77.

Many types of injuries and diseases with many causes affecting a diverse population have been omitted in this chapter. A man who passed a kidney stone the size of a walnut, a worm removed from the ear of a deaf man, a boy who fasted too much, a hunter whose skull was crushed by a bell, a rabid woman who barked like a dog, two impotent husbands, a frigid woman stabbed in the vagina, the man with a rabbit bone stuck in his throat—these and many more have been omitted from mention, but they are included in the summary of ideas that many be taken from these tales.

The Marian songs of healing are important because they establish popular notions or social norms about the nature of illness. First, they establish that the king/troubadour, Alfonso X, believed that Mary interceded on his behalf and, indeed, that she had done so even before he was born by interceding on behalf of family members in previous generations. Second, illness is most often a result of some sin. It is often a punishment that is directly administered by God and even, occasionally, by the Virgin herself. Third, there is no illness that cannot be cured by the Virgin. It therefore follows, based on the second point, that there is no sin that cannot be forgiven by the Virgin. Fourth, Mary is worthy of veneration at all times for her curative powers. Shrines, pilgrimages, the collection of relics all serve not only to acknowledge the debt owed to *La Immaculata*, but they are also often the most sincere form of venerating so great a saint. Fifth, there is no saint greater than the Virgin Mary. Again and again, these tales use phrases such as "having visited other shrines" or "having prayed to all other saints," the afflicted went to Mary. Mary is efficacious in every case. Sixth, it must be noted that there is money to be made from the business of Marian veneration. If she can cure all disease and if she is worthy of the attention and if there is no saint who is her rival, then those who operate the shrine or reveal the relic only on special days stand to reap significant economic rewards. Seventh, there

is no insignificant healing. A devout priest with a disease, a crowd of pilgrims suffering from St. Anthony's Fire, and a fallen ferret all alike deserve preservation. Eighth, Mary embodies the unification of the two human halves. Taken up in the Assumption, united body and soul, into heaven, she is capable of riding a beam of light down again in the same condition. Her body is immaculate and her soul is pure; unlike Christians who struggle their entire lives to match the two halves of the human condition, Mary is perfection. For this reason, she is the Great Physician.

The final point focuses on what is missing. Throughout these healings, Mary assesses the situation. It is Mary who decides on appropriate action, and it is she who effects the cure. Mary sprinkles her blessings freely, judiciously, and, sometimes, confusingly. She has the endless capacity to forgive even the most egregious of sins. In the deconstruction of these texts, the consistent factor that is removed, remote, and almost entirely absent is Jesus Christ. Although dogmatically speaking, Mary may receive her power from him, his direct presence is not felt through these songs. Petitioners do not seek him out; they do not witness him sliding down a beam of light or reattaching a severed limb. Compassion, reliability, and efficaciousness all belong to Mary.

CHAPTER 4

THE VIRGIN AND THE DEVIL: MARY AS DEMONSLAYER IN MEDIEVAL CULTURE

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

I Peter 5:8

4.1 Chapter Introduction

For most Medieval Christians, the threat posed by demons and the devil to the immortal well-being of even the most devoted among the faithful was real and palpable. Agents of evil were all too ready to ensnare a soul be trickery, by bribery, or by torment; they crafted illnesses that sapped the strong or dangled wealth, power, or sexual gratification as entrapments before the weak. Denizens of demons populated the pilgrimage trails, waiting to ambush even the fervently pious traveler. Townspeople found them in their beds, farmers encountered them in the field, and even the clergy met them in disguise amongst the orders and in the churches.

Historians have been quick to realize the omnipresence of evil and the perceived menace it posed to even the earliest Christians. One historian reduced the perils of daily life to a simple formula: "The new Christian suffered from two main threats to his existence. He was liable at any time to become a victim of the military despotism under which he lived. He was also open to attack by invisible foes."[1] Nor was this fear from unnatural enemies exclusively limited to Christians: "In these centuries everyone, pagan and Christian alike, believed in the existence of demons. Demons were in the air you breathed, the water you drank, and the meat you ate."[2] In his work *Satan the Heretic*, Alain Boureau claims that a rise of interest in and concern with demons coincided with the rise of important heresies and church/dynastic conflict. Boureau

[1] J.N. Hillgarth. *Christianity and Paganism, 350-750: The Conversion of Western Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1969), 12.

[2] Ibid.

discusses "the genesis of the obsession with demons" and determines "the period that includes the demonological turning point (1280-1330) coincides with a moment of high tension between the spiritual and the secular powers, between the papacy and the monarchies."[3] However, at no time does Boureau mention Mary nor does he consider popular songs and tales—especially those related to Mary—as evidence of mounting widespread interest in demons; instead, he accesses the works of academics, primarily Thomas Aquinas and Joachim of Fiore. Although his point is well taken that the time-line for the rise of interest in demons should be moved backwards from the fifteenth century, this chapter will prove that the time-line should be further revised in as much as Marian tales were already in popular circulation and formally inscribed and illustrated by the mid-thirteenth century.

Indeed, by the early thirteenth century the origin and role of the devil already held an established position in the mind of the highest theologians in Christendom. The First Canon of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) set forth the following as clearly established understanding:

> The devil and the other demons were indeed created by God good by nature but they became bad through themselves; man, however, sinned at the suggestion of the devil . . . . all shall rise with their own bodies which they now have that they may receive according to their merits, whether good or bad, the latter eternal punishment with the devil, the former eternal glory with Christ.[4]

Here, Pope Innocent III and his famous council lays out several doctrinal points. Frist, the terms "the devil" and "demons" are essentially interchangeable, referring as they do to creations of God. Second, demons were created "good by nature" and became perverse by stepping outside of God's intention. Third, that sin comes into the world through the agency of these creatures, but, forth, that a judgement at the end of time is forthcoming. Finally, the council offers the two

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[3] Alain Boureau. *Satan the Heretic: The Birth of Demonology in the Medieval West* trans. by Teresa Lavender Fagan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 7.

[4] H. J. Schroeder, *Disciplinary Decrees of the General Councils: Text, Translation and Commentary*, (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1937), 236.

entities, Christ and the devil, as existing juxtaposed—comprising as they do the final destination of all souls measured according to their works.

It should come as no surprise that eventually, given the rise of Mary's veneration, demons and Mary should eventually be mixed together in culture. C. S. Watkins begins his study on twelfth-century ideas and practice concerning sin, penance, and death, *History and the Supernatural in Medieval England*, with a simple, holistic statement: "In thinking about the supernatural, the place to begin must be with the conceptual categories that the church offered as a means to make sense of the visible and invisible worlds: the miraculous and the demonic."[5] There was no greater, single source for miracle tales in the Middle Ages than the Virgin Mary; thus, if there were demons to be dispelled, she would almost necessarily be called upon to exercise her power in this regard.

The God-fearing faithful in thirteenth-century Spain could find no more effective champion against the wiles of evil than the Virgin Mary. Although the *Cantigas* will evidence the many ways that Mary defeated throngs of demons and thwarted even the Devil himself, historically, the participation of the Holy Mother had not always been invoked by those in need of salvation. To be sure, descriptions of demonic encounters fill the pages of early Christian narratives; images of demons stand as reminders in such works as Gregory IX's *Decretals* and Justinian's *Digestum vetus* that demonic influence stood ready to lead even the most stalwart of law-abiding souls into sin and damnation. Nevertheless, the eighth-century theologian, Alcuin, did not seek out the Virgin in finding an answer to the taunts of the Devil during a nighttime encounter. Taunting the monk in much the same way as Christ had been mocked, the devil appeared in traditional guise.

[5] C. S. Watkins. *History and the Supernatural in Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 23.

> In that hour the devil presented himself to him in bodily form, as it were a large man, very black and misshapen and bearded, hurling at him darts of blasphemy. "Why dost thou act the hypocrite, Alcuin?" he asked. "Why dost thou attempt to appear just before men, when thou art a deceiver and a great dissimulator? Dost thou suppose that for these feignings of thine Christ can hold thee to be acceptable?"[6]

Although the devil appeared to be a formidable adversary, Alcuin was far from defenseless: "But the soldier of Christ, invincible, standing with David in the tower builded for an armoury, wherein there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men, said with a heavenly voice, 'The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear?'"[7] Hurling passages from the Psalms and relying on faith in Christ sufficed to rescue Alcuin from his confrontation with the Devil. Alcuin's example raises questions that this chapter seeks to answer; namely, how had Christians responded to demonic incursion in the early years of the church, how had an emerging lay piety changed the formula for demon expurgation, and what consistent types of demonic troubles are mitigated by Mary as demon-spoiler?

The view in the first centuries of Christian practice and dogma that Christ could prevail against dark forces found its basis in the New Testament. Later in this chapter, the *Cantigas* collected by Alfonsine poets will witness that, in popular thirteenth-century culture, there would come a transition from Christ to Mary as the primary source of hope and strength against the massed power of the demons. However, the emergence of Mary as a dispeller of evil forces has no authority in the Bible. Indeed, discerning the origin of Satan, or the Devil, and demons is more than a little confusing in the often-divergent biblical descriptions.

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[6] G. F. Browne. *Alcuin of York* (New York: E. S. Goram, 1908), 43.
[7] Ibid., 44.

4.2 Demons in the First Christian Millennium

While the Old Testament entertains the character of Satan in a number of relatively famous passages, Norman Cohn claims that, "the Old Testament had little to say about the Devil and does not even hint at a conspiracy of human beings under the Devil's command."[8] Here, Cohn draws a distinction between the medieval idea of the devil and that individual, Satan, who arguably appears as early as a serpent in garden. Alice K. Turner explains that "in the Hebrew Bible, or Old Testament, *satan* means 'adversary' or 'opponent,' and when the figure named Satan appears, it is always as Yahweh's angelic servant or agent operating against a man or men, certainly not against Yahweh himself."[9] Satan operates as a minion of God, prompting Neil Forsyth to characterize the entity as "a shady but necessary member of the Politburo."[10] Satan, then, performs the work of Yahweh in Exodus 12:23 in murdering the children of Egypt, in standing in the way of Balaam (Num 22:22-35), and in tormenting King Saul (Judges 9:22-23). The longest and most continuous interaction with Satan takes place in the book of Job. Casteel and Walton indicate that therein, "we meet a character called 'the Satan,' but it is a title, not a name. . . . In Job 1-2 the term describes a very different entity than the arch-fiend of later religious traditions; here, 'the Satan' is a functionary in God's court and visits him with all of the other angels."[11] Indeed, when introduced in Job 1:6-7, Satan seems amicably acquainted with the hosts of Heaven: "One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them. The LORD said to Satan, 'Where have you come from?' Satan answered the LORD, 'From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it.'"

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[8] Norman Cohn. *Europe's Inner Demons: The Demonization of Christians in Medieval Christendom*, rev. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 16.

[9] Alice K. Turner. *The History of Hell* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1993), 62.

[10] Neil Forsyth. *The Old Enemy: Satan and the Combat Myth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 23.

[11] Michael B. Casteel and John D. Walton. *And Then The End Will Come: A Theory of Biblical Christianity* (Bloomington, IN: WestBow Press, 2014), 91.

In considering the Old Testament characterization of Satan, Elaine Pagels suggests that the origin and functions of the figure reflect the frequent conflict in which early Israel found itself embroiled: "Many anthropologists have pointed out that the worldview of most peoples consists essentially of two pairs of binary oppositions: human/not human and we/they. Apart from anthropology, we know from experience how people dehumanize enemies, especially in wartime."[12] Pagels contends that Satan is often aligned with warring nations that oppose Israelite expansion into the "promised land." Turner agrees that Israel might have fashioned Satan in light of its opposition, but the scholar also contends that the notions about hell could possibly have, in fact, been borrowed: "Israelites might have shared with their Mesopotamian neighbors some notion of a dry and dusty underground venue for an afterlife."[13] The Hebrew text, then, composites a figure extrapolated from competing cultures. The evolution of Satan would take a decidedly harsher turn in the ensuing millennia.

The powerful trickster devil who intervenes on behalf of evil emerges from the pages of the New Testament. Even as Satan grows in malevolence, a savior emerges in the person of Jesus who can mitigate the ills of this rising power. In the first chapter of the book of Mark, probably the oldest of the gospels, Jesus encounters Satan and demons in rapid fashion and with uniformly successful results. There are three successive encounters with demonic forces: the Temptation, the expulsion of an unclean (demonic) spirit from the synagogue, and the cleansing of sickness and demon-possession from the townspeople in Capernaum.[14] Although much expanded in subsequent gospels, the Temptation follows his baptism and establishes his early dominance over the profane world. His power is vetted by a confrontation with Satan, the Holy Spirit sending the newly baptized Christ forth to his test: "At once the Spirit sent him out into

[12] Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 37.
[13] Turner, *The History of Hell*, 41.
[14] In order, these events are found in Matthew 4:1-11, Luke 4:33-37, and Mark 1:21-45.

the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him." Perhaps echoing Deuteronomy 6:13, the description of the Temptation in the Gospel of Matthew includes Jesus's famous response in 4:10, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

The second demonic encounter in the first chapter of Mark occurs when Christ enters the synagogue in Capernaum on the Sabbath in order to teach. A possessed man speaks out against the instruction and claims that this new teacher only sets listeners on a path to destruction. Christ does not allow the challenge to pass: "'Be quiet!' said Jesus sternly. 'Come out of him!' The impure spirit shook the man violently and "came out of him with a shriek."[15] This brief confrontation establishes Christ's ability to recognize and to exorcise unclean spirits. The final demonic encounter in Mark I involves healing of illnesses:

> That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.[16]

Here, the text establishes the link between demonic possession and physical illness.

A related story occurs in the fifth chapter of Mark; this account, however, expands on the possession motif and engages other elements. Jesus had traveled to the region of Geresenes by boat and happened upon a man "with an impure spirit."[17]

> This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.[18]

[15] Mark 1:25-26.
[16] Mark 1:33-35.
[17] Mark 5:3.
[18] Mark 5:3-5

In this narrative, being possessed of demons imbues one with super-human strength as well as the ability to recognize the Son of God. Identifying himself as "Legion" (that is, not one, but a host of demons), the man begged not to be tortured.

> A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. The demons begged Jesus, "Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them." He gave them permission, and the impure spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.[19]

This story will be echoed later in one of the Cantigas; indeed, this and other similar demon/devil interventions into the world are the inspiration for several of the thirteenth-century songs.

Demons and Satan appear more than three dozen times throughout the New Testament. While the specific appearances mentioned above all occur in Mark and under the scrutiny of Jesus, most are directed against the followers of Christ. In fact, some of the testament's most famous persons came under the influence of Satan. In Matthew 16:23, Jesus implies that Peter had come under the sway of Satan. More infamously, Judas Iscariot performed dire deeds under evil's direction.

> Now the Festival of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover, was approaching, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some way to get rid of Jesus, for they were afraid of the people. Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus. They were delighted and agreed to give him money.[20]

While some Biblical characters became fully possessed by demons, Satan's mere influence—the inference of betrayal—was enough to divert the ill-famed disciple. Unfortunately for Ananias and Sapphira, they too came into Satan's grip and refused to share their property with the disciples; the result for both was instant death (Acts 5:1-10). Even the great apostle of the

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[19] Mark 5:11-13.
[20] Luke 23:1-5.

Western church, Paul, confesses that he "was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me."[21]

Fortunately for the disciples and for his other followers, Jesus did not leave them without privileged abilities. According to Matthew 10:1, "Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness." The author of Luke waxes metaphorical and even more specific: "I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you."[22] Finally, in stating, "In my name they will drive out demons," Mark 16:17 bestows upon the faithful the selfsame ability as Christ.

However, there is no mention of Mary as having exorcised or having been imbued with such power over Satan, the devil, or demons. In fact, Dyan Elliot examines the many ways that women have been characterized in the same vein as the evil ones: "Both demons and women were also considered explicit harbingers of ritual pollution."[23] Elliott admits that "Perhaps the most compelling measure of the persistence of the pollution beliefs associated with women's physiology was the continued effort to separate the Virgin Mary from all such sources of contamination."[24] Although Mary escaped the unclean labeling applied to other women, she still had no special powers over demons in early texts. Elliott affirms that only as late as the twelfth century was the Virgin associated with miracle tales.[25]

Second-century Christian writers accepted the understanding that Christ stood as the bulwark against demonic powers. Jesus was the efficacious intermediary between the divine and

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[21] II Corinthians 12:7.

[22] Luke 10:19.

[23] Dyan Elliott. *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, and Demonology in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 7.

[24] Ibid., 5.

[25] Ibid., 119.

the human. In his Second Apology, Justin Martyr, for instance, blamed all manner of evil on the work of demons in this world. God, and through God, Christ had ordained a divine law that might have brought peace and harmony into the profane realm, but some of his angels opposed this plan:

> But the angels transgressed this appointment. and were captivated by love of women, and begat children who are those that are called demons; and besides, they afterwards subdued the human race to themselves, partly by magical writings, and partly by fears and the punishments they occasioned, and partly by teaching them to offer sacrifices, and incense, and libations, of which things they stood in need after they were enslaved by lustful passions; and among men they sowed murders, wars, adulteries, intemperate deeds, and all wickedness.[26]

According to Justin Martyr, the very purpose for Jesus's being was to mitigate the demons' hold over the world: "But 'Jesus,' His name as man and Savior, has also significance. For He was made man also, as we before said, having been conceived according to the will of God the Father, for the sake of believing men, and for the destruction of the demons."[27]

Although his works exclude Mary as an agent of protection against demons, Justin Martyr certainly understood one important aspect of Mary. The early Christian apologist may be the first writer to suggest the Mary-Eve parallel. In his *Dialogue with Trypho*, a work written around 155 CE addressing a Jew with whom Justin converses concerning Christian theology, Justin constructs an interesting parallel:

> For Eve, a virgin and undefiled, conceived the word of the serpent, and bore disobedience and death. But the Virgin Mary received faith and joy when the angel Gabriel announced to her the glad tidings that the Spirit of the Lord would come upon her and the powers of the Most High would overshadow her, for which reason the Holy One being born of her would be called the Son of God.[28]

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[26] Justin Martyr, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Volume I – The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus* ed. by Rev. Alexander Roberts, Sir James Donaldson, and Arthur Cleveland Coxe (New York: Cosimo, Inc., 2007), 190.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Justin Martyr, *The Faith of the Early Fathers, vol. 1*, ed. and trans. by W. A. Jurgens (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1970), 63.

Deducing a cyclical plan for God's creation, Justin saw Mary's purpose to right the wrong that the first virgin had brought into the world. In *Mary in the New Testament*, a collaborative group of scholars conclude that Mary functions more to reflect on the nature of Christ than to establish her own or women's nature.

> It is only with Justin Martyr, the apologist and philosopher, that Marian themes and particularly Jesus' virginal conception, gained some prominence in theological argument. . . . However, his interest in Mary basically serves a christological and soteriological purpose: Jesus' birth of the virgin is, on the one hand, proof of his messiahship and, on the other, the sign of a new time.[29]

Despite her rising importance in Justin Martyr's works, Mary's function seems entirely bound by her role as virgin and mother—battling demons was better left to the Godhead.

In the ensuing century, Origen Adamantius [184-254] continued Justin Martyr's argument that demons were once powerful supernatural beings. The Alexandrian affirmed that "all daemons have fallen from the way of goodness, and previously they were not daemons; for the category of daemons is one of those classes of beings which have fallen away from God."[30] Moreover, in *Contra Celsum* VII, 64, he speculated that demons were once worshipped by heathens as their gods and that demonic images occupied places of worship. Origen admits that demons are powerful beings capable of formidable magic spells and are invoked by devotees for "love-philtres and spells for producing hatred, or for the prevention of actions, or for countless other such causes."[31] God's power and Jesus's miracles, however, are differentiated from the magic of demons in as much as they are divine in nature and accomplish pure good; he rebuffs the idea that Jesus is himself a sorcerer (*C. Cels*. II.51). Origen affirms that all one needs do to

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[29] Raymond E. Brown, Karl P. Donfried, et al. eds., *Mary in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 254-255.

[30] *Origen Contra Celsum,* trans. by Henry Chadwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 452.

[31] Ibid.

rebuke a demon is to rely on "the name of Jesus, prayer, and words from the scriptures." (*C. Cels*. VII.67)

In the fourth century, Basil of Caesarea [329-379] makes only the slimmest of connections between Mary and demons. In the context of a discussion for the reasons behind the marriage between Joseph and Mary—and by way of validating Mary's virginity—Basil references the works of Ignatius of Antioch.

> An ancient author offered another reason [for the marriage between Joseph and Mary]. The marriage with Joseph was planned so that Mary's virginity might remain hidden from the prince of this world [the Devil]. For the external forms of marriage were adopted by the Virgin, almost as if to distract the Evil One, who has always preyed on virgins . . . . With this marriage, then, the tempter of virginity was deceived. For he knew that the coming of the Lord in the flesh would entail the destruction of his dominion.[32]

Clearly, Mary is complicit in a plot to fool the Devil, but her actions are passive, or, rather, part of a divine plan to distract "the prince of this world" from stealing from Mary her virginity. Rather than empowering her in this subversion, the scheme implies that Mary might have lost her purity had the Devil become wise to her real purpose; that is, she was incapable of guarding herself from the pitfall of promiscuity woven by Satan.

Chronologically following Origen and Basil, Augustine of Hippo (354-430) eclipses his predecessors in enduring influence as a churchman and philosopher. Stanislaus J. Grabowski affirms this opinion by writing that "in Augustine we find not only the best of Graeco-Roman culture, but an embodiment of the Christian tradition of the first four centuries."[33] The "doctor of doctors" for this time period writes extensively about demons in his seminal work, *The City of God*; however, the work's Latin title, *De Civitate Dei contra Paganos* seems more to the point

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[32] Luigi Gambero, S.M. *Mary and the Fathers of the Church: The Blessed Virgin Mary in Patristic Thought* trans. by Thomas Buffer (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999), 147.

[33] Stanislaus J. Grabowski, *The Church: An Introduction to the Theology of St. Augustine* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1957), ii.

that Augustine compares Christian and pagan cultural belief systems in regard to the nature of God, the gods, and their influence. In particular, Books VII through X consider the origins of demons, the nature of their acts (both good and bad), differences between pagans and Christians in their divergent understanding of demons, whether demons are gods, angels, or men, and even whether some demons or their acts could be admired, venerated, or worshiped. On this latter point, in Book VIII, Chapter 17, Augustine warns against admiration for demons: "What folly, therefore, or rather what madness, to submit ourselves through any sentiment of religion to demons, when it belongs to the true religion [and to Christ] to deliver us from that depravity which makes us like to them!"[34] For the philosopher and theologian, the power of Christ and His message supersede the dominion of demonic entities.

Just as he had a great deal to say about demons, Augustine substantiated many of the most important doctrinal claims concerning the nature and function of Mary. In *De Trinitate*, he avows, for example, the dogma of the virgin birth: "she [Mary] who was unstained and untouched, even in giving birth, by any contact with man, she from whom he as was born in a wonderful way."[35] But for Augustine, the importance of the miraculous birth rested completely on the nature of Christ—not on Mary: "We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ was born of a Virgin named Mary. But was she a virgin, what does it mean to be a virgin, and what is a proper name—these things we do not believe rather, we know them."[36] For Augustine, Mary's description, condition, and even her name are mere matters of fact; the nature of Christ fall into the greater, more challenging category of faith. Additionally, he agrees with conventional wisdom that Mary is a metaphor for the church, but, by way of questioning in *Sermo Denis*, he

[34] Augustine, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: First Series, Volume II St. Augustine: City of God, Christian Doctrine* ed. by Phillip Schaff (New York: Cosimo Inc., 2007), 156.
[35] Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church*, 228.
[36] Ibid., 229.

asserts a fundamental interpretation of the value of Mary: "Mary is holy, Mary is blessed, but the Church is better than the Virgin Mary. Why? Because Mary is part of the Church, a holy member, an outstanding member, a super eminent member, but a member of the whole body nevertheless."[37]

Although Augustine addressed both the nature of demons and the role of Mary, he did not allow that the two were related except in a single manner. The theologian wrote that being born of a woman allowed Christ to demonstrate that "he was invulnerable by his nature to any contamination, the less he should have feared a womb of flesh, as if he could have been stained by it."[38] Essentially, Augustine agreed with Basil that Mary allowed Christ to demonstrate the mystery of his birth—that her character was secondary to that of her son. According to Augustine, just as Jesus had been born without the help of any man, "even so, he could have been born without the cooperation of any woman."[39] The important theological point is that Christ circumvents any taint of evil by his miraculous entry into the world; he was born entirely outside the reach of the Devil. In Augustine's valuation, Mary played an ancillary function in thus thwarting the stain of evil with which all other men are born.

It is not the purpose here to offer in a few pages a complete history of the first thousand years of Mariology in regard to her relationship with evil. By way of synopsis, the one parallel that all accounts gravitate towards when considering the relationship between Mary and evil or demons is the Eve/Mary continuum. Between the fourth and eighth centuries, from the Council of Ephesus in 431 that proclaimed Mary to be the Mother of God, elaboration and theological exploration and validation for the power and influence of Mary continued to percolate in Western belief. By the early seventh century, Isidore of Seville, for example, would see in Mary

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[37] Ibid., 222.
[38] Ibid., 230.
[39] Ibid.

the answer to the problem of Original Sin. In her work examining the beginnings of sin, *Quaestiones in Genesim*, Isidore wrote, “The seed of the devil is a perverse suggestion; the seed of the woman is the fruit of a good work, by which the perverse suggestion of the devil is resisted . . . . She [Mary] will tread upon his head, because from the beginning she expels his perverse suggestions from her mind.”[40] By the end of the ninth century, Paul the Deacon claims an active role for the Virgin as he addresses Satan in a homily, “Burst with envy, ancient serpent, and let your indignation break you in two, for behold . . . . For she, by the virtue of humility, has drawn to herself the privilege of having the honor you lost because of your pride.”[41] Both Isidore of Seville and Paul the Deacon saw in Mary the power to undo the evil that the devil had wrought in the world and into the soul of humanity. Mary was taking the first steps towards actively confronting evil, sin, and ancient demonic power in the popular imagination.

By 787 and the Second Council of Nicaea, the church was ready to affirm that “I confess and I agree to in the first place the spotless image of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the holy image of her who bore him without seed, the holy Mother of God, and her help and protection and intercessions each day and night as a sinner to my aid I call for.”[42] Once the role of intercessor for Mary was released from that proverbial bag, her expansion of power and influence over clergy and laity alike is truly remarkable.

Wrestling with the devil, Satan, or demons is certainly not unique in Christian literature or hagiography. Saint Anthony in the desert contended with a devil who tempted him concerning wealth and women. Alcuin of York described his own late night conversation along with countless other theologians; from early Christian fathers to late, ancient world philosophers,

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[40] Gambero, *Mary and the Fathers of the Church*, 378.

[41] Gambino, *Mary in the Middle Ages: The Blessed Virgin Mary in the Thought of Medieval Latin Theologians,* 55.

[42] *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series, Volume XIV, The Seven Ecumenical Councils,* ed. by Phillip Schaff and Rev. Henry Wallace (New York: Cosimo Inc., 2007), 534.

to churchmen of the early Middle Ages, many have taken a turn evaluating the meaning of evil and discovering methods for mitigating its power or dispelling its efficacy altogether. However, these are not the only voices in this conversation concerning incursions of the Devil. In considering a history of the Devil, Robert Muchembled insisted that history consult other types of sources.

> It is essential to draw upon the widest possible range of evidence. The documents used by cultural historian go far beyond the classical manuscript sources that are the historian's usual terrain. Those wishing to study a culture cannot confine themselves to "legitimate" productions and the higher reaches of civilization such as the major arts or the literature of the Great Tradition.[43]

Muchembled begins his history by connecting the rise of Satan in the popular imagination of the Middle Ages to the rise of the Waldensians in the twelfth century.[44] Although the connection between notions of evil and heresy is a part of this study, for the current chapter the important point to note is that Muchembled asserts the significance of popular sources for any history of demons in the medieval period.

4.3 Demons, Mary, and the *Cantigas*

By the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, not only did the veneration of Mary increase exponentially, but also the roles that Mary assumed in popular religion and culture proliferated. Indeed, post-Apostolic controversies and subsequent church doctrine seemed to demand that Christ assume his role in the Godhead, far from the daily world of the medieval Christian. The vacuum left by Christ's ascent to Heaven in the popular imagination was filled in ever-widening ways by his mother. The many roles of Mary are recorded in minute detail in the poems and

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[43] Robert Muchembled, *A History of the Devil from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Cambridge. Mass: Polity Press, 2003), 3.

[44] Ibid., 38.

songs that esteem her. *Las Cantigas de Santa Maria* illustrates the particular ways in which Mary subsumes the biblical role of Christ in doing battle with demons. Sometimes, the role of Mary combating the devil seems simple and straightforward, but the text of the narrative reflects complex biblical passages. For example, CSM 343 recounts an incident in which the devil fills an innocent girl with curse words.

In CSM 342, a girl was possessed by the devil and cursed outrageously— swearing at whomever should pass [clearly the plot of the Exorcist, but without Richard Burton]. Interestingly, the story begins with a specific biblical reference: "For it tells in the Gospel about a man possessed by the devil who did not speak. However, that God Who healed all sicknesses and raised the dead commanded him as soon as he saw him to speak at once and say all he knew." The song couches the narrative in the context of Mark 9:14-29, a story in which Jesus healed a demon-possessed man. Some of the details of the two stories are remarkably similar. In the Bible version, a man brings his son to Jesus; the father explained that a demon held his son's voice and body captive and further explained that "I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not."[45] In CSN 342, the mother initially appeals to a priest to cure her daughter. The chaplain, bearing holy water, visited her, and the devil, speaking through the girl, accused him of having committed a sin. The chaplain fled and the devil, still speaking through the girl, revealed other people's sins. Lacking all assistance, the mother took the girl to the Marian shrine at Rocamadour, France where she appealed to the Virgin through prayer; "The Virgin at once heard the prayer of this woman and made the devil be quiet, and the girl was cured." Mary silenced the devil and liberated the girl.

In both stories, the parents of the afflicted children appealed first to lesser ecclesiasts—the father in Mark to the disciples and the mother in the *Cantigas* to the priest. In the Bible,

[45] Mark 9:18

Jesus expresses his concern over the failure of the disciples to effect the remedy: "'You unbelieving generation,'" Jesus replied, "'how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.'"[46] More than a story about healing, Jesus indicates that this tale reflects the father's faith: "Everything is possible for one who believes."[47] Following the ejection of the devil, the disciples were confused about their own failure to which Jesus offered a pointed reply: "After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, 'Why couldn't we drive it out?' He replied, 'This kind can come out only by prayer.'"[48] CSM 343 rests on an identical sequence of events. The priest is unable to cure the girl, but the mother successfully appeals to Mary through prayer: "The Virgin at once heard the prayer of this woman and made the devil be quiet, and the girl was cured. They gave praise for this to the Lady Full of Grace, whom all who would take my advice would greatly praise." In both healings, prayer played a pivotal part; beyond faith in divine intervention, faith that supplication works played an important role in these tales.

While the stories demonstrate other obvious common elements—possession by a demon who controls the voice, the parent seeking the cure on behalf of a child, public acknowledgement of the cure—the one significant change has to do with gender and the agent of intervention. In the biblical tale, the parent and child are male and Christ effects the cure, while in the thirteenth-century song, the parent and child are female and Mary takes Christ's place. The pattern of substituting Mary for Christ throughout these encounters with evil will become characteristic. In other songs, the Virgin's intervention is more complex and engages diverse levels of intercession. Like CSM 342, another Cantiga, CSM 82, is reminiscent of the biblical tale in

[46] Mark 9:19
[47] Mark 9:23
[48] Mark 9:28-29

which Christ expels demons into the bodies of swine, except, again, Christ makes no appearance in the later telling.

According to the text of CSM 82, a "chaste and pious" monk of Canterbury lay sleeping in his bed when he saw a host of demons in the form of pigs draw near. The devil exhorts his minions to attack the monk, but they beg off claiming an inability to harm the ecclesiast due to his saintliness. The devil responds, "Well, if you cannot, let me. With these pitchforks that I carry here I shall tear him to bits, even though he wears a silly frock." The friar called out to the Virgin who appeared and rebuked the demons all of whom vanished in a cloud of smoke. The Virgin, of course, had the last word: "I am pleased by the life you lead. Therefore, from this day on have care not to fail to do everything which your order requires." Clearly, Mary retains Christ's ability to vanquish demons at will and to protect the clergy from with guile of the devil. Moreover, she took responsibility for reinforcing clerical obligation.

If Mary will intervene on behalf of a monk, CMS 96 indicates Mary's willingness to rescue the immortal soul of a lay person. This song tells the tale of a man caught between two parts of himself and between two warring factions of existence: "This miracle was for a man who had always done everything he could to please the Virgin, but he would not repent of his sins because of the deceitful devil's counsel." The man continued in this dualistic manner until he was in a mountain pass one day and confronted by a group of thieves. They robbed him and, at the order of the head thief, cut off his head. Four days later, a pair of passing friars heard the head cry out, "Give us confession [note the plural in as much as the head and body are severed from one another], for the love of God and for His faith, so that we may not suffer punishment nor torment." The head and the body were miraculously rejoined, and the victim explained how he had been attacked and that the devil had wanted to take his unrepentant soul to hell;

"However, the Virgin, greater than all the rest, would not under any circumstances allow the devil to take my soul." The friars assembled a crowd and heard the man's public confession; afterwards, he asked for prayers and the body and head were once again disjoined. Everyone, of course, praised the Virgin.

The song of the decapitated man is highly referential to the martyrdom of St. Denis, patron saint of Paris. Denis fell subject to beheading at the hands of Roman authorities in the middle of the third century on Montmartre—the "Mountain of Martyrs." Although his two companions, Rusticus and Eleutherius, accepted decapitation in the usual manner, Denis's body arose, picked up his head, and hiked six miles (ten kilometers) while delivering a sermon on repentance. The martyrdom of St. Denis would have been well known by the time that the popular songs about Mary were being compiled. In fact, Denis's rise in popularity coincides with Mary's expanding influence and acquisition of powers. An eleventh-century statue of Denis stood at Cluny, and Bishop Suger famously expanded the Basilica of Saint Denis in the twelfth century.

The motif of the severed head is, likewise, well-documented in folklore. Stith Thompson catalogues dozens of tales that hinge on the macabre spectacle of a talking head, also known as cephalophore.[49] In her study of French hagiography, Emile Nourry has counted 134 cases of cephalophoric saints.[50] Christopher Walter quoted John Chrysostom who "asserted that the severed head of a martyr was more terrifying to the devil than when it was able to speak . . . . 'He then compared soldiers showing their wounds received in battle to martyrs holding their severed

[49] Stith Thompson. *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature: A Classification of Narrative Elements in Folktales, Ballads, Myths, Fables, Mediaeval Romances, Exempla, Fabliaux, Jest-Books and Local Legends* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955-58).

[50] Emile Nourry. *Les saints céphalophores. Étude de folklore hagiographique*, *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions* (Paris), 99 (1929), 158-231.

head in their hands and presenting it to Christ'."[51] Undoubtedly, not only is the talking head supposed to frighten the devil, but it is also intended to have an impact on the contemporary listeners who praise the Virgin all the more vociferously for the magnitude of her miracle and for the lesson that entrance into heaven is always open to those who will persevere.

To the modern reader, however, the opening phrase of CSM 96 might pose an irreconcilable conundrum: how can a man do all that he could do "to please the Virgin," the most venerable of all saints and, next to Jesus, the purest entity to walk the earth, and still take the "devil's counsel"? Essentially, how could he be both devout and a sinner? And given the admission that he sins continuously, why does the Virgin dedicate herself to performing so great a marvel to accomplish his rescue? The answer rests in the changing nature of sin, penance, and an evolving understanding about the threat posed by evil or by demons. An understanding of the complexion of sin in the world of these collections of Marian tales is fundamental to understanding the texts; as will become evident, many of these songs depend on the perplexing ability of the Virgin to release individuals from sin of a magnitude that should ensure their damnation.

In *History and the Supernatural in Medieval England*, C. S. Watkins identifies the twelfth century as pivotal in ideas about the nature of sin. Watkins examines theologians before that century to find that sin had a broader, social aspect; that is, sin against community or the church held the greatest concern.[52] Helen Steele states this concept most clearly.

> To sin [in the tenth century] was to breach the communal norms, to break the rules of conduct that kept the community ordered. Deeds could affect the community, thoughts did not, and thus the sin was in the deed. Sin was also external. The deeds that affected

[51] Christopher Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003), 143.

[52] C. S. Watkins. *History and the Supernatural in Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 171-172.

> others and the community were more deadly than private sins that only affected the person. Punishment and discouragement of sin was also public not private.[53]

After the ensuing century, sin became defined as something much more personal and internal. Watkins emphasizes that the rise of purgatorial theology (he sites Jacques le Goff on this point) and the increased importance on confession and the accompanying prominence of penitentials indicates that sin became more important to the individual's soul than cohesiveness of the community.[54] Watkins states that theologians "and others within the church were encouraged to tackle the theological problem of sin in a different way which abandoned the attempt to make full satisfaction for sin on earth."[55] Abelard, for example, "looked elsewhere for the keys to forgiveness and began to conceptualize penance in a new way shifting emphasis from atonement through arduous acts to redemption through inner contrition."[56] Extending his argument beyond Abelard as a source, Watkins also believes that demon tales and revenant stories suggest that new penitential and purgatorial teachings were circulating through the late twelfth-century England. . . . that even grave sins could be purged after death in fire so long as the sinner was penitent and had signaled this through confession."[57]

This changing concept for sin—moving from external to internal and from deeds against community to deeds against the self and one's own soul—is demonstrable in a number of sources outside the *Cantigas*. For example, the eleventh-century collection of the miracles of Sainte Foy, the *Liber miraculorum sancta Fidis,* begun in the early century by Bernard of Angers, is rhetorically crafted to assert the older idea of sin as affront to community. Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn employ social semiotics to assert that the Foy miracle tales

[53] Helen Steele. "Medieval Conceptions of Sin," accessed February 23, 2016, http://www.guernicus.com/academics/pdf/sin.pdf.
[54] Watkins, 187.
[55] Ibid., 171.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid., 187.

intentionally delineate “socially stratifying systems” and “trace a particular set of rhetorical codes” that “represent the corporate personal of the monastery.”[58] These authors find that, in particular, Books III and IV appropriate the miracle tales in order to establish the preeminence of the monastic system and to provide underpinnings for social norms of, for example, parental behavior and responsibility.[59] After the twelfth century, sin becomes personalized in popular text; G. R. Evans believes following the Fourth Lateran Council’s requirement that each person must make confession once per year, “amazing quantities of sin may be forgiven” so long as the repentance rings true—“it has to hurt.”[60]

The tales of Saint Faith from the 1000’s can be contrasted with the book by perhaps the first English woman to be identified as an author, Julian of Norwich. Certainly, the self-effacing writer, named Julian after the church to which she anchored herself, struggled with the idea of sin. In the twenty years between her first version of the *Showings* and the longer, second version, Julian developed a sophisticated theodicy concerning the nature of evil and redemption that reflects changes from the church’s stance prior to the twelfth century. In her analysis of Julian’s work, Denise N. Baker writes, “Julian’s preoccupation with sin indicates the challenge that is posed to her personally and to medieval Christians. The fact of evil, either as sin or as suffering, seems to contradict the belief that the universe was created by a good God.”[61]

In the third (of sixteen) revelations, Julian contemplates the nature of sin. She asks herself, “’What is synne?’ For I saw truly that God doth alle thing, be it never so lylyle.”[62] Julian affirms that all “thynges be my happes and aventure”—that nothing in this world occurs by mere

[58] Kathleen Ashley and Pamela Sheingorn, *Writing Faith: Text, Sign, and History in the Miracles of Sainte Foy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 19.

[59] Ibid., 81-85.

[60] G. R. Evans, *The Church in the Early Middle Ages* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2007), 57.

[61] Julian of Norwich, *Showings: Authoritative Text, Contexts, Criticism*, ed. Denise Nowakowski Baker (New York: Norton, W. W. & Company, 2004), xiii.

[62] Ibid., p.20.

chance or happenstance, but they are done by God's will. She knew that "he [God] doth no synne"; therefore, "synne is no dede, for in alle thys synne was nott shewde. And I would no longer marveyle in this, but beheld our Lorde, what he would shew."[63] Julian expressed her willingness to believe that Jesus would show her the nature of sin throughout these showings.

The conclusion to which Julian gravitates actually constructs a challenge to pervious notions about Original Sin. In a statement that seems redundant to the modern readers, Jesus tells her directly that "Synne is behoverly [necessary], but alle shalle be wele, and alle shalle be wele, and alle maner of thynge shalle be wele."[64] All the demons, all the evil that dwells herein, and all the sin is ultimately created by living in this profane world, but every individual may seek salvation in Christ's sacrifice. Time and again, Julian repeats Jesus's phrase, "I may make all thing wele."[65] Julian underscores the universality of forgiveness by characterizing Jesus as a mother figure; if "God almyghty is oure kyndly Fader," then Jesus "is oure Moder."[66] No sin can stand against so comprehensively a forgiving feminine figure: "For in oure Moder Cryst we profyt and encrese, and in mercy he reformyth us and restoryth and, by the vertu of his passion, his deth, and his uprysyng, onyd us to oure substaunce. Thus workyth oure Moder in mercy to all his belovyd children which be to hym buxon and obedient."[67] While not reliant on Mary as in the *Cantigas*, Julian nevertheless settles on a feminized Christ to rescue sinners.

Although Julian became a public figure, enjoying (or enduring) visits from, among others, Margery of Kempe, her religious observances and practices were highly individualized. Indeed, although a life like Julian's might seem to immediately validate the sorts of changes indicated by Watkins, Evans, and others, it should in fairness be noted that the anchorite

[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid., 39
[65] Ibid., 44-45.
[66] Ibid., 91.
[67] Ibid.

movement, which saw its zenith between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, harkens back to a tradition begun among the Desert Fathers and Desert Mothers. Just as the Rule of St. Benedict was intended in part to provide a collaborative structure for this individualistic movement, the *Ancrene Wisse* of the thirteenth century offered structure and control over the growing anchorite phenomenon. Ironically, a primary function of these two texts was to reign in and systematize—to draw together into common practice—movements that were inherently solitary and internal.

While the desert movement eventually engendered monasticism, a collectivist movement, and spirit of individualism dominated the *Cantigas* and later works like the *Showings*, both treated the threats posed by demons and the evil of the profane world. Just as Jesus was "led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted[a] by the devil" (Matthew 4:1), so were Anthony and Julian led into solitude to wrestle with evil. Indeed, the fourth chapter of the Ancrene Wisse cites that very line: "Ductus est Jesus in desertum a spiritu ut temptaretur a disbolo."[68] In her summary of the structure of the *Ancrene Wisse*, Janet Grayson indicates that "from the very early chapters there emerges the counteraction of the Devil's forces."[69] The developing nature of sin in an increasingly individualized society with a developing lay piety movement departs from notions about transgression prior to the popular Marian songs. Unlike the anchorites, moreover, the authors of the *Cantigas* had no manual to guide them. The demons whom Mary faced offer a broad range of challenges. A conclusion to be drawn in considering the individualization of sin and the proliferation of demons is that the two are linked. Norman Cohn believes that "by the later Middle Ages they [demons] had become far more powerful and menacing, and they were

[68] Robert Hasenfratz, ed., *Ancrene Wisse* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2000), 177.

[69] Janet Grayson and the University Press of New Engl, *Structure and Imagery in "Ancrene Wisse"* (Hanover: published for the University of New Hampshire by the University Press of New England, 1974), 228.

also far more closely involved in the lives of individual Christians."[70] Cohn goes on to write that demons are far more numerous and "shed their ethereal bodies" to work actively among the human population.[71] The connectivity to the individualization of sin would necessitate the simultaneous proliferation of demons—the more sin was personalized and customized, the greater number of demons required to procreate evil. What Evelyn Birge Vitz calls the "thrust towards autonomy" in the late Middle Ages leads to the diversification of sin and evil.[72] The headless thief of CSM 96 represents a single type of sin in a single individual whom Mary was willing to forgive.

More complex, and perhaps more demonstrative of the types of profane lives of sin that thirteenth-century listeners might have lived, are a series of tales connected to sexual misconduct. Take for example the story of the drowned sacristan as told in CSM 11. In this tale, also found in Berceo's *Milagros*, a certain monk who was the treasurer for his monastery led a life of conflicting morals: "he went to visit his harlot every night to have his pleasure with her. However, he always said the 'Ave Maria' with great goodwill before he went." Unfortunately, one night he fell into a river and drowned. The devil showed up to claim the soul, but a host of angels made a counterclaim and an argument ensued. The Virgin appeared and commanded the angels to "'Make bold to win back that which belongs to me'." They returned the soul to his body and revived him; the monk was subsequently discovered by the monks of his congregation, and they all celebrated the devil's defeat.

It is curious that the monk is able to sin and then say his Hail Mary in atonement—and then repeat the act. Apparently, the devil and angels were likewise confused. Nevertheless, the

[70] Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons: An Enquiry Inspired by the Great Witch-Hunt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 68.
[71] Ibid., 68.
[72] Evelyn Birge Vitz, *Medieval Narrative and Modern Narratology: Subjects and Objects of Desire* (New York: New York University Press, 1989), 92.

primacy of Mary's ability to forgive engendered by the monk's act of faith—even following, as it were, sexual impropriety—is validated. It may be that Julian of Norwich's notion concerning the inevitability of sin and holistic redemption are at play here; or, it may be that the popular audience, unburdened by complex theological ideas or any necessity for consistency of action, hoped to lay simple claim on Mary's powers of forgiveness. In another tale of sexual dalliance, the song takes a disturbing turn into the macabre—mixing fornication with murder and suicide.

In CSM 201, a woman described as being "of high estate and gentle and beautiful" promised to serve Mary, keeping "her body free of corruption." The devil, "always the enemy of virginity" tempted her to take her godfather as a lover and to live in sin. When she delivered a child of this sinful union, she went momentarily mad and slew the baby; however, "after she had killed him, she did not have the good sense to change her ways but sinned again and had another child." This child met the same fate as the first. This gruesome scenario is enacted yet a third time. Having fallen into despair and urged into further depravity by the devil, the woman decided to take her own life. She plunged a knife into her chest, but the blade missed its mark, leaving her wallowing in pain. She then attempted suicide by spider: "In order to die quickly, she did a very curious thing: she got up frantically and caught a spider and swallowed it right down, but it was not big enough nor poisonous enough for her purposes." When the small spider proved less than potent, she tried again with a much larger spider—thus, matching three sexual escapades and three murders with three suicide attempts. Indeed, this third effort appeared about to succeed when, racked with pain from a swollen body, she repented: "Oh, Glorious Lady, do not mind how sinful and loathsome I am, nor allow me to be lost, but be merciful to me and protect me from the devil and his temptations." The Virgin appeared, healed her—making her

body "more fresh, beautiful, and sound that it had been before"—and sent her to a religious order where "she ended her days virtuously and went to be with the saints."

Perhaps CSM 201 weaves a ghastly narrative, but it is certainly steped in fairy tale traditions. First, consider the triads that characterize the narrative structure of CSM 201. There are, as mentioned above, three groups of three—sexual encounters, murders, suicide attempts. The idiomatic phrase in Latin, *omne trium perfectum*, bears witness to the longevity of the notion that "the third time is the charm." This axiom appears to hold true in CSM 201 in as much as the protagonist finds her own perfection through her appeal to Mary. In his *Morphology of the Folktale*, Vladimir Propp suggests that trebling sequential narrative elements occur because the first two attempts may be accidental or incomplete, but the third confirms results or proves successful.[73] Unsurprisingly, in *The Uses of Enchantment*, psychologist Bruno Bettleheim offers a Freudian interpretation to narrative trebling: "The number three in fairy tales often seems to refer to what in psycho-analysis is viewed as the three aspects of the mind: id, ego, and superego."[74] For Bettleheim, the use of the number three symbolizes the character's exploration of the unconscious.[75] Both Propp and Bettleheim contribute to understanding CSM 201. Here, the use of three accentuates and intensifies the horrific actions of the noble woman, and it reveals the ultimate interiorization of the sin.

Bettleheim also discusses the fairy tale motif of the transformation of the cruel mother. The woman is initially "gentle and beautiful," but with the infusion of demonic influence, she becomes wholly cruel. The modern psychologist indicates that such a bifurcation of persona

[73] Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale* trans. by Laurence Scott (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 74.

[74] Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 102.

[75] Ibid., 103.

serves “to keep the good image uncontaminated.”[76] The transformation motif also explains absolving the woman of sexual impropriety, infanticide, and attempted suicide; simply put, her better self cannot be held accountable for what her demonically-influenced self had done. Allowing her to transform back to her uncontaminated persona serves to emphasize Mary’s inimitably keen judgement; the sin, which at its origin belongs to the devil, served the purpose of bringing the woman to contrition. Take the measure of Mary’s power of forgiveness in thirteenth-century popular culture. No crime—not even a triple murder—could allay the mercy of the Virgin. In what can be assessed as a precursor to Luther’s doctrine of *Sola Fides*, all one need do is call on the Virgin, and forgiveness is at hand.

Several of the Marian tales in which the Virgin confronts demons take the form of or have elements from fairy tales. CSM 47 for example, the tale of the drunken monk, is likewise told in a triad. In this narrative, an ordained monk is led astray by the devil “who despises goodness.” The devil “made him overindulge in wine in the cellar” and then attempted to carry him off. First, the demon appeared in the form of a fearsome bull attempting to gore the monk; fortunately, the monk called out for Mary who dispelled the demon. Next, the devil appears in the form of “a tall, thin man, all shaggy and black as pitch” only to be sent off by the Virgin. Finally, he appears a third time as a fierce lion only to be greeted with the same outcome. The Virgin then turns her powers on the monk, releasing him from “the wine which had addled him” and offering him the warning: “’Be careful from now on and do not misbehave’.” This comparatively mild tale of clerical misconduct relies on the classic triune structure.

CSM 17 relates a story with a somewhat harder edge that is also connected to fairy tale motifs. Here, a woman loses her husband and seeks sexual solace in the arms of her son; that is, she “succumbed to temptation by the devil.” Their union results in the birth of a child whom the

[76] Ibid., 67.

widow/mother immediately kills. The woman had thought that she escaped detection, but, alas, "the chief devil transformed himself into a wise man" and, claiming to be a mystic, he went to the court of the Roman emperor and revealed the woman's deep sin. The emperor's reaction to the tale was to set a trial date three days hence; he declared that, in the event that the woman was guilty, she should be burned. When the bereft widow called upon the Holy Mother, the latter explained, "This trial and tribulation of yours is clearly the wise man's doing, but consider him more vile than a dog and take courage." At the trial, the devil is unable to speak and flees, "tearing a hole a fathom wide in the roof."

The incestuous element in this tale immediately connects it with a litany of similar fables—perhaps most notably to Oedipus, but the story of the son is virtually absent from this account. Notably, Mary is almost dismissive concerning the widow's guilt; for the Virgin, seemingly all culpability lies with the devil. Jacqueline Schectman theorizes that a woman's bereavement always leads to some tragic event or events in the world of the fairy tale narrative: "The black magic of a family's grief, however well hidden it may be, can indeed create an ugly worm."[77] Thus, the loss of the husband and the subsequent mourning leaves the woman open to the devil's entreaties; the fault rests more with her circumstance, the family's loss, and the devil's intrusion than with a flaw in her character for the sin of incest. Bettleheim agrees that "many fairy stories begin with the death of a mother or father; in these tales the death of the parent creates the most agonizing problems, as it (or the fear of it) does in real life."[78] Mary's easy absolution may reflect her compassion and acknowledgement of these mitigating factors.

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[77] Jacquelyn Schectman, *The Stepmother in Fairy Tales: Bereavement and the Feminine Shadow* (Boston: SIGO Press, 1993), 8.

[78] Bettleheim, 8.

The ill-fated birth of a child lies at the center of another song, CSM 115. One of the longest of all the poems in the collection of Alfonso, this tale begins with a man and woman who lived lives of perfect satisfaction and devotion:

> In the land of Rome there was a man, as I learned in a written account, who was good and highly respected, and furthermore, so I heard, rich and happily married and beloved by all those in the land, for he fulfilled his obligations faithfully. This man and his wife lived a long time serving God with all goodwill. They had children and gave each and every one all that was necessary. Then they swore to observe chastity and modesty with each other at all times.

The tale begins couched in perfection. Note the rhetoric of extreme positivism even evident in the English translation—"good," "highly," "rich," "happily," "beloved," "fulfilled," "faithful," "goodwill," "chastity," "modesty." Frequently, tales begin with the world in a seemingly unsophisticated state of bliss. Arthur Asa Berger points out that, "We see that there is an elementary simplicity to the fairy tale based on polar opposition."[79] Indeed, Bettelheim reminds the modern reader that the expository statement of harmony quickly gives way to misery.

> Contrary to what takes place in many modern children's stories, in fairy tales evil is as omnipresent as virtue. In practically every fairy tale good and evil are given body in the form of some figures and their actions, as good and evil are omnipresent in life, and the propensities for both are present in every man. It is this duality which poses the moral problem, and requires the struggle to solve it.[80]

Polarities help the reader/listener to identify problems and to deal with existential dilemmas. The lack of ambiguity helps highlight the moral issue and guides the reader/listener inexorably to a moral conclusion with a moral lesson.

It should come as no surprise, then, that the blessed couple, pledged to chastity, will soon forsake their promise, otherwise the narrative cannot advance. However, one word about the

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[79] Arthur Asa Berger, *Narratives in Popular Culture, Media, and Everyday Life* (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Puclications, Inc., 1997), 85.

[80] Bettelheim, 8-9.

vow of chastity undertaken by the couple seems appropriate. The nature of marriage and all its surrounding elements—courtship, betrothal, dowry, wedding, procreation, divorce, inheritance—have been much discussed by historians. Frances and Joseph Gies write that “no element in social history is more pervasive than the family . . . . Every culture that we know, past or present, has included the institution.”[81] From Adam and Eve to Paul’s description of marriage, the Bible is replete with information concerning marriage, and the Wife of Bathe suggested that she should be counted an expert since “Experience, though noon auctoritee / Were in this world, were right ynough to me / To speke of wo that is in mariage.”[82] Considering her five marriages, the Wife knew little of a chaste arrangement; nevertheless, such a pact was considered by contemporaries to be most devout. In Book 4 of his *Sentences*, Peter Lombard affirms that marriage is an appropriate path for humans. He establishes two types of marriage: “The first was created in paradise [the Garden of Eden], before sin, as an office, where the bed was unstained and marriages were honorable, from which Adam and Eve conceived without passion, gave birth without pain. The second was created outside paradise, after sin, as a remedy, in order to avoid illicit passions.”[83] In this second form of marriage, the notion of sin enters the arrangement. Lombard discerns three positive goods to come from marriage: “faithfulness, sacrament, children.”[84] These three benefits together “excuse sexual intercourse” which he avows as venial sin for any reason other than to procreate: “every carnal desire and pleasure which is in intercourse is bad and a sin because it is from sin and is disordered. And we say that that desire

[81] Frances and Joseph Gies, Marriage *and the Family in the Middle Ages* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1987), 1.

[82] Chaucer “Wife of Bathe’s Prologue” *Canterbury Tales*, ln. 1-3.

[83] “The Theology of Marriage: Peter Lombard’s *Sentences*” in *Love, Marriage, and Family in the Middle Ages: A Reader* ed. by Jacqueline Murray (Ontario: Broadview Press, Ltd., 2001), 175.

[84] Ibid., 176.

is always bad because it is filthy and a punishment for sin."[85] Lombard insists that if both members of a couple agree, they could forego intercourse and live together in chastity as Paul recommends.[86]

Thus, the devil in CSM 115, who fills the husband's mind with desire, is disrupting a most holy union of two people. This couple have had their children and are attempting to lead a life free of the sin and filth (as Lombard characterizes it) of intercourse. Unhappily for the holy vow and life of good works to which the couple dedicated themselves, the devil wore down the man, and the latter decided to have intercourse with his wife. She, unswayed by the devil's influences, argued with her husband, stating that God would be displeased especially in that "tomorrow will be the feast of Holy Easter." When the man pressed his entreaties with "mad desire" the wife became angry and said, "'The issue of this deed I herewith bequeath to the devil'."

Natalie M. Underberg connects giving a child away to the devil to Stith Thompson's motif M210 and M211, otherwise known as the "Faust" series of fairy tales; the story titled "The Maid in the Tower," often known as Rapunzel, also falls into this category of tales.[87] Just as in most coming-of-age or puberty tales like Sleeping Beauty, the devil in CSM 115 promises to pick up the young boy of the couple's union when the child turns twelve.

Fifteen days before his twelfth birthday, the child is advised by his weeping, remorseful mother to seek out the Pope Clement for some defense against the devil. The pope admits to the young boy that his best hope is to travel to Syria because "there is a holy man there who is a patriarch of that land and has the district in his power. He will give you good counsel."

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[85] Ibid., 177.

[86] Ibid., 179.

[87] Natalie M. Underberg "Bargain with the Devil, Motif M210" in Archetypes and Motifs in Folklore and Literature: A Handgook ed. by Jane Garry and Hasan El-Shamy (Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 2005), 307-8.

However, the patriarch concedes that he is helpless against the devil and sends the boy to a hermit who lives outside of Antioch. The hermit suggests that the boy "pray to Our Lady of Goodwill that She defend you and that She thwart and overpower the devil so he cannot take you as he would like." The hermit begins saying the mass of Easter in hopes that by the time he reaches the conclusion of the service, the boy will be freed from his mother's pledge made in anger. Demons appear and attempt to carry the boy to hell only to be thwarted by Mary. She returns the boy, now free of the devil's claim, to the hermit just as he is concluding the mass.

Of course, the familiar pattern of three—in this instance the pope, the patriarch, and the hermit—play out, but the fact that all three characters essentially assume passive roles testifies to the centrality of Mary's function. No man in this story—not even God's representative on earth in the person of Pope Clement—can intervene on behalf of the boy. What is more, the order in which they admit their ineffectiveness seems inverted. The pope, assumedly the chosen of God and the leader of the church, is the very first of the three to admit that he is powerless against the superiority of Satan. The boy eventually makes his way through Syria to Antioch until he concludes his search with a recluse. So, why does a hermit take primacy over the pope in his ability to solve the problem of the hasty contract with the devil? Recall that concepts of sin had moved from sin against the community to sin against the salvation of the self—from external concepts of sin to internal. In his study, *Hermits and Recluses in English Society, 950-1200*, Tom Licence asks the important question: "Why did society harbor these people [like the hermit] who bypassed its norms and scorned its aspirations?"[88] Licence calls attention to historians who claim that medievals "needed the sort of counsellor and arbiter who had arisen in late-antique Syria"; these historians "link the rise of this figure to the dissolution of established social

[88] Tom Licence. *Hermits and Recluses in English Society, 950-1200* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 2.

structures."[89] The power of an anchorite like Julian of Norwich or the Antioch hermit in CSM 115 rests internally—in a special agency garnered from personal piety and not from that bestowed by hierarchy or titles. CSM 115 witnesses to power centered in the core of the faithful and fixed on its connectivity to the Virgin.

The devils in both CSM 17 and CSM 115 are elusive creatures; in 17 he appears initially as a wise man and at the beginning of 115 he whispers unbeknownst to the husband. For people in the Middle Ages, one of the greatest challenges dwelt in recognizing the devil or his demons for what they were. Although the Marian stories do frequently maintain the polarized world typical of fairy tales, the devil himself is often difficult to identify—especially to the character within the tales. In order to trick poor sinners and sometimes in order to escape the detection of ecclesiastical authorities, Satan frequently took on disguises. In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul warned about the devil's many prevarications. The Devil disguises himself in order to deceive others: "for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds."[90] Mary's universal efficaciousness in combating the evils wrought by demons and Satan was up to the task of combating demons in whatever guise.

CSM 26 examines just such a case in which the devil takes on a most holy pretense. This song is one of the most often re-told Marian tales; it appears in Berceo's *Milagros* as well in the *Codex Calixtinus*. Doubtless, it was included in the latter because the narrative concerns a man who conducted an annual pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. On one trip, "he spent the night with a dishonest woman to whom he was not married." Not only is this an unpropitious

[89] Ibid., 4.
[90] II Corinthians 11: 14-15

manner of departing, but he also left without going to confession; carrying such a sin along as partner to a pilgrimage foreshadowed an ill end to the journey.

Indeed, the ill-boding came to fruition; the devil, desirous of ruining so ardent a pilgrim, appeared in disguise. "Whiter than ermine," he materialized in the form of St. James. Having knowledge of the traveler's transgression the night before his departure, this faux apostle pretended to have compassion: "Although I am displeased with you, I offer you, have no doubt, salvation from your waywardness so that you will not fall into the infernal lake." The devil proposed a unique, if extreme, penance: "Cut off that member of yours which caused you to fall into the devil's power, then cut your throat." The gullible pilgrim performed both deeds exactly as he was bid. On finding his body, his companions fled, and a host of demons arrived to carry his soul to hell.

Propitiously, the genuine St. James rushed out of a nearby chapel and contended with the demons for the pilgrim's soul. The authentic saint argued that, since the devil had misrepresented himself to the mortal through impersonation, "you plotted great treason" and the soul should be consigned to St. James's care. The demons did have a legalistic retort to St. James's demands: "he must not enter God's kingdom. He killed himself with his own hands." At an impasse, James and the devils had but one recourse: "let us go before the judgment of Her who has no peer and abide by Her decision." In a previous chapter, Mary was shown to be an incomparable Mediatrix whose judgements always reflect perfect sacred judgement. That holds true in this case—with an interesting twist. Mary found that the devil had unfairly wrested the pilgrim's soul from his body. She commanded that the soul be returned and that the body be revived. However, not was all as it had been: "he never recovered the missing part with which he had sinned."

In his study on the topic of medieval suicide, Alexander Murry examines the history of this tale and considers several interpretations. Murry follows manuscript versions of the story past the Codex Calixtinus through the writings of Hugh of St. Victor and Anselm of Canterbury.[91] Some versions more explicitly examine the dialogue between the devil and the pilgrim to explain the latter's apparent readiness to perpetrate foul deeds on his own body: "You have lain hitherto in the slough of fornication. Now you wish to seem penitent . . . . If you wish to do fruitful penance for the revolting things which you have done you must, for loyalty to me and to God, cut off the member with which you have sinned, namely your penis, and after that, by cutting your throat, end the life which you have abused."[92] In his treatment of the story, Murry focuses on the question of suicide and how the pilgrim's companions react to the loss of their friend. One does have to wonder, however, about the punishment that the pilgrim suffers.

Why not reattach the member? And why doesn't the woman with whom he sinned, the "dishonest woman," also suffer some sort of punishment? It may be as Ruth Kazo Karras suggests: "Sexual intercourse was seen as something one person did to another. One consequence of this was that the two partners were not understood as doing the same thing or having the same experience."[93] Karras contends that women were "the receptive partners; they were penetrated."[94] The focus of the narrative rests on the male, and the culpability for the act may also rest on his loins.

Perhaps this explains why the woman avoids retribution, but why does the man pay so severe a price? The lesson both for the pilgrim in the story and for the hearer was that devotion to the spirit supersedes acknowledgment of fleshly desires. In his *Historia Calamitatum* Abelard

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[91] Alexander Murry, *Suicide in the Middle Ages, Vol. 1 The Violent Against Themselves* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 278-280.
[92] Ibid., 285.
[93] Ruth Kazo Karras, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe: Doing Unto Others* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 4.
[94] Ibid.

discovers this lesson as well. Having been castrated by Fulbert, he realizes the benefits of having temptation removed from his flesh: "the hand of the Lord had touched me for the express purpose of freeing me from the temptations of the flesh and the distractions of the world so that I could devote myself to learning, and thereby prove myself a true philosopher not of the world but of God."[95] In the same way, the pilgrim's member was a distraction from his most holy purpose—pilgrimage. As Abelard writes in his final letter to Heloise, "By a wound he [God, the father] prevents death, he does not deal it; he thrusts in the steel to cut out disease, He wounds the body, and heals the soul; He makes to live what he should have destroyed, cuts out impurity to leave what is pure. He punishes once so that he need not punish forever."[96] Yves Ferroul refers to Abelard's attitude to his own wound in writing that the scholar saw "castration at the root of his real fecundity."[97] While Abelard looks to God as the real hand that "cuts out impurity" in order that he might devote himself to godly pursuits following his castration, the pilgrim in CSM 26 has Mary to credit for his propitious penectomy—an act intended to preserve his soul from the devil.

If the devil maintained disguises as a tool in his arsenal, Mary was fully capable of reciprocating with a disguise. In CSM 216 she takes the form of a human in order to save one of her devotees from the devil. This narrative begins with an upstanding, wealthy knight who had fallen to ruin. In order to recover his status, "he became the devil's vassal." Having secured the service of the knight, the devil decided to pursue the wife: "Bring your wife to a mountain, and I will speak to her, then I shall make you rich beyond measure." The knight agreed, but when he approached the wife, she was reluctant to travel. She reminded him that it was Saturday—the

[95] Peter Abelard, *The Letters of Abelard and Heloise,* trans. by Betty Radice (New York: Penguin Books, 1974), 77.
[96] Ibid., 153.
[97] Yves Ferroul, "Abelard's Blissful Castration," in *Becoming Male in the Middle Ages,* ed. by Jeffrey Jerome Cohan and Bonnie Wheeler (New York: Routledge, 2015), 143.

day usually reserved for the veneration of the Holy Mother. She asked, instead, that he escort her to a church dedicated to Mary. He, of course, refused and insisted that she accompany him. Along the way, the wife noticed a Marian church and requested to stop; the wife entered, but Mary came out, "and looked so much like the woman that you would swear She was the same." The knight with Mary in tow met the devil who immediately recognized the Virgin. She chased away the devil and chastised the knight: "'You were a very unwise man if you thought to have riches and good fortune through the devil. However, do penance for it and repent of your deeds and give up what he gave you, for it can do you no good." The knight did as she required, reunited with his wife, and they lived in great wealth for the remainder of their lives.

Writing about witchcraft in medieval Scandinavia, Stephen A. Mitchell connects this tale to *pactum cum diabolo*, or pact with the devil, literature. He discusses a Nordic version of CSM 216 and believes that the intention is to turn the woman to witchcraft.[98] While a pact with the devil is part of this story, there is no evidence in the *Cantigas* that witchcraft plays a role. Certainly, the reader may assume that the devil means the wife no good, and the story contains a clear moral lesson about the dangers of being distracted by worldly wealth and position. Listeners can infer that the trappings of the profane world are nothing compared to the rewards offered by Mary.

Although the Virgin Mary seems capable of absolving every soul of his or her transgressions, the threat of eternal damnation is made abundantly clear in several of the Marian songs. According to CSM 58, for example, nothing short of a vision of hell could save a nun from leaving the vocation. Here, a nun "was very beautiful and obedient to the rules of her order and always did faithfully what pleases Holy Mary." The devil, who cannot abide such fidelity,

[98] Stephen A. Mitchell, *Witchcraft and Magic in the Nordic Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 110.

tempted her into infatuation; she fell in love with a knight, and the pair plotted to marry. On the day they arranged to meet, the nun fell asleep in a courtyard and experienced a vision that struck her with trepidation: "She saw herself on the brink of a narrow, deep opening, blacker than pitch. The devil, who had brought her there, tried to throw her through it into the eternal fire where she heard more than a thousand human voices and saw many people being tormented. Her heart almost burst with fear." The nun cries out to Mary to rescue her, but the Virgin retorts with a bit of peevish scorn: "'Let him for whom you threw me aside come to your aid, for I do not care a bit'." The devil began pulling her in, and "she screamed for Holy Mary, the Noble Spiritual Queen, who pulled her out." In the end, the nun realized that she should never have sought to forsake God for a mortal man. Indeed, she tells her would-be husband who arrives, "'I do not wish the fine clothes nor tunic, nor while I live shall I have a lover, nor do I seek any other love except that of the Mother of Our Lord, the Holy Heavenly Queen."

At the conclusion of the story, the nun rejects three temporal temptations. First, she abjures material things—fine clothes. Second, she rejects sexual gratification—a lover. Finally, she denies herself any emotional attachment—love—other than that offered by the celestial passion for the Mother. The severity of the vision with which Mary frightened the nun from her intentions reveals the depth of the attraction she felt for the knight and for his life style. As C. H. Lawrence points out, "the nunneries of the early Middle Ages not only offered women the chance to pursue the ascetical life; they attracted endowments because they performed an important social role in providing a haven for the daughters and widows of the aristocracy for whom no suitable marriage could be found."[99] He goes on to write that "the great majority of

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[99] C. H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, Inc., 1989), 216.

nuns came of aristocratic or knightly families."[100] Surrendering the clothing and the life of an aristocrat must have, at times, chaffed against even the most devout of nuns. For example, trading sartorial finery for the nun's wimple did not sit well with Chaucer's Madame Eglentyne whose brooch enscribed with *amor vincit omnia* topped off a most aristocratic outfit. In considering nun's clothing, Laura F. Hodges cites both the *Ancren Riwle* and the *Rule of Syon,* both of which "forbid the wearing of anything that is 'ouer curyous'"; that is, clothing that is "artistically or elaborately designed, exquisite, costly, or sumptuous."[101] For the nun to relinquish finery for plain clothing apparently required the yawning mouth of hell.

Although Mary forgives the nun for a momentary lapse, Mary's forgiveness and her willingness to interpose herself between the designs of demons and their victims ranged far afield. Like the CSM 216, another tale, CSM 119, includes the imminent threat of hell, but this storyline involves a lay person and touches on the topic of official misconduct. The story implicates a judge who used his office for personal gain: "He collected generous donations, not stingy ones. He always ate good bread and drank good wines, but he was not much given to traveling the highways to capture thieves." Instead of pursuing authentic justice, this individual caught minor offenders in his town and extorted money from them. One day, the judge heard what he thought was a quarrel; it turned out to be a gang of demons who carried the arbitrator outside of town and dangled him over a pit that boiled like a caldron. The judge is stricken by this vision of hell. The Virgin arrived and ordered the demons to "'take your insolent hands from this man'." The demons, of course, flee immediately; Mary offers the man advice, "for She does not wish Her faithful to come to grief. Although he had done very little justice, he had always had hope in Holy Mary." Thus, she tells him to confess his sins, "do great penance," and

[100] Ibid., 217.

[101] Laura F. Hodges, *Chaucer and Clothing: Clerical and Academic Costume in the General Prologue to The Canterbury Tales* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005), 11.

put his affairs in order. Indeed, she gives him one more day to live, and, if he wished to avoid the hell that he saw open before him, he must follow her directions. She then "left him in a beautiful meadow." The judge did as she bid him, confessing and receiving absolution. The very next day, he died, releasing his soul, and "the glorious angels carried it triumphantly away."

This story sweeps away Paul's many injunctions for constant preparedness—warning Christians that death will come "like a thief in the night."[102] The doctrine of Good Works fades to nothing as the judge speciously used his position for personal gain, doing "very little justice." Nevertheless, faith in Mary alone, an implied doctrine of *Sola Maria*, was enough to rescue him from the boiling mouth of hell. The text of the song implies that the judge performed some public act or acts of contrition and penance. In the concluding stanza the poet indicates that, on the day before he died and after he had made his confession, "he evoked great pity from all who saw him." The step toward public penance would have been a significant one; "Public penance was considered more truly sacramental by theologians of the time."[103] Peter Lombard held public penance to be particularly important because he indicated that it could not be repeated. Of course, in the case of the judge in CSM 119, he has no need to repeat his penance since he died the next day.

Remarkably, two other songs in the collection testify to Mary's forgiveness in the face of the devil and damnation for a pair of most unlikely sinners. In CSM 85 Mary reaches out to a Jewish man and performs a conversion. The Jew had been captured by thieves who were themselves Christians. They tied him up, beat him, and then removed him to a secluded house. Hoping to extort money from him, the thieves continued the beatings, but they "gave him bread and water so that he would not die on them and they could have a share of his money."

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[102] 1 Thessalonians 5:2

[103] Frank O'Loughlin, *The Future of the Sacrament of Penance* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2007), 55.

Exhausted from the abuse, the prisoner fell asleep and had a dream in which Mary came to him, cured his wounded body and freed him. When he awoke, she was indeed standing before him, and he was free. Not recognizing her, he asked for her name; she responded, "'Heed me well, for I am the one for whom you and all your tribe have perpetual animosity. You killed my son in vile felony." Nevertheless, Mary explained that she wanted to turn the Jew's heart and save his soul. She led him to a mountain top where he observed "a deep valley full of dragons and devils, blacker than coal, who were torturing the souls of the Jews in more than a thousand ways. They boiled them and roasted them and made them burn like embers. They singed their beards and moustaches." Predictably, the poor man reacted with great fear. Then Mary took him to another mountain "where he saw Jesus Christ seated with legions of angels who ceaselessly sing sweet melodies to Him. He saw a great many blissful saints there who pray for Christians that God may keep them from harm and from the devil and his temptations, singing delightful songs." Mary explained to the Jew that he would be saved "'if you believe in Him [Jesus] and eat suckling pig and stop cutting the throats of goats'." The Jew immediately sought out a nearby abbot who converted him. For the remainder of his life, the man proclaimed the miracles of Mary.

Although this story of the converted Jew ends happily for the new Christian, his favorable resolution is not frequently repeated elsewhere in the Marian tales. In particular, among the *Cantigas*, Jewish characters figure prominently more than a dozen times, yet in only one other instance does a Jew convert. In several of the songs, the Jewish characters come to horrific ends. In the *Cantigas*, the up and down treatment of the Jews reflects the volatile treatment and the diverse circumstances in which Jews found themselves in medieval Spain. Famously, they had enjoyed good treatment and equal status under Moorish law in the first two

centuries of Moorish rule [the Moors invaded in 711]; under Umayyad law and governance, "the Jews of al-Andalus had become visibly prosperous—materially, to be sure, and culturally even more so."[104] However, by the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Almoravid "rule was making life for many Jew more difficult, and many even had to emigrate to the north" into Christian-controlled territories.[105] Although initially welcomed by many Christians, their eventual treatment under Christian protection often reflected the prejudices of long mistrust for the slayers of Christ. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, even some traditional Jewish scholars and rabbis began teaching that a segregated society might be best for both Jews and Christians.[106]

Although the Jew from CSM 85 converted, even Jewish conversion could be looked on with suspicion and mistrust. Jonathan M. Elukin addresses the problem faced by the Hebrew who forsook tradition: "Throughout the Middle Ages, Jews who converted to Christianity found it difficult to convince Christians that they had abandoned their Jewish identities. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that Christians continued to insist that Jewish converts had retained some element of Jewishness."[107] To be sure, the Jew in CSM 85 viewed the horrors of hell and the rewards of heaven; these contrasting images would have been utterly familiar to readers and listeners of this tale across Europe. These very images adorn tympani in countless churches—the Cathedral of Our Lady in Antwerp, the Cathedral of Our Lady of Reims, the Cathedral of St. Lazare, the Basilica of Sainte-Marie-Madeleine in Vezelay, the Abbey Church of Saint Foy, the Church of Holy Mary of the White in Sirga, and the list goes on. Despite what should have been a sure-fire conversion experience, the Jew in CSM 85 still had to prove his

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[104] Maria Rosa Menocal, *The Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews, and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain* (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 2002), 84.

[105] Ibid., 163-164.

[106] Bernard F. Reilly *The Medieval Spains* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 121-122.

[107] Jonathan M. Elukin, "From Jew to Christian? Conversion and Immutability in Medieval Europe" in *Varieties of Religious Conversion in the Middle Ages* ed. by James Muldoon (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997), 171.

adoptive faith. First, according to the tale, he had to believe in Jesus, but beyond that, he had to give up the habits of his Jewishness as indicated above by Elukin. He had to “eat suckling pig,” and he must “stop cutting the throats of goats.” In other words, he had to violate the dietary laws that Jews had lived by since before the diaspora. Only these steps would convince the Virgin—and perhaps the Christians with whom the new believer must live—that he had converted in earnest. Perhaps his neighbors could cling to Paul’s grudging acceptance that one day even the Jews might be converted: “As far as the gospel is concerned, they [the Jews] are enemies for your sake; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, for God’s gifts and his call are irrevocable.”[108] According to Paul, the Jews are the enemies of God’s people, but they were, after all, once the Chosen of God and for that and for their tradition, God will see them converted.

What Mary was willing to do for the Jew, she was apparently agreeable to do for a Moor in demonic distress. Despite having occupied Spain since the incursion into the peninsula in 711 CE, few Muslims converted to Christianity until the forced conversions after 1492. Nevertheless, a Moor in CSM 192 comes to conversion through a wrestling match not unlike those described in the Bible. In Consuegra, a town near Toledo, there lived a Christian man “who loved Holy Mary above all else and argued persistently for Her sake each day . . . with a Moor of Almeria, who said that Her great power was worth nothing.” The Christian was the master of the Moor, yet he offered to free the infidel and to share his wealth if the man would convert and venerate Mary. The Moor was “false and incredulous,” so the master had the servant imprisoned in a cave. The devil came to the Moor and wrestled with him, but the Moor “caught the devil’s finger in his mouth and groaning and biting down hard, he tore it off.” Undeterred, the devil continued to wrestle with the Moor for three days. After that time, Mary

[108] Romans 11:28-29

entered the cave and made an offer to the captive: "'Pagan, if you wish to be saved, you must depart from the devil at once and also from the false, vain, mad, villainous dog Mohammed'." When the master came to the cave the next day, the Moor told the story and converted because "pardon comes from the Gentle Virgin who saves and rewards us."

CSM 192 remains the only one of the many *Cantigas* in which a Muslim character who figures importantly actually converts to Christianity. In his work, *God's Crucible*, David Levering Lewis contends that "the fall of Toledo [1085] was the beginning of the end of Islam's long sojourn in Europe. Toledo was the first domino."[109] Although 407 years elapsed between the fall of Toledo and the surrender of Granada in 1492, Lewis writes that the trajectory of military and political dominance of the Iberian Peninsula was set. From that point as well, Christians seemed devoted to squeezing as much personal gain as they could from the Muslim population and culture; little effort was devoted to conversion. Note, for example, the focus on "sharing his wealth" in CSM 192. Therein rests the implication of largess on the part of the Christian master, and he uses the only allurement that he may assume works on his Muslim servant—money.

It is interesting to contrast the two tales of conversion along pecuniary lines. In the conversion of the Jew, the Hebrew has money and Christians are attempting to squeeze it from him through beatings. In the conversion of the Moor, the Christian has money and offers to share with the Muslim. Lewis points out that "Alfonso VI called himself 'king of the two religions' and guaranteed the Muslims of Toledo the right to Worship in their Friday Mosque."[110] Although his leadership style generally honored the traditions of the Moors, Alfonso VI allowed the newly appointed archbishop of Toledo to seize the city's principal

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[109] David Levering Lewis, God's Crucible: Islam and the Making of Europe, 570-1215 (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2008), 357.

[110] Ibid., 359.

mosque and to convert it to a cathedral. Indeed, money may be at the heart of the survival of the last Moorish stronghold in Spain, the Emirate of Granada. After the fall of Cordoba in 1236, Ferdinand III of Castile (later canonized San Fernando for his conquests and piety) struck a deal with the Moorish leaders of Granada making them a tributary state. Following the surrender of Seville, Granada remained the only Muslim state on the peninsula. Without a doubt, the natural barrier of the Sierra Nevada Mountains that encircle the city to the north and the payment of a sizable tribute allowed the continuance of a Moorish presence. It is clear that money, more than religious tolerance, played a role for medieval Christians who had to contend with persons who venerated the "false, vain, mad, villainous dog Mohammed."

The Jew and the Moor of these two tales are brought to Christianity through images of hell. The ability to thwart the designs of hell raise Mary to considerable heights. In CSM 85 she stands on a literal mountain top, preeminent over both regions that embrace this middle earth. In thirteenth-century popular culture, Mary had overreached her role inscribed in the New Testament. She had developed the power to thwart or vanquish demons. Using demons or the devil as Mary's counterpoint in these narratives, despite the fact that the Bible retains not even the hint of an encounter between the two, was a fortuitous narrative trope. In his study on the supernatural in the literature of Spain, Frank Callcott gives the devil his due: "His Satanic Majesty is and always has been one of the most interesting of personages."[111] The greatness of Mary's power could only be demonstrated by an equally imposing foe. By directly encountering evil in the world, she not only held out hope for salvation to her faithful, but she also showed herself to be an incomparable presence on earth. She could raise the dead, turn aside the laws of both the profane and sacred realms and offer judgments based solely on her own divine

[111] Frank Callcott, *The Supernatural in Early Spanish Literature: Studied in the Works of the Court of Alfonso X, El Sabio* (New York: Instituto de las Espanas, 1923), 91.

assessment. She enforced clerical and lay chastity, converted Muslim and Jew, forced sinners to swallow curse words, chastised municipal authorities for misconduct, and crushed the devil's heretical designs on the direction of church doctrine.

4.4 Conclusion

Certainly, the Christ of the New Testament does not match the breadth of Mary's powers. Indeed, Christ is almost entirely absent from these narratives that feature so many demons and so many nefarious acts that could lead to damnation. At no time does Christ speak or appear as a character in the stories; to be sure, He is referenced and His sacrifice is noted, but His person and power are subsumed His Mother. In the matter of Mary's burgeoning power over demons, the tuneful troubadours of the thirteenth century apparently agreed with William of Ware. The English Franciscan, writing around 1300 in *De conceptione beatae Virginis,* described his assessment of Mary's powers: "If I must err – I would rather err by excess in giving a privilege to Mary, than by defect, diminishing or taking from her a privilege which she had."[112]

Historically, the emergence of tales in which Mary confronts both the demons of Judaism and of Islam speaks to the changing relationship between Christians and those who were increasingly becoming their religious rivals. Even as the Marian tales were in their infancy in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the seeds of increasing religious strife were being sown. Although the first two hundred years of Moorish occupation had been comparatively amicable, Simon Barton and Richard Fletcher indicate that this peace was not to last.

> In the middle years of the eleventh century a movement of what today would be styled Islamic fundamentalism had taken root in Morocco. The Almoravids were a sect of austere, unflinching Islamic rigors. Their armies crossed the Straits in 1086 to answer the

[112] Stefano M Manelli, *Blessed John Duns Scotus: Marian Doctor* (New Bedford, MA: Ignatius Press, 2011), 18.

> appeal of their co-religionists and did indeed inflict a heavy defeat upon Alfonso VI at Sagrajas.[113]

Although they came as allies, the Almoravids quickly became reformers. They were "shocked by what they saw as the religious backsliding" of the Spanish Moors.[114] Resolving to stay and implement religious reforms, the Almoravids quickly rose as demons on a new level from those Muslims whom Spanish Christians had previously known. This new strife came to be personified in the texts of the *Cantigas*; Mary had new demons to fight.

In addition to a change in the Moorish leadership, internal conflict among Spanish Christian leaders may have contributed to the influx of demons in the tales and songs. Thomas Bisson finds that the end of the reign of Alfonso VI of Castile saw heightened levels of social upheaval and unrest; "modern historians have not hesitated to speak of a time of crisis in these societies, and they are certainly right to do so."[115] Bisson points to the rise of the nobles and the poor leadership provided by Urraca, Alfonso VI's daughter, as reasons behind problems in Spain. An additional component in Bisson's mind is the economic boon that the Santiago pilgrimage trail had become. As the tide of pilgrims began to swell, so did the revenue; the attractive incomes to be had were desired by locals, lords, and kings alike.[116] The religious, political, and social problems that arose in the twelfth century may be linked to the demons that populated the Cantigas in ever increasing numbers. These popular tales reflected the difficulties in reconciling the times with the morality of Marian veneration.

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[113] Simon Barton and Richard Fletcher, *The World of El Cid: Chronicles of the Spanish Reconquest; Selected Sources* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 5.

[114] Ibid.

[115] Thomas N. Bisson, *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century: Power, Lordship, and the Origins of European Government* (United States: Princeton University Press, 2010), 244.

[116] Ibid., 248-255.

CHAPTER 5

MARY AS MEDIATRIX: THE LAW, PILGRIMAGE, AND MARIAN TALES

> *There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you--who are you to judge your neighbor?*
>
> James 4:12

5.1 Chapter Introduction

In previous chapters, the *mariales* have demonstrated the popular belief in the Middle Ages that Mary incorporated the powers or qualities that had traditionally been ascribed to Christ in the earliest Christian texts. Not viewed as merely the Intercessor Prime, she could perform miracles often through her own agency. The present chapter will uphold the same principle, but in an expanded capacity. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a history of law as it relates to twelfth- and thirteenth-century Marian tales. In his book on ancient law, Alan Watson makes the case for incorporating the study of law in primarily sociological history: "For an understanding of society, an appreciation of law is vital. But then so is legal history, because law is an essentially conservative discipline. Sadly, scholars in other disciplines are wary of the law."[1]

The law, lawgivers, and their impact on the history of Marian practice are precisely the topics here. The three primary participants under consideration are Jesus Christ the lawgiver, Alfonso *el Sabio* the lawmaker, and the one who transcends both of these "kings" in her ability to mediate between heaven and earth, the Virgin Mary. The law and codes of law, the practice of pilgrimage, and the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* combine to reveal notions about the balance between the sacred and the profane both in the common mind and in the mind of the King of Castile-Leon. In order to create a baseline of Christian belief at its inception, the initial focus will be on Jesus's New Testament role as lawgiver. Second, Alfonso X's efforts to create a

[1] Alan Watson, *Ancient Law and Modern Understanding: At the Edges* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012), 118.

unified code of law in the Spanish medieval period, an effort that faced strong local opposition, becomes interwoven with the need to guarantee pilgrimage across Spain. Third, the *Cantigas*, edited and authored by the king, will not only reflect popular opinion about the law, but they will also reveal the king's perceptions concerning his own powers and limitations. These popular songs examine the interrelationships between a summative code of law developed under the guidance of Alfonso X and notions of law, crime, and punishment as they emerge through the texts of the tales. Ultimately, these songs will reinforce Mary's primacy in dealing with matters of crime and punishment. While the evolution of law in Europe experienced the ever-widening gap between ecclesiastical and secular law, the popular tales represent an entirely divergent understanding concerning the law as it was meted out by heavenly agents.

5.2 Jesus, Mary, and the Law in Early Christian Literature

First-century Jewish law centered on interpretations of Mosaic Law and which ancillary legal elements were acceptable in addition to that text. Jesus's participation in the law, its making or reinterpretation, has been much debated. Frequently, discussion coalesces along two lines. First, examination of Jesus's role in terms of Mosaic Law could follow a path that considers his attitudes towards the elements of Jewish law in terms of the pressures of contemporary society and in the growing influence of Greek Jews. Second, theologians tend to deliberate the extent to which the law as represented in the New Testament is more a metaphorical pathway to salvation, acceptance of certain elements of right action and belief being necessary for the preservation of the soul. A complicating factor, and one equally debated, involves discerning where Jesus falls in his contemporary legal community. Finally, Mary's participation in the law moves from notable absence to marginalized conduit of justice.

Using the Bible as a source, medieval and modern readers alike find Jesus amongst an array of legalists, the most prominent of whom were the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. It is generally agreed upon by scholars that the earliest references to the Pharisees occur in Josephus who mentions them in the context of the Hasmonean priest Jonathan (160-143 BCE). Anthony Saldarini affirms that "the Pharisees' knowledge of Jewish law and traditions, accepted by the people, is the basis of their social standing….Jesus' struggle with the Pharisees, scribes and chief priests can be explained most easily as a struggle for influence with the people."[2] The Pharisees, often characterized as the part of the common person and middle-class priests, believed in both the Torah, or written law, and an oral tradition of law—interpreted law—as given to Moses by God. This oral tradition would eventually become the *Talmud* and the *Mishnah*, important texts of modern rabbinic Judaism. Benjamin D. Sommer discusses a series of phrases integral to framing Jewish law; Sommer lists key identifiers—whether a law is introduced with the phrase "as it is written," "as it is read," "as it is said," or "as it is known" (or "felt in the heart").[3] These phrases form a part of the pharisaical legacy having to do with greater or lesser reliance on orally transmitted texts. Steven D. Fraade believes that as a book of law, the most important is the *Mishnah* which consists of "topically grouped lists of rabbinic laws (*halakhot*), with only minimal reference to their biblical sources, in some cases practically applicable [laws governing practical matters such as purity, sacrifice, and the like]."[4]

Sadducees and Essenes fundamentally disagreed with Pharisees concerning the nature of the law, though the differences between then is not always a simple matter of liberalism and

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[2] Anthony J. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes, and Sadducees in Palestinian Society: A Sociological Approach* (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 33.

[3] Benjamin D. Sommer, "Introduction: Scriptures in Jewish Tradition, and Traditions as Jewish Scripture," in *Jewish Concepts of Scripture: A Comparative Introduction*, ed. Benjamin D. Sommer (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 6-7.

[4] Steven D. Fraade, "Concepts of Scripture in Rabbinic Judaism: Oral Torah and Written Torah," in *Jewish Concepts of Scripture,* 32.

fundamentalism. Michael Walsh points out that in the matter of the law of the Pentateuch, Sadducees were literalists who accepted only the written word without its more tenuous oral elements: "of differences over the interpretation of the Torah, it is the Sadducean party which seems to have adopted the more conservative, and in that sense more traditional stance."[5] The Sadducees were more accepting of Hellenistic influences and, as part of the wealthy classes, tended to collaborate with Roman authorities.[6] Essenes, along with others, including the Zealots and Sicarii, actively rejected Roman rule and sought out ascetic refuge in order to avoid contact with them. One clear divide between Pharisee and Sadducee is illustrated in Acts 23:6-8, a passage in which the Apostle Paul self-identifies as a Pharisee.

> Then Paul, knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, called out in the Sanhedrin, "My brothers, I am a Pharisee, descended from Pharisees. I stand on trial because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead." When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. (The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees believe all these things.)[7]

Since ideas about resurrection, angels, and spirits are all a part of the oral tradition and interpreted law—there is no direct reference to these in the written Mosaic Law—then Pharisees may believe, but Sadducees do not.

Most of Jesus's legal statements and confrontations dealt with the Pharisees; there are 77 encounters with pharisaical authorities or ideas between Jesus and these teachers in the New Testament. In a famous passage of Matthew, Jesus confronts the Sadducees on the topic of resurrection, then he turns his attention to a tricky question from the Pharisees.

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[5] Michael Walsh, *Roots of Christianity* (London: Grafton Books, 1986), 34.

[6] Ibid., 36-37.

[7] Paul identifies his heritage and political/legal predilections in a passage in Philippians 3:4-6: "If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless." He is unabashed in allying himself with the pharisaical viewpoint.

> Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

These are, of course, memorable words, but, concerning this passage, Linwood Urban counters that "this simplicity does not make the law less demanding."[8] Having reduced all laws to two, Jesus nevertheless has to deal elsewhere with the intricacies of daily practice of the law as applied to specific instances—an undeniable fundament that a single case might illustrate.

Many of the legal debates focus on the particulars of Mosaic Law and Jesus's actions. Consider, for example, the healing of persons—in particular with skin diseases, usually translated as "leprosy" in biblical text. The legal conundra facing Jesus in this regard are two-fold. First, when is it appropriate to heal, the Sabbath day being reserved, and, second and even more complex, how is it possible to heal a person with a skin disease if such action required touching the afflicted? Physical contact with such a sufferer would render Jesus "unclean" according to purity laws. John P. Meier devotes an entire chapter to Jesus and his reaction to Jewish purity laws in his book *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*. Meier uses Mark 1:40-45, the story of Jesus touching a leper, in contrast with Luke 17:11-19 in which Jesus heals ten lepers without touching them. After reviewing ambiguities that exist in the purity laws as expressed in Leviticus 13-14, Meier comes to the conclusion that to touch or not to touch is a matter of interpretation (though he admits that Josephus sets forward a compelling argument on behalf of traditional Jewish rabbinical authority that touching always constitutes a breach of the

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[8] Linwood Urban, *A Short History of Christian Thought: Revised and Expanded Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 33.

law).[9] Nevertheless, since there are examples of Jesus both initiating tactile contact and avoiding it, Meier's conclusion, by way of an apology to his readers, is that his findings are inconclusive.[10]

Truly, the preceding was nothing more than a gloss of a single legalistic wrangle that has been the topic of interpretation for centuries. William Loader provides a far greater outline of legal investigation in his work *Jesus' Attitude Towards the Law*. According to Loader, the problem of placing Jesus in a legal tradition has become more complex as more academic research is revealed:

> It is no longer meaningful to speak simply of three or four parties, Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, and Zealots, or to make sharp distinctions between Palestinian and Diaspora Judaism…. The diverse Judaisms were mostly united in commitment to Torah, but both in extent and in interpretation there was wide variety. Pentateuchal laws were central, but each group had both its additions and its interpretations.[11]

Loader highlights the book of Mark as particularly problematic and indicates that the manner in which Jesus is able to negotiate complex legal questions testifies to his personal capacity as a rabbi and as a judge.[12] Throughout the New Testament, Jesus addresses poor laws, marriage, divorce, inheritance, purity, taxes, alms giving just to name a few. Moreover, Meier extends the role that Jesus plays in the text in consideration of the law: "the importance of the Jewish Law to the Jewish Jesus, naturally leads to a second [important point]. Any investigator of the historical Jesus . . . is inevitably confronted with the personal, existential question: What, finally, do you think of the various moral teachings of Jesus that result from his engagement with Torah?"[13] Meier reminds readers that the historic importance of Jesus rests in a moral/ethical system that

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[9] John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, Vol. 4, Law and Love* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 411.

[10] Ibid., 413.

[11] William Loader, *Jesus' Attitude Towards the Law: A Study of the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002), 2.

[12] Ibid., 131-133.

[13] Meier, 649.

emerges from Jesus's thoughts about the law. From his first cognizant moment as described in the Bible, the passage in Luke 2:41-52 in which a twelve-year-old boy-child is discussing issues among the rabbis, Jesus is wrestling with the law.

Conversely, Mary is almost entirely absent from issues of the law in the Bible. The fact that "Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 1:18) could have engaged her in a problem with the law, but the text goes on to dis-involve Mary completely: "Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, he had in mind to divorce her quietly." (Matthew 1:19) Clearly, the legal issue rested with Joseph; Mary is never mentioned as having a decision or as facing any legal consequences. Essentially, she has no opportunity or authority to demonstrate her own faithfulness to the law. The only other legal moment for Mary occurs in the events at the Temple mentioned above. She does actually have dialogue in the passage in which she and Joseph question their son about wandering into the temple courts: "When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, 'Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.' 'Why were you searching for me?' he asked. 'Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?' But they did not understand what he was saying to them." (Luke 2: 48-50) Although Mary does engage in a rare moment of discourse (especially rare in Matthew), she does not substantively add to the situation and appears merely not to understand Jesus's efforts or his response. This passage, a coda to the nativity narrative that preceded it, is the only glimpse of Mary and Joseph as parents. One does have to wonder about their culpability in losing track of their twelve-year-old for more than a day; in order to recover the child today, they might have had to undergo an interview with Child Protective Services.

Other than the two peripheral moments cited above, Mary's direct involvement with the law is wholly absent from the New Testament. In like manner, neither the patristic fathers nor early medieval writers treat Mary in direct relationship with the law with the exception of a handful of marginal notes. As mentioned in a previous chapter, Irenaeus of Lyon discusses Mary in the context of being the new Eve, and Justin Martyr affirmed in *Dialogue with Trypho* that she brings the child who would fulfill the law; nevertheless, these authors do not suggest that she makes or interprets the actual law. In fact, Hilda Graef cites Ambrose from *De Institutione Virginis* in which the saint indicates that Mary is the new Eve and is eternally analogous with the church, but only Jesus fulfilled the law and "worked the Redemption by his passion and death."[14] The fact that Mary agreed to be the handmaiden of God and birth the child did not make her a participant in fulfillment of the law.

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, scholarly writers do begin to associate Mary's intercessory role as analogous to being a judge or the Mediatrix. Gambero cites prayers and meditations by Anselm of Canterbury (d. 1109) who claims that Mary's clemency can intercede on behalf of a sinful person: "O Lady, the more my sins are filthy in the sight of God and in your sight, the more they need your care and assistance. O most clement Lady, heal my weakness, and you will wipe away the foulness that offends you."[15] The accrual of sin signifies a broken law; thus, Mary's intercessory role allows her to some effect to appeal to her Son for mitigation of punishment. Eadmer of Canterbury (d. 1124) is even more explicit:

> O sinful man, rejoice! For there is no reason for you to despair, no reason for you to fear. Whatever judgment will be made in your regard depends totally on the verdict of your Brother and your Mother. So do not turn away the ear of your heart from their counsel.

[14] Graef, 66-68.
[15] Gambero, *Mary in the Middle Ages*, 112.

> Your Judge—that is, your Brother—has taught you to fly to the aid of his Mother . . . and she has promised that she will be there for you, lest you be overburdened by his justice.[16]

At no time do these or other writers characterize Mary as having either made or interpreted law; rather, they view her traditionally as a conduit through which to air a grievance or to place an appeal. Not a judge who determines the outcome of legal questions, she is, however, a counselor who has access to Jesus. At least in these passages, Mary and Jesus are near-equals in judgment, and the door lies open for Mary to assume even larger roles in the songs and tales that emerge in ensuing decades. In the ensuing decades and in the texts of these *mariales*, she will assume vastly more powerful roles that will cast her as judge, jury, and executioner.

5.3 Alfonso X, the Law, and the Great Pilgrim Trail

Alfonso's own engagement with the law is as deep and as varied as Mary's is absent from New Testament and early medieval scholarly sources. Americans have valued his contributions to such an extent that during the 1949-1950 renovation of the House Chambers in the United States Capitol building, a marble relief featuring Alfonso's profile was installed over the gallery doors. There are twenty-three great lawgivers included in the collection, and along with Alfonso, Pope Innocent III also appears. This will prove interesting later in as much as Alfonso will borrow from the Innocent's Constitutes of the Fourth Lateran Council for inclusion into the king's law code. Nadeau and Barlow assert that the acknowledgement in the House chamber is due to the king's circuitous contributions to American law.

> Alfonso X codified the *Siete Partidas* (Seven Parts), which remained the basis of the Spanish Legal system until the nineteenth century. When the United States annexed what is now the American Southwest from Mexico in 1848, old Spanish deeds, oaths, and

[16] Eadmer of Canterbury, "Mary's Role as Our Mother" from *De conception* in *Mary in the Middle Ages: The Blessed Virgin Mary in the Thought of Medieval Latin Theologians,* ed. Luigi Gambero, trans. by Thomas Buffer (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 123.

> contracts were all recognized by American Courts and Alfonso X's *Siete Partidas* became a foundation law of the United States.[17]

Why and how Alfonso came to compile one of the great codes of law in the Middle Ages is bound up in his fidelity to his father's wishes, in the legal confusion of thirteenth-century Spain, in his personal academic quests, and in his devotion to God and to his patron, Mary.

Alfonso would be bequeathed a kingdom forged from conquest by a father who quickly rose to legendary status. Fernando III is remarkable for his military prowess and for his veneration of Mary, his patroness; in his lifetime he had come closer than any predecessor to completing the *Reconquesta* that had begun in the ninth century. Having conquered Jaen in 1246 and Seville in 1248, Fernando made further inroads on the Muslim hegemony in the peninsula by reducing the kingdom of Granada to a "tributary vassalage to Castile."[18] Always concerned with public performance and symbolism, when Fernando conquered Seville, he had required the caliph to hand over the keys of the city in a public ceremony. When it was explained that the Muslim ruler kept no keys, Fernando duly had a set of three silver keys minted; these were sent to the caliph who promptly handed them back to Fernando as scripted. Another symbol that Fernando carried throughout his militaristic rule was "Mary of the Battlefield"—a statue of the Virgin carved from the central section of a gently curved elephant's tusk. Using this icon, the monarch prayed to Mary before each battle. Today, both the keys and "Mary of the Battlefield" are on display in a side reliquary of the Cathedral of Seville. An awareness of the importance of public ritual and the veneration of Mary became two important elements in the reign of Alfonso.

Fernando III had accomplished his military and political gains while promulgating his famous devotion to the Virgin Mary. Nor did his interests stop at the shores of the Mediterranean; John Esten Keller points out that his "plans included the building of a great navy,

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[17] Jean-Benolt Nadeau and Julie Barlow, *The Story of Spanish* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2013), 67.
[18] O'Callaghan, *A History of Medieval Spain*, 358.

one capable of carrying the might of Spain to the shores of Africa."[19] Fernando had many additional plans, but he died in 1252 before carrying forward with these. He is reputed to have laid on Alfonso a heavy injunction on his deathbed:

> "Sir, I bequeath you all the land which the Moors had taken from King Roderick of Spain; and in your power it all remains, part of conquered, part paying tribute. If you learn how to keep it in the state I bequeath to you, you are a king as good as I; and if you gain more by your own efforts, you are better than I; and if you lose any of it, you are not as good as I."[20]

In 1671, Pope Clement X would canonize Fernando as St. Ferdinand, but the weighty burden that he place upon his son belies the religious recognition.

Fernando's death came at a time when "the long struggle [between Christian and Moorish Spain] was all but over… it was Islam that would survive in Iberia only on the sufferance of its old rival, Christianity."[21] When Alfonso came to power, the base of his influence rested in Spain's central, northern Christian kingdom of Castile; his accession marked a clear transition not only of political power but also of cultural forces. The young king faced several divergent tasks. He wanted to fortify his throne and his rule over a people that included Christians, Muslims, and Jews by providing a clear pathway of positive law. Fernando had long been interested in unifying and standardizing the codes of law that existed throughout his growing and diverse kingdoms. He had tasked Alfonso early on with the responsibility of considering the law and, initially, with providing a workable Castilian translation of the Visigoth Code.[22] This was not the only legal code governing Spain; it was not even, perhaps, the most influential. Walter Ullmann identifies its place in Iberia's legal schema: "The law-book of the Visigoths in Spain, the *Leges Visigothorum*, contains as its kernel the oldest Germanic law code in existence. It is

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[19] John Esten Keller, *Alfonso X, El Sabio* (New York: Twayne Publishing, Inc. 1967), 33.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Reilly, *The Medieval Spains*, p. 139.
[22] Bernard F. Reilly, *The Medieval Spains*, 156.

that of King Eurin (466-85)."[23] The Visigoth Code as it was known in Alfonso's time was a combination of influences: "the final text shows a very high degree of Roman law influence, juristic sagacity and maturity….There is also a strong ecclesiastical influence exercised mainly by the archbishops of Toledo and Seville, though the individual laws were issued as royal laws."[24]

After the death of his father, Alfonso continued the work of compiling and revising the law. Nor was the Visigoth Code the only collection with which the learned king had to contend. Roman law was mixed with Visigoth laws and customary laws to lesser or greater extents in various localities. Indeed, in some smaller towns and even in fairly large regions, residents, in particular the landed and ruling elite, clung to their *fueros*. These local laws derived their validation from a number of sources: some were combinations of previous codes including Roman and Visigoth law; others were granted by special charter from previous rulers; and, still others were collections of customary laws that had simply been of such long standing they were accepted by remembrance. To say that the *fueros* could be idiosyncratic would be an accurate statement. Some collections varied from judge to judge as Manlio Bellomo discusses: "during the eleventh century, many Spanish cities had judges who, for professional purposes, owned brief summaries of customary norms known as *fueros breves*. These collections grew and were consolidated, and between the eleventh and the twelfth centuries more complete versions appeared—the *fueros extensos*—which for two centuries continued to be added to, modified,

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[23] Walter Ullmann, *Law and Politics in the Middle Ages: An Introduction to the Sources of Medieval Political Ideas* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), 195.
[24] Ibid.

and, at that time, translated from Latin into Romance dialects.[25] Thus, the *fueros* could vary from town to town and even from judge to judge.

Replacing the *fueros* proved a daunting task; the towns and the local nobility had grown used to the autonomy of their own law codes. In his article on Alfonsine law, Jerry R. Craddock identifies these codes, "the *Forum iudicum*, or in the vernacular *Fuero juzgo*—literally, the charter of the judges," as persistent in opposition in any reform effort sought by the king.[26] Stressing the local political connection, Thomas N. Bisson notes that the *fueros* "were, more or less, instruments of lordship. Whether they resulted from petitions, impulse, or—perhaps most often—preliminary discussion, they projected normatively the outcomes of local confrontation. They multiplied massively after 1050." Additionally, some of the *fueros* were actually usefully specific to the locale. The *Usatges of Barcelona*, for example, had maritime elements that were not found in land-locked *fueros*. Additionally, the *Usatges* was a product, in part, of Catalan culture and was a point of cultural pride; the counts of Barcelona clung to these "court usages" as traditional and necessary.[27] Simply put, the *fueros* were difficult to displace because they had preceded Alfonso's efforts at uniform codification by more than two centuries; "by defining privilege collectively and by limiting the more willful or arbitrary prerogatives, the charters promoted such communal interests—security, justice, freedom—as demanded competence in the agents deputed to uphold them."[28]

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[25] Manlio Bellomo and Lydia G. Cochrane, *The Common Legal Past of Europe, 1000-1800* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 98.

[26] Jerry R. Craddock, "The Legislative Works of Alfonso el Sabio" in *Emperor of Culture: Alfonso X the Learned of Castile and His Thirteenth-Century Renaissance*, ed. by Robert I. Burns (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 184.

[27] Donald J. Kagay, *The Usatges of Barcelona: The Fundamental Law of Catalonia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 44-45.

[28] Thomas N. Bisson, *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century: Power, Lordship, and the Origins of European Government* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 351.

Initially, Fernando had planned on systematically replacing the many divergent *fueros* with a single, summative *fuero*. He had begun compiling the many codes into one, organized collection called the *Fuero Real*—the Royal Law; this royal assemblage of laws had been intended to be a practical effort in establishing "a work of observation and compilation for a national code. [29] The *Fuero Real* "was a model municipal code, granted to the townships of Castile and medieval Extremadura, where it supplanted the existing municipal charters" which themselves had been based on the Visigothic Code. [30] Charles Sumner Lobingier, contributor to the 1931 translation of the *Partidas*, found that both the *Fuero Real* (and the *Partidas* that would follow) had four primary sources: Roman Law, Canon Law, Maritime Law, and Native Law. [31]

However, Alfonso was not satisfied with merely replacing the old *fueros* with a new, consolidated municipal code. The learned king wanted to combine the best elements of all the law codes that lay within the broad span of his own research. These included incorporating portions of the many church councils over the centuries and the useful declarations by popes, many of which had been codified into Canon Law. Alfonso also expected his code to reflect new ideas concerning the role of the king and the philosophical/religious underpinnings of kingship. In his vision, Spain no longer consisted of a loosely confederated collection of local kings and lords supplemented by the occasional Muslim caliph. The Spanish economy was no longer sustained by raiding on the Moorish strongholds for distribution of booty; those days had passed with Fernando's battlefield successes. The consummate scholar, Alfonso wanted a law code that reflected his own personality and predilections: "The essays of the *Siete Partidas* do not resemble the terse law codes promulgated by Frederick II and James the Conqueror in this

[29] Charles Sumner Lobingier, "Introduction, " in *Las Siete Partidas*, Trans. and ed. Samuel Parsons Scott (Chicago: The Corporation Trust Company, 1931), 50.
[30] Craddock, "The Legislative Works of Alfonso el Sabio," 184.
[31] Ibid., 53-54

century; both codes are now landmarks in European legal history. The *Partidas* are instead reflective historico-moral disquisitions such as one might expect from Plato's philosopher-king."[32] The preamble to *Las Siete Partidas* reflects all that this Christian king hoped to leave as a legacy for his people and for all people.

> We make this book for the service of God and the common benefit of nations, as we have shown in its beginning….But, because the Latin races give the name of laws to the religious belief which men have, and some persons may think that the laws of this book do not speak of anything else except that alone, for this reason we desire to make it understood what kind of laws these are. [33]

Some of the laws would "relate to the belief of Our Lord Jesus Christ," but others "pertain to the government of nations." Overall, the *Partidas* make the claim that "the law-maker should love God and keep Him before his eyes when he makes the laws, in order that they may be just and perfect. He should moreover love justice and the common benefit of all. He should be learned, in order to know how to distinguish right from wrong."[34] With the *Partidas*, Alfonso accepted the task of completing his father's dream of a comprehensive code of law for use in governing all of Spain's divergent population.

Alfonso's code of laws would eventually have a far-flung effect. The king and his jurists began work on the compellation in 1253 and completed work on the seven books by 1265. Although frequently overlapping, the seven books took on topics in specific areas: first, ecclesiastical administration and law; second, the king's court and its military/political organization; third, the administration of justice; fourth, family law; fifth, property and commercial law; sixth, wills and inheritance, and seventh, criminal law. [35] The law school at the

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[32] Robert I. Burns, "Stupor Mundi: Alfonso X of Castile, the Learned" in Emperor of Culture: *Alfonso X the Learned of Castile and His Thirteenth-Century Renaissance*, 7.

[33] *Partidas*, Part I, Tit. I.

[34] *Partidas*, Part. I, Tit. I, Law XI.

[35] Joseph F. O'Callaghan, *The Learned King: The Reign of Alfonso X of Castile*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 36-37.

University of Salamanca became the home of the study and application for these laws that were extended to apply throughout Christian Spain in 1348 under Alfonso XI, grandson of El Sabio.[36] By royal decree in 1529, they were further extended to apply to Spanish colonies throughout the world—an action that explains how so many of the laws in the *Partidas* came to be included into the state statutes of Florida, Louisiana, Texas, and California. [37]

Interestingly, there are whole sections of the *Partidas* crucially applicable in Alfonso's time that have passed into the realm of historical study, removed from practical use. Bound up in the production and importance of both *Las Siete Partidas* and *Las Cantigas de Santa Maria* is the nature of the medieval tradition and practice of pilgrimage. Indeed, the pilgrim trails that brought travelers to Santiago de Compostela in northwestern Spain informed both works under consideration here and, further, had a profound impact on most of Spanish culture, industry, and notions of piety. When the Moors were ascendant between the ninth and thirteenth centuries, there existed a thriving Muslim culture, and Mozarabic art and architecture dominated central and southern Spain; Christianity and European culture was all but removed from the center of Iberian life. For Christians, repossessing the land was second only to repossessing the soul of Spain; Simon Barton indicates that "one of the key factors in this transformation [from Moorish to Christian culture] was the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela."[38] According to local claims, the relics of St. James the Greater had been found between the years 818 and 842 near Ira Flavia in Galicia, a location that would soon grow into Santiago.[39] The discovery itself was startling—an event that accounts for the fact that "Santiago is scarcely heard of before the end of

[36] Lobingier, *Las Siete Partidas*, 53.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Simon Barton, *A History of Spain,* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 52.
[39] Ibid.

the ninth century."[40] As one pilgrimage historian remarks, the road to Santiago "was lifted to the front rank of medieval shrines by a combination of shrewd promotion and excellent communication."[41]

Although clearly a social phenomenon, in the long run the Spanish pilgrimage and its systematic promotion may have been just as efficacious as military and political efforts at creating unity under Christian rule. Alfonso VI (1065-1109), King of Leon at his initial accession and soon the conqueror of Castile, Navarre, and Aragon, began a methodical road and bridge-building program to make the pilgrimage to Santiago more accessible to pilgrims from neighboring France and the rest of Europe. Alfonso clearly wanted to draw the emotional and monetary attention of the rest of Christian Europe. He offered grants and support to two important monks, St. Dominic and St. Juan de Ortega, who aided this process. An illiterate, monastic reject who noticed the need for a stone bridge over the Oja River from the vantage of his remote hermitage, Dominic eventually earned the appellation *Santo Domingo de la Calzada*—"Saint Dominic of the Pathways"—because of his lifelong devotion to road maintenance.[42] Alfonso VI himself received the spiritual and monetary support of two popes. Alexander II opened papal encouragement for the Reconquista, and, when he occasionally relented from harassing Henry IV, Gregory VII likewise saw the importance of developing the pilgrim pathway across Spain. Gregory claimed in 1077 that "the kingdom of Spain was given by ancient constitutions to Blessed Peter and the Holy Roman Church in right ownership."[43]

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[40] Jonathan Sumption, *The Age of Pilgrimage: The Medieval Journey to God* (New York: Farber and Farber, 2003), 163.

[41] Ibid.

[42], David M. Gitlitz and Linda Kay Davidson, *The Pilgrimage Road to Santiago: The Complete Cultural Handbook* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 153.

[43] O'Callaghan, *History of Medieval Spain*, 201.

While Dominic and his successor, Juan, were motivated by piety, Alfonso VI and Gregory VII found more pragmatic reasons for supporting the pilgrimage trail. The east-west road linked almost all of the important Christian towns in northern Spain. Jaca, the principle city of Aragon, Pamplona and Najara, centers of Navarre, Burgos, the Capital of Castile, and the city of Leon were all located along its dusty path. It bears mentioning now that Alfonso X's citadel in Villalcazar de Sirga, where many of the *Cantigas* originated, was also situated along this route. Political and religious leaders cultivated the Santiago pilgrimage in order to sponsor unity and purpose in the area. Systematic pressure to develop the route began within Spain as early as the mid-eleventh century when Bishop Diego Pelaez laid out a program to make Santiago "a second Rome."[44] Each major participant in developing the region maintained his own reason or reasons for claiming devotion to the relics of St. James.

For example, the monks of Cluny joined the papacy in working to spread Roman Catholicism; that is, they sought not only to confine Muslim society to Granada but also to eradicate Christian practices that remained from the sixth and seventh-century Visigoth church. In particular, Abbot Hugh became the driving force behind an expansion of Cluniac monasteries all along the Santiago road. In his book on the rise of Cluny, Edwin Mullins claims that Hugh succeeded in creating "a remarkable relationship between Cluny and a dynasty of Spanish rulers, but that the abbot and the others of his company were "shockingly unscrupulous in their political dealings."[45] About thirty mile east of Leon in the town of Sahagun, Alfonso VI presented Cluny with the right to establish an extensive monastic complex; furthermore, Alfonso bestowed upon the abbot of Sahagun the entitlement "to a portion of the proceeds of the mint" including "the

[44] William Melczer, *The Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela* (New York: Italica Press, 2009)., 21.
[45] Edwin Mullins, *Cluny: In Search of God's Lost Empire* (New York: BlueBridge, 2006), 75.

market tax, the transport tax, and even the royal rents."[46] Sahagun's *fuero* sought to protect not only the pilgrims' passage through the town but also the merchants who sold goods to those on the way to Saint James. Clearly, money and political intentions greased the wheels of progress in creating the pilgrimage of devotion.

The association between the pilgrimage and politics was not uniquely a Spanish phenomenon. With its dual veneration of the universal saint, Peter, and the local saint, Swithun, an English church like Winchester sought to fuse distant Roman Catholic elements of Faith with more popular, indigenous worship practices. Other examples abound elsewhere in England. While a part of the reason why Canterbury clung to its famous martyr, Becket, was loyalty to the notion of the primacy of the papacy, Henry III attempted to counter with a saint in a sanctuary more directly under his own control. His thirteenth-century renovation of Westminster Abbey purposely included a new shrine for a regal saint—Edward the Confessor. Angered by the attentions paid to Becket, a saint who had opposed his grandfather's will, "Henry himself conceived the idea of making of his own Westminster Abbey the center of a rival cult [to that of the cult of Becket] to Edward the Confessor and the English Monarchy."[47] In the Gothic renovation process, builders located the shrine containing the remains of Edward strategically behind the altar in the transept of the cathedral; additionally, they elevated the crypt and built six prayer stalls, three on a side, in order that pilgrims might reach over their heads and place their hands on the underside of the reliquary as they sent their intercessory requests upward. All of this planning failed to result in a revival of lay interest in Edward, but the effort demonstrates that veneration of saints frequently became less a spontaneous event and more a tactic for shaping public opinion and political bonds. In the same manner, Spanish kings cultivated the

[46] Reilly, *The Medieval Spains*, 95.

[47] Rosalind and Christopher Brooke, *Popular Religion in the Middle Ages: Western Europe, 1000-1300* (London: Thames and Hudson, Ltd., 1984), 41.

pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela as a way to forge popular bonds between the towns and ethnic peoples along Spain's Christian highway.

Despite the depiction above that characterizes support for the veneration of St. James as a mere tool in the hands of prelates and statesmen, most common pilgrims took the road across Spain for more pious reasons. Ronald C. Finucane reminds his readers that although the pope might have wanted the Santiago route as a way of securing his brand of Christian practice throughout northern Spain, the average Christian was not concerned with applying doctrine; "it was a very long way from pope or prelate to peasant-priest, a long way in distance, education, and attitude."[48] The road itself was long—just over 500 miles from St. Jean Pied-du-port to Santiago, and that represented only the one-way route across Spain. The average pilgrim often traveled for many reasons, and neither combating perceived aberrations in Christian practice nor reasserting monarchical control over religion was among them.

To understand the pilgrimage from the perspective of the majority of pilgrims, and, therefore, to understand the origin and importance of the laws that governed and protected them in their journeys, the modern historian must accept the mystical motivations for the trip. In his book on the nature and value of relics in the medieval world, Patrick J. Geary effectively states time importance of not just identifying, but identifying *with* the attitudes of those ancients on holy excursion: "historians, like anthropologists, must accept their subjects' system of viewing reality."[49] Geary asserts that in the medieval mind, relics "are all genuine until proven otherwise by contemporaries; these relics are miraculous, giving off pleasant odors when touched, healing the sick, and otherwise expressing the wills of the saints whose remains they are." Writing in

[48] Roland C. Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 11.

[49] Patrick J. Geary, *Futura Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 4.

forceful terms, he claims that refusing to acknowledge the power and veracity of, for example, the bones of Saint James reduces any consideration of medieval religious life to mere "antiquarian triviality or anachronistic skepticism."[50] That is not to say, of course, that the bones are all genuine; all that matters here is that many pilgrims themselves believed in their power and in the truthfulness of their origin or source tales, and they were willing to stake their lives on that belief. Claude Jenkins, a historian who studies travel writers and pilgrims of the Middle Ages, agrees that "to stigmatize a medieval writer [who believes in the truth of relics and the miraculous] as credulous or superstitious is to throw away at the onset the key to the interpretation of what he writes—the disclosure of the man who wrote and of the age in which he lived."[51]

So why risk the arduous undertaking of traveling hundreds or thousands of miles? Certainly, the cult of relics was in the minds and hearts of many pilgrims. Although a physical object, the scrap of clothing, jeweled adornment, strand of hair, or fragment of bone associated with saints and their miracles became imbued with a supernatural force that seemed unquestionable to most medievals. Moreover, the power of these objects was proximal; that is, the nearer the pilgrim could come to touching or actually handling or kissing them, the more power gained for their prayers or the greater the release from future judgement. Objects placed near relics—clothing, jewelry, weapons—offered their owners special protections.[52] Churches would wash the venerable bones with water of wine and offer the latter for sale; curates even swept up the dust that settled around shrines or on relics and lucky pilgrims could purchase a

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[50] Ibid.

[51] Claude Jenkins, "Christian Pilgrimages, A.D. 500-800," in *Travel and Travellers of the Middle Ages* edited by Arthur Percival Newton (New York: Knoff, 1926), 41.

[52] Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims*, 26.

thimble-full of sifted grime for their home churches.[53] Competition between churches to obtain relics became widespread; the cathedral at Oviedo, Spain, began an extensive program in the twelfth century to buy or otherwise obtain relics because of its waning influence and income in the face of the newly founded cathedral in Santiago. Indeed, the church building and its environs were touched by the magic of the most powerful relics; penitents believed, for example, that only the bones of St. James could have provided sufficient inspiration to Maestro Mateo, the architect for the twelfth-century Santiago cathedral land designer of the *Portico de Gloria*, the triple-arched entryway under whose span pilgrims swooned to see the great life-like sculptures of Old and New Testament figures.

Barring objects such as Veronica's Veil—the piece of cloth with which St. Veronica is reputed to have washed the face of Christ as he toiled towards Calvary—the quintessential relics were the physical remains of the Disciples of Christ or of the Apostle Paul. This statement is true only because Christ's remains were in short supply because of the Resurrections (as stated in a precious chapter, Mary's breast milk was an important commodity even though the remainder of her physical form had been Assumed). The church in Rome claimed the remains of Peter and Paul; Santiago took second place to only the mother church among European pilgrimage destinations. Pilgrims relished the opportunity to view the silver reliquary in its marble-vaulted crypt beneath the altar and to climb behind the altar in a specially constructed pilgrim causeway and stair to place their arms around the silver and gold effigy of the Son of Zebedee. The tone of their awe still remains in the *Liber Sancti Jacobi*, a twelfth-century book recounting one pilgrim's experiences as he entered the cathedral: "In this revered basilica, under the high altar erected, with the greatest deference, in his honor rests, as it is reported, the venerated body of the Blessed James…a most precious tomb of admirable workmanship and harmonious

[53] Ibid., 27.

dimensions."[54] The fact that this is the true and complete relic of St. James is attested to by the witness of Theodemir, a bishop from the ninth century who was by no means a contemporary of the author of the *Liber Sancti Jacobi*.

Recovered during the reign of Alfonso II (791-842), the remains of James spawned more than one discovery tale. J. Van Herwaarden examines the several origins and the sources for these in his work *Between Saint James and Erasmus*. Briefly, the bones were traditionally said to have been revealed in 813: "the first actual mention of the site occurs in a charter issued by the regional ruler Alfonso II on 4 September 834."[55] In most versions, angels appeared to a hermit named Pepayo and prophesied the discovery of James's remains as illuminated by celestial light. A star is purported to have led Pelayo and/or Theodemir until it stopped over a plain where the body was found. The location was afterwards dubbed *campus stellae*, the "plain of the star."

> His body is immovable, according to what is asserted and furthermore as it is witnessed by Saint Theodemir, bishop of the city, who had discovered it a long time ago and in no way could remove it from its place. May therefore the imitators from beyond the mountains [the Pyrenees] blush who claim to possess some portion of him. [56]

Thus, according to the author of *Liber Sancti Jacobi*, these are the only true relics of one of Christ's original disciples—the apostle who traveled to Spain and brought Christianity to Iberian Romans, to the natives of Extramadura, to the Basques of Navarre and La Rioja, and to the Celtic peoples of Galicia.

Despite these words of adoration, religious zeal evolved as only one reason for going on pilgrimage. Barbara N. Sargent-Baur indicates that "pilgrimage was a last or first resort for any

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[54] Melczer, *The Pilgrim's Guide*, 127.

[55] Jan Van Herwaarden, *Between Saint James and Erasmus, Studies in Late-Medieval Religious Life: Devotion and Pilgrimage in the Netherlands,* trans. Wendie Shaffer and Donald Gardner (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2003), 337.

[56] Melczer, *The Pilgrim's Guide,* 127.

number of problems."[57] For those in spiritual or physical peril—looking for an indulgence or for the miracle of healing—pilgrimage was the final choice. Jonathan Sumption relates the story of a thirteenth-century sufferer of chronic neck pains who was cured by being given the walking staff of a Santiago pilgrim on the latter's return home. [58] However, for many others, pilgrimage was the means to an entirely different end. Some walkers simply wanted to relieve the boredom of their daily lives, hoping to visit interesting and entertaining places—holy or not. Pilgrimage increased in times of famine, and there is some speculation that the additional pilgrims were simply taking advantage of an opportunity to beg a meal under the guise of holy travel. [59] In some cases, profane purposes outweighed the sacred: "some pilgrimages were actually protest marches, demonstrations of anti-royalist sentiment."[60] The veneration of Thomas Becket and Simon de Montfort testify to such events. Quite aside from such self-serving reasons, some pilgrims were actually ordered by law to go on pilgrimage.

Two notable legal circumstances might send a pilgrim packing: penance and inheritance. The use of pilgrimage in the punishment phase of a case was not limited to ecclesiastical courts; "pilgrimage as penance and punishment remained a weapon in the hands of both ecclesiastical and secular authorities in the later Middle Ages."[61] The Dominican Bernardo Gui (a personality who serves as the antagonistic inquisitor in Umberto Eco's novel *The Name of the Rose*) maintained a personal log of all the penitential pilgrimages that he assigned during his tenure with the early fourteenth-century Inquisition of Toulouse. For the crime of adultery, Gui sentence one male offender to a peregrination to Canterbury. For adultery with his godmother,

[57] Barbara N. Sargent-Baur, *Journeys Toward God: Pilgrimage and Crusade*, (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1992), vii.
[58] Sumption, *The Age of Pilgrimage*, 120.
[59] Ibid., 144.
[60] Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims*, 42.
[61] Diana Webb, *Pilgrims and Pilgrimage in the Medieval West* (London: I.B. Tarus Publishers, 2001), 51.

assumedly a greater offense, another male had to travel to Santiago. A woman, however, caught as an adulteress was "whipped around the church and marketplace" and had "to visit on foot Canterbury, St. Edmund's and Walsingham."[62] As a matter of court record, Gui listed some pilgrimages as "minor" and others as "major." Many destinations and shrines—Limoges, Chartres, Bologne, Montpellier, Rocamadour, and the like—are among the minor pilgrimages, but Gui considers only four to be major: Rome, Jerusalem, Canterbury, and Santiago. [63] Even Pope Innocent III weighed into this legal stream by commuting a number of cases in which pilgrims were unable to complete their penitential sentences because of poverty or physical disability. [64] In extreme cases, penitential pilgrimage could be enforced by officers of the court; chained groups of pilgrims under the watchful eye of a bailiff were not unusual sights at many shrines during the later Middle Ages. [65]

To be sure, many pilgrims performed penitential pilgrimage, but such performances were evidenced more among non-Spanish travelers than among the indigenous population. The Irish, for example, had honed penitential rites since the sixth century, but the Spanish have few remnants of the habit. It may be that later Iberian Christians associated the inclination with Visigoth traditions. In Visigoth law, the Capitulary of Carloman (742 CE) decreed that "handmaidens of Christ" who had "fallen into the crime of fornication" should do penance through imprisonment, restricted dietary practices, having their head shaved, and pilgrimage. [66] In addition to this source, a document as prestigious as the Capitulary of Charlemagne, a ruler whose incursion into Spain famously resulted in the Roland legend, outline a series of crimes

[62] Ibid., 52.
[63] Ibid., 59.
[64] Ibid., 56-57.
[65] Sumption, *The Age of Pilgrimage*, 153.
[66] John T McNeill, Helena M Gamer, and Helena M. Garner, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance: A Translation of the Principal "libri poenitentiales" and Selections from Related Documents* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 388-389.

including theft, murder, rape, and demonic practices that demanded similar penitentiary acts. [67] Of the Spanish penitentials, only the Penitential of Silos and the Penitential of Vigila of Alvelda (both ca. 800 CE) offer substantive evidence of a penitential tradition, and both of these are heavily indebted to Celtic penitentials. [68]

The second legal reason for assigned pilgrimage, as mentioned above, concerned inheritance rights and rituals. In order to procure the vicarious benefits and indulgences of pilgrimage, many persons offered testamentary incentives. In his will dated 1307, Thideman Wise of Lubeck, for example, held out a reward for anyone willing to take up the challenge on the deceased's behalf: "Thideman leaves 5 marks for one pilgrim to St. Olav at Drontheim' 10 marks for a pilgrim to St. James."[69] Others on peril of their demise, chose to make the inheritance of family members conditional upon completion of a pilgrimage: "Meynekin van Vlenseborg, his son Adam, before he inherits, it to go to Rome to St. Peter's; his younger son it to go to St. Maria Sizemadum [Rocamadour] if he is able."[70] The testamentary call to pilgrimage was often sized to fit the departed person. The 1410 will of Queen Margrethe of Denmark required that 3000 marks be placed in the hands of Abbot Salomon of Esrom and Abbot Nicholas of Sora who would procure 76 pilgrims to venture to 46 different sites, singing proscribed hymns and saying prayers on behalf of Margrethe. [71] Some wills indicated particular conditions additional to specifying a location; such documents demanded that relatives or hired pilgrims complete acts of charity such as distributing alms along the way or acts of good works like participating in road repair. Still other requirements were intended to insure a level of suffering;

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[67] Ibid., 389.
[68] Ibid., 285-293.
[69] Diana Webb, *Pilgrims and Pilgrimage*, 137.
[70] Ibid., 138.
[71] Ibid., 141-142.

Thomas de Ware offered 20 shillings "to any one undertaking a pilgrimage with naked feet to the church of St. Thomas in Canterbury."[72]

Among the many ways that pilgrimage was mentioned in wills, one of the most personal to the dying individual was that involving vows undertaken in the fullness of life. For example, Peter Shepeye of Kent was most concerned with honoring promises that he had been unable to fulfill himself, offering payment for someone to travel to Southwark Cathedral and to "offer an image to the Blessed Mary…, and for pilgrimages which he had promised to make thither; for a pilgrim to go on his behalf to St. James in Compostella in Galicia, in fulfillment of a vow which he had formerly made."[73] Noted legal historian James A. Brundage devotes an entire chapter of his book *Medieval Canon Law and the Crusader* to the importance of the vow in pilgrimage ritual. It should be mentioned that Brundage makes no difference between the crusader and the pilgrim, insisting that "the crusades were, as has often been observed, an outgrowth, at least in part, of the eleventh-century pilgrimage tradition."[74] The crusader was a "species of pilgrim," and the same laws and statutes applied to both.[75] Brundage focuses on the *Decretum* of Gratian and the *Sententiae* of Peter Lombard. Gratian determines that vows made by minors, married women, and those who are the bondsmen of others are non-binding; however, Gratian affirms that vows made by adults under both Roman and Mosaic Law should be considered compulsory in their application.[76] Lombard's discussion of vows, a work that Brundage indicates would be supplanted later by Aquinas's *Summa theological,* differentiates between common and singular vows and private public vows. Some promises are held to be common among all Christians—the

[72] Ibid., 140
[73] Ibid.
[74] James A. Brundage, *Medieval Canon Law and the Crusader* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 10.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid., 43-44.

renunciation of the devil of baptism, for example. Others are singular—a vow of chastity that is applicable only to the Christian making the vow. Private vows are made without public knowledge, while public vows are termed thus because they are made with the full knowledge of the church. Lombard holds that to violate any type of vow would be "morally sinful', however, the most serious violation of vows occurs if persons should ignore promises that are public. [77] To ignore a testamentary promise to provide for pilgrimage incurred the ignominy of being a violation of a private vow, but such an act would also deny a public vow—one known to both secular and church authorities. In such a case, the family or inheritor became involved in both sin and public scandal—incurring the loss of dignity always integrated with *publica fama*.

Interestingly, this idea of the importance of penance and public fame is reflected in Chaucer's *"The Parson's Tal*e" from *The Canterbury Tales*—one of the most famous works of pilgrimage literature in European culture. Speaking last among all the pilgrims, the Parson delivers a sermon complete with references to, prefacing the passage below, Augustine. The Parson attempts to examine why pilgrimage ought to be undertaken, and to what benefit.

> The spyces of Penitence been three. That oon of him is solempne, another is commune, and the thridde is privee. / Thilke penance that is solempne, is in two maneres; as to be put out of holy chirche in lente, for slaughter of children, and swich maner thing. / Another is, whan a man hath sinned openly, of which, sinne the fame is openly spoken in the contree; and thane holy chirche by lugement distreineth him for to do open penaunce. / Commune penaunce is that preestes enioinen men comunly in certeyn caas; as for to goon, peradventure, naked in pilgrimages, or bare-foot. / Privee penaunce is thilke that men doon alday for privee sinnes, of whiche we shryve us prively and receive privee penaunce.[78]
>
> [The species of penitence are three. One of them is solemn (public), another is communal (general), and the third is private. That type of penitence that is public is in two manners (types): as to be put out of holy church in Lent, for the slaughter of children and such manner of things. Another is, when a man has sinned openly, of which sin *the*

[77] Ibid., p. 45-46.

[78] Geoffrey Chaucer, "The Parson's Tale" in *Canterbury Tales*, ed. E. T. Donaldson (Glenview: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1975), 582.

> *shame is openly spoken of in the community* (my italics); and then the church, by judgment desires him to do open penance. Common or general penitence occurs when priests enjoin men communally in certain cases, as to go, peradventure, naked on pilgrimages, or barefoot. Private penitence is that which men do each day for private sins, of which we shrive us privately and receive a private penance.][79]

Like Peter Lombard, Chaucer finds that atonement for public sin can only be earned through a public act of contrition such as pilgrimage. Alive or dead—through active, "open penaunce," or by proxy—pilgrims sought to regain their spiritual health and their public standing.

Laws concerning penance and inheritance comprised only a small part of the legal attention paid to pilgrimage. Law circumscribes the world or pilgrimage in ways that reflected laws elsewhere in society. As travelers, pilgrims were particularly vulnerable to crimes such as theft, rape, and murder. As strangers in strange lands, they might, be subject to ethnic discrimination and unequal application and prosecution of the law. These exposed persons could be subject to crimes that ranged from the annoyance of hotel over-charge to the dangers of overt violence. In part, concern over these violations that potentially threatened the traffic along the Santiago road led Alfonso X to generate *Las Siete Partidas.*

As a part of this code, Alfonso took care to define particular elements of law as they applied to pilgrims and pilgrimage. Part I, Title XXIV opens discussion of peregrination by examining why people chose to pursue such difficult undertaking:

> Men become Romeros and pilgrims in order to serve God and honor the saints, and, for the pleasure of doing this, they leave their families and their towns, their wives and their house, and all that they have, and travel through foreign countries, mortifying their bodies and spending their property, while visiting sanctuaries. And since men with such good and holy intentions wander through the world, it is but just that while they are engaged in doing so they and their property should be protected, so that no one may attack them or do them harm. [80]

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[79] My translation.
[80] *Partidas*, 256.

A mixture of motivations both for pilgrimage and for passing laws to protect it is evident in this passage. That people are doing homage to God and the saints, of course, constitutes a part of the reason why a Christian king would want to protect pilgrims, but an equally attractive inducement was undoubtedly that travelers would be "spending their property." The need to safeguard them is also augmented by the fact that they are wanderers from "throughout the world"; thus, parameters of protection under Spanish law for foreigners required definition. Finally, note that the introduction appears concerned with property and person; the laws that follow will protect both.

As indicated in the overview of the *Partidas* above, the entire first part of the code concerned itself with religious matters. It should come as no surprise, then, that the law framing pilgrimage is placed in a broader context:

> [I]n the preceding Titles we treated of fasts, and of festival days of the saints, and how alms should be bestowed, we desire to speak here of the above maned Romeros and pilgrims, who go to visit and honor the shrines; how many kinds of them there are; how pilgrimages should be made; how pilgrims should be protected and honored in the places where the travel, or seek shelter; and what privileges and superiority they enjoy, more than other men, while on pilgrimage; and also how pilgrims can make their wills; what obligations arise between men traveling under the direction of another on a pilgrimage; and what punishment those deserve who are guilty of violence, wrong, or dishonor, while they are on a pilgrimage.[81]

The code indicates a rather methodical treatment of the topic—definition, crimes against property, crimes against persons, inheritance law all appear in order.

First, the pages of the text offer a few definitions. A "Romero" indicates "a man who leaves his own country and goes to Rome, in order to visit the holy places where rest the bodies of St. Peter, St. Paul, and the others who received martyrdom there on account of Our Lord Jesus Christ."[82] Commonly, Romeros would signify their intention of traveling to Rome by wearing a

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[81] *Partidas*, 264.
[82] Ibid.

badge showing images of or associated with St. Peter and/or St. Paul. On the other hand, a "pilgrim" was defined as "a stranger who goes to visit the sepulcher of Jerusalem, and the other holy places where Our Lord Jesus Christ was born, lived, and suffered death for sinners; or one who goes on a pilgrimage to Santiago, Oviedo, or to other sanctuaries of a distant and foreign land."[83] One cannot, therefore, be a pilgrim *and* be a native of a native of a particular shrine location—pilgrimage involved travel and travel meant sacrifice and mortification as assessed in the introduction. Additionally, two of the locations specifically mentioned, Santiago and Oviedo, are Spanish cities, thus underscoring Alfonso's rationale driving the need for the code.

While the text makes no distinction between Romeros and pilgrims in the application of law, it does differentiate between the motivations for these walkers:

> There are three kinds of Romeros and pilgrims; the first is, when they go of their own free will, and without any compulsion on a pilgrimage, to any of these holy places; the second is, when this is done on account of some vow or promise made to God; the third is, when any one is required to do it by way of Penance, which has been imposed upon him and which he has to perform.[84]

The first part plainly addressed the practices associated with pilgrimage discussed earlier in this chapter. Implicit in this section is also an exclusory notion; namely, beggars, homeless itinerants, thieves, and the like may not claim pilgrim status. The law goes on to describe that a pilgrim can only claim eminence if he or she exhibits specific qualities.

> Pilgrims should make their pilgrimages with great devotion, and with meekness, by speaking and acting decorously, and should avoid doing wrong, not engaging in trade, not committing knavery on the way; and they should always seek shelter as soon as they can, and also travel with companions, in order to be protected from injury, and to better perform their pilgrimage.[85]

Criminal activity dissolves the label "pilgrim"; in order to be protected from that charge—in order to provide the traveler with some witnesses as to character—traveling in company was

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[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.
[85] *Partidas*, 265.

required. In the matter of public fame, it was advisable to carry a little insurance along, even on the road to Santiago.

From this point, the section of the code begins to differentiate specific guarantees extended to the pilgrim. Frist, there was the matter of fair business and trade practices.

> We decree that they may purchase the things of which they have need in all places where they solicit shelter. Also, that no one shall dare to change the lawful weights and measures by which other persons sell and purchase; and that anyone who does so shall be punished for it, according to the discretion of the judge before whom complaint is made.[86]

Apparently, price gouging for food or shelter was well known along most pilgrim routes. The sixteenth constitution of the First Lateran Council indicates a punishment of withholding communion for anyone who tries "to inflict novel tolls and taxes" on pilgrims.[87] In 1169 the "judges and whole people of Benevento drew the ire and a letter of censure from Pope Alexander III because pilgrims were 'badly treated by their hosts because of their cupidity'."[88] The *Partidas* address this issue immediately following the opening definitions, so it must also have been a keen concern for the Santiago road.

Before addressing the safety of a given pilgrim's property on the journey, the law makes provision for the property that a pilgrim left behind. Logically, allowing for endangerment to home property when the owner might be out of the area would be a disincentive to move out of the front door. In order to free the devout to commit to such an undertaking as peregrination, the law guarantees the safety of property not carried on the traveler's person:

> Not only should the property which pilgrims take with them while going on and returning from a pilgrimage, be safe and secure, but also that which they leave at home….and where they are deprived of its possession by force, or in any other way, that the servants, friends, neighbors, slaves, or laborers of the pilgrims, can bring suit for, and recover by judgment, the possession of the said property of which they were deprived, even though

[86] Ibid.
[87] Diana Webb, *Pilgrims and Pilgrimage*, 95.
[88] Ibid., 96.

> they may not have written authority to do so as agents of the pilgrims; and moreover, that no document shall be obtained from the king, or a judge, affecting the property of pilgrims while they are absent on a pilgrimage.[89]

Again, the logic of the law is difficult to challenge. Retention of property was deemed so important that even slaves were legally empowered to act in the name of their masters in its recovery. Note also that agents of the pilgrim need not have written authority since the pilgrim's autograph would certainly prove impossible to obtain. Finally, the code prohibits even the king from acting on property seizure while a person was on holy sojourn. Such a stipulation was particularly important in Spain, a country that, aside from Santiago and Oviedo, boasted important pilgrim destinations from the Maria del Pilar in Zaragoza to Veronica's Veil in Alicante to the largest piece of the True Cross in Europe held at the monastery of Santo Toribio in Liebana.

Only after demonstrating that the pilgrim may safely leave his home does the Partida turn to the question of property held on the pilgrim's body. Of course, matters concerning theft were covered under the general code of law and will be discussed as such later in this chapter. Interestingly, however, Alfonso's code provides for the local magistrate to make sure that a traveler's property was returned to whomever the pilgrim had designated to receive carried goods: "after his death, [the magistrate] shall deliver to the party to whom the said pilgrim bequeathed his property, whatever he appropriated."[90] The law goes on to make provision for burial funds reserved from personal property in case a pilgrim died without making a behest. How was this and all such apportionments to be determined?—"in this matter the statements of

[89] *Partidas*, 266.
[90] Ibid.

the pilgrim, or those of his companions who traveled with him, shall be believed."[91] Once again, the witness of companions takes a prominent place in pilgrimage law.

Finally, the *Partidas* set an obligation on Spanish adjudicators concerning the disposition of cases involving crimes against pilgrims or cases involving their deaths. In fact, the code implies a commitment to sponsor the welfare and to facilitate the passage of such travelers.

> We order that all judges and officials of our kingdom shall be especially required, each one in his own district, to watch over and protect Romeros and pilgrims, so that they may not receive wrong or injury in person and property; and not only must they themselves do so, but they must cause all others to attend to these matters which relate to pilgrims, as aforesaid.[92]

The motivation for such an inclusion might be more than the legal impetus to protect life. Alfonso's famous devotion to pilgrimage—especially to Marian shrines—must have played a part. To be realistic, the economic and political advantages of maintaining a steady stream of paying customers probably had something to do with drawing his judges' attentions to protecting the pilgrimage as an asset. Should a pilgrim's death require the visit of relatives to claim property, the law ordered a speedy disposition of the case. Indeed, alacrity was a necessary element for the processing of all legal questions involving pilgrims. As visitors from another country or kingdom, they were likely to have limited resources and frequently could not afford a prolonged stay. Also, the Spanish code sought to protect visitors from any prejudice or malevolence arising from their status as outsiders. Thus, judges were to consider their situations "without malice and without delay, so that neither their pilgrimage nor their rights may be interfered with through the prolongation of vexatious suits, or in any other way whatsoever."[93]

The Seven Part law code of Alfonso systematically and pragmatically deals with the day-to-day perils of travel in the Middle Ages. It is intended to protect individuals and to increase

[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid.

the numbers of pilgrims making their way across Spain with their devotion and their money. Even by modern standards, the laws tend to be logical and are methodically arranged. On the other hand, Alfonso's other great work, the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, are works of creativity and piety. The two works converge in as much as both deal with the law. Among the many songs are transgressions that might have been weighed and punished according to secular law; yet, these lapses of right or moral behavior among the characters of the tales are assessed by a source better known for her passion than for her punishment—the Virgin Mary.

5.4 The *Cantigas* and Mary's Primacy in the Law

The *Cantigas* are much less systematic than the *Partidas* and offer judgment and punishment in varying degrees of agreement with the law codes. Frequently, the code might prescribe one punishment, but the Prime Adjudicator, Mary, has other standards and other ideas. Casting Mary in this role—that of a judge—was not too much of an aberration considering the many other roles she had assumed in popular culture by the thirteenth century. For example, Linda B. Hall reminds readers that Mary had been viewed in Spain as a prime mover in the struggle to expel the Moors from the land: "it is self-evident that she was seen as Mother, not only of God but of themselves, but perhaps not so evident that she was also seen as Warrior."[94] Not unlike Fernando and Alfonso, Mary had helped conquer the land and, by application of the law, would help maintain the land. However, it is in the manner of her application of justice that Mary will differ from the codes of secular law.

The Cantigas offer many instances in which people will commit crimes and face the judgment of Mary. CSM 13, for example, is the story of Ebbo, the thief. The song begins with an appeal to a court of higher justice: "just as Jesus Christ while on the cross saved a thief, Holy

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[94] Linda B. Hall, *Mary, Mother and Warrior: The Virgin in Spain and the Americas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), 10.

Mary delivered another thief from death." Although Ebbo is clearly a thief in the narrative, "in his prayers, the thief always commended himself to Her, and that was his salvation." Having finally been caught in the act, Ebbo finds himself sentenced to hang by the local magistrate. The moment poor Ebbo dangles from a rope, Mary places her hands under his feet and lifts him up. He remains in this precarious position for three days until the magistrate finally arrives, sees the miracle, and releases him. Ebbo then enters an order and remains Mary's fervent admirer for the remainder of his days.

Although the punishment for theft in the *Partidas* is less than hanging, Ebbo does in fact owe restitution to the owner of the property stolen and should be delivered over for public scourging at the least. On the surface of the tale, Mary subverts the temporal law in favor of her own judgment. At no time does the tale question Ebbo's guilt; quite the opposite, he is referred throughout the tale as Ebbo, "*the Thief*." The lesson of the song had more to do with the afterlife than with this profane existence. Having sensed a spark of decency in Ebbo—namely, his veneration of the saint—the Virgin Mary willfully forgives Ebbo his sins and offers him his life back—a life which he then employs in positive religious practices. More important than reinforcing the letter of the law, CSM 13 affirms the principle of faith and grace that leads to salvation. Symbolic elements within the tale contribute to this essential message. Consider that hanging itself is a metaphor; the human being is suspended between life and death—heaven and hell. He remains in this position for three days; certainly, the listeners could not help but think of the three days that both Christ and Mary (in the Dormition story) spent in the tomb. Ebbo's literal life becomes a symbol of everlasting life which is held out as a reward for faith in the power of resurrection.

CSM 182 duplicates the spirit of CSM 13 and makes the allegorical elements literal. Here, another thief, this time unnamed, "plundered the highways and stole bread and wine and gold and silver from unfortunate folk." Despite his errant ways, the thief remained steadfast in his veneration of Mary: "he observed the vigils of Her days strictly and then committed no crimes, and not so much as a shoe would he take from anyone." This fellow escaped both capture and punishment, but he died unexpectedly. Devil appears in the narrative and carries the thief to a hill where he is beaten—not unlike the public scourging that the *Partidas* calls for in such cases. Nevertheless, his mother calls upon the Virgin "who at once gave him life and saved him from frightful death in Hell." Interestingly, the story concludes with the statement, "He thenceforth gladly obeyed the will of the Virgin who resolves difficulties."

Most probably, the thief reforms, although the text does not explicitly state that he does anything more than obeying "the will of the Virgin." Apparently he had already done enough of her will that she was willing to perform resurrection in order to save his soul despite his obvious crimes; indeed, he escapes both earthly punishment and the fires of Hell. His crimes are manifold, but so is his regard for Holy Mary. Consider the interior lessons of this tale. First, strict adherence to the practices of the church—observance of holy days—reaped a reward even in the face of deeds on other days that cried out for harsh punishment. Thus, the Doctrine of Works is in effect; the preponderance of acts in a person's life add up to reward or punishment according to a celestial mathematics. As the character Good Dedes tells Everyman in the play of the same name: "Go thou with thy rekenynge and thy good dedes." Everyman is sent to deal with death with only his good deeds written in a book; apparently the balance of the thief's good deeds weighed in his favor—at least in the eyes of the Virgin. Second, not even death can thwart

the efforts of a saint. Finally, the efficacy of intercessory prayer is affirmed by the intervention of Mary who chose to honor the pleas of the thief's mother.

In another case, Mary actually forestalls the escape of a would-be thief. In CSM 302, a pilgrim is traveling the Monserrat to Santiago pilgrimage route and takes up with a companion whom the former believes he can trust. While spending the night in a church, the thief took money from the man from Monserrat and added it secretly to his own purse. Following mass in the morning, the pilgrims made ready to depart, but the thief "could not go out [of the church], and many people saw this, for Holy Mary, who sits on high with God, would not allow it." The thief was supernaturally held in the church until "he had sincerely repented and fully confessed and had given back all he had stolen to the other man and declared before everyone how he had sinned and was ashamed of his ill-fated deeds."

CSM 302 is far closer to the spirit of the *Partidas* than the other two songs. According to Alfonso's law code, what had been committed was "secret larceny . . . that which a man commits secretly, so that he is not found or seen with the property, before he conceals it."[95] Having been discovered, the thief is punished according to the mandates of the law; he provided restitution by returning the money and he was publicly made to "suffer pain and disgrace."[96] What is notable in the song, however, is that Mary played the role prescribed to the magistrate. She caught the thief herself and effected punishment. If this song upholds the nature of the law, it also proves didactic in two ways. First, crimes committed in church are subject to supernatural intervention; God—or at least Mary—knows even the most secret sins of both heart and deed, and none of those will escape either notice or punishment. Second, forgiveness is, nevertheless, held out to those who are truly contrite. Apparently, even extorting the contrition (by not allowing the thief

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[95] *Partidas*, 1379.
[96] Ibid., 1387.

to exit the scene of the crime) counts for in as much as he "sincerely repented and fully confessed."

Just as crimes against property were considered in the Virgin's purview, so too are crimes against persons. Part VII, Title X of the *Partidas* considers crimes involving violence against Alfonso's subjects. As with all the Partidas, the delineation of the types of violence is specific and thorough. The text covers armed uprisings that cause personal damage, individual armed violence, unarmed violence, property damage that includes (accidentally or on purpose) violence against persons, and simple disturbing the peace.[97] All of these offenses include punishments that include, at the least, paying three times over for any property damage caused and banishment for the violence. If the personal injury was severe or the injury resulted in death, then the perpetrator may be put to death unless he is insane or under the age of fourteen.

CSM 198 is the simple, straight-forward tale of brawling pilgrims. A group of men who had traveled to Mary's shrine in Terena (today, in modern Portugal) were enjoying the town "scuffling and celebrating like true Spaniards. But the sly devil so aroused their anger that they all came at each other armed, ready to kill." The men fought all night, several falling from the battle with mortal wounds. In the morning, "they went around looking for the dead to bury and for others badly wounded to be treated," but Mary had caused all wounds to be miraculously healed—"only cuirasses and shields, very badly damaged." Mary preserved all from harm or prosecution "for She never forgets to aid those She loves or those who are in trouble." In gratitude, the men offered a feast in honor of Mary and made donations of money and cattle in her name to the church.

The letter of the law was, in part, carried out—if only in the matter of honoring Mary. According to the Partidas, restitution three times over was due at the very least; thus, the men

[97] Partidas, 1363- 1366.

offered the feast, money, and cattle. Honor and service to Mary was pledged in lieu of banishment. The lesson here is that pilgrimage earns merits that cannot be dissipated by bad conduct on the part of the pilgrims. Jenny Benham affirms that there was a level of acceptance for wounds as a result of personal injury, but court records in England and Scandinavia clearly indicate a complex manner of redress for such injuries.[98] Nevertheless, in the *Cantigas* drunken scuffling that results in personal injury and death may be mitigated, or *indulged* in, based on the earned rewards of peregrination and abasement to the Virgin.

Next to instances of theft, murder, the most egregious crime against a person, may be the most frequently represented felony in the *Cantigas*. Sixteen poems involve homicide in some topical manner: murder outright, false accusations of murder, murder of a prostitute, murder of an unborn child, and attempted murder. Part VII, section VIII of the *Partidas* defines the particulars of law surrounding homicide. According to the text, there are three kinds of homicide: "the first is, when one man kills another wrongfully; the second, when he does so justly in self-defense; the third, when a homicide happens through accident."[99] The Law II, the penalty for willful homicide is clear: any man or woman, slave or free person, who causes death not of accident or self-defense, "having in his hand a drawn knife, a sword, a stone, a stick, or any other weapon whatsoever," must suffer the penalty of death.[100] Law III allows that in cases of home invasion—what moderns would call the "castle law"—or protection of personal property, a person may kill without penalty as a matter of defense. Any knight attempting arrest of a charged person who subsequently resists arrest by violence may resort to deadly force.

[98] Jenny Benham, "Wounding in the High Middle Ages: Law and Practice," in *Wounds in the Middle Ages,* ed. Anne Kirkham and Cordelia Warr (New York: Ashgate Publishing, 2014), 171-73.

[99] *Partidas*, 1342.

[100] Ibid.

Importantly for the protection of pilgrims, "any robber who publicly frequents the highways, for one who kills any such person shall not be liable to punishment."[101]

The ensuing Laws indicate a fastidious attention to several details in cases of homicide. Physicians or apothecaries who knowingly endanger patients or clients are subject to the penalty of death as are women who eat or drink drugs or otherwise attempt physical harm that results in an abortion.[102] Parents who cause permanent disfigurement to a child by beating (and teachers who do the same to their students!), judges who knowingly render false verdicts in criminal cases, murderers of family members (yes, even in-laws), and anyone who wrongfully causes castration also fall under penalty of death. Law V concerning accidental death is particularly perceptive; the code suggests that some accidents—those involving cutting down trees or falling from heights in public—seem innocent enough, but witnesses should always be presented, especially in cases where there had been "public enmity" between the two persons involved.[103] The watchword in this and all such cases appeared to be, when in doubt, check public fame.

As with larceny and personal violence, the *Cantigas* tend to diverge from the *Partidas* in matters of murder. CSM 207, for example, should be a fairly simple case to adjudicate under the written law. In the song, a certain knight was Mary's "loyal servant, who dedicated his heart and mind to Her service." His son "whom he loved more than himself" was killed by another knight. The father seized the knight and tried to kill him but found himself strangely restrained. He took the murderous knight prisoner and visited his local Marian shrine. On seeing the statue of Mary, the vengeful knight forgot his anger, released his prisoner, "and the statue bowed and said: 'Thank you'."

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[101] Ibid., 1343.
[102] Ibid., 1346-1347.
[103] Ibid., 1345.

Certainly, the father has the right under the *Partidas* to extract a life for the loss of his son—doubly so a Law V mentions the particular right of a father whose heir is killed.[104] However, two mitigating spiritual factors exist: first, the knight diminishes his soul by succumbing to his wrath—a mortal sin; second, he gains a perspective on the virtue of mercy. On the notion of quelling the knight's anger, the text of the *Cantigas* offers a unique perspective. Stephen D. White characterizes representations of anger in literature during the Middle Ages frequently relating to a person's rank. White finds what he terms "displays of lordly anger" that "express what we would recognize as . . . gestures of a feuding culture."[105] In his article, White states that lordly anger is an extension of class and that to relent from such anger would be tantamount to abandonment of position.[106] Suzanna A. Throop agrees with White's point that anger generated by right vengeance was considered justified. She distinguishes between *ira per vitium*, "anger stemming from vice," which was considered sinful and *ira per zelum*, "anger from zeal for the law." In the latter case, an expression of anger when applying right action as validated by the law should have been not only acceptable but also admirable.[107] Throop even cites Thomas of Chobham on the topic of *ira per zelum*: "'Anger through zeal is when we are angry against vice and against the vicious, and we can hope that this anger increases, because it is a virtue'."[108] The father of CSM 207 should qualify under the description of ira per zelum since he is clearly pressing his anger against a "vicious" knight whose actions constitute a "vice" according to Chobham's definition; however, the Virgin clearly has another definition. As with

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[104] Ibid. 1342.

[105] Stephen D. White, "The Politics of Anger," in *Anger's Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages*, ed. Barbara H. Rosenwein (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 147.

[106] Ibid., 150-151

[107] Suzanna A. Throop, "Zeal, Anger, and Vengeance: The Emotional Rhetoric of Crusading," in *Vengeance in the Middle Ages: Emotion, Religion, and Feud,* eds. Susanna A. Throop and Paul R. Hyams (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010), 190-191.

[108] Ibid., 190.

the songs that feature theft, prosecution allowable under human law is commuted by the transcendent clemency of Mary.

Like CSM 207, CSM 255 relates a familiar theme of clemency in another murder case. Here, however, all the processes of law are followed by a local magistrate, only to be thwarted in the end. A townswoman described as being “noble and refined” allowed her daughter to marry, and the mother gave the young couple a house in town. Soon afterwards, there were rumors in town that the mother and son-in-law had started an illicit liaison. These were unfounded, but the rumors caused the mother-in-law such pain that “she gave a great deal of money to evil people to kill him.” When news of the young man’s death resounded about the city, an enterprising magistrate arrived and “by thoroughly examining the facts and inquiring,” he discovered the truth. The mother-in-law confessed and was sentenced to die. On her way to the stake, she begged her friends in the crowd to allow her to stop at a church and ask mercy from a statue of Mary. After permitting this pause, the crowd marched her to her house where dry wood was piled inside the home, she was locked inside, and the magistrate had the place torched. Of course, the Virgin intervened and preserved the woman even as the home was reduced to charcoal. Following the miracle, the crowd repented its judgement and took the woman to church where “priests stood in a line” to welcome the woman and to praise the mercy of Mary.”

The sentence of burning her might take the reader by surprise. Jeffrey Burton Russell offers a brief history of burning as a method of execution in his work *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages*. Russell contends that burning was generally reserved for crimes involving heresy, witchcraft, or sexual misconduct of an egregious sort: incest or particularly violent rape.[109] Russell claims that “in the eleventh century even more in the twelfth, punishments and

[109] Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972), 147-151.

procedures on the part of both secular and religious courts became more severe."[110] Although "the ordeal [by fire] was finally banned by the Fourth Lateran Council," use of fire as test and punishment persisted through the eighteenth century.[111] Michael David Barbezat reminds readers that the fire of punishment used against heretics and witches was intended to remind both the punished and those attending the event that the fires that consumed the flesh were related to the fires of Hell that consume the soul.[112]

The application of burning as the punishment in CSM 255 appears to be connected to the nature of the murder planned and carried out by the mother. She felt pressured by the townspeople who believed her engaged in an illicit—and by nature of the marriage to her daughter, incestuous—relationship with a man the approximate age of her child. On the one hand, the tale certainly testifies to the social pressure exerted by ill fame, but the story also relates directly to condemnation of heinous sexual practices and even to the hint or rumor of them. The fact that she confessed to murder did not remove the taint of sexual suspicion in the minds of the town. Having found her guilty and sentenced to die by burning, the townspeople insisted that she be marched "through the street, naked except for her shift." Connie L. Scarborough compares this tale with two others from other collections that maintain similar motifs: a relative is suspected of incest and is sentenced to death by burning.[113]

In CSM 255, the protagonist is a confessed murderer who, by all rights of law, deserved her sentence of death, burning or otherwise. Yet again, Alfonso establishes that, in the popular mind, the laws of Heaven—laws that involve forgiveness and abasement through veneration—

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[110] Ibid., 148.

[111] Ibid., 150.

[112] Michael David Barbezat, "The Fires of Hell and the Burning of Heretics in the Accounts of the Executions at Orleans in 1022," *Journal of Medieval History* 40.4 (2014): 399-420, 400.

[113] Connie L. Scarborough, "Women as Victims and Criminals in the Siete *Partidad,*" in *Crime and Punishment in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age: Mental-Historical Investigations of Basic Human Problems and Social Responses* (Boston: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co., 2012), 234.

always transcend laws forged on the profane earth. The only case among the hundreds of songs in the *Cantigas* in which execution involving homicide is carried out appears in CSM 4. Here, a Jewish boy sees young Catholic children taking communion during Eastertide. The Hebrew youth, a learned child who had attended school with the Christians and had excelled in his studies, experiences a sudden vision: "it seemed to him that Holy Mary, whom he saw resplendent on the altar cradling Her Son Immanuel in Her arms, was giving them [the other children] sacrament." He was so amazed at the apparition that he stepped in line to receive the Host from the Virgin; the wafer "tasted sweeter than honey." The child returned home and told his father what had transpired, and the elder Jew threw his son into a furnace. Rachel, the boy's mother, ran into the street decrying the murder; a crowd entered the home only to find the boy miraculously preserved by Mary. The tale ends happily for almost all parties concerned: "because of this great miracle, the Jewess came to believe, and the boy received baptism at once. The father, who had done the evil deed in his madness, was put to death in the same manner that he had tried to kill his son."

Of course, the death of the Jew follows Alfonsine law—even to dying in the same manner as the attempted murder indicated. One wonders, however, why this is the only case where execution is carried out for the crime of murder. The difference is that no sign of contrition is offered and no request to the Virgin is tendered by the Jew. Albert I. Bagby, Jr. decries what he called "the double standard of Alfonsine sentiment toward the Jew."[114] Although it is true that "Alfonso's court abounded in scholarly Jews whose pens were busy and whose words were influential" and that the king tolerated Jews in court positions better than

[114] Albert I. Bagby, Jr., "The Jew in the Cantigas of Alfonso X, El Sabio," in *Speculum*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (Oct., 1971), 688.

other monarchs of his time,[115] nevertheless, they were not Christian and might not call on the clemency of the Queen of Heaven.

One final *Cantiga* bears mentioning here—if only to prove that medieval Spain was not without its sense of humor and that the law can be funny. As evidence, consider CSM 327, the song of the priest's underpants. In the tale, "a woman gave a cloth she had in offering to a church of Holy Mary." The piece of cloth was relatively small, less than three feet in length, but it "was very delicate and finely woven. Therefore, the good woman had placed it there in the church where it could be seen spread over the altar." A priest of the church coveted the fine cloth for himself, took it home, and made underpants "with which to cover his sinful parts." He then lay down to sleep only to be awakened by the pain of his heels pressing into the tops of his thighs. It seemed that the Virgin had twisted his legs around backwards in the night. Crying out to his neighbors, he donated a "large linen cloth" to the church for the altar and confessed hoping that "anyone who hears this miracle never be so bold as to dishonor the Virgin." At once, Mary cured him, and he praised her name for the rest of his life.

Despite the inescapable humor in the song, the priest committed two crimes, theft and insult to God and a holy saint; neither one of which was a laughing matter. Altar cloths of two types were important to the celebration of the mass. One underlined the Cup and the Host and kept any drop of wine (or blood, of course) from polluting the altar. A second cloth covered the entire altar in order to maintain the Blessed Sacrament. Nor was their use optional; according to Gavantus, employment of the small cloth was promulgated into Canon Law in the seventh

[115] Ibid., 670-671.

century by Boniface III.[116] The use of such necessary decoration found its validation in the text of the New Testament: "For the fine linen are the justifications of the saints" (Revelation 19:8).

In the case of the priest's underpants, the punishment does fit the crime according to the mandates of the *Partidas*. The penalty for theft had been discussed above, and the priest delivered on those aforementioned terms. First, he had to offer restitution greater than the value of the stolen item; he does, after all, order that the entire altar be covered at his expense, an act indicating that he makes restitution to the church in larger measure than is prescribed by law—the value of the object plus two times. Second, he does suffer both physical and emotional punishment; his deformity is painful, and his neighbors appear to hear his confession and to witness his ill fame. The punishment for his use of the cloth is also appropriate. In Part VII, Title XXVIII, the punishment for "persons who offer insults to God, to Holy Mary, and to the other Saints" is made quite clear.[117] Law II under the title allows that a knight or squire may lose his land for a period of one year on a first offense for this crime. From an ordinary citizen of a town, the punishment for an insult is loss of "the fourth part of all his property."[118] Additionally, physical punishment involves disfigurement. They may be lashed, branded on the mouth, and even have their tongues cut out for repeated offenses. If the insult should involve hitting a wall or door of the church, "his right hand shall be cut off."[119] Thus, for wearing an altar cloth as underwear, having the legs turned around would be just payment.

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[116] A. J. Schulte, "Altar Cloth," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Volume I, (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1907).
[117] *Partidas*, 1448.
[118] Ibid., 1449.
[119] Ibid.

5.5 Conclusion

Jesus and his disciples, most particularly Paul, wrestled with the complexities of New Testament law and contended with and among the historical factions that sought to interpret the laws. In late antiquity, codes of law, from Justinian's *Corpus juris civilis* to the *Forum iudicum* of the Visigoths, began to emerge that combined elements of law from various traditions. Edward Grand believes that the *Decretals* of Gratian and subsequent work conducted at the University of Bologna represent the first great scholarly strides towards modern law: "by the end of the twelfth century, civil and canon law were transformed and set upon a new course. Although they would continue to be changed, they were established in the universities of Western Europe as disciplines where reason was systematically applied to laws that were now intended to be universal in scope."[120] These new systematically applied laws were meant, to apply to all newly emerging classes, not merely noble, priest, and laborer, but merchants and guildsmen as well. Grant proclaims that, in the world of legal studies, "the new professionalism had triumphed by the end of the twelfth century."[121]

Among the new professionals, the scholar-king Alfonso, el Sabio, was ready to take his place with *Las Siete Partidas*. The early version of Alfonso's work, the *Fuero real* (and a later revision was called the *Especulo*) was promulgated into law at the Cortes of Toledo in 1254.[122] The Partidas were not officially adopted during his lifetime; in fact, they only became generally accepted during, as previously mentioned, during the reign of his grandson, Alfonso XI. Unfortunately for Alfonso, his kingdom was too dependent on the traditional *fueros*, too influenced by the *cortes* of the nobility, and too distracted by internal dynastic difficulties to

[120] Edward Grant, *God and Reason in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 81.

[121] Ibid., 82.

[122] O'Callaghan, *The Learned King*, 37.

acquiesce to a new code of law beyond the *Fuero real*. Nevertheless, the pilgrimage road needed to be protected, and Alfonso had at least included enough of those statutes in the *Fuero real* to provide for the swelling ranks of pilgrims.

And the Virgin did her part as well. While Jesus is at the center of the law in the first Christian century, Mary had risen to take her place as sole heavenly adjudicator in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. While in the pop cultural mind, Jesus had taken his place in heaven, Mary remained the Mediatrix in matters of the law and in moments of questionable action. Her verdicts and intercession on behalf of her devoted often seemed to subvert the intentions of the law of the land. Alfonso contributed to this imaging of Mary as well as to the cultural and social welfare of Spain through two works under consideration here: *Las Siete Partidas* and *Las Cantigas de Santa Maria*. The former attempted to standardize a code of law throughout the kingdoms of Christian Spain; the latter was a labor of devotion that combined piety with poetry. Although these works appear to concern divergent spheres, in fact, both address notions of crime and punishment. What emerges as topically and thematically confusing is how and why the *Cantigas* seem to subvert the codes of law proposed by the *Partidas*; that is, certain crimes such as theft, rape, and even murder are not prosecuted in the narratives of the songs as indicated by the *Partidas*. Throughout the *Cantigas*, the royal editor of the most complete code of law in Spanish history indicates that divine law spectacularly supersedes positive law in almost all cases.

The focus throughout the Cantigas remains on Alfonso's holy patron and on the medieval efforts to seek out the spiritual and the miraculous. Eighty-eight of the songs concentrate directly on pilgrimage. In many ways, these songs constitute a tribute both to Mary and to the practice of pilgrimage itself. Joseph F. O'Callaghan has suggested that the Cantigas connect to

the Santiago pilgrimage in a uniquely negative capacity. O'Callaghan singles out six of the songs in which Saint James was unable to aid pilgrims even though he is the titular reason for the journey to Santiago. In all six tales, pilgrims successfully sought out and received help from the Virgin Mary. He believes that the literary deprecation of the healing powers of James indicated a feud between Alfonso and Bishop Gonzalo Games of Compostela—the former a devotee of Mary, the latter dependent on James.[123] Seventeen of the *Cantigas* do describe pilgrimage to Alfonso's own church in Sirga, and it may well be that he, like so many others, felt the pang of competition between his Marian shrine and the lure to travel to Santiago. In any event, the Cantigas clearly contribute to the body of pilgrimage literature and, at the same time, represent crime and punishment along these treacherous pilgrim routes.

Bernard Desclot, a chronicler writing just a few years after Alfonso's death, wrote that "this king of Castile was the most bountiful of man in any age, inasmuch that no man, were he knight of jongleur, who came to ask aught of him, went away unsatisfied."[124] Alfonso himself was both knight and jongleur—at once a political leader and a poet. From his court located on the *Camino de Santiago*, he sought to compile a series of songs that represented the Christian journey—the pilgrimage along a Spanish road and the pilgrimage through life. In the same way, Alfonso's codices represent positive law in its penultimate, thirteenth-century manifestation. If the Cantigas represent divine law—or even natural law of a sort—then they do not subvert Alfonso's posited legalisms; rather, the *Cantigas* augment *Las Siete Partidas* in offering addenda that expand on the limitations of the human vision of the law. Whereas temporal, profane regulations of social behavior might be subject to misapplication and misinterpretation, God's

[123] Joseph F. O'Callaghan, "The Cantigas de Santa Maris as an Historical Source: Two Examples (nos. 321 and 386)," in *Studies on the Cantigas de Santa Maria: Art, Music, and Poetry* (Madison: The Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, 1987), 393-396.

[124] Evelyn S. Procter, *Alfonso X of Castile: Patron of Literature and Learning* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), 139.

judgment, providentially interventional and infinitely fair and merciful, provides a stopgap to the inequities of positive law. Simply put, Alfonso and his subjects like to hope that when all else failed, Mary and the compassionate saints still acted as divine arbiters of an empathetic universe.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: MARIAN ASCENDENCY AND AN AGE OF ANXIETY

> *It needs to be pondered in the heart, what it means to be the Mother of God.*
>
> Martin Luther

CSM 61 is a popular tale as evidenced by the fact that it is repeated in several of the *mariales*. This song is one of the "Soissons tales" from a manuscript collection of tales held at the cathedral in Soissons; one of the lines in the introduction to the story calls attention to the collection itself: "Concerning this, I shall recount a miracle which happened in Soissons. There is a book there all filled with miracles of that place and no other which the Mother of God performs by night and day." A valuable resource, the Soissons anthology of Marian tales was accessed by authors including Gil de Zamora, John of Garland, Gautier de Coinci, and, of course, Alfonso X. The Soissons tales most often relate stories of miracles that are associated with the cathedral, Saint-Gervais-et-Saint-Protais de Soissons, or are set in the immediate vicinity of Picardy, France. Like many local collections of *mariales*, some of the Soissons tales actually come from other localities and were simply re-set in the environs best known to the populace who would have enjoyed hearing them read and re-read. CSM 61 is clearly relevant to the surroundings since it articulates a story set in the Benedictine monastery for women, Notre-Dame de Soissons, and focused on a relic: Mary's shoe.

Consisting of fewer than a dozen stanzas in the *Cantigas*, CSM 16 begins simply: "In that convent there is a shoe which belonged to the Virgin." Having begun matter-of-factly, the story turns to its central conflict; a "churlish fellow" states that he does not believe in the authenticity of the relic: "'It is senseless to believe it, for the shoe could not be so well preserved and not have rotted away after such a long time has passed'." This common peasant had been traveling

on the way to the town fair with four companions. They were not engaged in a holy pilgrimage; rather, they had turned aside briefly to view the relic out of apparent curiosity—not out of piety. The response to his lack of faith was immediate; his mouth began to contort to frightening proportions, and "he felt such pain that he thought that his eyes would pop out of his head."

Now, he had little choice. He turned around, for he realized he must return "on a pilgrimage to where the shoe was." Finally infused with an appropriately holy intent, he entered the convent chapel; immediately, he prostrated himself before the altar and admitted his foolhardiness. While he was lamenting his rash statement, "for his atonement, the abbess of the convent rubbed the shoe across his face and made it whole and sound again." His piety and penance apparently won the attention of the Virgin because his face was made whole. Armed with renewed vitality, the peasant sought release from his master and returned "to the convent where he is a servant to this day."

Today, the monastery of Notre-Dame de Soissons is a ruin. Like the great monastery of Cluny, Our Lady of Soissons was dissolved in 1789 in the aftermath of the French Revolution, was partially demolished, and lies in picturesque disintegration. Despite its eventual fate, even a brief history of the monastery discloses its impressive millennium of service and long-standing importance in northern France. According to Anne L. Clark, the abbey "was said to have been founded about 660 by Drausin, the bishop of Soissons, with the support of Ebroin, mayor of the palace, and his wife, Leutrude."[1] Rosamond McKitterick tracks the once-ascendant past of the

[1] Clark, Anne L. "Guardians of the Sacred: The Nuns of Soissons and the Slipper of the Virgin Mary1." *Church History* 76, no. 4 (12, 2007): 724-749. https://libproxy.library.unt.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/217527894?accountid=7113.

monastery; "Charlemagne's sister Gisela was abbess of Chelles and of Notre Dame at Soissons," and the abbey was renowned for having other members of French royal families in its fold.[2]

Clark writes specifically about the "slipper of Mary" in her article. She discusses the twelfth-century work of Hugh Farsit who was a "regular canon of Saint-Jean des Vignes in Soissons" and, sometime after 1143, wrote a treatise about the miracles of Mary's shoe held at Our Lady of Soissons. According to Hugh, an outbreak of ergotism, the burning disease discussed in a previous chapter, plagued the Picardy region of northern France. A young woman horribly stricken with the disease was brought to the nuns to convalesce. In Hugh's narrative, "Abbess Mathilde, who then was governing this place, wearied by the importuning and noise of her [the ergotism victim] assiduous clamor took up the slipper of the blessed Virgin."[3] The young woman was cured; this remedy caused a steady stream of similar ergotism sufferers over the next few months and the tale of the curative shoe was born. Clark goes on to write that the shoe was so reverenced that Hugh tells about one woman who wanted to take a bit of the blessing home with her and tried to take a bite out of the shoe.

It is within this relatively complex milieu that the story of the "foolhardy cowherd," as it is titled by Poncelet, was born. A little more than a hundred years after Hugh Farsit, CMS 61 was being sung in Alfonso's court and on pilgrimage pathways that laced their way across Spain. This self-validating, didactic tale instructs contemporaries to liberate their minds from doubt. Faith in the healing and redemptive power of pilgrimage and relics is confirmed by the reclamation of even this low-born, foul-bespoken cowherd churl. Even though a pair of Mary's shoes was said to be held at the Cistercian Abbey Maria Ophoven,[4] the devout should be able to

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[2] Rosamond McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 254.

[3] Clark.

[4] R. Bäumer, L. Scheffczyk et.al. *Marienlexikon*, vol. V, (EOS Verlag Erzabtei St. Ottilien, 1993), 453.

respond with a remark about her, perhaps, having more than a single pair throughout her lifetime. Perhaps the cowherd's incredulity is rooted in the fact that, as Clark and Farsit point out, there is no provenance for the shoe in Soissons. It was simply there and proclaimed as *the* shoe. As Clark writes, there is no "backstory" that might have made belief more palpable. Unfortunately for modernity, the shoes of the Cistercian abbey were stolen in 1826, and the single shoe in Soissons disappeared prior to the dissolution of the abbey. Today, nothing of the shoes or shoe remains to scrutinize. CSM 61 is a not-so-rare case of a literary work that defends itself; disbelief in its message or generally discounting the validity of Marian tales is warned away internally lest the reader or listener suffer the same fate as the foolhardy cowherd.

CSM 61 reminds the modern reader that doubt in regard to Mary was not a reasonable option for medievals—that only illness that reflects a polluted soul awaits the person who would follow the path of disbelief. Ironically, the modern reader inescapably understands that the oppositional message is also inherent is the story. Questions and disbelief must have been a part of the medieval world; otherwise, the cowherd would never have made his statement. The state of the shoe belied its purported heritage; how could a leather shoe have survived the centuries relatively intact? Despite the scoffing attitude of the cowherd, it is a reasonable question, but Marian veneration is not always intended to engage the faculty of reason. If Mary could move easily between heaven and earth to perform miracles, then one incorruptible shoe is surely within the range of acceptance. The tradition of the incorruptibility of saints and their relics is one of long standing in many Christian communities. In the introduction to her book on the study of *The Incorruptibles*—saints whose bodies never succumbed to decay, Joan Carroll Cruz categorizes types of human remains for consideration; she writes that "preserved bodies found in countries around the world can be divided into three classifications: the *deliberately preserved*,

the *accidentally preserved* and the *incorruptibles* [sic]."[5] In the first chapter, Cruz records that the body of Saint Cecilia (d. 177 C.E.) was inspected in 822 and again in 1599, yet the body was found to be without the earthly taint of corruption.[6] Clearly, the questions that arise from the discourse between faith and reason arise today; this same agonistic conversation existed during the Middle Ages, and the debate even made its way into the texts of the *mariales*.

The deliberation between faith and reason is not new, though it has surely been an implied element in this work. Fundamentally, this study has focused on two topics: first, the popular expression of faith and piety found in the texts of the Marian tales; and, second, the evolution of the role of Mary in subsuming the qualities of healing, exorcism, and judgement traditionally assigned to her son in early Christian literature and belief. Three additional topics arise by way of conclusion. First, no mention has been made here of Mary's gender role—of her place among goddesses of other belief systems. A brief acknowledgment of her function as goddess will follow. Second, in the history of venerations of all sorts, a driving force has been competition. The nature of competition and its intensity impelled the Marian tales forward. Third, the move from the primacy of Jesus in antiquity to Mary in the popular culture of the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries begs the question, what next? Is this a linear continuum, or a pendulum of faith that swings back? Indeed, the conclusion here is that the pendulum of lay piety has turned again to Jesus in re-fashioning character traits for the Son of God.

Almost any study of Mary that escapes religious foundation addresses Mary's relationship to the goddess and, specifically, to fertility imagery. Marina Warner, for example, notes that "the Virgin Mary was associated not only with the moon's fertility, but also with two

[5] Joan Carroll Cruz, *The Incorruptibles: A Study of the Incorruption of the Bodies of Various Catholic Saints and Beati* (Charlotte, North Carolina: TAN Books, 1977), xxvii.

[6] Ibid., 1-3.

other lunar properties: its constancy, which make it nature's own most accurate timepiece, and its hegemony over the tides."[7] Warner goes on to write that "Mary—like classical goddesses before her—emerges the eternal mistress of the waters, the protective deity of life, and especially the patroness of women in childbirth."[8] All of these are valid points; indeed, some of them supplement the arguments in this dissertation. The eight-century characterization of Mary as the *Maris stella*—the Star of the Sea—perfectly dovetails with Warner's description of Mary as the "eternal mistress of the waters." Additionally, several of the mariales do deal with childbirth and Mary's intervention could have been assessed as fulfilling a traditional role as goddess, or Earth Mother.

Moreover, Sally Cunneen attaches veneration of Mary to worship of other goddesses of antiquity. Cunnees admits that "the worship of Demeter, Cybele, and Isis, still lively in Egypt and Rome, was considered idolatrous by Christians. But a close look at the Isis cult by the second-century poet Lucius Apuleius offers a positive reading."[9] Apuleius's description of Isis "resembled pictures and medals of a much later Mary, standing on the crescent moon with stars circling her head."[10] Ean Begg goes farther East in discovering the roots of Mary. In his book, *The Cult of the Black Virgin,* Begg recalls that there are more than 500 black Madonnas worldwide and that these images hearken to another precedent entirely:

> [O]ur Black Virgin in the West has much in common symbolically with the other great goddess figures of the world. In her subterranean darkness she could be compared with the terrifying maw of death, Kali. The circle of wax dedicated to her at Moulins, Marsat, and elsewhere reminds us that in our end is our beginning and vice verso, of the uroboric prison of Maya and Karma, the measure of whose round-dance we must tread.[11]

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[7] Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex*, 51.
[8] Ibid., 262.
[9] Sally Cunneen, *In Search of Mary: The Woman and the Symbol* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996), 66.
[10] Ibid., 67.
[11] Ean Begg, *The Cult of the Black Virgin* (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), 131.

Begg is correct that Black Madonnas proliferated throughout Europe; several are associated with miracles and lie at the end of important pilgrimages—including Montpellier, Le Puy-en-Velay, Rocamadour, Chartres, Montserrat, and Soissons as well. Like Begg, Monique Scheer relates the image of the Black Virgin to the feminine image of god in previous cultures, recounting similar images in classical temples of Cybele in Sicily and Diana in Marseilles.[12] For Scheer, the blackness of the image may be accidental or even "perceived as black madonnas, a fact that is more closely connected with discourse on the images and the availability of interpretive schemes than with 'actual' blackness."[13] The important point to note, in this author's analysis, is the widespread veneration of the image of Mary.[14]

It is also correct that Mary might be considered in the same framework as other goddesses of antiquity. Judith Dupre places both Mary and Jesus in that context: "Like the ancient goddesses, Mary reestablishes the primordial unity between heaven and earth, as the first humans imagined it in their creation myths. Just as Gaia, earth, was impregnated by Ouranos, heaven, in pagan mythology, Jesus's incarnation was the result of a union between heaven and earth—the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary."[15]

The method of this work has been to begin each chapter by looking into the pages of the Bible to assess the inscribed roles of Jesus. Given the method, it is only fair to mention that Artemis rises up in direct conflict and economic competition with the spread of Christianity. In Acts 19, Paul resides in Ephesus and must contend with worshipers at one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, the Temple of Artemis. Eventually, locals are concerned "that the temple

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[12] Monique Scheer, "From Majesty to Mystery: Change in the Meanings of Black Madonnas from the Sixteenth to Nineteenth Centuries," *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 5 (December 2002), 1419. doi:10.1086/532852.

[13] Ibid., 1427.

[14] Ibid., 1440.

[15] Judith Dupre, *Full of Grace: Encountering Mary in Faith, Art, and Life* (New York: Random House, 2010), 26.

of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited; and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty" (Acts 19: 27). Tradespeople in the town worry that the new religion could cause them to lose their livelihoods; after all, the sale of religious ornaments and mementos to visitors to the shrine of Artemis are, even today, famous. Hundreds of thousands of the multi-breasted statues of Artemis bought from stalls in Ephesus made their way to every corner of the empire and Asia. Surely, Marian veneration and visitors to her shrines acted in much the same manner, and tradespeople from Monserrat to Montpellier had the same concerns about their businesses.

Although a discussion of Mary as goddess might be anthropologically appropriate, these connections do not have direct significance in considering the songs of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The average yeoman singing a song on the road between Burgos and Leon (or even the churlish cowherd hurrying back to the shoe) was not thinking about the relationship between his Holy Virgin and the goddess Kali of Hindu heritage. In his book *The White Goddess*, Robert Graves describes the archetypal goddess of culture and literature; he makes a lovely point that "I cannot think of any true poet from Homer onwards who has not independently recorded his experience of her. The test of a poet's vision, one might say, is the accuracy of his portrayal of the White Goddess and of the island over which she rules."[16] Yes, John, Nigel, Gautier, Berceo, and Alfonso X are all masterful poets, and they certainly were influenced by the unacknowledged collective unconscious. The archetypal role of Great Mother clearly falls to Mary in the absence of Isis, Astarte, or a host of others. Nevertheless, that Jungian perspective was not as important as the actual conscious adoration in popular culture that resulted in the growth of the cult of Mary through tales and songs.

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[16] Robert Graves, *The White Goddess: A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997), 20.

A second focus of this conclusion is to say a word about the nature of competition. Not to turn this into a Marxist treatise, but competition impelled the Marian tales into the minds of the populace and forward into time. Some sense of the competitive nature of the Middle Ages has been mentioned previously in this work. Not unlike modern vacation getaways, the many Marian shrines, fought hard to advertise their curative powers, their attractive locations, the available accommodations, and the relics and ancillary sites. One perfect example of a church that worked assiduously to remain relevant would be the Cathedral of Oviedo, San Salvador, Spain.

Chronology and human events are essential to understanding how competition shaped the church, pilgrimage, and shrine of Oviedo. The first cathedral was founded in 781 by King Fruela I of Asturias. By that time, the Moors had swept upwards through Spain leaving only the northernmost sliver of land remaining in Christian hands. Then, in the 840s, the bones of Saint James were said to have been found in northeast Galicia. It does not take much imagination to understand that the bones were happily and strategically located in just such a place (and immovable) so that the rest of Christendom would have to reconquer Spain in order to keep the relics safe. As the pilgrimage trail to Santiago sprang to life in the 900s, Oviedo became important indeed. On the coastline in windswept Asturias, Oviedo became a haven for pilgrims and a launching point for the *Reconquista*. Indeed, the pre-Romanesque shrine of Santa Maria del Naranco, built in 848, was the mustering point for the first great campaign against the Moors. The shrine is, today, designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO.

But the *Reconquista* was too successful for Oviedo's own good. As the Christian knights began to push the Moors towards central Spain, a new road, the *Camino Frances*, opened between Pamplona and Santiago de Compostela. This road, though still fraught with robbers and

natural barriers, was far less mountainous than the initial route along the rocky coastline and through Oviedo. This new road was the passage that Alfonso VI had chartered and had offered support to St. Dominic of the Pathways to help build. The *Camino* passed just north of the twin monasteries of Yuso and Suso, also a modern UNESCO World Heritage Sites. They began to circulate stories and to sing songs about the miracles that Mary wrought in their monasteries, and pilgrims were willing to take the short side-trip to the south to see for themselves. By the twelfth century, the *Liber Sancti Jacobi*, the *Codex Calixtinus*, offers a description of the medieval period's most popular pilgrimage route without mentioning Oviedo. The *Camino* has been recognized by UNESCO as being a World Heritage Site.

But Oviedo fought back. In order to be competitive, the cathedral, the kings of Asturias, and the townspeople began buying relics. In the ninth century, Alfonso II of Asturias had built a royal chapel, the Chapel of St. Michael, attached to the original cathedral. They began to fill up this space with relics; the chapel was renamed the *Camara Santa de Oviedo*, the Holy Chamber of Oviedo. The list of relics, including pieces of the True Cross, the Sudarium (a cloth purported to have been used to wrap Christ's wounded head prior to his being placed in the cave), Mary's milk, an stone-work box made by the disciples, and the *Arca Sacta*—a reliquary filled with the bones of many saints. Oviedo could once again compete; it became a pilgrimage site in its own right. Today, the Camara Santa is a World Heritage Site as designated by UNESCO.

Of course, it is not by accident that the UNESCO title had been mentioned several times here. Just as shrines, churches, and pilgrimage sites engaged in the civil battle over travelers' money and goods during the Middle Ages, so too are the modern locations similarly engaged. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) maintains its official website at whc.unesco.org. The 40th Session of the organization is due to meet in

Istanbul, Turkey in early July, 2016. Minutes of previous sessions are available as is a complete list of all World Heritage Sites along with travel information. They also accept donations through the website.

Medieval competition often made strange bedfellows. In the mid-eleventh century Abbot Hugh of Cluny was engaged in the most ambitious building program ever seen in Europe to that date. He wanted to spread the influence of Cluny through chapter houses across all borders—to unfold what Raoul Glaber had called the "white mantle of churches."[17] The collapse of a portion of the nave of Cluny II was seen as an opportunity by Hugh to build a new home church. Interestingly, at the same time in the mid-century Ferdinand I of Leon and Alfonso VI of Castile were soliciting the Pope and the powerful monastery of Cluny to support their expansion of the *Camino* and to declare a crusade against the Moors of Spain. Ferdinand and Alfonso had land and money to donate; Hugh had influence. Their competitive natures brought them together and the road was built, gains were made against the Moors, and Cluny built the largest church or building of any kind in Europe (to the mild chagrin of Pope Urban II in as much as Cluny was larger than any church in Rome).[18] Edwin Mullins aptly calls Cluny III "a gigantic architectural mountain," and its influence abroad was equally enormous.[19]

One more note concerning the nature of competition influenced the reign of Alfonso X. When Emperor Frederick II died in 1250, Alfonso perceived an opportunity to extend his dynastic reach. He began to press claims on the Holy Roman Empire; his eventual goal was his dream of "uniting the Iberian and Italian peninsulas under his leadership. By gaining dominance over the western Mediterranean in this way, his plan to recover North Africa as part of the

[17] Edwin Mullins, *Cluny: In Search of God's Lost Empire* (New York: BlueBridge, 2006), 121.
[18] Ibid., 117-119.
[19] Ibid., 118.

Visigothic legacy would be facilitated."[20] From 1250 until the election of Rudolf of Hapsburg on 1 October 1273, Alfonso spent money, resources, and influence trying to obtain control of the Empire.[21] He courted the ruler of Pisa, competed with Richard of Cornwall, sought the backing of Louis IX of France, attempted an alliance with Norway through marriage, and was even elected Holy Roman Emperor in 1257 in a vote that was later invalidated.[22]

What does Alfonso's ambition to be Holy Roman Emperor have to do with Marian tales? The margin illustrations from the pages of the *Codex Rico* manuscript of the *Cantigas* carry images of Alfonso's heraldry. Visible in the corners of every panel are the images of a lion and a castle—iconic representations of the crowns of Leon and Castile. Some of the illustrations, however, from the early 1260s carry the image of the black eagle of the Holy Roman Empire. It is clear that Alfonso hoped that his scholarship, his artistry, and his holy patron would influence some electors. Additionally, it is generally thought that his work in the 1250s on the *Siete Partidas* was also connected to the competition for the Imperial crown. A demonstration of his familiarity with "Roman and Canon law, theology and philosophy" and "the doctrinal character of the work" might have impressed voters who would have occasion to turn to the Emperor for legal ruling or justifications.[23] Apparently, though they are works of piety and devotion, even the *Songs of Holy Mary* and the *Siete Partidas* were not entirely exempted from the pressures of political ambition and competition.

The final level of competition involves the thesis and format of this work: the competition between Jesus and Mary for the attentions of Christians in popular culture. Early in the Christian era, the Christocentric nature of belief and practice was obvious. From the texts of

[20] O'Callaghan, *The Learned King: The Reign of Alfonso X of Castile* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 198.
[21] Ibid., 212.
[22] John Esten Keller, *Alfonso X, El Sabio* (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1967), 34-35.
[23] O'Callaghan, *The Learned King*, 36-37.

the New Testament to daily devotion to the decorations and early icons of Christian art, Jesus appeared at the heart of Christianity. His mother was a peripheral element. Although the *Protoevangelium* answered the early call for her backstory, almost nothing was said about her in terms of doctrine until the Theotokos controversy of the Council of Ephesus in 431. The earliest ecumenical council, the First Council of Nicaea in 325, had focused on functional elements—the baptism or reacceptance of heretics and Christians who had abandoned the faith for a time and then wanted to return. That council also responded to Arianism in beginning the long debate over the nature of Christ.

The seven ecumenical councils, from First Nicaea in 325 to Second Nicaea in 787, were all in one way or another devoted to determining who and what Jesus was. The "-isms" fell hard upon orthodox belief. The list is familiar to church historians: Arianism, Apollinarism, Sabellianism, Nestorianism, Origenism, and Monothelitism. The common element that traverses each is a question about the nature of Jesus. If Jesus is the "Son," then is he seconded to God "the Father"? Once Jesus assumes his human form, does his mind become human or does it remain divine? Does Jesus have dual natures, human and divine, that co-exist at the same time? Perhaps he has two natures, human and divine, but his will, or soul, always remains unified and divine? The answers that the Roman and Orthodox Churches continued to press involved a balanced Trinity co-equal in power and that Jesus had two natures and two wills—human and divine in both—but the divine was the greater.

While theologians wrangled with the esoterics of Christology, the common Christian was just hoping for help in times of need or aid for illness—some practical intervention of the divine. The cult of saints answered these needs, and the rising cult of Mary in particular responded at a time when theologians seemed to be pushing Jesus more and more towards the divine. Mary's

human hands could offer immediacy where Christ's divine profile seemed too remote to access. In the midst of this development, two influential social movements were poised to impel Mary foremost before her son or the other saints: the Bogomil, Waldensian, and Cathar heresies and the lay piety movement.

It does not seem prudent to introduce an entirely new area of investigation in a conclusion, but the heretical movements mentioned above thrived between 1000 and 1300 and link with the Marianist movement in as much as both depended on the rising tide of lay piety. In his study on heretic movements, Michael Frassetto writes that "around the year 1000, the old order of the Church was fading away, as new institutions and a new understanding of the Church and its place in the world was taking shape. The traditional conception of the saints as local spiritual protectors was giving way, being replaced by a notion of universal saints, such as Peter and Mary."[24] Frassetto follows the life of Cosmas the Presbyter in tracking Bogomil theology. That heretical leader rejected Christ's miracles and tended towards Docetism, the belief that Christ's body was not fully human but phantasmal. If Christ was not human, what need did they or he have of Mary: "the rejection of Mary is also a part of a broader repudiation of the prophets and saints venerated by the Orthodox Church."[25] Not to over-simplify the argument here, but the Waldensians similarly lashed out against church dogma: "The Poor of Lyons [as followers of Waldo were often called] alone were true disciples of Christ and thus they were the only ones who could legitimately" offer the sacraments.[26] The Bogomils and the Waldensians attacked the legitimacy of the priesthood as well as the dogma of the church. R. I. Moore connects the growth of heretical movement to the growth of literacy: "the enormous power represented by the

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[24] Michael Frassetto, *Heretic Liver: Medieval Heresy from Bogomil and the Cathars to Wyclif and Hus* (London: Profile Books, LTD, 2007), 25.
[25] Ibid., 18.
[26] Ibid., 72.

ability to read and write made literacy . . . not only an invaluable personal asset but an increasingly visible social marker."[27] Moore goes on to characterize that Waldensianism and Catharism spread through literacy.

> Nervousness of heresy tended to exaggerate its power and sophistication. The rustics who questioned the necessity of church marriage, or the capacity of their priest to absolve in other the sins of which he had so manifestly failed to purge himself, were quickly discovered on interrogation to have been infected by the emissaries of a hidden but universal sect which preached a sophisticated doctrine of theological dualism.[28]

Thus, theological dualism was at the center of the heretical movements.

The dualism lineage ran from the Bogomils to the Waldensians to the Cathars. This latter group, centered in northern Italy, southern France, and eastern Spain, believed that existence could be characterized by dualities. There existed the body and the soul, the seen and the unseen, the real and the illusionary. Most controversial, there is the God of good and the God of evil. Cathars rejected the idea that God in the form of Jesus could ever have come to the profane earth—a place of the body, the physical, and the evil. According to their belief system, heaven rested in the hands of the benevolent God, while the earth was entirely the domain of evil. What separated the Cathars from other heresies according to Sean Martin was their ability to organize: "what was different about this new heresy was that it was not merely anticlericalism of the sort propagated by Henry of Lausanne and all the motley assortment of libertarian preachers who had been such a colourful—if unpredictable—fixture of religious life during the twelfth century up to that point. These new heretics had organized properly."[29] When a cell of Cathars was

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[27] R. I. Moore, "Literacy and the Making of Heresy, c. 1000-c. 1150" in Heresy and Literacy, 1000-1530 edited by Peter Biller and Anne Hudson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 22-23.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Sean Martin, *The Cathars* (Edison, New Jersey: Chartwell Books, Inc., 2005), 47.

discovered in Cologne, it was found to have six bishops, dozens of priests, and hundreds of followers organized into worship groups complete with texts carrying Cathar theology.[30]

Note that these heretical groups were dependent on what all of the authors above characterized as rogue priests or wandering preachers. These itinerants often lacked any formal ordination, but often through their literate capacities they had formed non-dogmatic opinions and opted into a new religious habit. This sort of lay activity was exactly the direction that the Roman Catholic Church had hoped to avoid. Indeed, Pope Innocent III had expressed such concern about ungoverned lay movements that he had, in part, assembled the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 to consider this problem. The canons that the Fourth Lateran produced attempted to regularize the clergy. They labeled all heresy anathema; the council named the pope the unquestioned leader of the Church on earth. Furthermore, the council and the pope required that all preachers be ordained and appointed within proper episcopal structure—no more wandering preachers. And it ended the formation of all new "lay" orders that were not pre-authorized by the pope. This last canon was aimed squarely at the Beguines and similar lay groups of women who sought to formularize their own religious orders. Beguines were not nuns, but they promised to observe the rule of celibacy as long as they remained within the order. They did not live in monasteries, nor were they sequestered; they established their own houses, and, most concerning to the Catholic Church, each house was free to set its own rules. Finally, Beguines tended toward being mystics, and lay visions were very difficult to regulate; nevertheless, one of the canons of the Fourth Lateran actually attempts to do so by saying that mystics and their visions should be under the review of an assigned clergy member.[31]

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[30] Ibid., 47-48.

[31] It is interesting the roles that the Beguines have played in literature. Corporal Trim in Laurence Sterne's comic satire *The Life and Opinions of Tristran Shandy* describes them as "those kin of nuns, an' please your honour, of whish, your honour knows, there are a good many in Flanders which they let go loose." The randy Corporal

In essence, the first fifteen or so canons of the Fourth Lateran Council were directed at controlling lay expressions of religious autonomy. These attempts at control would prove to be too late. Indeed, the Marian songs themselves are lay expressions of religious autonomy. The theology of the songs was suspect and, as pointed out earlier, even condemned by some bishops. At the same time, the Catholic Church found itself in the position of defending Jesus's divinity again and again when confronting the various heretical movements. More and more the Church pushed Jesus toward heaven in a response to heretical doctrine even as a growing number of lay Christians were becoming literate and began reaching for their own expressions of belief. When they reached, they found Mary. Her songs moved from being academic collections in Latin poetics to becoming popularly sung vernacular compositions. Many, especially late in the thirteenth and early in the fourteenth centuries, had added stanza after stanza in the fashion of popular ballads. Consider too that pilgrimage itself is an expression of lay piety. Ordinary people walked away from their home dioceses and wandered into the broad world in order to discover a sense of religious self—or to receive indulgences—or just to vacation. The point is that they were outside of many formal controls of the church. It seems like perfect irony that Innocent III had called the Fourth Lateran Council to control internal lay piety, which was moving towards uncontrolled Marian veneration, while at the same time he had declared the Albigensian Crusade to stamp out an anti-Marian group of heretics. Innocent's general, Simon de Montfort, had defeated the Albigensian army of Toulouse just months before the Fourth Lateran convened.[32]

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describes the Beguine rubbing his wounded knee in a most erotic fashion. (Vol. 8, Chapters 20-22) Additionally, they appear in Charlotte Bronte's novel *Villette*. Finally, they are mentioned as objects of the Inquisition and under the eye of Bernardo Gui himself in Umberto Eco's novel *The Name of the Rose*. The Beguine's Court in Amsterdam is now a museum.

[32] Jonathan Sumption, *The Albigensian Crusade* (New York: Farber and Farber, 1978), 169-179.

Nevertheless, the winds of change were blowing from the East and from the West—from the lands of John Wycliffe and Jan Hus. Adoration of Mary reached its peak in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Kings like Fernando III and Alfonso X rode into battle carrying "Mary of the Battlefield" before them—not "Jesus of the Battlefield." Pilgrims sought out shrines across Europe where Mary had made her appearances, not where Jesus had appeared. They venerated statues of Mary that had been discovered hidden in caves or buried or concealed in ivy-covered grottos; in these Marian shrines the representations of Jesus are usually only those of a child in his mother's arms. Mary was omnipresent in people's lives; as pointed out at the beginning of each chapter here, Jesus was alive only in the text of the New Testament in languages that most people could not read. In the hundreds of *mariales*, Jesus almost never makes an appearance. Although Mary converses with characters, interposes herself between life and death, sickness and health, demons and damnation, Jesus remains silent. He speaks only twice in the 427 songs of the largest collection of the *Cantigas*—and then only to affirm his mother's decisions. In the songs and tales that twelfth- and thirteenth-century pilgrims preferred to sing and tell along their holy pathways, Mary was the center of attention.

But where the songs of Mary had been translated into the vernacular, could the vernacular Bible be far behind? Nicole R. Rice agrees that "during the final decades of the fourteenth century, lay spiritual aspirations presented clerical authors with a range of challenges and opportunities…. The first challenge was the danger of lay retreat from the world: the prospect that in desiring contemplative experience, readers might withdraw from social and sacramental responsibilities, beyond structures of priestly mediation."[33] Agreeing that translating many texts into the vernacular would have been declared heresy little more than a

[33] Nicole R. Rice, *Lay Piety and Religious Discipline in Middle English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 133.

hundred years before, Rice writes that many lived with "the hopeful possibility, near the end of the fourteenth century, of safely adapting texts and practices traditionally associated with the clergy for lay readers."[34]

Although Luther famously wrote that Christians come to the son through the mother, Marian veneration following the Reformation retreated from Protestant practice as did the habit of pilgrimage and the collection and veneration of relics. As radical reform movements seized control of areas, the English Civil War in the mid-seventeenth century and the ensuing Commonwealth comes to mind, saints' relics were destroyed and churches turned into stables for horses—most unfortunately for Old St. Paul's in London. Catholics were likewise conflicted concerning her place in their ongoing belief systems as well. Although the Jesuits, for example, were founded under the patronage of Madonna Della Strada, they are still, after all, the Society of Jesus. Nevertheless, Catholics continue to expand on her mythos; in the sixteenth century the *Hail Mary* was added to the catechism at the Council of Trent (1566). In the seventeenth century, the feast day honoring the Immaculate Heart of Mary began to be widely celebrated, though it was not regularized until 1805 by Pope Pius VII.

In the Protestant world, the pendulum of devotion has swung dramatically in favor of Jesus. Apparently, he has been released from the dogmatic confines of the celestial throne and enters the hearts and minds of the devoted in very intimate ways. In his 1855 hymn, Joseph M. Scriven characterizes Jesus as a personal acquaintance with the line, "What a friend we have in Jesus." More irreverently, the character of Cardinal Glick (played by the comedian George Carlin) in the 1999 film *Dogma* approaches the same thematic idea. The cardinal creates a new, more personal Catholic Jesus whom he names "Buddy Christ." The new Jesus winks at Christians and offers a hearty "thumbs-up." These examples are not intended to be frivolous;

[34] Ibid., 134.

rather, they are intended to represent the direction of popular culture in the expression of traditional religious ideas.

One final example of how the Christian world is divided over matters of devotion can be found on the Tepeyac hillside just outside of Mexico City. It was there in 1531 that a native Mexican peasant named Juan Diego first saw Our Lady of Guadalupe. Juan Diego's *tilma,* his cloak wrap, was miraculously decorated with an image of Mary. This relic and the pilgrimage site have become an inexorable part of Mexican culture. Certainly, as a validation of that culture, it was used in subsequent years to justify political and military revolt, especially from European colonial powers. Today, there is a saying in Mexico: "Que te lo crea Juan Diego." Clearly idiomatic, it roughly means "If you want to be believed, tell Juan Diego." Cynical in design, the phase is spoken whenever someone asserts something that seems completely unbelievable. The words sarcastically refute Juan Diego's vision by suggesting that he would believe anything. The phrase indicates that even in Mexico, belief in Juan Diego's apparition is not universally accepted.

In *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*, Jack Zipes writes that stories—even and especially those that are considered fiction or fairy tales—create a discourse that is a "dynamic part of the historical civilizing process, with each symbolic act viewed as an intervention in socialization in the public sphere." The stories that a society creates are ultimately "historical prescriptions, internalized, potent, explosive, and we acknowledge the power they hold over our lives by mystifying them."[35] The *mariales* and, specifically, *Las Cantigas de Santa Maria* perform the function, as outlined by Zipes in other chapters, of setting the standards for medieval European civilization. They establish norms of belief, and they offer an implied social self-

[35] Jack Zipes, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 11.

portrait. Additionally, they are subversive. Reaching beyond the traditional and textual role ascribed to the Virgin Mary, they subsume the assumedly more important Jesus, taking from him his power to heal, to defend, and to judge. These tales allowed medieval persons, whether walking a pilgrim trail or contemplating a holy relic, to connect with an image of Mary. The image, after all, proved more potent in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries than the unknown, actual Mary.

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