Writing Christina at St Albans:

A Literary History

by

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ABSTRACT

Christina of Markyate, a twelfth-century visionary and prioress, has been
frequently seen in scholarship as an outsider at her home institution of St Albans,
enduring solely under the protection of its abbot, Geoffrey, her spiritual friend and
confidant. This characterization appears incorrect when *The Life of Christina of
Markyate*, St Albans' record of Christina's personal history and religious career,
is viewed in its original literary environment. The high volume of extant material
from twelfth-century St Albans makes it possible to view Christina's depiction in
several original ways: as a textual construction (at least in part) influenced by
Bede's narratives of holy women in his widely read *Ecclesiastical History*; as a
portrayal of contemporary devotional prayer in the style of Anselm of Canterbury,
a major authority on devotional practices of the time; and as a prominent addition
to St Albans' own liturgy, the record of its celebrated saints and local patrons, as
an object of devotion herself. The strategy of Christina's endorsement in her *Life*
is also notably different from strategies on display in St Albans materials related
to Katherine of Alexandria, an important saint for Abbot Geoffrey, which further
suggests he was not her sole promoter at the abbey, if he was involved in the
process of her textual production at all. Finally, the historical fact that she was
employed as a patron of St Albans before none other than Pope Adrian IV, to
whom St Albans was appealing for numerous institutional benefits at the time,
shows that the prevailing opinion of Christina at the abbey can not have been
entirely negative. Placing the *Life* within the literary and cultural circumstances
of its production thus provides a fresh reading of Christina's institutional and

devotional roles at St Albans, medieval views of women's spirituality and its

place within the western European Christian tradition, and the compositional

process of a major work of medieval hagiographical literature.

DEDICATION

For Lister Matheson, my first advisor in medieval literature, who passed away as this project was coming to completion.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The Life of Christina of Markyate[1] describes the life history of its

eponymous subject, a prioress and holy woman who lived from c. 1098 to

sometime after 1156 and was associated with St Albans Abbey in Hertfordshire,

England. The *Vita* was discovered as an addition to the end of British Library,

MS Cotton Tiberius E.i, the first extant copy of John of Tynemouth's

Sanctilogium Angliae, in a hand different from the remainder of the manuscript's

contents.[2] This copy of the *Sanctilogium*, assembled at St Albans sometime in the

second quarter of the fourteenth century, post-dates the composition of the *Vita*

itself by several centuries; the original text of the *Vita* was certainly composed

during Christina's lifetime, as the author, based on several references in the text,

can be shown to have been a monk of St Albans who knew Christina personally

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[1] Hereafter referred to as the *Vita*; see below, pp. 16-17.

[2] Following Koopmans, "The Conclusion of Christina of Markyate's *Vita*," 696,
in contrast to Talbot, ed., *The Life of Christina of Markyate*, 1, who finds that the
entire manuscript, including the *Vita*, was written in a single hand. See also
Bollermann and Nederman, "King Stephen, the English Church, and a Female
Mystic," 435 n. 13. John of Tynemouth was a St Albans monk during the first
half of the fourteenth century, and the Tiberius manuscript of the *Sanctilogium* is
the earliest known copy to exist. Koopmans hypothesizes that the *Vita*, though in
a different hand, was added to this manuscript of the *Sanctilogium* not long after
its composition. John's connection to St Albans may explain his interest in the
Vita, if he is the one to have added it to the collection, and Talbot echoes earlier
theories that see the manuscript as a whole as having been designed specifically
for use at St Albans.

and speaks of her as if she was still alive.[3] The last year referenced in the *Vita*

before its text breaks off is 1139, and there is no mention of the death of Geoffrey,

abbot of St Albans from 1119-1146 and a major presence in the *Vita* as

Christina's spiritual friend and confidant. In addition, the copy of the *Vita*

preserved in the Tiberius manuscript of the *Sanctilogium* appears to be a summary

of the original version of the text, or at least an imperfect copy, as there is a

reference at one point to "the venerable Thomas, whom we have mentioned

above,"[4] although no such Thomas is mentioned in the text previously. The text

of the *Vita* is thus imperfect in many ways, and the single surviving copy as well

as its textual state has suggested to many modern readers that the work was not

seen to be of much importance during the Middle Ages, at St Albans or

elsewhere.

     In line with the manuscript context in which her life history survives,

Christina, as she is portrayed in the *Vita* itself, seems always to have been

destined to be an outsider. Even the beginning of the *Vita* describes a child who

was ridiculed when, after being told that God is everywhere, she spoke to him

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[3] Details of the state of the manuscript and the dating of the *Vita* itself are drawn largely from Talbot, ed., *The Life of Christina of Markyate*, 1-7, and Koopmans, "The Conclusion of Christina of Markyate's *Vita*," 663-64, 671. See also Koopmans, "Dining at Markyate with Lady Christina," 143-44 and *passim*.

[4] Talbot's translation. Talbot, ed., *The Life of Christina of Markyate*, 163: "vir venerabilis Thomas cuius supra meminimus." Subsequent references to the *Vita* and other primary sources will be cited parenthetically. Translations are my own unless otherwise noted. Talbot, ed., *The Life of Christina of Markyate*, 140, notes another point in which some text appears to have been omitted from this copy, though no reason for supposing so is specified.

openly while sitting on her bed, as if having a conversation with him (37). She grew, made a vow of virginity, and was subsequently forced to flee her home to avoid a forced marriage. Even as a religious woman, Christina lived a life in hiding, and when she was accepted as a spiritual advisor by Geoffrey, her relationship with the abbot was chastised as being too worldly and, possibly, sexual in nature. Following the death of Geoffrey, little is recorded in St Albans' history of Christina, and although her priory of Markyate persisted at least until the time of Innocent III's bull of enclosure,[5] it appears not to have survived the Middle Ages. If not for the *Vita* in the Tiberius manuscript, many today, including scholars of history and literature, might not be aware that she had ever existed.

It must be admitted that this story, a commonly adopted one in studies of Christina, is in many ways accurate. We have no evidence to prove that Christina's memory, aside from scattered references in St Albans chronicles, persisted more than a couple of decades after the time described in the *Vita*, and while the tropes of hagiographical writing caution us against taking the events described in the *Vita* too literally, the fact that it was written during her lifetime by a St Albans monk and possibly under Christina's own guidance[6] make it difficult to lay the charge of utter fabrication at the hagiographer's feet.[7]

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[5] Koopmans, "The Conclusion of Christina of Markyate's *Vita*," 697.

[6] See Koopmans, "Dining at Markyate with Lady Christina," 143-47.

[7] Some monks were aware of the dangers hagiographical tropes represented to accurate portrayals of saints. LeClercq, *The Love of Learning*, 164, relates one

However, the story told in contemporary scholarship displays a different fault: namely, it tends to take the events described in the *Vita* too literally, treating it as a history or biography instead of the hagiography that it presents itself as, and the hagiography that it was certainly viewed as by its first audiences (and thus, presumably, its author).[8] Due to the nature of the primary surviving document of her life, our picture of Christina walks a dangerous path between complete trust of a genre that does not share our interest in historical truth-claims and a historian's inherited scholarly skepticism of hagiography.

But even on its own the story as scholars have constructed it and passed it on seems to have some glaring inconsistencies. If Christina was so widely persecuted at St Albans as scholarship has implied, and as the *Vita* appears at first glance to suggest (173), then why was the *Vita* itself written at all? Why, moreover, has the St Albans Psalter – whether it was produced for Christina, as some have argued, or merely in her honor, or adapted for one of these purposes after an earlier construction – been so closely tied to her memory? Even if not produced for her at all, the interest of the Psalter in women's spirituality and in scenes from Christina's visionary experiences must be acknowledged as uncomfortably inconsistent with the inherited story of Christina as outsider. In

such complaint by a certain Letaldus: "there are some who, in their desire to exalt the saints, offend truth; as if falsehood could possibly contribute to the glory of saints who, had they lied, would never have attained to sanctity."

[8] See Fanous, "Christina of Markyate and the Double Crown," which discusses virgin and ascetic martyrdom tropes in the *Vita*. See also below, pp. 24-25, and Chapter 6, where I discuss the presentation in the *Gesta Abbatum* of the *Vita* as a saint's life.

addition to these problems, which could be explained even in ways that account for a general disapproval of Christina's role at St Albans, why did she continue to be used as a patron figure for the entire abbey in the church at large after the period described in the *Vita*, when she was apparently so roundly criticized?

This study will answer these questions by returning to the main document under concern – the *Vita* – and examining the cultural conditions under which it was composed in order to show that, far from being an outsider at the abbey, Christina – as presented in the *Vita* – was in fact central to St Albans' cultural scene. Contemporary scholars are fortunate to have a large body of manuscript materials from twelfth-century St Albans abbey through which to establish such a context, and equally fortunate to have the work of scholars such as Rodney Thomson, who has catalogued and described this material where it survives.[9] We are thus able to view the cultural scene of St Albans through a variety of lenses: its investment in its own history; its interest in contemporary devotional trends; and its propagation and dissemination of various saints' cults through liturgical and hagiographical means. All of these factors, I argue here, influenced the way Christina is portrayed in her *Vita* as well as St Albans' intended purpose for Christina's story. Because of the nature of this literary and spiritual influence, Christina, I argue throughout the chapters that follow, cannot be seen as an outsider protected only by the influence of Geoffrey at all, but rather emerges as a figure who was seen as central to St Albans' cultural activities and its sense of

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[9] *Manuscripts from St Albans Abbey 1066-1235*, 2 vols. Many descriptions of manuscripts discussed in this study depend upon Thomson's descriptions, particularly Verdun, Bibliothèque municipale MS 70, examined in Chapter 4.

itself as an abbey and an institution of English religious history. While Christina may well have had her detractors, the romanticized view of her as an outcast from the very abbey that promoted her religious career cannot, I believe, present an accurate picture of the reasons her *Vita* was composed, nor of how it was used by St Albans once it existed.

This version of the story of Christina's exclusion from St Albans' cultural life, as I have indicated in the notes to the above discussion, was given most detailed expression by Rachel Koopmans in her 2000 article "The Conclusion of Christina of Markyate's *Vita*." Even before this, however, scholars had tended to take the *Vita* at its word and portray Christina in similar terms. C. H. Talbot, in the introduction to his 1959 edition of the *Vita*, characterizes Christina's later religious career as struggling with resistance and bias. He tells us, for instance, "[a]fter Roger's death Christina's trials began once more, mainly owing to the pressure brought to bear on her by the bishop of Lincoln, and she was compelled not only to abandon her hermitage at Markyate, but also to seek shelter in various other places to avoid his attentions."[10] On its own this may seem unremarkable, and even borne out by the details of the *Vita*, but in the very next paragraph Talbot asserts, "[i]n the meantime her reputation as a person of great holiness had spread far and wide and she was visited by prelates…entreating her to become abbess of communities in which they were interested."[11] That this more favorable view of Christina is also born out by the *Vita* is a sign that its narrative is, if not

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[10] Talbot (ed.), *The Life of Christina of Markyate*, 27.

[11] Talbot (ed.), *The Life of Christina of Markyate*, 27.

directly falsifying information, then selectively highlighting certain facts in order to make the point needed at any given moment. Talbot continues to make numerous observations that indicate his wholesale acceptance of the narrative of the persecuted Christina. "In doing this [i.e., founding the priories of Markyate and Sopwell] he [Geoffrey] appears to have been willing to run counter to the wishes of his own community,"[12] he says, despite admitting that no evidence for such animosity in the case of the founding of Sopwell, and nothing extensive in the case of Markyate, can be discovered in the *Gesta Abbatum*, St Albans' local historical chronicle.[13] This is an interesting fact, since each entry in the *Gesta Abbatum*, detailing the deeds of a single abbot of St Albans, reserves a space for discussion of the abbot's faults and shortcomings (the section on Geoffrey's negligences includes the founding of Markyate, but says very little about actual complaints against the decision – see n. 13 below). Concerning Geoffrey and Christina's relationship, Talbot has the following tidbit to offer: "As time progressed he became more and more dependent on Christina for advice and direction…[i]t is small wonder that tongues began to wag and that rumors spread from mouth to mouth about the constant visits of the abbot to Markyate."[14] In

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[12] Talbot (ed.), *The Life of Christina of Markyate*, 29.

[13] *Gesta Abbatum*, I.95-96, 103 records discontent over the founding of Markyate; the latter reference only momentarily mentions the "murmurings" ("Conventus Sancti Albani...murmuraret") of the St Albans community over the foundation, while the former claims the "magnum gravamen et praejudicium ecclesiae" ("great trouble and disadvantage of the church") that resulted from Geoffrey's actions, but refers to no particular faults, as the *Gesta* compiler is wont to do elsewhere.

fact, this observation comes from only a single comment in the *Vita* (173) – no other moment hints at a sexual relationship between Geoffrey and Christina, and several passages confidently assert her virginity and its public recognition.

Talbot was not the only early critic to adopt this view of a marginalized Christina, and it can be assumed that his introduction to the *Vita* was instrumental in helping to propagate this interpretation of her biography. Thomas Renna in 1985, though not dwelling on the concept of the persecuted Christina, does conceive of the *Vita* in its entirety as a defense against Christina's critics.[15] While the *Vita* certainly spends the vast majority of its time (though not all of its time, it should be noted) encouraging its reader to accept and revere Christina for her virginity and her willingness to go to great lengths to preserve it, it does not seem to assume, as Renna posits, that its audience will be hostile to its more or less ready acceptance of Christina's holiness – indeed, Christina's detractors are described as "urged on by the envy of the devil" and, somewhat more benignly, as simply having "nothing better to say" (173)[16] about Christina than to spread rumors about her connection with the abbot. Even Ruth Mazo Karras, in her article of 1988, asserts that "Christina's love for Geoffrey remained chaste, but gossip about their relationship damaged her reputation. This indicates that their

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[14] Talbot (ed.), *The Life of Christina of Markyate*, 29.

[15] Renna, "Virginity in the *Life* of Christina of Markyate and Aelred of Rievaulx's *Rule*," 83.

[16] Talbot's Translation. "compulsi...demonis instimulantis urgente invidia," "aliter loqui nescientes."

relationship, to an outside observer, might resemble a carnal one."[17] While it must be admitted that Karras' point here is to discuss twelfth-century spiritual friendship's negotiation of erotic impulses and the frequent blurring of lines between friendship and eroticism, comments such as these indicate the ease with which scholars have adopted Talbot's version of the Christina story – a problem rooted in the seemingly historical concerns of the *Vita* author, though these have been debunked recently by Samuel Fanous.[18]

However, as mentioned above, Koopmans' 2000 article provides the most compelling image of Christina as a persecuted outsider on the margins of the St Albans community, and appears to have exercised a strong influence on Christina studies since it was published just over a decade ago. In it, Koopmans uses the evidence of the scant manuscript tradition of the *Vita* to argue that it was not, in fact, ever completed, and that the reasons for its abandonment can be found in the political and economic unrest characteristic of Geoffrey's reign as abbot as well as the reigns of his successors, Ralph (1146-1151) and Robert (1151-1166), Geoffrey's nephew. Koopmans' language concerning Christina's position is strikingly vivid, as in the following examples:

> …the more one considers the heavy blanket of silence over
> Christina's later life, death and possible cult, the more suspicious it
> appears. In Christina's case, I will argue, the silence is not the
> result of manuscript damage or misfortune. There was a deliberate
> blackout.

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[17] Karras, "Friendship and Love," 316.

[18] Fanous, "Christina of Markyate and the Double Crown," 53.

> The cover-up was so successful that Christina was forgotten at St Albans within a century or two of her death.

> [The *Vita*] was a text which had little or no impact on its contemporaries. Abandoned in mid-composition, forgotten and unread, it was neither the basis for a medieval cult nor an influence on later writers or readers.[19]

This, then, is the picture of Christina that Koopmans presents, and an image that seems to be echoed in later scholarship on Christina, the *Vita*, and her connection to the St Albans Psalter.[20] It must be admitted that Koopmans' interpretation cannot be considered altogether wrong, as the *Vita* and, more significantly, the *Gesta Abbatum* do present a few pieces of evidence of discontent surrounding Geoffrey's relationship to Christina, especially concerning his founding of Markyate, as discussed above. I argue, however, that while there is evidence to support Koopmans' view of Christina's position, the evidence is slight and must be somewhat exaggerated in order to see Christina in this way. Moreover, the evidence of other cultural ties between Christina and St Albans presented in the *Vita*, many of which are discussed in the present study, imply quite the opposite about views of her status there. If institutional records such as the *Gesta Abbatum* imply that Christina's path to prominence within the abbey may have been less than smooth at some points, the evidence of the *Vita* suggests that she was

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[19] Koopmans, "The Conclusion of Christina of Markyate's *Vita*," 665, 696, 698.

[20] Recent examples of scholarship supporting this view of Christina include Geddes, *The St Albans Psalter*, 11, and Bollermann and Nederman, "King Stephen, the English Church, and a Female Mystic," 436. On the other hand, Matthew, "The Incongruities of the St Albans Psalter," 399-400 has questioned the truth of a widespread persecution of Christina and notes her many employments in service of the abbey.

adopted wholeheartedly by the abbey, and that virtually everything about her

history was conceived of in terms as closely tied to the abbey's own culture as

possible, whether in terms of historical records, devotional practices, or liturgical

celebrations.[21]

But, if Koopmans' argument represents a distortion of Christina's actual

position within St Albans, one element of her essay represents an important

development in Christina studies. At the conclusion of her own article,

Koopmans states that "the incomplete *Vita*…provides a glimpse not only into the

early career of a medieval woman but also of the complex of forces governing the

production of a *Vita* in a twelfth-century religious community."[22] If I express

disagreement with Koopmans' adoption and expansion of earlier, romanticized

views of Christina and her *Vita*, it must be acknowledged that I am heavily

indebted to Koopmans' introduction of a more institutional perspective on the

origin, purpose, and influence of the *Vita*¸ as her article is one of the first to

examine Christina's *Vita* in the context of St Albans' cultural scene. Indeed, her

comparison of the account in the *Vita* to the historical records in the *Gesta*

Abbatum is virtually unprecedented in Christina studies, and it highlights a

singular opportunity offered by the case of Christina and St Albans. Almost

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[21] Watt, *Medieval Women's Writing*, has provided a more recent echo of Christina as a marginalized figure, emphasizing her connection with Geoffrey (21) and even asserting that "Christina's unmediated voice…is lost to us" (38). Watt also believes that "Christina's marginal status should not be overemphasized" (35), although even here Christina is still viewed as a powerful individual figure and not as a welcome addition to a monastic community.

[22] Koopmans, "The Conclusion of Christina of Markyate's *Vita*," 698.

nowhere else, and certainly not from many places in Christina's own time, does

such a complete record of a holy woman exist alongside such copious extant

manuscript materials and historical records that speak either to her situation

directly or to the situation surrounding the composition of her *Vita*. The

opportunity to study Christina *in situ*, as it were, is perhaps one of the most

fascinating aspects of scholarship on her *Vita*. Hence, the current study exploits

this situation in order to determine how the *Vita* may have been read by a member

of the St Albans community approaching it within the St Albans manuscript

holdings.

Before addressing the theoretical framework and content of the following

study, however, it will be worthwhile to address some points of terminology not

covered in the following chapters. Primary among these issues is what I imply

with the term "holy woman." The term is used widely in scholarship on medieval

literature and history to denote any number of women whose religious

experiences range between visionary, mystical, and prophetic tendencies (and

even some of these terms are used interchangeably, often due to the fact that few

women's religious experiences fit into only one of these categories). Moreover,

the women who undergo these experiences vary widely in respect to their living

situations (cloistered or not, urban or not, noble or not). In this study, however, I

use the term to indicate a woman whose history involves the following factors:

first, a woman who underwent some sort of visionary, mystical, prophetic, or

otherwise supernatural (in the strictest sense of the term) experience of a religious

(usually Christian) nature; second, a woman who was celebrated as a patron saint

or holy figure by some community (whether a community of which she was a part or not); and third, a woman whose communal celebration involves a textual element of some kind, whether something written by her own hand, or something written about her by another author (I exclude, however, basic liturgical texts used to celebrate saints in the typical ways – thus, not every woman saint in the liturgy is a holy woman).[23]

I also make a distinction here between early medieval and later medieval holy women. Figures such as Bede's Aedilthryda or Hilda – both nuns and visionaries in seventh-century England – rarely leave texts of their own of any sort behind, sometimes oddly so (especially in the case of Hilda, given her reputation for encouraging the spread of education and poetry as well as her attendance of religious synods, unusual for women of the time, even of Hilda's status). The influence of a few key figures on the continent during the twelfth century establishes new precedents for the narrative of the holy woman, however, most notably via the writings by and about Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179). In her case, the conjunction of an authorial presence with social and institutional agency was, indeed, revolutionary, even to the extent that few holy women in Europe could be said fully to live up to her example (Birgitta of Sweden might be one such candidate). Hildegard is nevertheless known to have inspired many

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[23] This definition, while similar to that presented by Peter Brown in "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man," differs in a few key ways, particularly in my emphasis on mystical experience and textual elements. Although Brown himself moved away from these aspects in his later work, I have preferred to include them because of the resulting greater emphasis on the social function of the holy figure, an aspect of central importance here. See also Cameron, "On Defining the Holy Man," 27-33.

women to follow her example, one of whom – Elisabeth of Schönau (1129-1165) – might provide the best contemporary analogue to the experience of Christina in her *Vita*. Elisabeth, while she composed many of her own texts, frequently spoke on behalf of and in the place of her community, usually at the urging (and, it has been suggested, at the discretion) of her brother, Ekbert.[24] Furthermore, to return to examples from England, the growth of texts concerning women such as Aedilthryda and Hilda – in Latin texts such as the *Liber Eliensis* and an anonymous twelfth-century poem on the life of Hilda[25] and in Anglo-Norman texts such as the *Vie Seint Audrée*[26] – during the twelfth century is another indication of the rise in (textual) status of holy women during the high Middle Ages (whereas for much of the Anglo-Saxon period, Bede remains the sole textual source of information on both women).

For her part, Christina fits my criteria of a holy woman, though in a way that relies almost exclusively on the evidence of the *Vita* – it is the only surviving text related to her life and religious career, and only there do we have any direct evidence for her mystical experiences. Her status as a patron of St Albans is attested elsewhere, but only in the briefest of references, and were it not for the

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[24] For Ekbert's role in recording and/or editing Elisabeth's works, see Anne Clark's introduction to *Elisabeth of Schönau: The Complete Works*, 7-20.

[25] Rigg, "A Latin Poem on St. Hilda and Whitby Abbey" prints an edition of the poem and a discussion of its contents, which are based not only on Bede but on several other sources. The poem also seems to contribute several pieces of information that are either unique contributions to, or embellishments on, Hilda's history.

[26] On Aedilthryda's multi-lingual medieval cult in England, see Wogan-Browne, "Rerouting the Dower," 27-35.

Vita, those references might very well go unremarked today. Nevertheless, the fact of the survival of the *Vita* seems to place Christina in the company of high and late medieval holy women, as it constitutes a lengthy piece that is almost exclusively devoted to depicting Christina and her life. By comparison, Aedilthryda and Hilda receive only a chapter each in Bede's *Historia*.[27] While it cannot be determined how, if it all, figures such as Hildegard and Elisabeth may have laid the groundwork for Christina of Markyate, it seems clear that the composition of the *Vita* should be ascribed to a contemporary, emerging attitude about what types of approach were warranted for the preservation and celebration of holy women.

The definition I am constructing here, however, raises a concern that should be addressed, particularly in the case of Christina: does such a textual celebration, written by someone other than the holy woman herself, amount to a celebration of the experiences and efforts of a holy woman, or rather an appropriation of her story for other purposes? The answer must surely be mixed, for neither could be accomplished without the other – institutional appropriation cannot occur without a woman subject being deemed worthy of such appropriation, and even were veneration of a holy woman not tied to a specific community's benefit, the veneration would presumably still have to occur under the aegis, and thus for the sake of, the Catholic church. Moreover, the balance (or lack thereof) between celebration and appropriation will vary in every case, and

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[27] The Old English *Juliana*, however, provides an example of early hagiography dedicated to a woman in England, so it is impossible to say definitively whether the *Vita* is based on early medieval precedents or anticipates later trends.

indeed this study as a whole will be concerned with examining to what extent these two actions – celebration and appropriation – can be said to have happened to Christina in the case of her *Vita*.

This issue leads to one final consideration, the response to which, I believe, implies a great deal about our attitude towards Christina: namely, what title do we give to the work which tells her life story? I have, to this point, referred to the text in question as the "*Vita*" without subsequent explanation, in spite of what appears to be a scholarly preference for *The Life of Christina of Markyate*, or, more simply, the *Life*. My reasons for not adopting Talbot's title lie in the fact that, for medieval readers, "*vita*" was not simply a common descriptor in titles of works devoted to the lives of saints, but an indicator of genre as well – to call such a work a "*life*" is an act of cultural as well as linguistic translation, and in the interests of precision I have decided not to settle for that here. On the other hand, the use of "*Vita*" to describe this text may, at first glance, appear to assume too much about its genre and its audience's response – if we have very little evidence to support the veneration of Christina outside of the *Vita* itself, can we, in fact, refer to it as a *vita*? I believe so, though not, perhaps, in the typical sense.[28] My primary reason for adopting the title of *Vita* is that this is how St Albans monks themselves referred to the text, in the few cases when they did so. In the *Gesta Abbatum*, the work is referred to, interestingly, as the "*Vita Sanctae Christinae*" (104) as well as the "*Liber de Vita Sua*" (105), though the latter may be merely a descriptor rather than a formal title. This assumption has guided my

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[28] See below, pp. 24-25, as well as Chapter 6.

preference for "*Vita Sanctae Christinae*" as the full title, though the variance between "*vita*" and "*liber*" should be kept in mind by any reader of the *Vita*. In addition to this, however, the clear use of Christina as a patron figure of St Albans or an example of local sanctity – as described in Chapters 2 and 6 – seems to tilt the choice in favor of "*Vita Sanctae Christinae*." Whatever else the *Vita* may be, and whatever its relation to Christina and her religious career, it is certainly a document written on behalf of, and in celebration of, a patron of St Albans abbey.

The ability to explore how, exactly, the anonymous author of the *Vita* composed this piece of self-promoting hagiography – and the difficulty in coming to definite conclusions regarding his working methodology – have to a large degree influenced the focus and theory behind this study. The order in which materials from St Albans are examined in the subsequent chapters emphasizes the circular nature of the material in question, especially the interchange between examining St Albans' employment of the *Vita* for its own political and institutional purposes and examining the textual bases they used to enable Christina and her *Vita* to serve such a purpose for the abbey. Thus, while the first and last chapters examine the *Vita* functioning in the political and liturgical life of St Albans, the chapters between them discuss ways in which Christina's representation in the *Vita* was constructed so as to be able to serve such a purpose.

Such a course will inevitably cause frequent preemptions, recalls, and cross references, but to my mind this entails a better representation of Christina's textual depiction than a more linear approach. Rarely is a subject introduced into the *Vita* only to be immediately explained and permanently discarded; on the

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contrary, the *Vita* is a ruminating, pensive text that continually revisits and

requestions its own premises.[29] An excellent example of this tendency is when

Christina, more than halfway through the *Vita* and just before her reception of the

mystical crown of virginity, begins to doubt whether or not she is worthy of the

official status of a virgin (127) – this despite the previous visit of Christ in the

form of a child who comforts her and miraculously removes all traces of her

sexual temptation (119). Earthly finality is not a virtue for the *Vita* author, and

here we might detect a trace of what Jean LeClercq referred to as the ultimate

purpose of monastic literature in the Middle Ages: "literature [was] continually

transcended and elevated in the striving to attain eternal life."[30] Christina's

ultimate goal, it must be remembered, is simply to preserve her virginity, not

necessarily to pursue a religious life (or, at least, not at first),[31] and this goal

remains a lifelong one for her – she is constantly being forced to defend herself

either from actual rape or from the threat of a reputed loss of her virginity, as in

the case of the brief mention of rumors surrounding her and Geoffrey's friendship

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[29] My classification of the *Vita* as a "pensive" text is based on Roland Barthes' use of the term at the end of *S/Z*, 216: "Pensive, the Marquise can think of many of the things that have happened or that will happen, but about which we shall never know anything: the infinite openness of the pensive (and this is precisely its structural function) removes this final lexia from any classification."

[30] LeClercq, *The Love of Learning*, 53. While such a universal purpose might be granted, and even allowed a certain general influence over western monasticism, I do not follow the extreme universality of LeClercq's claim – as much of this study is concerned with establishing, there was more at work in Christina's *Vita* than just a longing for heaven and divine union.

[31] Cf. Renna, "Virginity in the *Life* of Christina of Markyate and Aelred of Rievaulx's *Rule*," 86: "Christina is lauded less for her virginity than for her tenacity in preserving this condition."

(173). Hence, themes are (re)introduced and developed throughout the text – as
also in my examination of it here – all of which constantly adjust our perception
of Christina and her circumstances.

Furthermore, because this study deals with several common social and
literary trends, the issue of proof is a frequent problem in discussions of whether
or not a given text influenced the construction of the *Vita*. Unfortunately for us,
Christina's hagiography, for all its clear cultural connections, exists in something
of a vacuum – it is almost never referred to or commented on from the outside,
except for two brief references in the *Gesta Abbatum*, which tell us nothing about
the text except for suggesting a title and confirming that St Albans monks were,
and remained, aware of its existence. Thus, many times I have been compelled to
theorize evidence to establish connections between the *Vita* and other texts,
though the evidence that can be summoned is extensive and, I believe,
convincing. The most common situation encountered in the following chapters is
that a copy of a text can be shown to have existed at St Albans during the period
of the *Vita*'s composition, and St Albans monks can be shown to have been
working actively with the text as opposed to simply owning a copy and
(presumably) reading it.

Even in situations where the *Vita* appears to be employing genuine tropes,
however, I have felt compelled to question how, in the historical moment, those
tropes were conveyed to the author of the *Vita* – for there is a difference, to use
one example, in imitating Aedilthryda of Ely as a saint who employs virgin
martyr tropes and imitating Katherine of Alexandria as a virgin martyr. While

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both employ various tropes of virgin martyrdom, the differences between their two stories – especially between the specific versions of their stories known to have been accessible to St Albans readers in the twelfth century – and the contingencies of discourse allowed by those versions mean that asking such a question is not a meaningless exercise. Much like establishing where in a manuscript stemma different copies of a text belong and tracing what developments, changes, and omissions led to the state of an extant manuscript, establishing how a particular trope or genre was applied in the case of the *Vita* will tell us much about St Albans' views of Christina and how, exactly, her story was meant to differ from the material used to construct it. Therefore, a radical localism is the impetus behind this study; its goal is not to determine how the *Vita* was a product of the Gregorian Reforms, of Benedictine monasticism in general, or even of English Benedictine monasticism,[32] but rather how the *Vita* was a product of St Albans Abbey during the mid-twelfth century, in a way that would have changed, whether slightly or drastically, with any relocation to surrounding houses such as those at Durham or Bury-St Edmunds or any change in historical period. The resulting examination, I believe, presents a new interpretation of Christina and her *Vita*, as well as suggests some of the possibilities open to male clerics looking to promote and celebrate holy women in the Middle Ages.

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[32] Christina has, in any case, been studied in these contexts previously, such as in Todd, *Christina of Markyate's Biographer and His Work*; Hollis and Wogan-Browne, "St Albans and Women's Monasticism"; Haney, "The Saint Albans Psalter and the New Spiritual Ideals of the Twelfth Century"; and Karras, "Friendship and Love."

The second chapter of this study addresses the issues of celebration and institutional self-promotion directly by tackling the issue of how Christina's *Vita*, as a finished product of St Albans' scriptoriums, as well as other pieces of hagiography were used to promote St Albans' interests in the wider medieval Christian world – in Christina's case, particularly before Adrian IV in the course of St Albans' quest for a grant of institutional liberty from the first English bishop of Rome. This chapter also establishes, in its most extreme form, the method for the remainder of the study: reading Christina's *Vita* in its original context – not the context of a history necessarily composed of events or objects, but the context of the other works that appear to have been read by its author and that influenced the content and style of the *Vita*. Specifically, the chapter deals with a series of works that outline what I call a "*peregrinus* aesthetic," a narrative strategy, drawn from *peregrinus* liturgical plays, that involves the reader's pre-emptive recognition of holy figures. This recognition always comes with a social purpose, and sometimes also a spiritual purpose; such, I argue, was the goal behind the *Vita*, which clearly employs this strategy as well. While one of these works – the *Vie de Saint Alexis* – has frequently been connected to the *Vita* in Christina scholarship, it is read here in a way different from that of previous critics, who depend on the similarities between the beginnings of Christina's and Alexis' journeys to connect the two. Here, however, I compare the whole of their experiences, examining particularly Alexis' death and his parents' and spouse's subsequent discovery of his identity. In addition to the *peregrinus* liturgical plays already mentioned, the chapter also deals with St Albans hagiography

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surrounding Oswine, the Anglo-Saxon king discussed by Bede. Oswine's cult grew rapidly at St Albans in the twelfth century due to political conveniences, and his case provides important parallels for the likely purposes behind the writing of Christina's *Vita*.

The third chapter continues the focus on Bede by turning to the accounts in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* of two individual women and one community of nuns, all of whom Bede apparently viewed as holy women. Because of the extensive use (and revision) of Bede's *Historia* in the case of the Oswine hagiography from the second chapter, I argue, we can assume that the St Albans community, including the author of the *Vita*, would have been aware of the accounts of Aedilthryda, Hilda, and the nuns of Barking in Book Four of the *Historia*. A closer examination of these accounts shows that they bear numerous similarities to Christina's story as we have it, and I conclude from this that Christina's story was intended to be authorized by being patterned after what might be called "the story of the Anglo-Saxon holy woman," in so far as Bede's text constructs such a genre of narrative about women religious. This fits well with what we know of other twelfth-century hagiography in England, which is typically concerned with retelling and elaborating upon stories of woman saints from the early Christian period such as Katherine and Modwenna as well as Aedilthryda herself.

Christina was not, however, patterned solely after early medieval examples of holy women, and the following chapter examines a more contemporary parallel for her presentation in the *Vita*: the devotional prayers of

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Anselm and other authors whose works were attached to Anselm's name. Though no previous scholarship has connected Christina and Anselm, I argue for an explicit influence of Anselmian devotional materials on the *Vita*, based on the Anselmian and pseudo-Anselmian devotional prayers in Verdun, Bibliothèque municipale MS 70. Christina is frequently depicted in scenes of vivid and impassioned prayer, and while they have typically been passed over in Christina scholarship, I note the originality of these scenes in the context of twelfth-century English devotional practice and highlight specific prayers from the Verdun manuscript that appear to have served as inspirations for the prayers presented in the *Vita*. The connection between Christina's devotional habits and the devotional materials in the Verdun manuscript has numerous implications; patterning Christina after a respected *auctor* such as Anselm and allowing her to become an "author" of devotional prayers herself imply a genuine respect and celebration of Christina's status as a contemplative visionary and holy woman. Beyond this, however, several scenes in the *Vita* follow the pattern of what I term "sacerdotal prayers" in the Verdun manuscript, prayers that were meant to be spoken by priests before performing official duties such as the celebration of mass. Putting language from these prayers into Christina's mouth has the effect of elevating her – at least in her depiction in the *Vita* – to the level of the priesthood and constitutes an entirely different level of her authorization in the eyes of the St Albans community.

Nevertheless, the *Vita* author did not indiscriminately pattern Christina after every available exemplar he had, and the fifth chapter of this study examines

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one figure that Christina does not appear to have been patterned after, despite the possibility of doing so: Katherine of Alexandria. While it is difficult to establish that Katherine herself, as opposed to a different virgin martyr, is an exemplar in any given case, I argue that, due to the special focus of much Katherine material at St Albans, we can be reasonably certain that the *Vita* author saw no connection between Katherine and Christina. For St Albans in the twelfth century, Katherine was as much a legal authority as she was a virgin martyr, and in this chapter I trace legalistic themes and images in St Albans liturgical hymns and hagiography concerning Katherine. While possible points of similarity exist between Christina and Katherine's experiences, I argue that they are few enough and slight enough to cast significant doubt on Katherine's use as a model for Christina. Furthermore, since Katherine was clearly tied in St Albans' memory (as represented in the *Gesta Abbatum*) to Abbot Geoffrey, Christina's supposed protector and supporter, the absence of Katherine material and backgrounds from the *Vita* imply that Geoffrey may not have been very instrumental in the planning or composition of the *Vita*. This ties in with the emphasis in this study on Christina's *Vita* as a product of St Albans as a whole, for its own purposes, instead of the project of one person, albeit the abbot, against the express wishes of his entire community.

The sixth chapter returns to the emphasis of the second chapter by examining the realm of sanctity in which Christina's *Vita* was meant to be included: the local community of holy figures that St Albans frequently acquired and celebrated, but for which it did not seek to develop cults or to spread

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veneration to other religious communities. This "internalization" of local sanctity

can be seen in several places in St Albans culture, such as in its liturgical

calendars and litanies, which show a marked tendency to celebrate local saints

and local concerns. An emphasis on local sanctity is also on display, however, in

the three biographical sketches in the *Gesta Abbatum* of notable hermits and

recluses during Geoffrey's time: Roger, a celebrated hermit and contemplative as

well as Christina's mentor; Sigar, a hermit and contemplative closely associated

with Roger; and Christina herself. Indeed, extracts from the *Vita* itself form the

primary substance of these sketches,[33] and this use of the *Vita* establishes most

convincingly, I believe, the general impression of Christina in the eyes of the St

Albans community. It also explains, I argue, why her cult was not encouraged at

St Albans – rather than the result of a conspiratorial censoring of its own history,

St Albans simply never intended to establish a lasting cult for Christina, in the

same way that Roger and Sigar were never venerated in any lasting way. This

form of celebration, while unusual in conventional views of hagiographical

activity in the Middle Ages, is borne out by the evidence of the *Vita* and its uses

in the monastic context of St Albans and finally situates Christina in her original

place in the abbey's historical moment.

Following this chapter, a brief conclusion explains the chronological limits

of the study and sketches, in outline, further developments in St Albans

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[33] Koopmans, "The Conclusion of Christina of Markyate's *Vita*," 666-67, notes
that some of the *Gesta Abbatum* extracts draw upon material from a separate
version of the *Vita* than the Tiberius manuscript version, but does not specify that
every extract, except that dealing with the life of Sigar, comes solely from the
Vita.

hagiography in the late twelfth century. These developments help illustrate why Christina's memory did not prove to be a lasting one at St Albans, but also show ways in which her presence may have left more impressions on the abbey's cultural memory than is usually suspected.

Chapter 2

RECOGNIZING THE SACRED IN TWELFTH-CENTURY ST ALBANS
ABBEY

The narrative climax of Christina of Markyate's *Vita* presents an

eminently interpretable scene to its readers: a "certain pilgrim, quite unknown, but

of reverend mien" (183),[34] comes to Christina's priory. He celebrates a meal with

Christina and her sister Margaret, though he only tastes, rather than eats, the food.

He leaves, only to reappear mysteriously and suddenly in the midst of St Albans'

choir, watching over the surrounding monks with approval as they sing the

liturgical celebration of the Nativity. While the symbolism of these events

certainly does not escape many readers of Christina's *Vita*, few critics – with at

least one notable exception[35] – have focused on how the monks of St Albans may

have first viewed this scene. Christina's initial St Albans audience probably

would have understood this episode in terms of two key annual liturgical

celebrations carried out at St Albans: the *Officium Peregrinorum*, or *peregrinus*

play, of the Easter liturgy, and the performance of the *Vie de Saint Alexis* on July

17th, Alexis' feast day. Both focus on a dramatic tension that includes an

unrecognized holy figure – whether Christ or Alexis – who, in the course of the

play and the *Vie*, comes to be recognized and re-interpreted by the human

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[34] Talbot's translation. "Peregrinum quemdam. ignotum quidem. sed reverendi
admodum."

[35] Cartlidge, "The Unknown Pilgrim." Cartlidge, however, focuses on secular
romance – copies of which may or may not have been present at St Albans – as a
context for the "unknown pilgrim" motif, whereas this chapter emphasizes the
liturgical analogues for the theme in texts known to have been present at the
abbey.

participants of the drama. I argue here that this theme, so prominent in the liturgy

and hagiography of St Albans, and tied to Christina through the "unknown

pilgrim" scene of her *Vita* and the inclusion of Alexis and *peregrinus* material in

the St Albans Psalter (Hildesheim, Dombibliothek MS St Godehard 1), influenced

how Christina's story was conceived and how it is likely to have been used by the

abbey: namely, as an element of support in St Albans' quest for a long list of

privileges, including abbatial primacy, exemption from the episcopal authority of

Lincoln, archdeaconry status, and institutional liberty. The point Christina's

biographer is making is that although there are many possible ways to understand

her, Christina, for the material as well as spiritual benefit of St Albans, must be

interpreted in a particular way: as a holy woman, a virgin and ascetic martyr, and

most importantly, as a patron of St Albans guaranteed a place in heaven by the

side of no less a figure than Alban himself, the proto-martyr of England and

namesake of the abbey. This rhetorical strategy appears in several pieces of

liturgical and hagiographical texts circulated and produced at the abbey – aside

from Christina's own *Vita*, it is also displayed in the *peregrinus* play and the *Vie*

de Saint Alexis, already mentioned, but also in the hagiographical materials

concerning St Oswine that were produced so rapidly in and for Tynemouth priory,

a dependency of St Albans', throughout the twelfth century. Where the

peregrinus and Alexis texts serve to import this rhetorical strategy into St Albans'

cultural discourse, St Albans monks later come to employ this strategy themselves

in the Oswine and Christina materials, and viewing Christina's *Vita* in this context

establishes most explicitly her status, not as an outsider on the fringe of the St Albans community, but as a patron for St Albans in the wider Christian world.

1. The *Officium Peregrinorum*

Between the four texts involved here – the *peregrinus* play, the *Vie de Saint Alexis*, the *Vita Tertia* of Oswine, and Christina's *Vita* – the *peregrinus* play was probably the ultimate source of the strategies at work in the later texts related to Alexis, Oswine, and Christina, so I begin with this early piece of liturgical drama. Unfortunately, the precise way in which the St Albans *peregrinus* play was celebrated, including the exact text used, have not come down to us, but it is possible, for several reasons, to surmise what the text of the *peregrinus* play at St Albans probably looked like, what elements of the story it covered, and how it may have influenced the St Albans community to adopt its themes into the interpretation and composition of other works. Therefore, a reconstruction of the St Albans play is necessary before discussing what influence it could have had upon Christina's biography.

To begin with, the plot and execution of most *peregrinus* plays were fairly static throughout their history: the two pilgrims of Luke 24, on the road to Emmaus, are met by a third man, unknown to them, who turns out to be Christ, risen from the dead – a fact they realize when he celebrates mass with them and abruptly disappears. The only changes to this basic format took the form of additions to this outline – the pilgrims going to reveal their story to the apostles and a meeting with Mary Magdalene being two notable examples of later

additions.[36] Furthermore, the language of the plays was also fairly stable, being

based, in large part, upon liturgical antiphons from the Easter celebrations of

which the plays formed a section.[37] The problem in discussing the St Albans

peregrinus play, however, lies not only in the fact that its exact text does not

survive, but also in that its text appears to have been embellished and, thus, was

atypical among *peregrinus* plays.   This can be inferred from the only textual

witness we may have from the St Albans' version, which is preserved in the St

Albans Psalter. The words "see the sun, as evening approaches"[38] are included in

the textual description of the scene depicting two pilgrims and the pilgrim-Christ

on the road to Emmaus. These words are a clear echo of a common line of

peregrinus plays in which the pilgrims invite Christ into their home,[39] as well as

an observation not included in any other source for the scene, including the gospel

of Luke. Thus, many critics have cited this as evidence for the performance of a

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[36] The latter scene is included in the miniature cycle early in the St Albans Psalter
(Hildesheim, Dombibliothek MS St Godehard 1), p. 51, though neither are in the
Emmaus scenes in the Alexis quire, pp. 69-71. Thus, it is uncertain whether they
formed part of the St Albans play.

[37] Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, vol. 1, 466; Gardiner, *The
Pilgrimage of Desire*, 88; Kurvers, *Ad Faciendum Peregrinum*, 154-60.

[38] Hildesheim, Dombibliothek MS St Godehard 1, p. 69: "aspice solem quoniam
advesperascit." Note that the Saint Albans Psalter, in contrast to usual practice, is
not foliated but paginated. Translation by Patrick Edwards in Geddes, ed., *The St
Albans Psalter Project*.

[39] Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, vol. 1, 461: "Sol vergens ad
occasum suadet ut nostrum uelis hospicium" ("The sun, verging towards setting,
urges that you should wish for our hospitality"). Cf., however, an analogous line
in the *Carmina Burana*: "Mane nobiscum, Domine, quoniam advesperascit et
inclinata est iam dies" ("Stay with us, oh Lord, since evening approaches and the
day already declines"). Ibid., 464.

peregrinus play at St Albans.[40] None, however, have commented on the fact that this wording varies drastically from that in almost every other surviving *peregrinus* play, and would constitute an extensive rewriting of a traditional script, a practice that offers only one other parallel: the mid-twelfth century *peregrinus* play by Laurence of Durham, known as the *Rithmus*.[41] Nevertheless, the close echo of the *peregrinus* scene in Christina's *Vita* and the tripartite depiction of the Emmaus story in the St Albans Psalter (showing exactly the primary points of action in a typical *peregrinus* play) strongly suggest that some version of the play was performed at St Albans – possibly the work of Geoffrey, abbot of St Albans and Christina's spiritual confidant as well as the author of a drama focusing on the life of Katherine of Alexandria. Therefore, because of the uncertainty surrounding the nature of the St Albans version, I will restrict the discussion here to the prominent aspects of *peregrinus* plays that were most likely to be included in every version.

The *peregrinus* play establishes a clear example for the dramatic revelation of a divine reality. In fact, most *peregrinus* plays went further than merely implying an example and offered a specific call to extend this revelation of Christ throughout time and into the present day, offering an *exemplum* of interpretive practices. The hymn *Iesu, nostra redemptio*, part of the transition

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[40] See, for example, Geddes, *The St Albans Psalter*, 74, and Pächt, et al., *The St. Albans Psalter*, 74-78.

[41] Though Laurence of Durham's *Rithmus* may offer a parallel to the St Albans play, the Durham play also post-dates the St Albans version. See also Kurvers, *Ad Faciendum Peregrinum*, 185-87, for a discussion of possible evidence for performance of the *Rithmus* as part of the liturgy.

between the liturgy and the *peregrinus* play, provided a sort of prologue to nearly

all versions of the play (and those that did not open with it usually ended with it).

Typically it was sung through its fourth stanza, ending with the lines:

> May that piety compel you,
> that you might overcome our evils
> with mercy, and satisfied with our wish,
> may you satiate us with your appearance.[42]

These lines were included in all Norman versions of the play,[43] which are likely to

have been the inspiration for the St Albans version. Significantly, the subjunctive

mood of "may it compel you" implies a continued action, as F. C. Gardiner has

noted in his study of the play.[44] "May that piety compel you" – in other words,

may the audience still be moved by a revelation of your appearance; a revelation

which occurs, for instance, in the annual performance of the *peregrinus* drama. It

is worth pointing out, as well, that not only the "may it compel you" phrase but

the whole of this stanza of the hymn continues in the subjunctive, thus implying

not only continued compelling of Christ to overcome "our evils," but also that his

"appearance" [vultus] might be continually revealed to and recognized by the

audience as a means of its salvation. The exposure of divinity becomes a repeated

event, re-invoked and re-performed every year on behalf of the audience by the

players themselves – one of whom, of course, is always recognized as Christ by

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[42] Gardiner, *The Pilgrimage of Desire*, 95: "Ipsa te cogat pietas, / Ut mala nostra superes / Parcendo et voti compotes / Nos tuo vultu saties."

[43] Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, vol. 1, 461, 466, 471; Gardiner, *The Pilgrimage of Desire*, 89.

[44] Gardiner, *The Pilgrimage of Desire*, 95.

the audience. On top of this dramatic recognition, the part of Christ was usually

played by a priest, and so during the Eucharistic celebration in Emmaus, the use

of a host that was actually consecrated invoked, as Robert Kurvers has pointed

out, "a conscious association...between the sacramental celebration of the

Eucharist and the celebration of liturgical drama."[45] The performance of the

peregrinus piece not only involved the playing of Christ, but a literal conjuring of

his presence; a physical enactment of the continued revelation called for in the

Iesu, nostra redemptio hymn.

2. The *Vie de Saint Alexis*

This blurring of the lines between liturgy and drama – and between a

literal repetition and a liturgical recollection – is seen not only in Christina's *Vita*,

in the scene already mentioned, and the *peregrinus* plays, but also in the Old

French *Vie de Saint Alexis*, which was performed, like the *peregrinus* play, at St

Albans[46] and adopts this "*peregrinus* aesthetic" in its presentation of Alexis' own

strivings for a life of ascetic purity. Most discussions of the *Alexis* and its

presence in the St Albans Psalter, however, have tended to focus on Alexis' flight

from his marriage, perhaps inspired by the well-known illustration of this scene in

the Psalter: Morgan Powell has noted the theatrical impulse underlying these

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[45] Kurvers, *Ad Faciendum Peregrinum*, 144.

[46] Powell, "Making the Psalter," 313, notes the performance of the *Vie* to commemorate the dedicated of a chapel to St Alexis at St Albans between 1115 and 1119.

depictions of Alexis' flight,[47] and Janice Pinder has identified renunciation as

"[t]he main theme" of the text, as Alexis gives up "wealth, position, family,

marriage and even personal identity."[48] Though ascetic renunciation is

indisputably a major aspect of the *Vie*, I suggest that recognition and

misrecognition – usually of Alexis' identity – form another primary theme here,

and perhaps, in fact, the main theme.

Scenes in which Alexis is recognized (or not recognized) tend to provide

the principle dramatic thrusts of the poem, such as Alexis' arrival in Edessa and

the failure of his father's servants to recognize him in their search:

> The child has changed his soft flesh so much,
> His father's two servants did not recognize him;
> To the boy himself they have given alms. (116-18)[49]

This failure of recognition is, of course, one of many such failures that allow

Alexis to continue his life of self-imposed ascetic exile – a life that, without the

reader's omniscient perspective, is beyond the attention of the servants of

Eufemien, Alexis' father. Only through an acknowledgement of the drive behind

Alexis' impulses and the divine inspiration urging him on does his life appear

holy. Although characters throughout the poem constantly fail to see the truth

behind Alexis' poverty, sometimes they recognize him all too well, disturbing his

flight from royalty, wealth, and fame. The disclosure of Alexis' identity by the

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[47] Powell, "Making the Psalter," 313.

[48] Pinder, "Transformations of a Theme," 71.

[49] "Si at li emfes sa tendra carn mudede, / Nel reconurent li dui sergant sum pedre; / A lui medisme unt l'almosne dunethe."

icon (168) [imagine] of the Virgin Mary is one example of an excess of recognition: his identity revealed through divine intervention, Alexis is forced to flee from Edessa just as he fled from his family and marriage in Rome. When Alexis returns, his father, mother and his former bride all fail to recognize him, again allowing him to continue his ascetic lifestyle, although this time the parents place their son in a room under the stairs in their home, where Alexis proceeds to live for seventeen years.

Upon his death, Pope Innocent,[50] who has come seeking the "man of God" who fled Edessa, reveals Alexis' identity, reading the written account of his life's story that, even in death, Alexis had been reluctant to release from his grip. His parents, learning of their son's death, undergo an elaborate and lengthy display of grief which runs over one hundred and fifteen lines – nearly one fifth of the length of the entire poem. The pope, however, finally steps forth to "correct" their readings of Alexis, stating:

> What is the worth of this cry, this grief, or this noise?
> Oh you who mourn, it is a joy for our profit,
> For through this man we will have good aid;
> so we pray that he may save us from all evil. (502-05)[51]

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[50] In an ironic extension of the theme of re-presentation and circular histories surrounding the performances in the *peregrinus* plays and the *Alexis*, the pope referred to here is Innocent I (401-417), but the pope at the probable time of the poem's use in the St Albans Psalter was Innocent II (1130-1143). Whether or not the monks of St Albans made use of this confluence, however, is of course unknown.

[51] "Que valt cist crit, cist dols ne cesta noise? / Chi chi se doilet, a nostr'os est il goie, / Quar par cestui avrum boen adjutorie; / Si li preiuns que de tuz mals nos tolget."

This curt dismissal of the extreme grief of parents and a spouse may appear to a modern audience to be overly harsh, and has troubled more than one critic.[52] The poem itself seems at least marginally concerned to satisfy its audience's emotional reaction to the numerous displays of parental and spousal grief by assuring us that Alexis and his bride are together in heaven (606-610). However, focus on this point obscures what is, ostensibly at least, the main concern of the poem: correcting our spiritual "sight," our ability to recognize Alexis and his importance to the church's, and his audience's, continued salvation. This echoes the concern of the *peregrinus* plays to represent Christ's resurrection as a continuously manifesting miracle, as the *Alexis*-poet exhorts his audience for a similar miracle. God's initial call to the people of Edessa makes very clear the material benefits of finding Alexis:

> [the voice] spoke to them another commandment,
> That they should search for the man of God, who is in Rome,
> and they pray to him that [God] might not destroy the city
> and the people who live there might not perish:
> Those who heard the voice are put in great fear. (296-300)[53]

The pope carries this urgency into his discussions with Alexis' family; "we pray that he may save us from all evil," he intones after admonishing them, much as the poet concludes the *Vie* as a whole by proclaiming "so we pray that he might

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[52] For an extreme example, see Burrell, "(Dis)closure in *La Vie de Saint Alexis*," 12: "[Alexis'] failure to regard their humanity, to consider even for a moment their human and carnal pain...are less the trademarks of a suffering saint and more the devices of a spoilt and capricious adolescent."

[53] "Lur dist altra summunse, / Que l'ume Deu quergent, ki est an Rome, / Si [li] depreient que la citét ne fundet / Ne ne perissent la gent ki enz fregundent: / Ki l'un[t] oïd remainent en grant dute."

save us from all evil, / [that] in this age he might obtain for us peace and joy"

(622-23),[54] both points echoing, of course, the *Paternoster*. But it is also at the

end of the poem that the poet reminds us, once again, what keeps us from gaining

access to this "peace and joy" which the new saint promises us and how we might

obtain it: "alas," the *Alexis*-poet declares,

> we are so *blind*!
> Because of this we see that we are all crazy.
> We are so encumbered by our sins...
> Through this holy man we ought to be *re-enlightened*" (emphasis added;
> 616-20).[55]

As in the *peregrinus* plays, the devotional lesson here lies in our ability to

perceive and acknowledge the sacred, a capacity that can be enhanced, moreover,

by those who are already holy themselves. The *Vie* even directly involves the

pope and the rest of the institutional Church in an effort to ensure that Alexis

"[will] be a good champion" on behalf of everyone involved "before his Lord"

(600)[56] as his body is richly entombed in a marble sarcophagus encrusted with

gold and jewels – representing, perhaps, the benefits that the saint's followers can

expect to enjoy upon their recognition of the spiritual truth of his efforts, as the tie

between precious gems and salvation is a well-attested link throughout much of

medieval literature.

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[54] "Si li preiuns que de toz mals nos tolget, / En icest siecle nus acat pais e goie."

[55] "Las!...cum esmes avoglez! / Quer ço veduns que tuit sumes desvez. / De noz pechez sumes si ancumbrez / ...Par cest saint home doüssum ralumer."

[56] "Al son seignor il...seit boens plaidiz."

3. St Albans and Saint Oswine

The urge to recognize previously hidden examples of sanctity for the purposes of individual and communal benefits, both sacred and profane, was not merely a trope imported to St Albans via literature produced outside the abbey. The strategies on display in the *peregrinus* plays and the *Vie de Saint Alexis* were also employed by St Albans writers themselves, notably in the case of a series of hagiographic materials related to the Anglo-Saxon king Oswine (killed sometime around 651). These materials comprise, in part, three lives, numerous sermons, miracle collections, and rhymed liturgical texts,[57] all of which were produced for Tynemouth priory, a dependency of St Albans, throughout much of the twelfth century. Although much of the material related to Oswine produced for Tynemouth has not been edited, Paul Hayward has documented the case of St Oswine's emerging cult and its texts, most of which are based on Bede's account of the king in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* (III.14), showing how the growth of Oswine's cult was linked to a material need for St Albans to benefit financially and socially from the prestige of cults whose funds would benefit St Albans itself as well as its dependencies.

Throughout the twelfth century, St Albans and Durham were in conflict over the rights to Tynemouth Priory in Northumberland, which had been acquired

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[57] Hayward, "Sanctity and Lordship," 137-44 provides a complete listing and description of unpublished texts in Corpus Christi College MS 134, which contains the bulk of the Oswine materials known to have been composed at St Albans during the twelfth century.

by St Albans in 1090.[58] Although St Albans retained ownership over the priory, the cult of Oswine was relatively weak at the beginning of the century, and cults associated with Durham, particularly that of Cuthbert, threatened to undermine St Albans' authority at Tynemouth and divert its pilgrimage benefits to St Albans' northern rival. Because St Albans inherited the cult of Oswine when it took possession of Tynemouth, strengthening the cult provided St Albans a means of retaining its claim on the priory. As Hayward has stated, St Albans' "need to address this problem...accounts for the extraordinary intensity of its efforts to provide the obscure cult of Saint Oswine with hagiographical and liturgical texts."[59] This was even more urgent because the account of Oswine's life in Bede's *Historia* does not adequately establish Oswine's sanctity, only his innocence and worthiness as king.[60]

While the resulting *vitae* that set out to prove Oswine's sanctity do not obviously contradict Bede, they do embellish his account of Oswine's life in ways that serve as clear indications of St Albans' drive to authorize Oswine as a saint. Whereas Bede does not mention any spouse or children in Oswine's life, the *Vita Tertia* claims this as evidence for Oswine's virginity: "he displayed himself as another Joseph, both handsome in appearance and chaste among the Egyptian

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[58] Folz, "Trois Saint Rois «Souffre-Passion» en Angleterre," 41.

[59] Hayward, "Sanctity and Lordship," 120.

[60] Ibid., 121-28 for examples of differences between Bede and the *Vita Prima* of Oswine.

people" (3).[61] While this moment in particular reveals the authorization attempts

in Oswine's case by "discovering" (in the medieval sense of the Latin term

"inventio") Oswine as an exemplum of an earlier, scripturally documented type of

sanctity, and the *Vita Tertia* occasionally refers to Bede directly as a source for its

material (3, 5), it is the introduction of the *Vita Tertia* and its discussion of the

relationship between its own text and that of Bede's *Historia* where St Albans'

methodology and perspective on the work of the Oswine hagiographers is most

clearly expressed. Initially, the *Vita Tertia* author is disparaging of Bede's

contribution to Oswine's "hagiography": "for the Venerable Bede, briefly

narrating the life and death of St Oswine in his *History of the English*, did not

make evident either his life as is proper, or his death as is becoming" (1).[62] Soon

after this, however, the author explains his intentions in composing a work that, at

least in its description of Oswine's life, takes almost entirely after Bede: "indeed,

I confess that it is my intention to compose again what the Venerable Bede

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[61] "Alterum se Joseph, et decorus aspectu et, castus, inter cives Ægyptios exhibuit." The *Vita Tertia* is one of the few pieces of Oswine-related hagiography to be published in a modern edition, and although it cannot be taken to represent perfectly the corpus of Oswine material as a whole, Hayward, "Sanctity and Lordship," 121 asserts that, despite a composition period stretching from 1110 to 1190 for the Oswine material, there is nowhere evidence for any "major changes of strategy" on the part of its authors: "[i]ndeed, the authors do not seem to have had much of a strategy at all, other than to strengthen Oswine's sanctity in every way that the 'evidence' allowed." Note also that, although the material printed by Raine is sometimes described as three separate works, as in Folz, "Trois Saint Rois «Souffre-Passion» en Angleterre," 40 n. 24, in Raine's edition it runs as a single continuous work discussing Oswine's life, translation, and posthumous miracles.

[62] "Namque Venerabilis Beda in Anglorum hystoria vitam mortemque Sancti Oswini succincte perstringens, nec vitam ejus ut deceret, nec mortem ut oporteret, declaravit."

composed; I also carefully examine the appearance of apocryphal material from abroad, which is not found in Bede, and nevertheless is heard everywhere, as if, supported by the truth, it is bound up with historical narration" (1).[63] While the addition of oral material to a saint's life is not uncommon – indeed, Bede himself frequently relied on such material in his own work, as did many other medieval chroniclers – the *Vita Tertia* author's attitude concerning his own work contra Bede's, as displayed here, is extremely revealing. Even if Bede's work is somehow inadequate, the hagiographer resolves to re-disclose what Bede has already disclosed – in other words, he will say nothing that Bede himself never said, but will say it again in order to clarify what Bede said. Here the impulse underlying the *peregrinus* plays and the *Vie* of Alexis can be seen at work in a more explicitly textual arena. Whereas before it was a reinterpretation of a pilgrim or of a beggar that needed to be made for our spiritual benefit, here it is a reinterpretation of a text; the *Vita Tertia* hagiographer is teaching us how to read Bede, an attitude made clear by his inclusion of apocryphal material to clarify Bede's account. This was especially important in the establishment of Oswine's cult because, as several critics of the Oswine *vitae* have pointed out and as is noted above, nowhere in Bede's account is Oswine actually declared to be a saint.[64] Thus, in contrast to the *peregrinus* and Alexis material, which merely, in

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[63] "Fateor quippe praesumptionem esse, quod Venerabilis Beda texuit, retexere; speciem quoque apocriphi fore perpendo, quod apud Bedam non invenitur, et tamen passim auditur, quasi veritate subnixum narrationi hystoricae innectere."

[64] See Hayward, "Sanctity and Lordship," 107, and Folz, "Trois Saint Rois «Souffre-Passion» en Angleterre," 41. Chase, "*Beowulf*, Bede, and St. Oswine,"

the course of their respective texts, uncover sanctity already known to exist or a saint from outside the mainstream of St Albans devotional culture, here the method of recognition (or recomposition, to follow the *Vita Tertia* author's use of "retexere") is used to "compose" ("texere") a saint virtually unknown anywhere, one of great importance both to St Albans' devotional culture as well as to its financial status, via its connection to pilgrimage activity at Tynemouth.[65]

Following the relation of Oswine's martyrdom and invention, the remainder of the *Vita Tertia* is filled with a long list of posthumous miracles performed by the saint in order to further establish his sanctity. While some forty miracles of great variety are reported, several of these miracles serve to complete the equation of the recognition of sanctity already seen in the case of the *peregrinus* and Alexis materials: a monk, Simon of Huntingdon, is healed of a toothache and a tumor in his throat (35); Osbern, a priest at Tynemouth, is restored from sickness to health (32); a certain prior Ruelendus of Tynemouth is healed of an intolerable pain in his hands (36); a brother Arkillum is released from horrible visions in which the devil, "appearing as an Ethiopian" [simulans

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182, however, notes the markedly unrestrained tone in Bede's laments for Oswine's death. Although, as Chase points out, such an outpouring of emotion differs also from the way in which Bede discusses the deaths of other saints, including abbess Hilda and those killed in England under the persecutions of Diocletian. Such a unique moment in Bede could have served as a small moment of inspiration for the St Albans monks looking to find evidence of sanctity in Bede's account of Oswine.

[65] It should be noted that the *Vita Tertia* author may have adopted this strategy from Bede himself, who in the preface to the *Historia* claims to have based his writing about Cuthbert on both written and oral sources. However, in contrast to the *Vita Tertia* author, Bede never seems to use this method to promote previously unknown saints.

Æthiopem], terrifies him (29); and a woman, cured of "renum languore," or pain

in her loins, is miraculously visited by Oswine in a dream (31), all of which

happens, as the *Vita Tertia* is frequently at pains to remind us, "in that same

dwelling of the holy king and martyr Oswine, which is Tynemouth" (31).[66] The

message is clear: acceptance of the truth of Oswine's martyrdom, which the first

section of the *Vita Tertia* attempts to display by "compos[ing] again what the

Venerable Bede composed," leads to the same material benefits described by the

pope in the *Vie de Saint Alexis*, only this time the benefits will be enjoyed by St

Albans itself. The *Vita Tertia* hagiographer's methods can thus be seen to mix

well with those of the *peregrinus* and Alexis materials.

4. Christina of Markyate's *Vita*

In the case of Christina of Markyate's *Vita*, the focus on recognition of the

sacred and its attendant benefits continues, with Christina herself as the figure

needing the proper interpretation. Often throughout her *Vita*, she is depicted as

following the examples – one might even say performing the role – of traditional

holy men and women, examples that are usually, but not always, based on

scriptural episodes. One example of these depictions recalls the text of the *Vita*

Tertia of Oswine: when Christina flees from her fiancé Burthred after rebuking

his attempts to convince her to consent to a marriage, he tries to grab hold of her,

forcing her to stay, but Christina, "loosening [her mantle] from her neck, and, *in*

the manner of Joseph, leaving it in his hand...escaped quickly into her private

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[66] "In eadem Sancti Regis et Martyris Oswine mansione, hoc est Tynemudtha."

room" (emphasis added; 73).[67] The reader is thus led to recognize a spiritual

element in what otherwise could be passed over as merely a nimble escape.

Christina is understood in terms of many other figures as well – she is seen as

Cecilia, Abraham, and the Paula to Geoffrey's St Jerome[68] – but here I focus on

one particular episode: the scene, referred to at the outset of this chapter, in which

Christ, as the unknown pilgrim, comes to Christina's priory.

As the pilgrim comes to stay at Markyate, Christina and her sister,

Margaret, attend to the pilgrim's meal, but Christina is aware that the pilgrim is

not what he seems: "she felt a divine fervour which made her recognize him as

being far beyond ordinary men or man's deserts" (183).[69] Margaret focuses on

preparing the pilgrim's meal while Christina devotes her attention to their visitor,

and, as the narrator says, "if it had been possible to see Jesus sitting down you

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[67] Talbot's translation. "Caute solvens illud a collo suo, et exemplo Ioseph relinquens in manu eius; secessit in secretiorum cameram expedite." While the various *vitae* of Oswine do not emphasize virginity as a source of virtue and sanctity in the way that Christina's biographer does – in her case, it is virtually the sole quality establishing her sanctity – similarities in episodes like this one between the two hagiographies (including the references to Joseph as an exemplar) suggest a consistent rhetorical strategy in which saints like Oswine and Christina are celebrated as examples of English sanctity, but in such a way that they are included in the company of older, less "derivative" – and thus more authoritative – holy figures, such as Abraham, St Cecilia, and any number of Bede's saintly English priests.

[68] See Talbot, ed., *The Life of Christina of Markyate*, 51, 181, 175, respectively.

[69] Talbot's translation. "Illa senciens divinum aut homines aut hominum commune meritum ipsum sentit excedere."

would recognize another Mary and another Martha" (183).[70] This, of course,

refers to the scriptural scene well-known in the Middle Ages as a type of the

active and contemplative spiritual lives. In this context, Christina is depicted as

the Magdalen (who, by this point, had become conflated with the original Mary of

Bethany of the gospel account).[71] She apparently plays the role perfectly, since

the only condition for making the recognition is that the reader must acknowledge

the pilgrim as Christ – an acknowledgement described in the subjunctive by the

author ("if it had been possible...you would recognize"), but an acknowledgement

that we are led by the narrator to make, much as Christ is urged in the *peregrinus*

plays to continue revealing his presence to his audience. Thus, Christina is

included in the company of the sacred, as well as in biblical history, and it is

important to view this insistence on Christina's worthiness for this company

alongside the importance of locating and recognizing Alexis in his *Vie*: the people

of Rome, commanded by a heavenly voice "that they should search for the man of

God," go to the pope, who then prays to God, "beg[ging] him for his pity / that he

would reveal to them where they might be able to find [Alexis]" (297, 311-12).[72]

The ability to recognize and celebrate Alexis' sainthood is, for the people of

Rome, an issue of life and death, and for the pilgrims in the *peregrinus* plays,

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[70] Talbot's translation. "Ita ut aliam Mariam aliam videres et Martham, si Ihesum discumbentem, daretur conspicere."

[71] See Carrasco, "The Imagery of the Magdalen," 69, and Jansen, "Maria Magdalena: Apostolorum Apostola."

[72] "Que l'ume Deu quergent, ki est an Rome," "Ço li deprient, la sue pietét, / Que lur anseint ol poissent recovrer."

recognizing the pilgrim as Christ is even more – an issue of the continuation of

salvation history. Given the numerous parallels between Alexis, Oswine, and

Christina, could we not assume that recognizing her sanctity and virginity – which

so much of her *Vita* attempts to convince us to do – was an issue of singular

importance for St Albans, just as Alexis' rediscovery was important for Rome?

Christina's *Vita*, at least, appears to reciprocate preemptively this sort of

devotion in a passage worth quoting here at length:

> ...she preferred our monastery, both because the body of that
> celebrated martyr of Christ, Alban, rested there (whom she loved
> more than the other martyrs revered by her), and because Roger the
> hermit came from there and was there buried: also because, as you
> have learned by experience, she revered you more than all the
> pastors under Christ, and because there were in our community
> certain souls whom she cherished more than those of
> other monasteries, some of whom owed their monastic vocation to
> her. (127)[73]

This declaration of Christina's love for St Albans reveals the attending benefits of

recognizing Christina's holiness; if the reader recognizes and accepts her sanctity,

then her reverence for St Albans itself – her ability to recognize this monastery's

worth – comes along with it. Christina is not only a symbol to be read. She also

provides an exemplar for the monks of St Albans and anyone associated with it:

just as the reader learns to interpret Christina's sanctity and virginity as an

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[73] Talbot's translation. "Illa vero preelegit nostrum monasterium. tum quia
egregius athleta Christi Albanus in eo requiescit corporaliter. quem pre ceteris sibi
dilectis martiribus amabat specialiter. tum quia Rogerus heremita fuerat inde
monachus et in eo sepultus. tum quia te super omnes sub Christo pastores in terra
fortissime diligebat sicut [iugi] experimento probasti. tum quia in nostra
congregacione nonnulli erant quorum animas omnibus aliorum locorum cariores
habebat. de quibus aliquot ipsa fecerat in ea monachos." It is not immediately
clear to whom the "you" [te] of the passage refers; one possibility is discussed
below, p. 49.

indication of her divine status, the reader learns to adopt Christina's readings of St

Albans' preeminence, as indicated above. Thus, Christina's story is not merely a

collection of fascinating *miracula*; it comes with the social and institutional

purpose of confirming the status of St Albans by confirming the sanctity of a holy

woman who admired it. Like the *Vita Tertia* of Oswine, Christina's *Vita* serves to

validate a holy figure for the benefit of St Albans – and it is tempting to wonder if

this, after all, may not have been the point of the *Vita* in the first place.

Evidence for Christina's ability to provide material as well as spiritual

benefits for "her" abbey comes from an episode outside of her *Vita*, but recorded

in a scene from St Albans' own history, the *Gesta Abbatum*. In this scene, a

number of gifts sent to Pope Adrian in 1156, including mitres and a pair of

sandals made by Christina, feature prominently as part of St Albans' attempt to

court Adrian's favor towards a writ of *Incomprehensibilis*[74] for the abbey – a writ

he did, in fact, grant to the abbey shortly thereafter. The gifts from Christina to

the pope have been mentioned occasionally in essays on Christina as one of the

scarce pieces of evidence for her life after her *Vita*, but less frequently discussed

is the fact that among all the items offered to Adrian, he accepted only the mitres

and sandals made by Christina.[75] Though Rachel Koopmans has argued that

scarce pieces of evidence such as this indicate a "dead halt to Christina's story"

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[74] Named from its incipit, such a writ rendered the recipient abbey or other
institution free of financial, social, and spiritual obligations to any authority other
than the pope. For the text of the writ granted to St Albans, see Bolton and
Duggan, eds., *Adrian IV, the English Pope, 1154-1159*, 312-17.

[75] Bolton, "St Albans' Loyal Son," 103.

following the early 1140s, when the narrative of her *Vita* breaks off,[76] the nature

of this evidence implies the contrary. The continued use of Christina as a patron

of St Albans before none other than Pope Adrian, to whom St Albans was

applying for help in attaining its long-sought privileges, as well as Adrian's

acceptance only of the gifts associated with Christina, lead us to question whether

Christina may still have held a position of importance within St Albans' sense of

its own history. Adrian probably did not know Christina personally, for when he

applied for admission to St Albans, probably late in the reign of abbot Richard

(1097-1119), Christina was still living in seclusion with Roger the Hermit, and

her *Vita* records no meeting between her and the future pope. If Christina's, and

Markyate's, association with St Albans had been severed, as Koopmans argues,

Adrian may have identified with Christina as a "cast-off" from St Albans[77] – a

possibility echoed in the scene in the *Gesta Abbatum* of Adrian's refusal of most

of the gifts from St Albans: "I refuse to take your gifts for when I fled to your

monastery and requested the monastic habit, you refused to receive me" (125).[78]

Adrian does seem, however, to have looked on St Albans' requests warmly,

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[76] Koopmans, "The Conclusion of Christina of Markyate's *Vita*," 665.

[77] Markyate, it is worth pointing out, is not listed in the names of houses attendant on St Albans in the *Incomprehensibilis* writ of 1156.

[78] "Abnuo, recipere munera tua, quia me aliquando, ad alas religionis domus tuae confugientem, et habitum monasticum caritative postulantem, recipere renuisti." Translated in Bolton, "St Albans' Loyal Son," 103. Adrian's father, Robert de Camera, was also a monk at St Albans at this time, and it is difficult to discount the influence this may have had upon Adrian's decision to grant the writ of *incomprehensibilis*. See Egger, "The Canon Regular," 17-18.

promising that anything they requested would be granted.[79] Christina's gifts, it

appears, had the desired effect, or at least did not dissuade Adrian from granting

St Albans its privileges, and it is tempting to wonder whether Adrian may have

read the *Vita* author's assertion, already quoted above, that Christina cared for

Alban and St Albans more than all other monasteries and martyrs. Moreover, if

that were the case, could Adrian have been the addressee of that passage, which

claims that Christina "revered *you* more than all the pastors under Christ," and not

Geoffrey, as is so often assumed?[80]

Conclusion

Although this is, of course, not the place to pursue an inquiry into who,

exactly, was the addressee of Christina's *Vita* – if conclusive evidence one way or

the other could even be presented – the fact that Christina was employed as a

patron for St Albans before Adrian IV illustrates once again the preoccupation of

the abbey with hagiographical material as a means of guiding outside

interpretation of the sacred for its own benefit. Whomever the *Vita* was meant to

be addressed to, if the second person pronoun in the section quoted above can

indeed be taken to indicate a particular addressee, it was clearly meant to function

in the same capacity as the *Vita Tertia* of Oswine and in the same way as the

peregrinus play and Alexis' *Vie*: as a revelation of hidden sanctity that must be

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[79] Bolton, "St Albans' Loyal Son," 85.

[80] Watt, *Medieval Women's Writing*, 34, for example, assumes that "[t]his reader can only have been Geoffrey of St Albans himself, and this interjection confirms that the *Life*, like the St Albans Psalter, was commissioned by and possibly (in the first instance) for him," though without providing any indication as to why.

uncovered to serve the material, as well as spiritual, benefits of a particular

institution. St Albans authors used the discourse surrounding figures such as the

pilgrim-Christ in the *peregrinus* play and Alexis in his *Vie* to guide readers of

Oswine's and Christina's *vitae* in ways that seem, at best, slightly less than

impartial, and even, at times, fairly heavy-handed. In Oswine's case, this

involved no less than a virtual re-write of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, one of

the most important works of English religious history in circulation in the

England of Christina's time.[81] The words of the *Iesu, nostra redemptio* hymn

could well serve as an epigraph to Christina's own *Vita* and her context within

this realm of St Albans hagiography:

> May that piety compel you,
> that you might overcome our evils
> with mercy, and satisfied with our wish,
> may you satiate us with your appearance.

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[81] See Westgard, "Bede and the Continent," 210-13.

Chapter 3

CHRISTINA'S *VITA* AND THE HOLY WOMEN OF

BEDE'S *HISTORIA ECCLESIASTICA*

Whatever else might be said about Christina of Markyate and her *Vita*, the

contemporary reader and scholar of her life and texts related to it must eventually

tackle the most basic problem of her case: how was a document as remarkable and

unique as the *Vita* allowed to be created at all, and what gave its author(s) and/or

patron(s) the cultural justification to do so? Christina is usually seen, and rightly

so, as an isolated coincidence in a period largely inattentive to woman-authored

works and works otherwise associated with women's literary culture.[82] The

tendency to view Christina as a sort of outlier may be a side-effect of scholarly

trends that have tended to associate Christina with women such as Margery

Kempe and Julian of Norwich – and in such a grouping, Christina inevitably

remains the odd figure, isolated from other late medieval holy women in England

by a period of at least two hundred and fifty years. In this chapter, I argue that

turning our historical view in the other direction and reading Christina's *Vita*

through the lens of earlier texts can help us make sense of her as part of a history

of holy women in England – even, it could be said, a history of English holy

women. Focusing on the earlier side of medieval history allows us to see

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[82] See, for example, Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture*,
1-2, which discusses both popular conceptions of a lack of women's writing in
Anglo-Norman England, and also the comparative wealth of unacknowledged
women's writing in Anglo-Norman. Even granted the role that such literature
plays in women's history at this point, the uniqueness of Christina's *Vita*, as a
document of the life of a contemporary women written in Latin, cannot be
overemphasized.

Christina in the context of several Anglo-Norman lives of women saints, authored

by both men and women – e.g., Geoffrey of Burton's *vita* of St Modwenna and

Clemence of Barking's *Vie* of St Katherine of Alexandria – and a tradition of

Anglo-Saxon holy women, particularly Aedilthryda[83] as represented in Bede as

well as in the Old English *Homilies* of Ælfric of Eynsham, but also figures such as

Hilda of Whitby and the nuns of the first foundation of Barking Abbey.[84] The

work of Christine Fell in particular has done much to draw our attention to the

role that Anglo-Saxon women played in the history of religion and gender in

England,[85] but scholarship has yet to apply these advances to our understanding of

how women's roles and perspectives on those roles in the Anglo-Saxon world

remained influential in a post-conquest England that was often painstakingly

attentive to, if not always historically sensitive about, its use of the English past.

If Anglo-Saxon narrative sometimes offered saints and heroes of particular

interest to Anglo-Norman writers, it must be admitted that the concerns of the

latter often outweighed an interest in accurately recording the deeds of the former.

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[83] For the sake of convenience, as well as acknowledging the figures under discussion as products of Bede's narrative rather than purely historical figures, Latin versions of names will be used in this chapter, even in cases where Old English iterations are more popular – hence Aedilthryda instead of Æthelthryth, Hilda instead of Hild, etc.

[84] Barking abbey was traditionally founded in 666 by St Erkenwald, a fact noted – though without the date – by Bede (IV.6). The abbey was subsequently destroyed during an invasion of Danish Vikings in 870, and refounded during the tenth century. See MacGowan, "Barking Abbey," and "Saxon Timber Structures."

[85] See her essays on Aedilthryda ("St Æðelþrhyð: A Historical-Hagiographical Dichotomy Revisited") and Hilda ("Hild, Abbess of Streonæshalch"), discussed in further detail below.

The goal of this chapter, then, is to take up one of these texts in particular – Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* – and read Christina's *Vita* through its "lens"; that is, to use Bede as a historical context for Christina's own hagiography, as her earliest readers, and her hagiographer as well, probably would have done. Bede's *Historia* was never more widely circulated than in twelfth-century England,[86] and the manuscript of the *Historia* which was produced for Tynemouth abbey, a minor holding of St Albans, shows signs of functional use: though it is not filled with many marginal annotations (a practice uncommon among St Albans manuscripts of this period in any case), it does contain several notes indicating prominent subjects of interest to the St Albans reader, including sections detailing the lives of Oswine, Hilda, and others. Furthermore, the extensive use made of Bede's *Historia* by St Albans monks indicates the great use to which Bede's writings were put by the resident monks within the abbey's scriptoria.[87] How, we should then ask, does our experience of reading Christina's *Vita* change if Bede is taken as a precedent? What elements stand out, and what parts of Christina's *Vita* appear to be picking up on elements described in Bede's stories of holy women? In presenting this reading of the *Vita*, I do not propose that Christina's biographer was attempting to create a "new" English holy woman based explicitly on Bede's example. Rather, I want to highlight points of contact between Bede and Christina – ways in which Christina's *Vita* indicates that the traditions established by Bede had not been abandoned or forgotten, and ways in which Bede's writing

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[86] See Westgard, "Bede and the Continent," 210-13.

[87] Such as in the case of St Oswine, discussed previously in Chapter 2.

foreshadows the possibilities and limits of Christina's own situation in twelfth-century England. Aedilthryda, Hilda, and the nuns of Barking, as represented in Bede's text, collectively mirror several important aspects of Christina's own career, and show that, far from erupting onto the stage of history in a world openly hostile to the aspirations of a contemporary religious women, Christina and her hagiographer in fact had access to a tradition of women's religious history that more than likely informed both their perception of her as a virgin ascetic and their understanding of her as virgin and abbess.[88] While Bede's *Historia* posits a framework for the story of the Anglo-Saxon holy woman and her experiences, Christina's own history, as presented in her *Vita*, seems to conform to such a story to a degree that suggests that her hagiographer cannot have been ignorant of the earlier, Anglo-Saxon tradition – or that such a tradition was still current in Christina's own time and directly influenced her own expectations of what her life as a religious woman should look like.

In light of such a possibility, it will be worthwhile to examine briefly Anglo-Saxon and Old English references within the text of the *Vita* before examining parallels between Bede's *Historia* and Christina's *Vita*. Christina, for her part, shows numerous signs of moving within and being influenced by a culture that is still very Anglo-Saxon in its sense of identity. The most famous example of the persistence of Old English in Christina's time is Roger's epithet for her – "my Sunday daughter" (107) [myn sunendaege dohter] – which,

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[88] A fuller discussion of a twelfth-century parallel for Christina's experience in the *Vita* – the devotional piety of Latin prayers produced by Anselm of Canterbury and others – is presented in Chapter 4.

depending on the date of composition of Christina's *Vita*, may constitute one of the latest examples of writing in Old English from the post-conquest period – albeit an example of only three words. What it does prove, however, is that at least in this portion of her career, Christina lived in a community in which Old English, not Anglo-Norman, was the primary spoken language. The composition of Old English poems such as *Durham* (written no earlier than 1104, during Christina's lifetime, to commemorate the translation of Cuthbert's relics to that city) as well as the Peterborough manuscript of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (which continued its recordings until 1154, through a large part of Christina's life and almost to the end of extant documentation for her activities) serve as helpful reminders that literary composition in Old English was by no means concluded a century earlier in 1066. In the absence of any formal education (the *Vita* describes nothing of this sort), might Christina's earliest exposure to written materials, if she had any, have occurred via texts composed in Old English? Beyond the evidence of the spoken word, the names of the people who populate the hermitage with Christina – Alfwen (97), to begin with, but also Roger's companions Leofric and Acio (99) and Godescalc of Caddington and his wife (111), indicate how widespread Anglo-Saxon roots were among Christina's early residences following her flight from her family – a family which, the *Vita* informs us, came from a long line of "ancient and influential *English* nobles" (83; emphasis added).[89] Indeed, Roger himself is the only one at the hermitage to have a name of Norman origin (Christina's given name, of course, is Theodora, by

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[89] Talbot's translation. "Antiquis anglis nobilibus atque potentibus."

which she is still addressed at this time [109]), and aside from Roger's possible influence, there is nothing in the *Vita* to indicate that Christina had any encounter with either Anglo-Norman culture or language until after she was deprived of Roger's influence by his death in the early 1120s. Finally, there is also evidence that certain well-known Anglo-Saxon, or at least Germanic, traditions were still in practice in Christina's time. Early in her life, Christina's parents insist that "Christina, their eldest and most worthy daughter, should act as cup-bearer" (49)[90] at the annual Gild merchant festival. This recalls, of course, the role played by Wealtheow in *Beowulf* at the feast just prior to Beowulf's fight with Grendel:

> Then the lady of the Helmings went around,
> Gave precious cups to each host
> And youth, until the time came
> That she, the ring-adorned queen, great in spirit,
> Carried the mead cup to Beowulf. (620-24)[91]

There are, of course, several differences between the two episodes, but a detailed consideration of them will begin to show that the differences are not numerous. Christina and Wealtheow perform their roles both as a result of their high social standing and in the context of a gesture of hospitality. The only major difference seems to be that Christina performs her cup-bearing duties as part of the persecution she is suffering from her parents due to her refusal to marry, as opposed to the glorification of Wealtheow as a "ring-adorned queen."

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[90] Talbot's translation. "Sua maior natu atque dignior filia. idest Christina. gereret officium pincerne."

[91] "Ymbeode þa ides Helminga / Duguþe ond geogoþe dæl æghwylcne, / Sincfato sealed, oþ þæt sæl alamp / þæt hio Beowulfe, beaghroden cwen / Mode geþungen medoful ætbær."

Christina's own experiences, then, seem to be invested in Anglo-Saxon traditions and social circles – what, then, of her biographer's potential use of further instances of Anglo-Saxon culture via Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*? Book Four of Bede's history furnishes the most numerous, and most useful, examples of women's experiences in religious life, concerned as that book is with examples of religious and mystical experiences, on the part of both men and women – it culminates, for example, in a several-chapter-long description of Cuthbert's life and miraculous deeds. The fourth book of Bede's work will, therefore, be the primary focus of the discussion here,[92] and the place to begin should be with the clearest parallel to Christina's own experiences throughout Bede's *History*: Bede's narration of the life of Aedilthryda of Ely and his hymn in honor of her virginity.

In terms of cultural contexts, Aedilthryda offers one of the best points of contact for Christina. One of the most popular Anglo-Saxon saints, she was frequently cited by writers such as Aelfric as one of the preeminent English saints – along with Cuthbert and King Edmund – and as evidence of the sanctity of the English nation and the divine favor bestowed upon it.[93] Her popularity continued

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[92] It should be noted that two women in the *Historia* (III.8) mirror the story of the Anglo-Saxon holy woman presented in this chapter: Earcongota, the daughter of Earconberctus, King of Kent, and her aunt, Aedilburg. Though many of their experiences are echoed in the stories of Aedilthryda, Hilda, and the Barking nuns (such as the foretelling of one's own death, a miraculous revelation of a death, preserving virginity, becoming an abbess, and becoming involved in the cultural life of said abbey), the latters' stories are more detailed and thus better serve the purposes of this chapter.

[93] See Bauer, "Abbess Hilda of Whitby," 27.

into, and past, the twelfth century, as evidenced by the *Liber Eliensis* and *La vie seinte Audrée*, as well as the usual forms of material devotion (e.g., relics), as Virginia Blanton has illustrated in her examination of the popularity of Aedilthryda's cult throughout the Middle Ages.[94] Indeed, if there was any popular saint that Christina was likely to have been patterned after, or that she was likely to have envisioned herself in terms of, Aedilthryda almost certainly must have been the one. Aedilthryda's own struggles to preserve her virginity against the insistence of her husband and her long struggle to enter the monastic life could well have inspired Christina, at least to the extent that entering a monastic life was her plan, as opposed to simply avoiding marriage and remaining a virgin. Christina's biographers can hardly have failed to see and exploit the similarities between the two, though we should not take those similarities as a sign that Christina's story has been erased or covered over by Aedilthryda's. As Pauline Thompson has observed of Aedilthryda's case in light of stories of early Christian virgin martyrs:

> "[Aedilthryda] was actually living out her understanding of a saint's life. For this reason, even within the hagiographical part of the story, there may well be more of Bede the historian than we think. It is not hard to conceive of someone committed to the mortification of the flesh deciding to wear wool rather than linen next to the skin, taking infrequent baths and praying instead of sleeping, even though all of these are frequent hagiographical topoi."[95]

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[94] Blanton, *Signs of Devotion*, 131-41. Readers of Blanton should also consult the Gretsch's review for its caution against historical inaccuracies in Blanton's book.

[95] Thompson, "St Æthelthryth," 477.

Though there are no direct references to Aedilthryda and her experiences in Christina's *Vita*, we should not take this as a sign that Aedilthryda had no influence on her or on her story. St Albans was certainly one of the many communities in England celebrating her cult in the twelfth century, as shown by her inclusion in all the surviving liturgical calendars from the abbey at that time.[96]

Furthermore, in light of the similarity between Aedilthryda's and Christina's biographies, we can surely be allowed to suspect some connection between the two, or, if nothing else, influence from a common source. Even superficially, Aedilthryda's life, as narrated by Bede, bears several striking similarities to Christina's experiences; both are given in marriage against their will, and expend considerable energy to preserve their virginities – Christina against the efforts of her parents and Burthred as well as a host of ecclesiastical officials, Aedilthryda primarily against her husband, Egfrid – and both enter a monastery under the aegis of a male spiritual advisor. Unfortunately, in Aedilthryda's case, most narrations of her life include very little of her story after her entrance to her monastery, focusing instead on miraculous events surrounding her death, and since Christina's *Vita* breaks off while she is still living (and shows signs that she was still alive during its composition[97]), this primary point of

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[96] BL MSS Royal 2.A.x, Egerton 3721, Add. 81804, and Hildesheim, Dombibliothek MS St Godehard 1 (the St Albans Psalter) all list Aedilthryda's feast day on June 23rd. She is also included in the litany of virgin martyrs in the St Albans Psalter (though not in any other surviving twelfth-century St Albans litany).

[97] Koopmans, "Dining at Markyate with Lady Christina" discusses the implications of Christina's relationship with the author of the *Vita*.

interest for Aedilthryda's biographers can find no parallel in Christina's story. However, their earlier struggles certainly bear some examination.

Both faced not only social pressure to succumb to the wishes of their families and husbands, but to financial pressure as well. Bede tells us that "Egfrid [Aedilthryda's husband] had promised to give him [Wilfrid, Aedilthryda's spiritual advisor] estates and money if he could persuade the queen to consummate their marriage" (393).[98] This scene reminds Christina's readers, perhaps, of Autti's encounter with bishop Robert: called upon by Christina's family to arbitrate the situation – presumably in Christina's parents' favor – he surprises them by deciding that Christina has every right to refuse her marriage based on her prior vow of virginity. Autti's friends, however, counsel him afterwards: "If you had given [bishop Robert] money, you would certainly have won your case" (67).[99]

Christina and Aedilthryda also both face doubts about the validity of their virginities, given their circumstances in life: Aedilthryda because of her two marriages and Christina because of her relationship with Geoffrey. Bede himself seems to consider Aedilthryda's virginity after two marriages to be in need of some supporting documentation, as after he declares her to be in possession of the "glory of perfect virginity," he assures us that "[when] I asked Bishop Wilfrid of blessed memory whether this was true, because certain people doubted it, he told

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[98] Colgrave's and Mynors' translation. "Ecgfridua promiserit se ei terras ac pecunias multas esse donaturum, si reginae posset persuadere eius uti conubio."

[99] Talbot's translation. "Si obtulisses illi pecuniam. peregisses utique causam tuam."

me that he had the most perfect proof of her virginity" (391-93).[100] Though

Christina's virginity is not doubted initially – although when under interrogation

by one Fredebert, Christina is accused of "rejecting marriage with Burthred in

order to enter a more wealthy one" (63)[101] – her authenticity does come under

attack late in the narrative of her *Vita*. Some of her detractors, under the influence

of Satan, as the *Vita* informs us, "called her a dreamer…a seducer of souls…[and]

others, who could think of nothing better to say spread the rumour that she was

attracted to the abbot by earthly love" (173).[102] In Christina's case, the "proof" of

her virginity comes not, as for Aedilthryda, via direct testimony of a personal

acquaintance, but rather from a vision in which Christina herself provides the

assurance. Simon of Bermondsey, a figure basically sympathetic towards and

trusting of Christina, begs for divine reassurance that she is in fact what she

claims to be, and is granted a vision: "he saw, with surprise, Christina standing

near the altar. He was astonished at this for the virgin could not have come out of

the cell and it was hardly possible that any women would be allowed to approach

the altar…[t]hen she said: 'Thou mayest be sure that my flesh is free from

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[100] Colgrave's and Mynors' translation. "Perpetua tamen mansit uirginitatis integritate gloriosa...cum hoc an ita esset quibusdam uenisset in dubium, beatae memoriae Uilfrid episcopus referebat, dicens se testem integritatis eius esse certissimum." See also Thompson, "St Aethelthryth," 475.

[101] Talbot's translation. "Quia forsitan spretis Burhredi nupciis: diciores affectas."

[102] Talbot's translation. "Eam alii sompniatricem alii animorum translatricem...alii autem aliter loqui nescientes eidem abbati carnali devinctam amore summurmurabant."

corruption'. And when she had said this she vanished" (177).[103] Thus, although

Simon is granted a miraculous vision about Christina whereas Wilfrid relies, as

far as Bede tells us, only on his personal relationship with Aedilthryda, they both

afterwards act as witnesses for the "remarkable" facts of these women's

virginities.

One other common detail from their lives deserves to be pointed out.

Even though, according to Bede, Aedilthryda's preservation of her virginity is a

miraculous event, he gives a pointed defense of her story based on historical

precedent: "nor need we doubt that this which often happened in days gone by, as

we learn from trustworthy accounts, could happen in our time too through the

help of the Lord, who has promised to be with us even to the end of the age"

(393).[104] In other words, the divine origin of these miracles means that

recurrences are seen not as influences across time but as events that are, so to

speak, outside of time in the same way that Christ, as an omnipresent deity, is

directly involved in every generation; Aedilthryda's history is thus not affected by

early Christian virgin women, but rather effected by the life of the original virgin,

Mary. Bede forestalls the very question of historical influence here – Aedilthryda

is just as miraculous an occurrence as any early Christian virgin martyr purely by

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[103] Talbot's translation. "Obstupefactus in hoc: neque enim virgo cellam egredi.
sed nec ad altare illud mulier quelibet facile valebat admitti...Cum illa. Scias
inquid carnem meam omnis corrupcionis immunem. Et hiis dictis evanuit."

[104] Colgrave's and Mynors' translation. "Nec diffidendum est nostra etiam aetate
fieri potuisse, quod aeuo praecedente aliquoties factum fideles historiae narrant,
donante uno eodemque Domino, qui se nobiscum usque in finem saeculi manere
pollicetur."

virtue of the source of her inspiration. While Christina's biographer never openly

makes this sort of observation in her case, an interesting narrative trend – referred

to also in Chapter 2 of this study – tends to view Christina in terms of scriptural

and early Christian precedents. She is described as another Joseph (73), another

Paula (175),[105] an echo of Abraham, in his act of sacrificing Isaac (181), and, of

course, as another Mary of Bethany, the medieval type of the contemplative life

(183).[106] In a sense, Bede's phrase – "nor need we doubt that this which often

happened in days gone by...could happen in our time too" – could act as a

certification for Christina's story. Just as Aedilthryda's miraculous virginity

appears possible because of a continued divine influence, Christina's actions are

repeatedly interpreted in terms of early Christian predecessors, apparently as a

way of validating her experience. There is, we are led by Christina's biographer

to feel, no reason to doubt that such a thing could happen in twelfth-century

England, just as it did in seventh-century England.

Thus, based on the numerous similarities between their stories – their

personal struggles to preserve their virginity despite familial interference, doubts

about the validity of their virginities, and their grounding in early Christian

precedents – as well as the high level of popularity enjoyed by Aedilthryda at St

Albans and elsewhere during Christina's time, it is safe to assume that

Aedilthryda's story played either a direct or an indirect role in forming either

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[105] Referring to Jerome's correspondent and friend St Paula, with whom,
ironically, Jerome was also reputed to have had an amorous relationship.

[106] On the medieval conflation of Mary of Bethany and Mary Magdalen shown in
this scene, see above, Chapter 2, p. 45.

Christina's own experiences or her biographer's view of them. Indeed, given

Aedilthryda's popularity, it is difficult to imagine Christina's contemporaries not

making such a connection, if at no other time, then during the annual celebrations

on Aedilthryda's feast day on June 23rd. However, the narrative of Aedilthryda's

life (and death) is not the only material Bede gives us about Aedilthryda. While

she and Hilda are the only two women in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* to receive

something like full narrative accounts of their lives, in Aedilthryda's case, Bede

goes further, recording a hymn he wrote in honor of Aedilthryda and her virginity

– in effect, turning Aedilthryda into the first historical example of a culturally

produced holy woman in England.[107]

The hymn is notable for several reasons, its production of Aedilthryda

being only one of them. In addition to being the earliest example of the creation

of a holy woman, it is a useful collection of information (however slight) on early

Christian virgin women and virgin martyrs as well as a preservation and

adaptation of even earlier works collecting lore on virgin women. Surprisingly,

the hymn itself discusses Aedilthryda only briefly, and for his part, Bede

describes the work not as focused only upon Aedilthryda but as "a hymn *on the*

subject of virginity which I composed many years ago in elegiac metre *in honour*

of this queen and bride of Christ" (397; emphases added).[108] It starts out,

however, by placing itself in opposition to pagan works and culture – "[c]haste is

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[107] As defined and discussed in the introduction, pp. 12-14.

[108] Colgrave's and Mynors' translation. "hymnun uirginitatis...quem ante annos
plurimos in laudem ac praeconium eiusdem reginae ac sponsae...elegiaco metro
conposuimus."

my song, not wanton Helen's rape. / Leave lewdness to the lewd! Chaste is my

song" (399)[109] – and moves into a brief praise of the Virgin Mary as the

wellspring of all sacred (i.e., Christian) virginity. From that point the hymn

moves forward through several stanzas giving paired descriptions of virgin

martyrs, wherein each of the two virgins display some similar act or quality –

"Keen lions yield to Thecla's spirit high" (399)[110] as to Euphemia's, and "Cecily

laughs at the sword" (399),[111] as does Agnes. Once the poem arrives at its

account of Aedilthryda's story, however, it proclaims her to be more than simply

another virgin: "Nor lacks our age its Æthelthryth [i.e., Aedilthryda] as well; / Its

virgin wonderful nor lacks our age" (399),[112] Bede declares, echoing his earlier

statement on miracles such as Aedilthryda's occurring "in our time." Thus, once

more, Aedilthryda is a continuation of previous miraculous trends, as well a

unique event, to the extent that she is able to re-create past glories in Anglo-Saxon

England – she is both an originator and a traditionalist. Christina's

contemporaries, reading Bede's hymn in the twelfth century, cannot have failed to

see this, as with Bede's earlier statement, as a warrant for recognizing similar

miracles in their own time. This is made even more likely if they were aware of

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[109] Colgrave's and Mynors' translation. "Carmina casta mihi, fedae non raptus
Helenae; / luxus erit lubricis, carmina casta mihi."

[110] Colgrave's and Mynors' translation. "Kasta feras superat mentis pro culmine
Tecla."

[111] Colgrave's and Mynors' translation. "Cecilia infestos laeta ridet gladios."

[112] Colgrave's and Mynors' translation. "Nostra quoque egregia iam tempora
uirgo beauit; / Aedilthryda nitet nostra quoque egregia."

the literary background to the hymn itself. As Christine Fell has pointed out, the

virgins mentioned in Bede's hymn are all included in Venantius Fortunatus' own

De Virginitate, a much longer work in which he similarly praised a long train of

virgin women for their religious devotion. Aldhelm's *De Virginitate*, also a

possible source, does not include Euphemia, though it does include all the other

virgins that Bede names.[113] "Bede does not," Fell concludes,

> model his poem on Venantius Fortunatus' much longer one…but
> there are clear indications of influence. Venantius also moves from
> the Virgin Mary to Euphemia, Agatha, and Thecla. His reference to
> lilies, roses and violets may underlie Bede's *virgineos flores*. And as
> Bede follows the early virgin martyrs with one of his own choosing,
> so Venantius moves forward in time to include Radegund. As
> Venantius could put a woman of his own century into such a context
> so Bede could follow the precedent.[114]

Fell's last statement here – that Bede may have used Venantius's work as a

justification for producing his own – mirrors my argument, of course, regarding

the possible use of Bede's Aedilthryda material in Christina's hagiography. The

possibility of Christina's contemporaries recognizing Bede's adaptation and

updating of Venantius Fortunatus' material only makes such an argument all the

more plausible – a revision of Bede's hymn could even be imagined, naming

Christina, as opposed to Radegund or Aedilthryda, as the "virgin wonderful" who

enriches "our time." As already discussed, this may have been one of Christina's

hagiographer's explicit goals.

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[113] Fell, "St Æðelþrhyð: A Historical-Hagiographical Dichotomy Revisited," 21.

[114] Fell, "St Æðelþrhyð: A Historical-Hagiographical Dichotomy Revisited," 26.

Beyond this, the hymn also manages a feat for Aedilthryda that the present study attempts to perform in Christina's case – it gives her a historical context, a tradition to operate within, echo, and challenge. A statistical analysis of Bede's emphasis on holy women – some twenty are discussed throughout the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, with only two receiving full treatment[115] – would give quite a different picture of Bede's perspective on holy women than that given by this hymn. Here, Aedilthryda is not merely one of two exceptional cases in a national history spanning decades, but one in a long train of historical occurrences stretching back to the Virgin Mary herself.[116] Woman virgins, for Bede, do not seem to be in short supply in history, even if their presence in England is somewhat less than might be desired. It is interesting to view this imagined community in light of the apparent disappearance of women monastics from Anglo-Saxon England by the tenth century[117] – such a method of establishing a continuous history of women's religious experience may have been particularly attractive to English nuns whose own history had been interrupted by, among other events, the Viking invasions of the ninth century.

The concept of such a "community" for Aedilthryda, as presented in Bede's poem, leads us to considerations of other images of communities of women in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, beginning with the most famous of Bede's

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[115] Bauer, "Abbess Hilda of Whitby," 14.

[116] See Thompson, "St Æthelthryth," 475, 482, on the influence of Roman virgin martyr tropes on Bede's account of Aedilthryda.

[117] Foot, *Veiled Women*, I.35.

abbesses, Hilda of Whitby.[118] Whereas Aedilthryda achieves the office of abbess

as well, Bede spends almost no time covering her duties or achievements in this

capacity; his interest in her is focused *in toto* on her role as a persecuted virgin

and on her incorruptible body. Christina's *Vita*, however, moves past this portion

of her story and includes not only her struggles to maintain her own virginity but

also what she does with her own position as head of the community of Markyate

once her position is secured.[119] To this extent, the portions of the *Historia*

Ecclesiastica that cover Hilda's career may serve as an interesting parallel to

Christina's situation. The parallels here are less clear, however, than those

between Christina and Aedilthryda, indicating either that the biographer was

unwilling to stretch the life history of a subject who was still living, or that he

simply preferred not to use Hilda as a direct model for Christina's story.[120] In any

case, Aedilthryda certainly makes for a clearer parallel in so far as Christina is

constructed as (and, via her later detractors, remains) a persecuted virgin.

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[118] The following discussion of Hilda and her influence on the *Vita* should be compared with Watt, *Medieval Women's Writing*, 27-31.

[119] Fanous, "Christina of Markyate and the Double Crown" discusses these two halves of Christina's career and finds them to be characterized by, respectively, the narratives of the virgin martyr and the ascetic martyr.

[120] Hilda, it should also be noted, was included in only one twelfth-century St Albans liturgical calendar – that in the St Albans Psalter – whereas Aedilthryda was included in all four surviving calendars, possibly implying that the latter's story simply had more currency at St Albans. However, Bauer, "Abbess Hilda of Whitby," 27, notes that Hilda was only rarely located in post-conquest liturgies in England. Thus, it may be that we should take Hilda's presence within the St Albans Psalter calendar as a more significant fact than it might otherwise appear – if acknowledging Hilda at all was a rare event, including her in a liturgical calendar even once may indicate special interest in her story, as opposed to the somewhat "obligatory" inclusion of the more well-known Aedilthryda.

The portions of Hilda's life with which we will be concerned here cover the majority of her career: her call to the monastic life, her sponsorship of other monastics (bishops in Hilda's case, St Albans monks in Christina's case), and the role of dream visions and prophecies in their stories. Before covering these aspects of Hilda's career, however, we should acknowledge those experiences of Hilda's which find no clear parallel in Christina's *Vita*. Hilda is, perhaps most notably, never described as a virgin throughout Bede's writing, and the information that she entered the monastic life at age thirty-three may, as some scholars have suggested, indicate that she was married or widowed prior to her religious life.[121] Indeed, if this were the case, it may explain many of the puzzling aspects of Hilda's career, including why her cult never attained wide popularity and was eclipsed so soon after her death.[122] It might also explain why Hilda could have proved to be a less clear model for Christina: given the categories of sainthood in the litany – martyrs, confessors, and virgins – with the first two categories reserved for male figures, a "rehymenated" woman such as Hilda may not have fit easily into medieval conceptions of sainthood. In addition to this, Hilda is frequently depicted as an educator. Bede tells us that "[s]he compelled those under her direction to devote so much time to the study of the holy

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[121] Fell, "Hild, Abbess of Streonæshalch," 79-80.

[122] See Karkov, "Whitby, Jarrow and the Commemoration of Death in Northumbria."

Scriptures and so much time to the performance of good works" (409),[123] but

beyond this, special mention of the education of the future bishop Oftfor (409-11)

and of the poet Caedmon (419) are also made. Also in line with this, perhaps, is

Hilda's presence at two synods during her lifetime,[124] not to mention the

continued respect Bede accords her despite her alignment with factions to which

Bede was opposed (e.g., the Irish faction in the Easter calculation debate).

Christina, on the other hand, is never mentioned as an educator, and her only

connection with synods or councils involves her dissatisfaction with Geoffrey's

involvement with such meetings during King Stephen's reign, and even her desire

for Geoffrey not to attend one of these meetings (161-65). In fact, Geoffrey is

miraculously recalled from that second meeting – an odd example of divine

intervention in a hagiographical work, and a telling difference between Hilda's

and Christina's stories.

Even granted these differences between the two figures, however, the

similarities are much more numerous, and, as with Aedilthryda, it is difficult to

imagine a twelfth-century audience not being struck by the parallels between

Christina and Hilda. Indeed, the role of abbess was one of the most prominent

roles occupied by women in hagiographical literature of Christina's time[125] – it is

only due to the fact that so few examples of this type of literature survive from St

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[123] Colgrave's and Mynors' translation. "Tantum lectioni diuinarum scripturarum suos uacare subditos, tantum operibus iustitiae se exercere faciebat."

[124] For a discussion of Hilda's role in these synods, see Bauer, "Abbess Hilda of Whitby," 22-24.

[125] Wogan-Browne, "Queens, Virgins, and Mothers," 14.

Albans' library that Hilda's story is the most prominent example of this genre of

women's *vitae*. Two aspects of Hilda's and Christina's roles as abbesses stand

out for us here: their entry into the monastic life and role of abbess, and the role

that familial connections played in their monastic lives. Hilda and Christina, both

initially involved in some sort of monastic life, both inherit (or are given) their

positions from male clerics. Hilda, about to leave England to join her sister

Hereswith as a nun at Chelles, is recalled to Northumbria by none other than

bishop Aidan, who gives her "a hide of land on the north side of the River Wear,

where, for another year, she lived the monastic life with a small band of

companions" (407)[126] before moving on to become abbess of other communities,

including that of Whitby. Christina, for her part, is also already living the life of a

recluse, if not a nun, when Roger decides to leave his hermitage to her, thus

setting her up to inherit a ready-made religious community comprised of both

men and women. Christina actually requests to be made Roger's successor –

more precisely, she asks for "[Roger's hermitage] to dwell in" (111)[127] – during a

vision in which the Virgin Mary offers to grant Christina whatever she wants.

The Virgin agrees to Christina's request, and "[f]rom then on," the *Vita* reports,

"she knew that she would follow Roger as the tenant of that place" (111).[128] As

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[126] Colgrave's and Mynors' translation. "locum unius familiae ad septentrionalem plagam Uiuri fluminis, ubi aeque anno uno monachicam cum perpaucis sociis uitam agebat."

[127] Talbot's translation. "Utinam detur michi locus iste ad habitandum."

[128] Talbot's translation. "Ex hoc itaque cognovit quod ad incolatum habitaculi Rogero successura sit."

in other places, however, the *Vita* is not content to leave such things up to divine

intervention, and notes that "Roger was anxious both before God and men to

provide a patron and the necessities of life for his successor" (111),[129] eventually

settling on Archbishop Thurstan of York to guarantee Christina's position. The

importance of family connections, on the other hand, have already been

mentioned in Hilda's case – namely, going to join her sister in the community at

Chelles. Beyond this, however, Hilda seeks help from her kinsman, the king of

the East Angles, in beginning her religious life; she was also related to

Aedilthryda and may even have counseled her on entering a monastery – a fact

that shows, perhaps more than anything else, the deep familial ties running

through Anglo-Saxon monastic life. Christina, despite her early conflicts with her

family, particularly her parents, proves to be just as interested in preserving

family ties within the monastery as are many other Anglo-Saxon saints and

monastics. Many of her siblings enter monastic life with her, including her sister

Margaret (141ff), who plays such a prominent role in the "Unknown Pilgrim"

episode with Christina late in the *Vita* (183-85), and her brother Gregory, who is

introduced at the moment of his death at St Albans (157-61).[130] A moving

portrayal of Christina and Margaret's presence at his death and funeral underscore

how significant familial bonds remained for Christina: "[f]ull of hope, he breathed

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[129] Talbot's translation. "Rogerus apud Duem et homines in magna sollicitudiene
de providenda heredi sue tutela cum necessariorum ope."

[130] The fact that Gregory is introduced only at the moment of his death in fact
mirrors a common narrative strategy in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*; see below,
p. 74 ("Pope Gregory is an excellent…")

forth his last and, what he had most hoped for earlier in life, both his sisters, Christina and Margaret, were present at his burial" (161).[131] We should perhaps not be surprised that, later in their lives, Christina's parents – so hostile to her religious aspirations at the beginning of the *Vita* – take refuge with her at Markyate. In light of this, the tyrannical representation of her parents' resistance to her monastic vocation may, after all, owe more to the tropes of the virgin martyr story than her biographer leads us to suspect, though how much, exactly, this element of Christina's life became exploited for hagiographical purposes is hard to say. It is hard to imagine Christina herself making this re-interpretation, and the anonymous author of the *Vita*, familiar with the hagiographical material from Bede discussed here as well as other texts, may be the best candidate.

Beyond these literal family connections, however, the concept of maternity and maternal roles plays a part in Hilda's story, as Clare Lees and Gillian Overing have pointed out, and may have a role in Christina's story as well. In Hilda's case, Lees and Overing have drawn attention to the ways in which "Bede theorizes the maternal…as nurturing, which is paradoxically synonymous with Hild's active production of the clergy. But," they continue, "the power to translate reproduction into cultural production is denied in that Hild is alienated not only from her labor, but also from her gender and her clerical 'progeny',"[132] namely the well-known Anglo-Saxon poet Caedmon, whose story is presented

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[131] Talbot's translation. "In spe bona flatum reddidit ultimum. Quoque prius vivens admodum optaverat. Mortuo tumulando soror utraque Christina scilicet et Margareta presens astitit."

[132] Lees and Overing, "Birthing Bishops and Fathering Poets," 44.

separately from Hilda's and directly by Bede, as opposed to an achievement of Hilda's own. Thus, for Bede, Hilda is a "mother, founder, [and] educator," but not a "principle actor."[133] While it must be granted that Hilda's separation from Caedmon in Bede's narrative does have the effect of downplaying her role in his nurturing as poet, it is worth pointing out that Hilda, despite the fact that her death and life story (so to speak) is presented and concluded before Caedmon's story, is given an active role in Caedmon's own history. Bede states clearly that the abbess of Whitby brings Caedmon into the monastery, helps him become a monk, and makes available to him the best education her monastery can offer. This fits, in general, Bede's narrative pattern – he tends to introduce prominent characters, both men and women, at the moment of their death, looking back at important episodes of their lives after telling how they died, and even describing minor events in their lives later in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* when the narrative calls for such recollection. Pope Gregory is an excellent example of this phenomenon: though he is discussed in Book One of Bede's history, his death at the beginning of Book Two provides the impetus to recollect his life history, including the celebrated story of his discovery of the two Northumbrian boys on sale in a Roman slave market. He continues to play a role in Bede's narrative through the end of Book Two, however, when he is invoked as the person responsible for the conversion of King Edwin, who has himself just died in Bede's narrative. The death of a character in Bede's *Historia*, even when it does not serve to introduce characters, often represents simply an expansion of the role they play in the

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[133] Lees and Overing, "Birthing Bishops and Fathering Poets," 46.

overall narrative. I thus argue that Hilda's role in what Lees and Overing term

"cultural production" is more active than they allow – though it must be admitted

that in this sense, Hilda's value as "mother" – the term carries more weight here

than the typical honorific for an abbess, perhaps – lies primarily in her production

of *male* ecclesiastics and poets. In Christina's case, her maternal role in cultural

production is even broader than Hilda's. She is identified as responsible for the

careers of several St Albans monks – "there were in our community certain souls

whom she cherished more than those of other monasteries, some of whom owed

their monastic vocation to her" (127)[134] – but also for the spiritual welfare of at

least two women in her community at Markyate, to whom she attends after the

"Unknown Pilgrim" episode near the very end of the surviving portion of her

Vita.

      Finally, the role of dream visions and prophecies in both Hilda's and

Christina's careers should be mentioned.[135] Both women are announced as saintly

figures before their birth in the form of prophetic events revealed to their mothers

– Hilda's mother dreams of a glowing jewel that is so bright that "it filled all

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[134] Talbot's translation. "In nostra congregacione nonnulli erant quorum animas omnibus aliorum locorum cariores habebet. de quibus aliquot ipsa fecerat in ea monachos."

[135] As the inclusion of Martin of Tours' experience in the St Albans Psalter cycle of miniatures implies, this saint may have been a source of dream vision imagery in much Anglo-Norman, and even Anglo-Saxon, hagiography. On Martin's connection to the Anglo-Saxons, see Magennis, "Warrior Saints," 34; Olsen, "Beggars' Saint but No Beggar," 469-70; and Hewish, "Eastern Asceticism versus Western Monasticism," 123-27.

Britain with its gracious splendor" (411),[136] whereas Christina's mother is visited

in her waking life by a dove who rests in her lap for seven days, "allowing itself

to be stroked with her hands, showing no sign of uneasiness, and nestling

comfortably" (35).[137] Another prominent episode in Bede's narrative of Hilda's

life involves more dream visions, this time dreams of nuns in her own and other

monasteries revealing the abbess's death to the faithful either before or at the

moment of her passing (413-15). While Christina's death is not covered in the

Vita (the text breaks off before its completion, and she is several times shown to

have still been alive during the composition in the first place), she does receive an

assurance that her brother, during his sickness, is much loved by the Virgin Mary,

and that she is too. Christina, notably, interprets this information as proof that her

brother is about to die, and "that her own passing was not far off" (159).[138]

Especially in light of the interpretive leap that Christina seems to make here, it is

tempting to view Christina's interpretation in light of the Anglo-Saxon trope of

the foreknowledge of one's own, or another's, death.

　　As stated already, then, Hilda's story as presented by Bede bears several

similarities to Christina's, though possibly not enough to argue for a direct

influence. What it does show, however, is Christina's involvement in Anglo-

Saxon forms of hagiography, and the concern of twelfth-century clergy in

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[136] Colgrave's and Mynors' translation. "omnes Brittaniae fines illius gratia splendoris impleret."

[137] Talbot's translation. "Ut et attrectari manibus eius inevitabiliter plauderet. et libencius...gauderet."

[138] Talbot's translation. "Certa...nec de proprio transitu...eo citaciore diffidens."

England to authorize themselves and their spiritual foundations with reference to traditional Anglo-Saxon saints. Much as Aedilthryda was appropriated into the *Vie Seint Audrée* and the *Liber Eliensis*,[139] some material related to Hilda – whether from Bede or elsewhere – appears to have been appropriated by the St Albans monk in his construction of Christina along the lines of his idea of what a properly "English" abbess' career should have looked like.

In addition to Hilda's and Aedilthryda's roles, one further point of contact between Christina's *Vita* and Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* needs to be examined – namely, the role that communal visions played in the religious life of the first foundation of Barking Abbey. Much as the visions surrounding Hilda's death underscore the communal involvement in visionary experience – at least two nuns receive visions of Hilda's passing – Barking is filled with women and children that receive prophetic visions about deaths and other events within their community (*Historia* IV.7-10). This contrasts with later experiences of medieval women visionaries who undergo their experiences either in isolation – Julian of Norwich is an excellent example – or find their communities in (primarily continental) literary precedents, such as Margery Kempe. The idea of a community of women receiving visions together does, however, mesh well with the experiences of nuns described in the sister books of fourteenth-century

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[139] See, for example, Wogan-Browne, "Rerouting the Dower," 35-37 and 39-40 for discussions on the *Liber Eliensis* and *Vie Seint Audrée* authors' attentions and modifications to, respectively, the roles of Aedilthryda's husbands and the importance of her familial lineage.

German Dominican houses and the fifteenth-century *Devotio Moderna*.[140] The

style of visionary experience in these later communities, usually focusing around

bright lights and prophetic utterances, also bears a striking resemblance to the

experience of the Anglo-Saxon Barking Abbey nuns, as will be seen below. In

Christina's case, however, the closest and most easily available model for a

community of visionaries lies in Bede's description of the events and people at

seventh-century Barking.

Barking Abbey is unusual in the history of English monasteries in its

presentation of a wide community of women and children who undergo visionary

experiences. Indeed, the first visionary experience described in the four chapters

Bede devotes to the Barking nuns is a vision witnessed by several nuns at once.

The women of the abbey were unsure where to bury the bodies of sisters dying

from an encroaching plague, and

> [w]hile they were singing their accustomed praises to the Lord,
> suddenly a light appeared from heaven like a great sheet and *came
> upon them all*...[t]his resplendent light...rose from the place and
> moved to the south side of the monastery, that is, to the west of the
> oratory. There it remained for some time, covering that area until
> it was withdrawn from *their sight* into the heavenly heights. (357;
> emphases added)[141]

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[140] See Lewis, *By Women, For Women, About Women: The Sister-Books of
Fourteenth-Century Germany*, 95 for an example of visions similar to those about
Hilda under consideration here.

[141] Colgrave's and Mynors' translation. "Solitas Domino laudes decantarent, ecce
subito lux emissa caelitus, ueluti linteum magnum uenit super omnes...[i]pse
autem splendor emissae lucis...non multo post illo eleuatus de loco in meridianam
monasterii partem, hoc est ad occidentem oratorii, secessit, ibique aliquandiu
remoratus et ea loca operiens, sic uidentibus cunctis ad caeli se alta subduxit."

The repeated emphasis that the event was witnessed by several women at once underscores the fact that it is a revelation meant for a communal benefit, not merely the enlightening of a single woman (however much that woman might contribute to her abbey afterwards). Following this event, a young boy, stricken with the same plague attacking the sisters and near death, suddenly calls out to a certain "Edith," who is immediately stricken with the plague as well and, as Bede puts it, "follow[s] him who had called her to the kingdom of heaven" (359).[142] Miracles quickly pile on top of each other in the remaining portions of chapters eight through ten of Book Four of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*: a dying nun witnesses a bright light that fills the house, which she describes to her sisters; a certain Tortgyth sees a vision of a body wrapped in a sheet, again shining brightly, that foretells the death of abbess Ethelburga, and later has a conversation with the already deceased Ethelburga regarding Tortgyth's imminent death and entry into heaven; another nun dies miraculously after praying to be released from her "cruel tortures which she had endured so long" (361-63) [diutinis cruciabitis]; and, bringing the episode to a full circle, the tenth chapter of Book Four – the final one to discuss the inhabitants of Barking – describes a bright light habitually seen over another graveyard of Barking nuns, and a noblewoman who is cured of blindness after praying there. Thus, the competition between revelatory light and confining burial in Bede's description of the Barking nuns is brought to a close.

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[142] Colgrave's and Mynors' translation. "Et illum, qui se uocauit, ad regnum caeleste secuta est."

The concentration of miraculous events here is extreme – Donald Fry has counted fifty-one miracles in the whole of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, nine of which occur in the Barking chapters[143] – and the communal emphasis is unmistakable. Almost every vision is either witnessed by multiple people or involves one person having a vision about another person. Although each one was of course eventually shared in the form of its narrations in both Bede's work and the volume from which he claims to have taken these stories, all of the visions are also immediately communicated to other members of the abbey by the person or people who have them. The level of visionary experience and its role within daily communal life thus seems, based on Bede's account, to have played a large role in the nuns' daily lives, at least at this point in their history. They also provide a striking comparison for the situation in Christina's *Vita*, for, despite the understandable emphasis in scholarship on Christina and her own visionary experiences, it should be remembered that several people in the course of Christina's story have visionary experiences, usually related to questions about her marriage or her status as a virgin. This list includes Roger, who is noted for his "spirit of prophecy" [spiritu prophecie] as well as "his contemplations" (83) [contemplativis illius]; Burthred, briefly Christina's husband and a primary antagonist in the narrative, who receives a vision from the Virgin Mary urging him to release Christina from wedlock (109); Geoffrey, who has a vision of Christina at night while sitting awake (153); Simon of Bermondsey, who receives a vision of Christina (while celebrating mass, no less) assuring him that she is a

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[143] Fry, "Bede Fortunate in his Translator," 345.

virgin (177); and a group of Christina's nuns, who, along with their abbess,

witness a terrifying vision of a headless body accosting them one Sunday morning

at Markyate (179). As with the Barking miracles, these are all shared

immediately by the people undergoing the visionary experience, they all involve

revelations concerning other people in their immediate social circuit, and some,

such as the vision of the headless body, are witnessed by multiple women at once.

The subject matter is, of course, different, but the Barking miracles and the

Christina-associated visions share a rigorous consistancy – every vision at

Barking involves the deaths or burials of sisters of the house, and every vision in

Christina's *Vita* is related to her power and authority as a virgin and a *sponsa*

Christi.[144] Bede's account of Tortgyth's conversation with the already-sainted

Ethelburga may also be viewed in light of Christina's childhood conversations

with Christ – just as Tortgyth carries on an otherwise apparently normal

conversation with someone who happens not to be present, Christina "used to talk

to Him on her bed at night just as if she were speaking to a man she could see;

and this she did with a loud clear voice, so that all who were resting in the same

house could hear and understand her" (37).[145] In a reversal from the communal

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[144] See Fry, "Bede Fortunate in his Translator," esp. 346, which outlines the symbolic interplay of images of bright lights and burials which inform the Barking visions (cf. the light in Hilda's mother's dream before Hilda's birth, and the prominence of dream visions at her death). No such consistency exists in the immediate appearance of visions in Christina's *Vita*, even if their ultimate subject – Christina's virginity – remains consistent.

[145] Talbot's translation. "In noctibus et lectulo suo loquebatur ad ipsum quasi ad hominem quem videret. et hoc alta voce et clara. ut audiretur et intelligeretur ab hiis qui in eadem domo iacebant."

expectations of Barking – and also, apparently, Markyate – Christina is made fun of by those at her family's house and as a result ceases what we might call her monologues with Christ. Much as in Hilda's case, it is difficult to connect any particular incident in the Barking episode of Bede's *Historia* with Christina's *Vita*, but the similarities between them and, of course, St Albans' monks' great familiarity with Bede's text (as discussed in Chapter 2) are sufficient to indicate that they may have been informing Christina's *Vita* in a general sense – or at least directing her hagiographer as to which incidents from Christina's personal history deserved or needed to be recorded in her *Vita*.

Having thus reviewed these three cases – Aedilthryda of Ely, Hilda of Whitby, and the nuns of Barking Abbey – from Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, a text elsewhere so popular with twelfth-century St Albans readers and authors, as well as several parallel episodes from Christina's *Vita*, what can be made of the resulting similarities? In a sense, some of the parallels between Christina's and Bede's narratives must be acknowledged to be part of the familiar tropes of women's hagiography. Christina and Aedilthryda were certainly not the only holy women known in England whose life stories conform to the persecuted virgin/virgin martyr narrative, as even works like Bede's hymn on Aedilthryda's virginity show us. On the other hand, many other works that we might otherwise point to as precursors for Christina's story are not known to have been present in St Albans' library holdings when Christina's *Vita* was being composed,[146] and

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[146] One such possible text, however, the *Passio Sancte Katerine*, seems to have held no such influence over Christina's *Vita*, as shown in Chapter 5.

even if the elements in Bede's *History* represent hagiographical tropes, the fact

that they could have been delivered to Christina's hagiographer via Bede as

opposed to some other way must certainly be significant. It would represent a

major instance of continuity between Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman religious

cultures, a possibility that is still not widely discussed in contemporary

scholarship.[147] Given the arguments in Chapter 2 of this study, it would also

constitute an extension of St Albans' practice of using Bede to generate politically

motivated hagiography – Oswine and Christina both being examples of figures

whose lives are either drawn from or embellished by material from Bede in order

to serve the interests of St Albans' standing in England and the institutional

Catholic church of the twelfth century. This may not, upon reflection, prove to be

very surprising – Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* was a text of great importance to

historians of Christina's time, reaching the peak of his popularly in twelfth-

century England.[148] William of Malmesbury's captivation by the "straightforward

charm" of "Bede, most learned and least proud of men" (15)[149] and Henry of

Huntingdon's supposed almost exclusive reliance upon Bede for both historical

and miraculous material (4, 122) – if such a distinction can be made without

anachronism – are not isolated instances of admiration for a distant precursor, but

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[147] The work of Thomas Bestul, cited frequently throughout the following chapter, is one of the few important bodies of work to take this historical phenomenon into account.

[148] See n. 86 above.

[149] Mynors', Thomson's, and Winterbottom's translation. "Suaui sermone...Beda, uir maxime doctus et minime superbus."

represent more or less accurately the prevalent opinions during Christina's lifetime in England as a whole, and apparently in St Albans specifically, about Bede and his role in the recording of English history.

Christina fits well into Bede's vision of what a holy woman in England can aspire to be. In light of this, and the consequent temptation to view Bede's *Historia* as an inspiration for Christina's *Vita*, it must be asked how we, as contemporary scholars and historians, ought to classify Christina. Would she be more profitably viewed as the first in a series of later English medieval holy women – a tradition culminating with the writings of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe – or, rather, as the last in a series of English holy women inspired by the story of the Anglo-Saxon holy woman as presented in Bede's *Historia*? In a way, Christina's situation in Anglo-Norman England precludes any sense of easy historical delineation, as the hybrid nature of English culture during this period makes questions of what is "English" and what is "Norman" complicated questions to answer.[150] On the other hand, the question of which tradition lent more to Christina's *Vita* may be a question of great importance, as it arrives directly at the issues of her production as a cultural phenomenon, especially the concern of the *Vita* to promote Christina as a virgin, an earthly patron figure, and an intercessor for St Albans in heaven.

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[150] William of Malmesbury again provides a useful point of comparison, in his discussion of his mixed Saxon and Norman heritage at the beginning of his *Gesta Regum Anglorum* (425).

Chapter 4

CHRISTINA, ANSELM, AND DEVOTIONAL PIETY AT ST ALBANS

The previous chapter described the possible influence of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* on Christina's *Vita*. This chapter, however, focuses on a more contemporary influence on perceptions of Christina, her role at St Albans, and her nature as a contemplative and virgin recluse: the collection of devotional prayers written by Anselm of Canterbury[151] and by Pseudo-Anselmian authors whose works were rapidly attached to Anselm's own body of writing. Though less studied today in favor of Anselm's own theological and philosophical writings, during the Middle Ages Anselm's devotional writings (and their imitations) were among the most popular works to circulate under his name. Beginning around 1072, Anselm composed nineteen prayers (each addressed to individual saints) and three accompanying meditations, various collections of which were distributed to noble patrons such as Adelaide, the daughter of William the Conqueror, and Mathilda of Tuscany.

But despite the fact that these works were all authored during Anselm's time at Bec, well before he set foot in England and became archbishop of Canterbury, it should be stressed at the outset that examining their connections

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[151] Anselm is well-known to modern readers as the founder of scholastic modes of thought in the Middle Ages, via several philosophical works such as the *Proslogion* and the *Cur Deus Homo*, in which Anselm formulates his ontological argument proving the existence of God. This chapter, however, is concerned with Anselm's devotional works, known collectively as the *Orationes sive Meditationes*, which were actually more popular at certain points during the Middle Ages than Anselm's more scholastically-minded works. The two segments of his work are extremely interrelated, however; see Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape*, 91-93, 112-13.

with Christina's hagiography does not necessarily amount to examining a foreign, Norman influence on the *Vita*. Anselm's prayers, while they are certainly innovative for late eleventh- and twelfth-century devotional practices and constitute clear developments of those traditions, do not display a complete break with previous devotional traditions in England.[152] A long history of Latin devotional writing existed in Anglo-Saxon England, in addition to the Carolingian traditions that Anselm is now supposed, by modern scholars, to have expanded upon in the composition of his prayers while at Bec. This existing Anglo-Latin tradition is now seen as largely responsible for the great popularity enjoyed by Anselm's devotional works in England. The surprising rate at which works by English authors were added to Anselm's initial small canon of prayers and meditations is, indeed, a testament to the rapid popularity that his works attained.

For the purposes of this study, it is essential to consider the fact that several early English manuscripts of Anselmian and pseudo-Anselmian works were copied, and probably originally assembled, at St Albans, including the manuscript now known as the Verdun Anselm, or Verdun, Bibliothèque municipale MS 70, a collection of devotional prayers produced around the same time as Christina's *Vita*. Thomas Bestul has identified this manuscript as central to the first stages of the formation of the larger Anselmian canon of devotional

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[152] Bestul, "Self and Subjectivity," 147 has noted, for instance, the development in scholarly thought between Richard Southern's early characterization of Anselm's work as "the Anselmian revolution" in devotional prayer (Southern, *Saint Anselm and his Biographer*, 42) and his later revision of this concept to "the Anselmian transformation" (Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape*, 99).

materials.[153] As a collection, the manuscript includes nearly all of the genuine

devotional works of Anselm,[154] as well as thirteen other short writings modeled

after Anselm's style. If St Albans monks were responsible for the initial growth

of this collection of texts – a collection that eventually swelled from the original

nineteen to include over one hundred and fifty prayers – it is worth asking what

effect, if any, this devotional literature may have had on other areas of St Albans'

intellectual life, and in particular on the composition of the *Vita* of Christina.

Although Anselmian works have not been discussed in conjunction with Christina

in previous scholarship, an examination of the devotional trends in the two works

proves to be very revealing about the roles that Christina was being assigned,

explicitly or implicitly, in the course of her *Vita*. It also sheds a great deal of light

on the importance – and the ingenuity – of the scenes of private devotion and

prayer depicted in the *Vita*. More than any other aspect of the *Vita* examined in

this study, the role of private devotional prayer runs the risk of being

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[153] Bestul, "The Verdun Anselm," discusses the contents of the Verdun
manuscript; the one surviving illumination from the manuscript is reproduced in
Pächt, "The Illustrations of St. Anselm's Prayers and Meditations," which also
discusses the manuscript's contents. Bestul, "The Collection of Anselm's
Prayers," discusses the Anselmian prayers of Cotton Vespasian D.xxvi, another
manuscript of English origin which provides a useful context for the Verdun
manuscript.

[154] The modern canon of Anselm's devotional works, comprised of nineteen
prayers and three meditations, is drastically reduced from traditional counts, as
noted above. This is largely due to André Wilmart, whose work formed the basis
of F. S. Schmitt's edition of Anselm's complete genuine works – see Southern,
Saint Anselm and his Biographer, 35. Schmitt's edition – *S. Anselmi
Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi Opera Omnia*, vol. 3 – will thus be the version cited
for genuine works of Anselm; spurious devotional works will be cited in the
edition of Migne's *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 158, their only modern printing.

underestimated. This style of piety is too easily viewed in the context of later medieval trends, and it is easy to forget how new it was in Christina's time and how innovative her practices, as shown in the *Vita*, must have looked to their first audiences at St Albans. In the course of this chapter, several aspects of the devotional writings in Verdun 70 (concerning both the genuine and pseudo-Anselmian works) are examined, including the prominence of Marian imagery and devotion, the emphasis on communal settings, whether friendly or hostile, and the importance of sacerdotal imagery and roles (as several of the Verdun prayers are intended specifically for priests or abbots about to perform duties of their offices). The use in the *Vita* of these types of imagery from the prayers, as well as depictions of private prayer and devotion, I argue, paint a portrait of Christina as both author and authorized religious – that is, she is portrayed as an author of private devotional works of the same type as Anselm, and she is shown to adopt the same methods of devotion and preparation for spiritual experience as those prescribed for monks, or even priests. When viewed in the context of the devotional piety of her day, Christina appears to be far from the shunned and marginalized figure she is sometimes seen as in scholarship – rather, she appears as a clear and celebrated example of popular devotional practice in mid-twelfth century England.

To begin, the investment of St Albans in devotional prayer, and specifically Anselmian devotional prayer, needs to be established, both in a historical sense and then specifically in relation to the *Vita*. Recent work by Bestul on the manuscript tradition of Anselm's *Orationes sive Meditationes*, and

especially on their post-Anselmian continuations, proves invaluable here, as it

will continue to be throughout this chapter. One of his particularly important

essays notes the production at St Albans of the Verdun Anselm MS, as well as

Bodleian Library MS Laud misc. 363, which contains many of the earliest

additions to the Anselmian canon of devotional works, a group of writings termed

"group B" by André Wilmart and usually ascribed to the authorship of a certain

Ralph of Battle Abbey.[155] Bestul concludes from the early date of the Verdun

manuscript and the survival of other manuscripts at St Albans, such as the Laud

manuscript, that the Verdun manuscript "represents a very early stage in the

development of the Anselmian apocrypha," and that "the monastic house [at St

Albans] played an important role" in assembling and distributing this set of

genuine and spurious works to a wider reading audience.[156] Even more revealing

for our purposes, Bestul speculates, concerning St Albans' role in this process,

that:

> …the St Albans manuscripts are a witness to the continued interest
> in the production and heritage of devotional writings, a part of the
> English monastic heritage which predates the Conquest and has its
> roots in the Benedictine Revival of the late tenth century. It seems
> reasonable to assume that it was at St Albans that the work of
> Ralph and Anselm was first joined together, and it is likely that the
> experiment was not widely imitated, if at all, in England.[157]

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[155] Little is known about Ralph other than his arrival in England with Lanfrac, his
abbacy at Battle from 1107-1124, and his authorship of these devotional works in
the early twelfth century, his only known works to survive; see Bestul, "The
Verdun Anselm," 384.

[156] Bestul, "The Verdun Anselm," 386, 388.

[157] Bestul, "The Verdun Anselm," 388.

If Bestul is correct in his assumptions here – and the manuscript evidence of the

period gives us reason to believe that he is – then St Albans' role in the history of

English devotional practices is, to say the least, due for a vast reappraisal.

Regarding Christina's experience alone, it is important to take into account that

her *Vita* was composed at an institution that, perhaps uniquely in England, was in

a position to make use of the newly developing Anselmian tradition of devotional

prayer, existing works of English devotional authors such as Ralph of Battle

Abbey, and older works (e.g., Carolingian prayers, extracts of the Psalms).[158]

This contrasts with the case of St Alban's use of Bede in an important way.

Whereas the use of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* at St Albans amounted to an

extension of an already recognized authoritative text (in the case of the *vitae* of

Oswine or the possible adaptations of Aedilthryda, Hilda, and the Barking nuns as

models for Christina's *Vita*), the Anselmian canon at St Albans constitutes an

active assembly of a canon of contemporary and traditional devotional works and

an effort to disseminate them to other monastic institutions such as Verdun.

Whether or not this amounts to an "Anglicization" of Anselm's work is perhaps

beside the point here. More at issue is St Albans' active hand in the matter, and

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[158] Prayers from these various traditions form what might be called a unified, if
not always coherent, tradition of private prayer in England. On the influence of
Anglo-Saxon devotional traditions on the reception of Anselm's work in England,
see Bestul, "St Anselm, the Monastic Community at Canterbury, and Devotional
Writing in Late Anglo-Saxon England," 194, and Bestul, "St Anselm and the
Continuity of Anglo-Saxon Devotional Traditions," 23-31, which contains
detailed comparisons of Anselmian, Anglo-Saxon, and Carolingian devotional
prayers, concluding that "Anselm belongs to the tradition [of Anglo-Saxon and
Carolingian devotion] and yet advances beyond it" (26).

how its work with Anselmian texts may have helped to shape the *Vita* of

Christina.[159]

Christina's participation in private devotional prayer certainly deserves a

re-evaluation in light of the originality of this interest in devotional works at St

Albans. Indeed, Bede's *Historia*, which may have provided so much of the

foundation for Christina's story, gives no basis for such practices, and as already

noted, it is easy to forget how innovative St Albans' application of Anselmian

devotional practices to the *Vita* may have been. The *Vita* itself does not help us in

this regard, as it begins, at an early point in its narrative, to display Christina's

religious experience as grounded in exactly these devotional techniques, a move

that gives the impression that they are nothing other than normative. Indeed, the

young Christina – as is common in lives of women saints and virgin martyrs – is a

poster-child for high medieval piety and devotional practices, as if by nature. The

moment of her birth has just barely passed in the narrative when her biographer

recalls that "she used to beat her own tender body with rods whenever she thought

she had done something that was not allowed" (37).[160] These more gruesome

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[159] The dating of the Verdun MS is also worth noting – Kauffmann, *Romanesque Manuscripts*, 71 dates its production between 1120 and 1130. Thompson, *Manuscripts from St Albans Abbey*, 124, notes that the manuscript was probably produced "somewhat later" than the bishopric at Verdun, from 1117-1129, of Henry, archdeacon of Winchester. Both of these dates place the production of the manuscript squarely within Christina's time at St Albans following the death of Roger in roughly 1122-1123, when she achieved her highest level of prominence with the abbey.

[160] Talbot's translation. "Suam tenellam carnem virgis cedebat quociens aliquod illicitum se fecisse putabat."

aspects of devotional practice are rare in the *Vita*,[161] however, and much more common is the type of scene immediately following, where the young Christina speaks in an open voice to Christ, because she has heard that he is everywhere. Following this experience, her earliest action of adulthood is also a vocal one – a prayer, seeking God's protection and authorization of her status as virgin (41). This beginning in private devotion proves to be an accurate foreshadow of Christina's activities – she prays for guidance to endure her parents' torment, for aid in her flight from home, for advice while living with Roger, and, while her prayers are seldom presented directly during the final section of her *Vita*, she is continually noted to be praying during Geoffrey's abbacy and specifically on his behalf.[162]

However, there is more evidence for an influence of Anselmian devotional writing on Christina's *Vita* than merely the presence of important early manuscripts at St Albans and the preponderance of private, devotional prayer in the *Vita*. Many thematic elements of the prayers contained in the Verdun manuscript find their way into Christina's *Vita* at critical junctures of her career as a recluse and mystic, three of which will be focused on here: attention to the

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[161] These scenes are much more common, however, in later medieval *vitae*, particularly those concerning women.

[162] Many of Christina's prayers for Geoffrey are included in Christina's other private devotions, but occasionally her prayer is entirely directed towards other concerns (such as her own safety, or the safety of the women under her charge at Markyate). The *Vita* gives several examples of her prayers, such as at pp. 139-41, 145, 179-81. The final example implies that her prayers for issues other than concerns of Geoffrey's are superfluous: "your prayers [for protection against diabolic apparitions] are unnecessary: but the prayers for your beloved friend, that he be enlightened with eternal light, have been granted."

presence and roles of the Virgin Mary; an emphasis on private prayer as a

communal experience (i.e., a prayer that is made on behalf of a human

community); and the use of sacerdotal imagery. The importance of the Virgin to

Christina's experience, to begin with, is almost certainly grounded in specific

scenes and concepts from the Anselmian canon, in a way that is easy to overlook

without comparison to the absence of Mary in the devotions of other holy women

in England.[163] Christina's first visionary experience involving the Virgin – which

inaugurate her visionary experiences – begins with a scene probably familiar to

monks of twelfth-century England: the Virgin sitting, "like an empress" (75)

[similem imperatrici], and awaiting Christina's delivery of a flowering branch.

Most images of the Virgin on monastic seals of the time depicted her sitting,

enthroned and crowned, holding a flowering branch,[164] and the image was

certainly familiar to the community at St Albans by way of the Saint Albans

Psalter, which depicts, in the initial to Psalm 71, an enthroned and crowned

Virgin, holding the Christ child in her lap and a flowering branch in her hand, as

the Magi come to pay tribute to the infant Christ. Christina's vision continues

past this imagery, however, to a more intimate confrontation with the Virgin.

Climbing to an upper chamber in the palace of her vision, Christina meets the

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[163] Many of the texts concerning holy women discussed in this study do not
include Mary in anything but cursory roles. Aedilthryda and Hilda, for example,
are never explicitly compared with or placed under the guidance of Mary.
Ricardus' *Passio* and Clemence's *Vie* of Katherine of Alexandria similarly avoid
Marian imagery.

[164] Morgan, "Texts and Images of Marian Devotion," 129.

Virgin again, who lays her head down on Christina's lap to rest, but facing away

from her. The vision continues:

> This turning away of her face was a source of disquiet to Christina,
> and not daring to speak, she said inwardly: 'O, if only I were
> allowed to gaze upon your face.' Straightaway the empress turned
> her face towards her and said to her with winning kindness: 'You
> may look now; and afterwards when I shall bring both you and
> Judith also into my chamber, you can gaze to your full content.'
> (77)[165]

This imagery is almost certainly owed to numerous scenes in the genuine

Anselmian prayers to Mary, especially the third, which states, "O most blessed,

all that turns away from you, and that you oppose, must needs be lost, and equally

it is not possible that whatever turns to you and you regard with favour, should

perish" (121).[166] Additional, if less direct examples, are contained in Anselm's

other two Marian prayers – the second asks, "whom will you spare…whom will

you reconcile…if you…Lady, turn away your goodness and love from this little

man who confesses his sin with sorrow?" (113),[167] and the first prayer states that

"I am so filthy and stinking that I am afraid you will turn your merciful face from

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[165] Talbot's translation. "Cuius adversionis Christinam non mediocriter tedebat et
non ausa loqui: tantum in corde suo dicebat. O si licuisset michi vultum tuum
contemplari. Et continuo convertit vultum suum imperatrix illa dixitque blanda
affabilitate. Et licet et contemplare contemplativa postmodum ad sacietatem:
quando introduxero te in thalamum meum. te et Judith una tecum." The inclusion
of "Judith" in the vision provides an example of the communal emphasis on
devotional experiences, discussed further below, pp. 96-103.

[166] Ward's translation. "Sicut enim, o beatissima, omnis a te aversus et a te
despectus necesse est ut intereat: ita omnis ad te conversus et a te respectus
impossibile est ut pereat."

[167] Ward's translation. "Cui parces...quem reconciliabis...si tu...domina, averteris
homunculum bona vestra cum amore, mala sua cum maerore confitentem."

me" (107).[168] Passages such as these equate the gaze of the Virgin with salvation

and, in Christina's case, protection of her virginity and foreshadow later scenes in

the *Vita* such as Roger and Christina's accidental, mutual gaze (101). In addition

to her physical gaze, however, another aspect of the Virgin – which commands at

least equal importance for Christina in her *Vita* – is Mary's new role as intercessor

between humanity and God. While unsure whether she is worthy to be

consecrated as a virgin, Christina turns again to the Virgin Mary for comfort,

"pleading with her and asking her to intercede for release from this uncertainty"

(127).[169] As with many scenes of Marian devotion, it is difficult for modern

readers not to glance over this scene as a generic convention. Doing so, however,

runs the risk of ignoring the wealth of imagery in Anselmian devotional works

depicting Mary as the sole intercessor for humanity in a world dominated by a

vengeful, judging God. Again, in his third prayer to Mary, in which the imagery

of Mary as intercessor is the strongest, Anselm proclaims often and emphatically

Mary's ability to redeem humankind, and indeed all of creation: "Lady, you are

mother of justifier and the justified, bearer of reconciliation and the reconciled,

parent of salvation and of the saved" (122),[170] and again, "So God is the Father of

all created things, and Mary is the mother of all re-created things. God is the

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[168] Ward's translation. "Sic sordibus et foetore foedatur, ut timeat ne ab ipsa misericors vultus tuus avertatur."

[169] Talbot's translation. "Petens ut ipsius interventu caperet ambiguitatis sue certitudinem."

[170] Ward's translation. "Domina, mater es iustificationis et iustificatorum, genetrix es reconciliationis et reconcialiatorum, parens es salutis et salvatorum."

Father of all that is established, and Mary is the mother of all re-created things"

(121).[171] One of the pseudo-Anselmian prayers of Verdun 70 continues this

imagery, depicting Mary as she "through whom the whole world is saved" (Col.

0891C) and putting questions in the mouth of the orator such as "who, therefore,

is stronger in merits for soothing the anger of the judge, than you who deserve to

be the mother of that same redeemer and judge?" (Col. 0947C).[172] The context of

devotional utterances such as these certainly places Christina's "disquiet," as her

hagiographer puts it, and her desire to see Mary's face in a new light – it is not, as

might be guessed from the scene in the *Vita*, merely a last moment of lingering

doubt, but a statement that employs fervent, emotional language and impassioned,

desperate pleas for the aid of Mary against the horrors of judgment. It is not

difficult to imagine Christina, given her fondness for devotional prayer, reciting

one of these very pieces in her "pleading" (127) [petens] with Mary for the

safeguarding of her own status as virgin.

Another common feature of Anselmian devotional prayers that appears

frequently in Christina's *Vita* is the emphasis on a communal presence, whether a

hostile or a friendly one, on whose behalf prayers are frequently made. Indeed, as

Benedicta Ward has noted in an essay on the genuine Anselmian prayers, "for

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[171] Ward's translation. "Deus est pater constitutionis omnium, et Maria est mater restitutionis omnium." See Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape*, 106-09 for further discussion of Mary's role as intercessor in Anselm's prayers, especially concerning the development of Anselm's theology of Mary throughout the three Marian prayers.

[172] "Per quam totus salvatus est mundus"..."Quae ergo potentior meritis ad placandam iram judicis, quam tu quae meruisti mater esse ejusdem Redemptoris et judicis?"

Anselm, [prayer] is never a private matter…[what] is most personal to each is in some sense common to all, and in the perfection of charity [Anselm] sees the emotions of each as a source of unity rather than divisiveness."[173] Although it is sometimes difficult to see such a trend in Anselm's own work – a vision of the world or community at large is occasionally obscured beneath intense personal devotion to the saint or saints in question – the importance of community is made a central issue in two prayers which, in modern editions, conclude the canon of Anselm's prayers – the "Prayer for Friends" and the "Prayer for Enemies."[174] In the Verdun manuscript, however, these two prayers, while not the first material in the collection, are placed very close to the beginning, emphasizing their importance; they are preceded only by Anselm's prayer to Christ and a pseudo-Anselmian prayer for priests preparing for mass, both clearly intended as preparatory works. The copy of the "Prayer for Friends" in the Verdun manuscript is, moreover, incomplete, beginning not with Anselm's own invocation of "Jesus Christ, my dear and gracious Lord, [who has] shown a love greater than that of any man and which no one can equal" (212),[175] but rather in

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[173] Ward, "'Inward Feeling and Deep Thinking'," 182.

[174] The emphasis that Anselm does place upon friendship, in these two prayers and elsewhere in his genuine works, is usually expressed more clearly in his letters, on which see Feiss, "The God of St Anselm's Prayers," 10-13, and Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape*, esp. 138-141.

[175] Ward's translation. "Dulcis et benigne domine Iesu Christe, qui exhibuisti caritatem qua maiorem nemo habet et cui parem nemo habere potest."

mid-sentence:[176] "good friend, you are whatever good there is. Your humble and contemptible slave desires to obey your commandment. You know, Lord, that I prize this love which you command" (213).[177] These two prayers – for friends and enemies – go on to dwell heavily on the presence of a community outside that of the orator and God. A few examples will suffice here, such as from the "Prayer for Friends": "I pray your mercy upon all men, yet there are many whom I hold more dear since your love has impressed them upon my heart with a closer and more intimate love, so that I desire their love more eagerly – I would pray more ardently for these" (213);[178] and from the Prayer for Enemies, "whatever you make me desire for my enemies, give it to them and give the same back to me, and if what I ask for them at any time is outside the rule of charity…do not give it to them and do not give it back to me" (217),[179] and, most notably, "Fulfil [*sic*] my prayer, Lord, not only for my friends and the enemies for whom I have prayed, but distribute the healing of your mercy wherever you know it may help

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[176] Bestul, "The Verdun Anselm," 385.

[177] Ward's translation. "Bone amice, bonum totum quidquid es, huic praecepto tuo desiderat oboedire humilis et contemptibilis servus tuus. Tu scis, domine, quia dilectionem quam iubes amo."

[178] Ward's translation. "Omnibus exoro clementiam tuam. Sunt tamen plures quorum dilectionem, sicut specialiter et familiarius cordi meo impressit amor tuus, ita ardentius bene desidero illis, et devotius opto orare pro illis."

[179] Ward's translation. "Quidquid ipse me facis desiderare inimicis meis, et illis tribue et mihi retribue. Et si aliquando exopto illis extra regulam caritatis...hoc nec illis tribuas nec mihi retribuas."

anyone and not be contrary to your will, both to the living and the departed"

(219).[180]

     The pseudo-Anselmian prayers tend to increase this conscious attention to

friends and enemies, consistently referring to their presence, their ability to

influence the speaker, and how the speaker would prefer God to interact with

them. The third prayer in Migne's numbering,[181] described as "against three

enemies who often heavily disturb a sinner" (Col. 0865B),[182] contains a

particularly vivid expression of these *inimici*: "behold, my sweetest lord God,

behold my unhappy spirit gnawed from all sides by evil works, from the teeth of

its enemies, by whom it is unhappily mutilated" (Col. 0866B).[183] It should be

noted that, in this case, the enemies referred to are not literal people, but rather the

vices of *inanis gloria*, *invidia*, and *superbia*; this, however, only serves to

emphasize the use of communal language more, since the author

anthropomorphizes these abstract concepts so that they may be struggled against

as flesh-and-blood enemies. Two of the sacerdotal prayers – discussed further

below – also contain, as might be expected, references to communities of people

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[180] Ward's translation. "Et non solum amicis et inimicis meis quae precatus sum tribuas, sed sicut scis unicuique expedire et voluntati tuae non disconvenire, omnibus vivis et defunctis misericordiae tuae remedia distribuas."

[181] See above, n. 154, on the use of Migne's edition for the spurious works of Anselm.

[182] "Contra tres inimicos qui peccatorem gravius multoties infestant."

[183] "Ecce, dulcissime Deus meus, ecce infelix spiritus meus malis operibus undique corrosus, de dentibus inimicorum suorum, quibus infeliciter dilaniabatur."

outside the orbit of the speaker (a priest) and God. The twenty-sixth prayer, in Migne's numbering, actually refers to a person "proceeding with a great retinue of men" (Col. 0195B),[184] and the twenty-eighth prayer – presented in the Verdun manuscript as a single work with prayer twenty-seven[185] – contains both acknowledgements of communal emphasis in language typical of Scriptural precedent, such as "in truth, you instruct us to value rightly our neighbor just as ourselves,"[186] as well as that typical of the elevation of the Eucharist: "may the sacrifice of your body and blood for all the living and the dead be a forgiveness for all sinners" (Col. 0919C).[187] Most interesting, perhaps, is the pseudo-Augustinian prayer in the Verdun manuscript, not included in Migne's collection, which, in its second part, begins by invoking a community of saints along litanic progressions.[188] Starting with the Virgin, it proceeds to the Archangels, following with the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, and the martyrs, confessors, priests,

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[184] "Cum magno comitatu hominum pergens."

[185] Bestul, "The Verdun Anselm," 385. The combination of these two works occurs in most medieval manuscripts of the spurious prayers.

[186] "Proximum vero nostrum et tu nobis, sicut nos ipsos, recte diligere praecipis."

[187] "Sit omnibus vivis et defunctis sacrificium tui corporis et sanguinis remissio omnium peccatorum."

[188] The text of the prayer is available in Wilmart, *Auteurs Spirituels et Textes Dévots du Moyen Age Latin*, 571-77. Examples such as this prayer show an intermingling of private and litanic devotions, two types of devotion that are usually split, as Southern, "Anselm and the English Religious Tradition," 33, sees in English devotional practices of his time: "The second feature of the English tradition in which Anselm plays an important part is his strong emphasis on private prayer and meditation outside the regular liturgy." While this may be true in Anselm's genuine works, his contemporaries – or, at least, his immediate successors – appear to have felt no such compunction to respect such a division.

and virgins (576). Having begun with the Virgin and proceeded through the

heavenly ranks to the angels and saints, it then continues to those still on earth:

"pray, oh lord...for men and women and for all rulers who labor for your holy

name" (576).[189] It continues to enumerate specific categories of people for whom

the speaker is to pray, including some interesting groups, in light of the previous

chapters in this study: "Preserve, oh Lord, *chastity for virgins*...sustenance for

orphans, shelter for the poor, and a *return for pilgrims*" (576; emphases added).[190]

The litanic invocation used here thus includes the diversity of this earthly

community with the community of those in heaven, including saints and angels.

The author of Christina's *Vita* shows a clear familiarity with these

communal scenes in his construction of Christina's devotional piety. Throughout

the *Vita* she is shown addressing the role her community – whether that of her

parents and home, the hermitage at Markyate, or the monks at St Albans – plays

in her spiritual life. As may be expected, one of her early prayers focuses on the

antagonistic role of her parents in her home life: "Lord, how are they increased

that trouble me. Many are they that rise up against me. I have looked for some to

take pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none" (57).[191] The

extensive use of Psalmic language here should not be surprising, nor should it lull

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[189] "Oro, domine…pro viris et feminis ac pro omnibus rectoribus qui pro tuo
sancto nomine laborant."

[190] "Presta, domine uirginibus castitatem…orfanis sustenationem, pauperibus
protectionem, peregrinantibus reditum."

[191] Talbot's translation. "Domine. multiplicati sunt qui tribulant me. multi
insurgunt adversum me. Sustinui qui simul contristaretur. et non fuit. et qui
consolaretur: et non inveni."

the reader into an impression that the language is used unreflectively, as the

Psalms were, as already mentioned, one of the primary sources of inspiration for

eleventh- and twelfth-century devotional writings. Christina's use of the Psalms

here is largely parallel to (pseudo-)Anselm's.[192] She adopts Psalm thirty-seven

wholesale in her devotional practices when she first arrives at Flamstead

following her escape from home (93). The Psalm, unsurprisingly at this point,

emphasizes her personal community, now rapidly changed from enemies to

friends, and although the *Vita* does not report the text directly, the specified

passage reads: "Oh Lord, all my desire is before you, and my lamentation is not

hidden from you. My heart is disquieted, my strength has abandoned me, and the

light itself of my eyes is not with me. My friends and my neighbors have

approached me and stood against me, and those who were near me have stood far

away" (Psalm 37:10-12).[193] The passage serves as an interesting summation of

many of the themes touched on in this chapter, and the rarity of the author's

citation of a specific biblical passage as a source of devotion for a character in the

Vita is perhaps explained by the surprising applicability of the passage in

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[192] Wogan-Browne, "Women's Formal and Informal Traditions of Biblical Knowledge" discusses the lack of Latin reading on the part of Anglo-Norman nuns, and examines ways by which they could have come to know scriptural writings. This may mirror the historical Christina's situation, but there is no evidence that she herself knew Anglo-Norman. The *Vita* author, in any case, presents Christina as reading directly from the Latin text.

[193] Text cited from Weber, ed., *Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, 4th ed., 814. "Domine ante te omne desiderium meum et gemitus meus a te non est absconditus. Cor meum conturbatus est, dereliquit me virtus mea et lumen occulorum meorum et ipsum non est mecum. Amici mei et proximi mei, adversus me adpropinquaverunt et steterunt, et qui iuxta me errant de longe steterunt."

question. Always, even when in seclusion with Roger, Christina lives a life of

communal piety, and it is worth mentioning the scene in which Burthred formally

releases Christina from their marital contract: Burthred makes his official

statement in the presence of Roger and "before five hermits who lived with

[him]" (109).[194]

However, the most consistent section of the *Vita* during which prayer for

others is emphasized is the one dealing with Christina's friendship with Geoffrey.

Relatively few scenes of prayer are shown directly; more often they are

mentioned in passing, as when she prays for God's intercession with Geoffrey

(141, 145, 155) and before she discusses him with her sister, Margaret (143).

Two scenes, however, deserve a brief discussion here. The first is Christina's

celebrated vision of the trinity during a prayer, a visual depiction of which is

possibly present in the Saint Albans Psalter at the beginning of the litany.[195]

During the vision of the trinity, Christina notices Geoffrey trying to enter the

room with her, "humbly begg[ing] her to introduce him to the persons standing at

her side in the divine presence" (157).[196] In response to her urging for Geoffrey's

admission, the dove in her vision flies about the room, and Christina, encouraged,

"would not stop pleading until she saw the man [i.e., Geoffrey] already mentioned

either possessing the dove or being possessed by the dove. And when she came to

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[194] Talbot's translation. "Coram quinque Rogeri coheremitis."

[195] Saint Albans Psalter (Dombibliothek Hildesheim, St Godehard 1), p. 403.

[196] Talbot's translation. "Postulabat suppliciter. ut in divina presencia. sese
studiosus astantibus commendaret personis."

herself, she understood clearly…that the abbot, once filled with it, would be able

to aspire to only things above" (157).[197] The second scene in question involves a

somewhat simpler vision, but one more striking in its implications: when asked by

a heavenly voice during her contemplation, "He whom you love so much for my

sake…would you like him to suffer death for my sake?" She responds, "That

indeed, O Lord, I gladly desire, and if Thy will was plain, I would even more

gladly carry it out with my own hands" (181).[198] The surprising nature of this

event – Christina is praying for, or rather accepting an offer for, Geoffrey's

martyrdom – is even more surprising when viewed in the context of the pseudo-

Augustinian prayer in the Verdun manuscript, where communities of the heavenly

and the worldly intermingle via litanic invocation, as discussed above. Here,

much the same event is happening – the veil between the earthly Geoffrey and his

heavenly prospects is breaking down via Christina's exercises in prayer, and the

fact that one of these scenes may have been chosen to illustrate the litany in the

Saint Albans Psalter strengthens this connection even more.[199] Also worth

remembering, however, is that it is when describing the relationship between

Christina and Geoffrey – one of the most dramatic of the entire *Vita* and the focus

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[197] Talbot's translation. "Non destitit a precibus donec m[emo]ratum virum. vel
possidere columbam. vel possessum cerneret a columba: ad se autem reversa
manifestius intellexit...perfusus abbas non nisi ad superna [pos]set amplius
respirare."

[198] Talbot's translation. "Quem pro me tantopere diligis...velles ut pro me mortis
subiret angustias?"..."Illud quidem Domine gratanter sed et si vestra pateret
voluntas propriis manibus gratancius complerem."

[199] Saint Albans Psalter (Hildesheim, Dombibliothek MS St Godehard 1), p. 403.

of much scholarly attention – that the author is actually most in touch with the

(pseudo-)Anselmian elements of St Albans devotional culture. In other words,

the Christina that has captured the attention of modern readers is the Christina

patterned most heavily after Anselmian models of prayer.

One final mode of discourse in Anselmian devotional works has yet to be

discussed – namely, the role of sacerdotal prayers[200] in the Verdun manuscript

and their possible influence on depictions of Christina in the *Vita*. This style of

prayer is almost wholly illustrated by pseudo-Anselmian works; the genuine

prayers give no explicit examples of prayers to be spoken by a priest, except

perhaps the "Prayer by a Bishop or Abbot to the Patron Saint of his Church,"

though even this prayer begins with the speaker denigrating and negating his

status in order to adopt the typical Anselmian pose of the humble repentant

sinner: "I am called master, but I do not know it is so; I am named shepherd, but I

deny that it is so" (207).[201] The sacerdotal, pseudo-Anselmian prayers of the

Verdun manuscript, however, contain many specific references to priestly offices

and allow the speaker to acknowledge his status while at the same time seeking

guidance or inspiration to carry out specific duties. The first sacerdotal prayer

presented in Verdun 70 – the second prayer of the whole collection of the

manuscript – is meant to be spoken by a priest before celebrating a mass, and

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[200] The prayers described here as "sacerdotal" are those in the pseudo-Anselmian collection that are meant to be spoken by priests in preparation for, or in the course of, their official duties.

[201] Ward's translation. "Magister...vocor, sed esse nescio. Pastor nominor, sed esse nequeo."

contains numerous specific requests for God to prepare the speaker: e.g., "Make me, through your grace, always to believe and understand that [part] of the holy mystery...free my heart from unclean and impious, empty and harmful thoughts" (Col. 0921B-C).[202] In line with these requests, the prayer also shows the speaker displaying concern over his fitness to perform the office of the mass, or other priestly duties: "king of virgins, lover of chastity, God, with the heavenly dew of your blessing, extinguish in my body the firewood of burning pleasure, so that a continuance of bodily and spiritual chastity may remain in me" (Col. 0921C-0922A).[203] The difference in tone between these prayers and the typical discourse of the genuine Anselmian prayers is notable; the sacerdotal prayers, as shown in the preceding examples, are focused, disciplined, even calm about their approach to the speaker's failings, whereas Anselm's prayers – as in the prayer to be spoken by a bishop or abbot, mentioned above – are typically more dramatic and emotional in their exposition; take, for example, the following moment from Anselm's third prayer to Mary: "[m]other of the life of my soul, nurse of the redeemer of my flesh, who gave suck to the Saviour of my whole being – but what am I saying? My tongue fails me, for my love is not sufficient."[204] The

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[202] "Fac me per gratiam tuam semper illud de tanto mysterio credere et intelligere…[l]ibera cor meum ab immundis et nefandis, vanis et noxiis cogitationibus."

[203] "Rex virginum, amator castitatis, Deus, coelesti rore benedictionis tuae exstingue in corpore meo fomitem ardentis libidinis, ut maneat in me tenor castitatis corporis et animae."

[204] Ward's translation. "Genitrix vitae animae meae, altrix reparatoris carnis meae, lactatrix salvatoris totius substantiae meae! Sed quid dicam? Lingua mihi

sacerdotal prayers expect their requests to be fulfilled; the Anselmian prayers are

typically surprised when their speakers' requests are fulfilled, and take the

opportunity to ponder the mystery of the divine grace that made fulfillment

possible. The pseudonymous works' more subdued approach to one's sinful

nature continues in another of the sacerdotal prayers of the Verdun collection, this

time a prayer written specifically for a priest who doubts his fitness for his office

(Migne, Or. 25). The tone here is stepped up a notch from the previous prayer,

though still not quite at the level of the genuine Anselm: "what should he do, oh

sweetest Lord Jesus, this priest of yours, what should this sinner of the lowest

level do, oppressed with the burden of your service? For I am too uncertain what

might be useful for me to do or to forsake" (Col. 0911A-B).[205] The priest

continues to mourn his inappropriateness later in the prayer: "As you see, most

merciful Lord Jesus, as you see, more and more thus I do, that in such a sordid

vessel, or even more, in such a sordid heart I lift up your body and blood; I speak

the truth, do not be sparing with me!" (Col. 0911D-0912A).[206]

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deficit, quia mens non sufficit." Other imitations of Anselmian prayers also
warped or distorted the original context of the emotional outpouring that has so
often been taken as Anselm's chief characteristic. See Ward, "'Inward Feeling
and Deep Thinking'," 177, which outlines several examples of Anselm's prayers
and contrasts their style with that of later devotional works.

[205] "Quid ergo faciet, dulcissime Domine Jesu, his tuus sacerdos, imo hic peccator
quid faciet, hujus tui servitii onere gravatus? Nimis enim sum incertus quid mihi
sit utilis, dimittere, an facere."

[206] "Ut tu vides, clementissime Domine Jesu, ut tu vides, saepius et saepius ita
facio, et in tam sordido vase, vel potius in tam sordido corde corpus tuum et
sanguinem suscipio; verum dico, non mihi parco!"

In addition to emotional preparation for priestly duties, the sacerdotal prayers meditate on offices, such as the Eucharist, that priests performed. Prayers twenty-seven and twenty-eight,[207] according to Migne's numbering, emphasize the anagogical meaning of the celebration of the Eucharist: "think, as sweetly as you are able, of the unutterable sanctity of the body of Christ itself which you hold, and the sweetness, more desirable than can be judged, which suffered many injuries for your redemption, and was finally crucified" (Col. 0918A).[208] The meditation continues onto a metaphorical level, where the host becomes the "tame lamb" which "shows inestimable patience" (Col. 0918B),[209] before concluding: "pour your whole self into Christ, whom you hold, and before adoring him, pour forth your compulsions, hastening again and again" (Col. 0919A).[210] The second half of this prayer (Migne, Or. 28) continues the imagery of holding Christ, though with attention to a different bearer: "therefore, the mostly holy virgin who bears you is proclaimed and believed [to be] the god-bearer [Theotokos], that is, the mother of God, by all the faithful" (Col. 0919A-B).[211]

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[207] Presented in the Verdun MS as a single prayer – see n. 185 above.

[208] "Recordare, quam dulcius potes, ipsius corporis Christi quod tenes ineffabilem pietatem, et plusquam aestimari possit admirandam dulcedinem, quod pro redemptione tua multas injurias sustinuit, et ad ultimum crucifixum sit."

[209] "Agnus mansuetissimus... inaestimabilem patientiam ostendit."

[210] "Ingere totam te ipsam in Christum quem tenes, et ipsum prius adorans, tuas iterum et iterum repraesentans ingere necessitates."

[211] "Propterea sanctissima Virgo quae te portavit, ab omnibus fidelibus Θεοτόκος praedicatur et creditor, hoc est Mater Dei."

At first glance, these episodes in prayers intended for priests would seem

to bear scant relation to Christina's *Vita*. However, the imagery from the prayers

discussed here is used to dramatic effect by the author at two key moments in the

Vita: Christina's self-doubt concerning her virginity and her subsequent, and

miraculous, crowning by angels as a true virgin of Christ. While Christina is

living with the lascivious priest, who performs all sorts of acts to tempt her into

sexual activity (some of which acts the biographer refuses to mention; 115), she

manages to shame him into ceasing his advances, but nevertheless is unable to

"cool [her own] passion" (117).[212] After a full day and night of prayer and

weeping to be freed, Christina is granted a visitation from the Christ child:

> …in the guise of a small child He came to the arms of his sorely
> tried spouse and remained with her a whole day, not only being felt
> but also seen. So the maiden took Him in her hands, gave thanks,
> and pressed Him to her bosom. And with immeasurable delight
> she held Him at one moment to her virginal breast, at another she
> felt His presence within her even through the barrier of her flesh.
> (119)[213]

The scene is striking for a number of reasons, including its comparative

originality in women's mysticism of the Middle Ages, but perhaps for nothing

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[212] Talbot's translation. "Nec...deferbuit estus in virgine." The importance of
temptation as a spiritually redeeming experience seems to be at work here also – a
concept that was enjoying increased currency in twelfth-century monasticism in
England. See Leyser, "Two Concepts of Temptation," 318, 321-22. It should be
noted, however, that the positive view of temptation – as an experience that tested
virtue rather than corrupted it – was more common in Cistercian writers than in
Benedictine ones.

[213] Talbot's translation. "Ipse namque in forma parvuli venit inter brachia probate
sibi sponse. et per integrum diem mansit cum illa. non modo sensibilis. sed eciam
visibilis. accipiens itaque virgo puerum in manibus: gracias agens astrinxit sibi ad
pectus. et inestimabili delectacione nunc et virginali illum in suo tenebat sinu."

more than the clear physicality that it displays. Christ is not only seen, but felt, as

is emphasized at the outset of the brief passage and then again repeatedly, with

imagery of holding Christ in her hands and feeling his presence both outside and

inside Christina's own body.[214] It is difficult to view this scene without recalling

at least hints of Eucharistic imagery even if no physical consumption actually

takes place, especially given the prominence of Christina holding Christ "in her

hands" and her metaphorical, if not literal, ingestion: "she felt His presence within

her even through the barrier of her flesh." Phrases from the sacerdotal prayers

such as "that sweetest body of the sweetest Lord which you hold in your hands"

(Col. 0918B)[215] are echoed here, and if the author of the *Vita* had access to the

Verdun manuscript, or one like it – and given the parallels discussed here, this

seems more than likely – it is hard to imagine him not conflating these scenes,

either as an act of interpretation after writing the *Vita* or as an act of composition

during his work on it.

    The language of self-doubt is employed soon after this, just as Christina is

about to be crowned a virgin. After deciding to take up permanent residence at

Roger's hermitage,

> inwardly she was much troubled, not knowing what she should do,
> nor what she should say, when the bishop inquired during the
> ceremony of consecration about her virginity. For she was mindful
> of the thoughts and stings of the flesh with which she had been
> troubled, and even though she was not conscious of having fallen

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[214] The scene thus suggests the transformation of Christ from child to lover via his
presence in the Eucharist – a drastically compact presentation of all three physical
manifestations of Christ's body.

[215] "Ipsum dulcissimum dulcissimi Domini corpus quod in manibus tenes."

either in deed or in desire, she was chary of asserting that she had escaped unscathed. (127)[216]

As with the scene describing Christina's encounter with the Christ child, this episode is immediately striking to the attentive reader of the *Vita*, as it is the only time Christina herself expresses any doubt about her vocation – she is suddenly focused inwardly in a way not previously portrayed in the *Vita* (possibly because, given the outside pressures Christina faces, she has not yet had the opportunity for introspection). Indeed, the self-degradation of the Anselmian prayers – whether genuine or pseudonymous – is the one aspect of their piety that never finds widespread expression in Christina's literary portrait. However, it is employed here in the style of the sacerdotal prayers, as can be seen by comparing the extracts from them discussed above. In this case there are even specific verbal parallels. The "for I am too uncertain what might be useful for me to do or to forsake" (Col. 911B) [nimis enim *sum incertus quid mihi sit utilis*, dimittere, an *facere*; emphasis added] of Migne's Prayer 25 has much in common with the biographer's description of Christina's uncertainty, "inwardly she was much troubled, not knowing what she should do" (126) [intra semetipsam multum estuabat. *ignorans quid sibi faciendum*; emphasis added]. This glossing of Christina's mystical experience with language and imagery used to describe priestly functions in St Albans devotional literature raises the issue of women's

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[216] Talbot's translation. "Intra semetipsam multum estuabat. ignorans quid sibi faciendum. quid dicendum foret. quando sacraturus eam episcopus de virginitate sua requireret. Recordabatur namque quos impetus cogitacionum quam ignotos carnis sue stimulos sustinuerat nec audebat se profiteri de tantis procellis integram evasisse. et si nusquam meminerit se neque actu neque voluntate lapsam fuisse."

roles within the priesthood, an issue alluded to in the Verdun prayers where the priest and Mary (as the Theotokos) are both described as ones who literally bear God.

What, then, is the modern reader to make of the biographer's use of all of this Anselmian and pseudo-Anselmian imagery, particularly the sacerdotal language and images? The extensive use of all three of these kinds of imagery – Marian, communal, and sacerdotal – in the Verdun manuscripts seems to have been employed consciously by the author of the *Vita* throughout his work. This shows us Christina's biographer as an individual involved in St Albans' contemporary cultural work of preserving and distributing popular devotional writings of a noted authority, and using that work in the presentation of his own subject. The spiritual economy at work here, Christina's relation to the divine, and particularly the Virgin Mary, as a distant, yet addressable force,[217] contrasts strongly with her relationships with flesh-and-blood individuals – a dichotomy at work in the Anselmian canon of prayers as well.[218] Christina is, indeed, driven by human relations much more strongly than divine ones on several occasions throughout her *Vita*. Her struggles with her parents and Burthred, her friendships with Sueno, Roger, and Geoffrey, and her relations with her clerical antagonists – e.g., Ranulph, the unnamed priest, and her detractors at St Albans – are all

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[217] See Morgan, "Texts and Images of Marian Devotion," 133-34 for a discussion of the tensions between allegorical and humanized depictions of the Virgin in twelfth-century Benedictine art.

[218] The scene in which Christina is physically comforted by Christ, as both child and lover, is the one exception, but it is worth pointing out that this experience is granted to Christina without her explicit request for it.

defining points in her career. Indeed, it is difficult to find many times when she is

without some kind of human association (her crowning as a virgin being the one

notable exception). Her depiction in the role of a priest, however – as described

in the analysis of the sacerdotal Verdun prayers above – allows us as readers, and

the author as well, to bridge the gap between these two forms of experience. In a

way, the whole of the *Vita* serves to bridge this gap for Christina herself; in the

beginning, the spiritual and human portions of her life are in conflict, whereas by

the end of the surviving text, her spiritual life becomes the basis of her human

interactions. Christina as priest, however, is a strange image to accept, for a

number of reasons. To begin with, it contrasts sharply with modern readings of

Christina as a political embarrassment at St Albans, most notably Rachel

Koopmans' article on the political context of the *Vita*'s composition.[219] In

addition, it constitutes a type of women's agency rare in the Middle Ages. Many

examples of women's preaching practices are present, whether literal or

metaphorical, and here the contemporary experience of Hildegard of Bingen

perhaps stands out as a strong example.[220] Images of women as priests, however,

are much fewer, and usually limited to heretical circles such as the Cathar and

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[219] Koopmans, "The Conclusion of Christina of Markyate's *Vita*," 665-66, 698. See also the relevent discussion in Chapter 1.

[220] Hildegard is known to have made at least four main preaching tours between 1159 and 1170, all of which saw her speaking at other monasteries; this may have been allowed partially because preaching within a cloistered environment was ultimately up to the abbot of the monastery. See Flanagan, *Hildegard of Bingen*, 165-68.

Waldensian movements.[221] We might look to women such as Elisabeth of

Schönau and her intercession in the "Virgins of Cologne" incident as an example

of a woman imbued with divine authority, but this is not quite fully analogous to

Christina's situation in the *Vita*, as Elisabeth is merely providing information

through divine inspiration, not guiding anyone in, or leading, particular religious

rituals.[222] However, the use of Christina as a priest/intercessor to reach the divine

is, of course, mirrored in the famous "Christina initial" and other scenes of the St

Albans Psalter. The illuminated capital of Psalm 105 presents the so-called

"Christina initial" and sports a caption above it which reads "spare your monks, I

ask, in mercy, oh Jesus."[223] The illumination itself shows a clear depiction of a

woman either interceding, or being asked to intercede, with Christ on behalf of a

group of men. Several scenes in the cycle of miniatures at the beginning of the

manuscript continue this equation, among them a depiction of the Virgin Mary

being charged with the same mission as the apostles at Pentecost and a depiction

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[221] On women's involvement in Cathar and Waldensian ritual practices, see
Peters, ed., *Heresy and Authority in Medieval Europe*, 106, 141. Biller, "The
Earliest Heretical Englishwomen" describes a late twelfth-century case of two
women, an older woman and her spiritual apprentice, accused of catharism. Such
instances were not, however, common in medieval England.

[222] Clark (trans.), *Elisabeth of Schönau: The Complete Works*, 18-19, gives a brief
discussion of the event, in which Elisabeth was called upon to provide visionary
insight into the collection of remains thought to belong to a group of martyred
virgins.

[223] Hildesheim, Dombibliothek MS St Godehard 1, p. 285. "Parce tuis queso
monachis clementia Jesu."

of the Magdalene announcing the resurrection to the apostles.[224] Here, again, a

woman becomes the intercessor between the human and the divine, though it is

interesting to note that the Magdalene's discovery of the empty tomb and the risen

Christ – and the "noli me tangere," especially interesting for the purposes of this

chapter – are not depicted anywhere in the Psalter. Nevertheless, these examples

establish the fact that a background for women's intercessory roles does exist at

St Albans, even if Christina's case is the most extreme. The most surprising part

about this imagery may not be that it was employed in Christina's case, but that

Christina then continued to be used by St Albans as a sort of Patron figure as late

as 1157, when the abbey obtained its favors from Adrian IV (described above in

Chapter 2).

There is more to be said, however, of the literary and social implications

of placing Christina in the role of *orator*, especially by way of echoing genuine

and pseudo-Anselmian prayers. As already mentioned, including Christina in this

discourse has the effect of investing her with a holy office, whether

metaphorically or, in some sense, literally. Another aspect of this influence is that

Christina emerges as an author of prayers, of works in the tradition of Anselm and

the devotional writers before him, many of which became assimilated into his

authorial corpus and his authorial status. Consider, for example, the prayer that

Christina utters early in her *Vita* when seeking to make a vow as a virgin, which I

quote here in full for comparative purposes:

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[224] Saint Albans Psalter (Dombibliothek Hildesheim, St Godehard 1), pp. 55 and
51. See Geddes, *The Saint Albans Psalter*, 20, 61 on this unusual depiction of the
Magdalene as "apostola apostolorum."

Lord, all my desire is before Thee, and my groaning is not hid
from Thee. Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none
upon earth that I desire besides Thee. My flesh and heart faileth,
but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever. For
lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: Thou hast destroyed all
them that go a-whoring from Thee. But it is good for me to draw
near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may
declare all Thy works…O Lord God, merciful and all powerful,
receive my oblation through the hands of Thy priest. For to Thee
as a surrender of myself I offer this penny. Grant me, I beseech
Thee, purity and inviolable virginity whereby Thou mayest renew
in me the image of Thy Son: who lives and reigns with Thee in the
unity of the Holy Spirit God for ever and ever, Amen. (41)[225]

Many of the characteristics of Anselmian prayer already discussed can be seen

here: the request for specific virtues, the emotional outpouring of praise upon

God, to whom the prayer is directed, and the emphasis on the speaker's position

in a human community, namely those who "go a-whoring." Beyond those the

role of intercessor – which Christina is to become herself – is also emphasized.

Despite the length of this prayer – it is much shorter than the majority of the

genuine and pseudonymous Anselmian prayers – it is easy to see the influence of

Anselmian devotion here. Moreover, the length of the prayer should not be seen

as a serious impediment to an argument for Anselmian influence. Many earlier

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[225] Talbot's translation. "Domine ante te omne desiderium meum et gemitus
meus a te non est absconditus. Quid enim michi est in celo et a te quid volui
super terram? Deficit caro mea et cor meum; Deus cordis mei et pars mea Deus
in eternum. Quia ecce qui elongant se a te peribunt: perdidisti omnes qui
fornicantur abs te. Michi autem adherere Deo bonum est. ponere in Domino Deo
spem meam...Domine Deus clemens et omnipotens. suscipe tu per manum
sacerdotis tui meam oblationem. Tibi namque in resignatione mei ipsius
denarium istum offero. Dignare queso candorem et integritatem virginitatis
conferre michi quo reformes in me ymaginem filii tui. qui tecum vivit et regnat in
unitate spiritus sancti Deus per omnia secula seculorum. Amen."

prayers which were later to be adopted into the Anselmian corpus have a similar

scope, and here I cite one example from Cotton Titus D.xxvi:

> Nay, again and again I seek to avoid you, oh all saints, in eternity:
> relieve me; have pity on me; raise me up; set me right; through you
> all sacred knowledge, wholesome remorse, honorable life, [and]
> praiseworthy union are given to me. And help me so that through
> you I might come to you.[226]

Since there is no known source for Christina's prayer, and it is, moreover, tailored

specifically to her own situation, it seems reasonable to assume that this is an

original composition for the *Vita*; but putting it into Christina's mouth changes the

literary impact entirely. Just as she becomes not merely a virgin, but a

metaphorical priest as well, she here becomes not merely an orator, but an author

as well.[227]

　　　　And it is no mean author that Christina is patterned after in the *Vita*. The

Vita author shapes Christina's image using as his model Anselm, an especially

noted author/authority of contemporary medieval Europe – in other words, an

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[226] "Iterum atque iterum immo in aeternum vos, o omnes sancti, deprecor:
subvenite mihi; miseremini mei; erigite me; corrigite me; per vos mihi detur
conscientia sancta, compunctio salutaris, vita honorabilis, consumatio laudabilis.
Et me adiuvate ut per vos perveniam ad vos." As reproduced in Bestul, "St
Anselm and the Continuity of Anglo-Saxon Devotional Traditions," 24-25.

[227] It is worth pointing out that Anselm's first letter to Mathilda of Tuscany, sent
as a preface to his *Orationes sive Meditationes*, encourage her to compose her
own prayers "after [the] example" (90) of Anselm's compositions. He also
encourages Mathilda to choose her own reading material from the collection. See
Bestul, "Self and Subjectivity," 153: "The reader…by the act of selection [of what
prayers to read], actively engages with the text of Anselm and endows it with
meaning." Though the preface and letters of Anselm are not included in Verdun
70, the textual lesson they taught seems to have been absorbed by the author of
the *Vita*; it is worth asking if these texts were available in another, lost source at
St Albans. See also Bestul, "Antecedents," 2 for a discussion on the impact of
Anselmian devotional writing on women's mysticism and authorship.

individual whose works were frequently circulated together under the author's

own name, a fact that has been noted by Thomas Bestul and Richard Southern.[228]

Although the devotional writings became Anselm's most popular work, his name

was also heavily associated with Mariology and Marian devotion in general, as he

was erroneously believed to have been the initiator of the doctrine of the

Immaculate Conception and a large number of prayers to the Virgin aside from

the three prayers now believed to be genuine.[229] The significance of glossing

Christina and her experiences with reference to an author such as Anselm cannot,

I believe, be overestimated by the modern reader. She could scarcely have been

assigned a more prominent figure as an analogue. Only patristic figures would

have presented more prominent models, and it is worthwhile to recall here the

characterization in the *Gesta Abbatum* of Roger as "equal in character to the

ancient fathers" (97).[230] The author of Christina's *Vita* appears to have found a

suitable model for her in a contemporary figure approaching a status similar to

that of the ancient fathers, and his interest in promoting her via her devotional

practices is evident throughout the *Vita*. It may be appropriate that the modern

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[228] Bestul, "The Verdun Anselm, 387, 389; Bestul, "St. Augustine and the *Orationes sive Meditationes*," 600; and Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape*, 91, 112. See also, however, Bestul, "The Collection of Private Prayers in the 'Portiforium' of Wulfstan of Worcester," 359, which points out that devotional works of Anselm occasionally circulated independently or incomplete groupings, though usually still with authorial attributions.

[229] Southern, *St Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape*, 106-07.

[230] "Par habitus antiquis patribus."

received text of this work breaks off with yet another reminder of the "prayers" (193) [precibus] for which Christina seems to have been so well known.

This re-reading of Christina as an honored member of the St Albans community, as opposed to a marginalized outcast, offers to the modern reader a chance to see her textual depiction as a product of St Albans' devotional culture, and, indeed, as a product of the devotional works that St Albans itself was helping to expand and distribute throughout England and the continent. In light of the biographer's probable use of Anselm, as well as Bede and the *peregrinus* plays of the St Albans liturgy, it seems highly likely that Christina's *Vita* was written in order to tie her to the cultural scene of St Albans, not to distance her from it.

What remains to be seen, however, is what place, exactly, St Albans found for Christina within its own culture and history. As much as Christina was depicted as a devotional orator and priest in the style of (pseudo-)Anselm, an English holy woman in the tradition of Bede's *Historia*, or a figure necessitating contemplation in the manner of Oswine, Alexis, or the Pilgrim-Christ, she could not, for obvious reasons, literally have occupied any of these specific roles, even if she could serve as a patron for the abbey in certain circumstances. In order to describe the place eventually carved out for Christina within St Albans' sense of itself as an institution and community, the sixth chapter of this study will examine St Albans liturgical manuscripts and the records of local holy men and women in the *Gesta Abbatum* in order to illustrate where Christina finally, after all her struggles – biographical as well as textual – found a home in the history of St Albans abbey. Before turning to this issue, however, it will be helpful to examine

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one further issue, discussed in the following chapter, to establish fully the fact that

Christina's reputation at St Albans was not solely dependent upon abbot

Geoffrey's influence.

Chapter 5

THE *PASSIO SANCTE KATERINE* AND THE *VITA SANCTAE CHRISTINAE*:

IMPLICATIONS OF THEIR DIVERGENCE

  The previous two chapters in this study have addressed how the

anonymous St Albans hagiographer promoted Christina in ways important to the

abbey itself by examing the stories of holy women in Bede's *Historia*

Ecclesiastica and the patterns of devotional prayer in the genuine and spurious

writings of Anselm. Texts at St Albans related to St Katherine of Alexandria

appear, at first glance, to have been another such influence, as Christine Walsh, in

her essay concerning the Norman influence on the spread of the cult of Katherine

in England, has suggested: "[t]he key to Geoffrey's interest in St Katherine can be

found in his relationship with Christina of Markyate…Christina had chosen, like

Katherine, to stay a virgin and not to marry…St Katherine would be a very

suitable role model for a woman such as Christina."[231] On the surface, the idea is

extremely probable, and Katherine texts at St Albans – particularly the *Passio*

Sancte Katerine by one "Ricardus," a unique *Passio* of Katherine surviving in

only one twelfth-century St Albans manuscript and possibly composed there[232] –

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[231] Walsh, "The Role of the Normans," 33.

[232] Thomson, *Manuscripts from St Albans Abbey*, 120 notes the St Albans
provenance of the manuscript containing the *Passio* – Cambridge, Corpus Christi
725 – but does not comment on the authorship of the *Passio*. Walsh, *The Cult of*
St Katherine of Alexandria, 122, 166, speculates – based on the preservation of
the Passio in a unique St Albans manuscript – that the "Ricardus" who identifies
himself as the author of the *Passio* in its epilogue was a monk of St Albans.

would appear to be the natural place of inquiry here, alongside Bede's and Anselm's texts.

However, readers of Christina's *Vita* will notice several problems when attempting to explore the influence of Katherine's *Passio*, and Geoffrey himself, on the composition of the *Vita*. Despite the apparently high level of interest in Katherine at St Albans, and the devotion of Christina's supposed main ally at the abbey, Geoffrey, to her cult, Katherine herself is not mentioned once in the course of the *Vita*. While unexpected – Christina refers to other virgin martyrs herself in the course of the text – neither Bede nor Anselm are mentioned in the course of the *Vita* either, and the holy women of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* are similarly absent. Nevertheless, St Albans monks are known to have worked directly with the writings of Bede and Anselm (and the pseudo-Anselmian authors), but the precise level of their involvement with the *Passio Sancte Katerine* is less firmly established. The certainty that St Albans authors worked closely with the texts of Bede and Anselm – expanding on material in Bede and editing and assembling works of Anselm – makes arguments for their influence on Christina's *Vita* easier to construct than an argument for their use of the Katherine *Passio*; all that can be said for certain about it is that it was copied there. Furthermore, close inspection of the *Vita* and the *Passio* reveals that there are few moments in the *Passio* that can be tied directly to aspects of Christina's experiences in the *Vita*. Some of Katherine's major attributes can not have been influences for Christina's story: while there are moments of generic similarity (especially in the case of virgin

martyr tropes, present in both the *Passio* and the *Vita*),[233] overall the two women

are characterized very differently, particularly when considering the finer points

of Katherine's depiction, such as the emphasis on her legal education, in the

Passio of Ricardus. Finally, the material in Bede and Anselm examined in the

previous two chapters is more or less unique for the time period, whereas virgin

martyr tropes could have come from a variety of sources – the Katherine Group[234]

vitae provide us with a useful, and nearly contemporary, examples of how various

classical virgin martyrs, such as Margaret, Juliana, or Katherine, all of whom

were venerated at St Albans,[235] could serve as models for woman recluses, and

make arguing for one in particular difficult to do.

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[233] For a discussion of these tropes as they apply to Christina's *Vita*, see Fanous, "Christina of Markyate and the Double Crown," 53-63. Scholarship focusing specifically on the *Passio* version of Katherine's legend is rare, but Lewis, *The Cult of St Katherine*, 46, 80-110 discusses some of the most widely expressed virgin martyr tropes in early versions of Katherine's story.

[234] A collection of twelfth-century *vitae* of Sts. Katherine, Margaret, and Juliana, the Katherine Group provides an important example of early Middle English hagiography; it is often associated with the *Ancrene Wisse*, a guide for women anchoresses. None of these texts, however, is known to have been present at St Albans during the time period in question.

[235] The surviving liturgical manuscripts from St Albans – Royal 2.A.x, Egerton 3721, Add. 81804, and St Godehard 1 [the St Albans Psalter], discussed below in Chapter 6 – include all three virgin martyrs in their calendars. Only Royal 2.A.x omits Juliana; Margaret and Katherine are included in every calendar (though Juliana and Katherine's feasts are omitted in the Add. 81804 calendar, which begins only with March and ends with August). Katherine and Juliana are included in every surviving St Albans litany (the "Luciana" of the St Albans Psalter litany is presumably a scribal error for "Juliana"), though Margaret is only included in the expanded list of virgin martyrs in the St Albans Psalter litany. Christina's *Vita*, moreover, implies that other virgin martyrs may be more likely candidates for influence over her story. Christina compares her and Burthred's situation to that of Cecilia and Valerian (51), and later in the *Vita* Margaret

The prominence of Katherine material at St Albans (in the liturgy as well as in hagiography) thus raises a different sort of question than that posed in the previous two chapters – namely, whether Katherine's *Passio* can be shown to have influenced Christina's *Vita* at all, and if not, why not. The stakes here are potentially very high for scholars of Christina's *Vita*. If Katherine is not used as a model in the *Vita*, it would imply, as discussed below, that Geoffrey's influence was not as extensive in Christina's promotion as has been so often assumed. Thus, the current chapter explores the problems in attempting to identify Katherine as an exemplar for Christina. In the end, it will be shown that the only scenes in the *Passio* – namely, Katherine's disputations, her crowning as a martyr, and her torments in prison – that could be tied to moments in Christina's *Vita* are too dissimilar from their corresponding sections in Christina's story to argue convincingly for Katherine as a major influence on the *Vita* in the same way as the texts of Anselm and Bede. The primary implication of this is that, if Katherine was not used as an exemplar for Christina, and Geoffrey was always noted as a particularly strong promoter of Katherine's representation in St Albans culture, then Geoffrey's role in the production of the *Vita* may have been much smaller than is usually assumed, and perhaps non-existent. Christina's

appears to the woman with the falling sickness to urge her to go to Christina for aid. Margaret also appears in the *Gesta Abbatum* (I.126), though not in any role that suggests she was seen as a predecessor for Christina. No major sources survive detailing cults of these saints at St Albans, however, and none of Christina's patrons, whether the author of the *Vita*, Geoffrey, or anyone else, is known to have been especially devoted to any of them.

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representation in the *Vita*, then, appears finally and completely as a product of the abbey as a whole, and not of a single rebellious supporter.

Before moving directly to a fuller discussion of Katherine's *Passio* at twelfth-century St Albans, a brief discussion of the variety of source materials for her cult there is needed. The evidence is not as extensive as might be desired, but is fairly wide-ranging when compared to that for twelfth-century cults of other saints, even those at St Albans. The major item must be the *Passio Sancte Katerine* (sometimes referred to by its incipit, "Ut super omne melos," to differentiate it from other *passiones* of Katherine), whose author is known only by his self-identification in the epilogue to the work, where he appeals to Katherine for her mercy and aid: "Therefore bring aid, I ask, to Ricardus!" (VI.723).[236] While a major source for views of Katherine at St Albans, its role in this capacity is problematic for a number of reasons. First, while Christine Walsh has speculated that the work may be from the pen of a St Albans author,[237] a final word on this matter cannot currently be established. Moreover, other scholars, notably Rodney Thomson, have noted that this manuscript of the *Passio* was eventually included in the catalogues of Christ Church Canterbury, and so even though it was likely produced at St Albans, this copy at least was certainly not

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[236] "Fer opem, precor, ergo Ricardo!" The *Passio* has been edited from the unique St Albans manuscript by A. P. Orbán in *Vitae Sanctae Katharinae*, Pars Prima (Turnholt: Brepols, 1992), 151-259.

[237] See above, n. 232.

kept there.[238] This presents a case similar to that of the Verdun manuscript,

discussed above in Chapter 4, but in that case the larger exportation of Anselmian

texts reveals St Albans as a major center of Anselmian study, where a canon of

his genuine and spurious prayers was assembled and then distributed to other

locations. In the case of the *Passio*, all that is known is that this copy, now the

only extant version of the work, most likely came from the pen of a St Albans

scribe.[239]

     Despite the open question of the poem's provenance, the *Passio* seems to

mesh comfortably with the other depictions of Katherine at St Albans. The text

displays a unique portrait of Katherine that emphasizes not only her typical

learning and erudition, but also focuses heavily on specific aspects of her

education – in a striking example of medieval comfort with anachronism, among

the most significant areas of Katherine's learning mentioned in the *Passio* are

civil and canon law (I.36-37). This echoes very closely a hymn to Katherine used

(though not authored) at St Albans and preserved in British Library, MS Royal

2.A.x, which equates the experiences of Moses as lawgiver and Katherine as saint,

both of which were began on Mount Sinai.[240] The hymn was not unique to St

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[238] Thomson, *Manuscripts from St Albans Abbey*, 120.

[239] Thomson, *Manuscripts from St Albans Abbey*, 120.

[240] Katherine's cult in particular has a long history of dependence on hymns,
including longer, narrative hymns. Walsh notes this effect in *The Cult of St
Katherine of Alexandria*, 26-27, and cites Grosdidier de Matons, "Un Hymne
Inédit à Sainte Catherine d'Alexandrie," which publishes an example of an early
Greek narrative hymn to Katherine. See also Jones, "The Norman Cult of Sts.
Catherine and Nicholas," 225-26.

Albans,[241] but if the *Passio* is any evidence, it contributed to a view of the virgin

martyr that is somewhat idiosyncratic when compared to more traditional views

of the saint as a rhetorician and healer.[242] The only thing the *Passio* does not give

any evidence of is what led to its composition. The author is clearly aware of

other *Passiones* of Katherine, particularly the Vulgate version,[243] with which his

version of the Katherine story shares a number of major characteristics, such as

the dispute with Maxentius' philosophers, her imprisonment and torture, her

conversion of many onlookers including Maxentius' queen, the episode of the

wheel, and, of course, her eventual martyrdom. The *Passio* of Ricardus is not

merely a variation upon other versions, however – one notable difference involves

the appearance of the Archangel Michael at the end of Katherine's disputations

with the rhetoricians in order to confirm the truth and sanctity of her arguments

(II.360-88), an event apparently unique in Katherine texts. It is necessary, then, to

ask what spurred the creation of a work of such length (the text runs to more than

3400 lines) and why additions such as Michael's appearance were inserted into

the usual framework of the narrative. It seems that this work could be another

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[241] Walsh, *The Cult of St Katherine of Alexandria*, 191 gives a translation (though not the original Latin) of the hymn from the "Canterbury Missal," Corpus Christi, Cambridge 270.

[242] Lewis, *The Cult of St Katherine of Alexandria*, xiii-xvii outlines the most common characteristics of Katherine's story, as displayed in the *Legenda Aurea* version of her life.

[243] The "Vulgate" Katherine was the most popular Katherine *vita* at the time of the composition of the *Passio* – over one hundred manuscript copies survive. This Latin text originated from Rouen, the center of Katherine's cult in Western Europe, and was the standard work on her life prior to the *Legenda Aurea* version. See Lewis, *The Cult of St Katherine of Alexandria*, 9.

example of St Albans' local production of hagiography, seen already in the cases of Oswine and Christina (discussed above in Chapter 2).

In addition to these more literary witnesses to Katherine's cult at St Albans, liturgical evidence – discussed below, in Chapter 6 – provides a clear picture of the importance of Katherine to the yearly cycle of worship at the abbey. Katherine's feast day is included in all surviving St Albans calendars,[244] and is indicated as a major feast in every calendar except that in the St Albans Psalter.[245] Furthermore, Katherine is included in all three surviving litanies of the liturgical manuscripts, including an entry in the Additional manuscript litany which gives Katherine's name in full display case lettering, as opposed to the common script of other entries in the list – a distinction otherwise granted only to the Virgin Mary and St Alban.[246] Katherine was, by Christina's time, a prominent enough virgin martyr to be expected to appear in some litanies and calendars of major monastic houses in England – the renewal of her cult in Rouen in the 1020s and 1030s (due to the appearance of finger bone relics, and the healing oil which her

[244] See above, n. 235.

[245] Why this should be the case is puzzling, especially in light of the Psalter's general interest in women saints and women's piety, regarding which see Chapter 6. Without making recourse to the possibility of a simple error in the Psalter's calendar, as the manuscript must have served as a display copy and not a functioning calendar for daily use, it is possible that this implies the Psalter's production for someone other than just Geoffrey or for a different religious community; see Matthew, "The Incongruities of the St Albans Psalter."

[246] While this fact seems to highlight Katherine as an important entry in the St Albans litany, it is unclear exactly what type of honor this implies, as Katherine's name is not given a double invocation, as is Alban's in twelfth-century St Albans litanies, and no other special instructions for her litanic invocation are known to be included in any manuscript.

bones were famously supposed to exude) and its transmission to England have been documented by several studies of her cult in the early Middle Ages.[247] However, the degree of prestige bestowed upon Katherine by St Albans monks in the calendars and hymnals shows the importance she held for the abbey, and makes the fact that St Albans was one of the first four houses in England to acknowledge her cult unsurprising.[248] Moreover, the difference between recognition of Katherine and that of other virgin martyrs – such as Cecilia and Margaret – confirms the necessity for an inquiry into Katherine's status in particular. While the other two virgin martyrs are also included in St Albans calendars and litanies, they are not indicated as major feasts. Only Juliana's feast in the St Albans Psalter calendar, added as a major feast at the same time as Geoffrey's obit, obtains a similar status in a St Albans calendar. The entries of Margaret, Juliana, Cecilia, or any other virgin martyr in litanic texts are not highlighted in any way beyond the simple fact of their inclusion.

This prominence of Katherine in the liturgy is most likely due to the influence of Abbot Geoffrey, who is known to have promoted the cult of Katherine at St Albans during his abbacy by elevating her liturgical celebration

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[247] See Walsh, *The Cult of St Katherine of Alexandria*, 63, 97-101; Jenkins, *The Cult of St Katherine of Alexandria*, 50-55; and Jones, "The Norman Cults of Sts. Catherine and Nicholas," 221-25, especially concerning the source of the healing power of the oil exuded from Katherine's bones.

[248] Walsh, "The Role of the Normans," 30. The other three houses to include early mentions of Katherine in liturgical material were Winchester, Christ Church Canterbury, and St Augustine's Canterbury.

there to the level of a major feast.[249] Geoffrey's devotion to Katherine, a devotion

that had its roots in personal as well as professional reasons, has been well

documented,[250] and as mentioned at the outset of this chapter, is of particular

importance here. Most of what is known comes directly from the *Gesta Abbatum*

Monasterii Sancti Albani, St Albans' record of its own history organized

according to the reigns of its abbots (though the events in each section concern

more than merely the abbot's own actions and influences). The *Gesta Abbatum*

does not indicate when exactly Katherine's cult appeared at St Albans, although it

is probable that it was introduced when Paul of Caen, during his abbacy of 1077-

1093, confirmed the reforms of Lanfranc and introduced Norman customs into the

abbey (52).[251] There are, however, several mentions of Katherine during the

section highlighting Geoffrey's abbacy which serve to illustrate her importance to

the sixteenth abbot of St Albans. The first of these is the well-known story of the

reason for Geoffrey's entrance into St Albans as a novice. While performing a

liturgical play of his own authorship, several copes Geoffrey had borrowed from

St Albans caught fire and were destroyed, prompting Geoffrey to offer himself to

the abbey in compensation. For the purposes of this chapter, of course, the most

interesting fact about the episode is that the play in question took the life of

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[249] Walsh, *The Cult of St Katherine of Alexandria*, 120.

[250] Walsh, "The Role of the Normans," 32-33, cited at the beginning of this essay, is one notable example. See also Lewis, *The Cult of St Katherine of Alexandria*, 53-55.

[251] See also Walsh, "The Role of the Normans," 30-31, and *The Cult of St Katherine of Alexandria*, 119.

Katherine as its subject, probably focusing – like most other material about her – on her confrontation with, and death at the hands of, the emperor Maxentius.[252] The *Gesta Abbatum* also includes a mention of Geoffrey's ordination (75), which happened on Katherine's feast day – the 25th of November – and a description of his elevation of Katherine's feast later in his abbacy (93). These three references are the only places where Katherine is mentioned in the lengthy account of Geoffrey's abbacy – it runs some twenty-five pages in Riley's edition, more than twice the length of the accounts of several other abbots – and, at first glance, it may seem to be scant evidence for Geoffrey's devotion to a saint supposedly so important to him. However, it should be noted that none of the accounts of other abbots in the *Gesta Abbatum* close to Geoffrey's time mention Katherine at all – not even the abbot, whoever he was, who first introduced her feast to the abbey. Furthermore, the account of Geoffrey's abbacy presented in the *Gesta Abbatum* should by no means be taken as a comprehensive record of his personal spirituality. The focus of the abbots' biographies in this lengthy work tends to be on institutional and public actions – much of the account of Geoffrey's abbacy concerns the discovery and translation of the relics of Alban and the effort to build a new shrine dedicated in his honor.[253] The personal and spiritual lives of the abbots tend to be ignored, and the fact that any mention of Katherine's

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[252] Such a work may have had a background in the liturgical narrative hymns about Katherine's life – see above, n. 240.

[253] Of the narrative of Geoffrey's abbacy contained in Riley, ed., *Gesta Abbatum Monasterii Sancti Albani*, vol. 1, 72-96, Geoffrey's (and the abbey community's) work on the shrine and relics of Alban are discussed in detail on pp. 80, 82-88, 92, and 96 – just under half of the narrative of his abbacy.

importance to Geoffrey, let alone three references, should be included is a testament to how much his devotion to her must have remained in St Albans' communal memory. The fact that Katherine is mentioned only in connection with Geoffrey may also, however, indicate that the memory of Katherine's cult at St Albans was tied particularly to Geoffrey and not to the history of the abbey itself, thus strengthening the idea proposed earlier in this chapter – that a tie to Katherine's influence is, *de facto*, a tie to Geoffrey's influence.

The diversity itself of sources for Katherine's importance at St Albans – historical, liturgical, and hagiographical – makes almost as great an impression as that of a more in-depth source such as the unique *Passio* of Ricardus. Together, all of these sources paint a picture of a saint whose influence at St Albans was particularly robust, and about whom many sources existed at the abbey for those interested in learning more about Katherine or devoting themselves to her. This makes it tempting to identify particular moments in Christina's *Vita* as evidence that Katherine played a particular role in shaping her hagiographical portrait. Indeed, several elements of the *Passio* seem, at first glance, to be analogues for facts or events described in Christina's *Vita*: Katherine is noted to be of noble birth (I.35-36), as is Christina (35), echoing a common trope of the virgin martyr mythos, and Christina's constant efforts to preserve her virginity are echoed at least once in Katherine's refusal of the emperor's offer of marriage (VI.424-31). As these examples rely only on brief and sometimes incidental moments in the text of the *Passio*, however, here I will focus on three specific episodes that receive treatment of at least moderate length in both the *Passio* and the *Vita*: the

importance of the women's ability to argue formally against their persecutors in rhetorical disputations; the depictions of physical sufferings and tortures as a part of their devotional patterns; and the crowning scenes in which each woman's accomplishments and sacrifices are acknowledged and confirmed by divine authority.

The first of these – skill in formal disputation and rhetorical argument – is arguably one of Katherine's most defining characteristics across the many versions of her cult and *vitae/passiones*, as well as the aspect that most distinguishes her from other virgin martyrs.[254] Therefore, any discussion of influence by Katherine-related material would, reasonably, have to begin here. Although Christina's *Vita* does not supply us with any material portraying her as skilled in formal disputations – cause enough to make her readers wonder whether Katherine forms much of a major backdrop for her story – one episode at least stands out as a possible echo of Katherine's skills: Christina's debate with Fredebert, prior of the church of the Virgin Mary from which Christina draws so much strength early in the *Vita*. While she is still living at home and fighting the influence of her parents, who are trying to convince her to consummate her marriage with Burthred, Fredebert steps forward to attempt to convince Christina of the rightness of the marriage. After Christina's father describes the situation,

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[254] See, for example, Fanous, "Christina of Markyate and the Double Crown," 53-63 which, in its discussion of the typical characteristics of the virgin martyr legends, does not cover the issue of disputation or formal education (the "match of wills" stage that Fanous describes does not need to involve formal disputation, only an effort on the part of antagonists to convince the virgin of the wrongness of her ideas).

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Fredebert begins his discussion of the matter, referring to Christina's "madness" (61) [insaniam] in her refusal to submit to her husband, and refers to Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians on the subject of marital subjection as well as the commandment to obey one's parents. He advises her to submit herself to the judgment of her husband and parents, but should they conflict, he counsels Christina to submit herself to her husband, continuing:

> Now, however, that they [i.e., her parents] order you to do
> something which we know on divine authority to be more
> important than obedience itself, and you do not listen to them, you
> are doubly at fault. Nor should you think that only virgins are
> saved: for whilst many virgins perish, many mothers of families
> are saved, as we well know. (60)[255]

Christina, for her part, begins her discussion with a humility topos, claiming that she is ignorant of the Scriptures, but that she will answer from "their sense" as she understands it from Fredebert. She claims a higher authority than her obedience to either husband or parents – namely, God, to whom she made the vow of virginity as a child – and then affirms Fredebert's point that "if many virgins perish, so rather do married women," though reworking his original assertion to focus on the fact that "if many mothers of families are saved…certainly virgins are saved more easily" (63).[256] The debate culminates in Christina's admission that she is saving herself for a "more wealthy" (63) [dicior] spouse than Burthred,

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[255] Talbot's translation. "Nunc autem cum [illud] tibi iubeant quod eciam obedi[encie] prelatum auctoritate divina novimus quando illos non audis: profecto rea [dup]pliciter existis. Nec putes quod sole [salvantur] virgines quando pereuntibus multis virginibus multas matresfamilias salvari non ignoramus."

[256] Talbot's translation. "multe virgines pereunt sicut vos dicitis et verum est: utique multo magis pereunt coniugate...si multe matres familias salvantur. quod vos dicitis similiter et verum est. utique multo facilius salvantur virgines."

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namely Christ, and a statement of her willingness to submit to a trial by iron in order to prove her desire and the truth of her statements.[257] Several points in this encounter might be compared to Katherine's disputations with Maxentius and his philosophers in the *Passio*, though Katherine's rhetorical techniques are different from, and more complex than, Christina's. In the beginning of the *Passio*, Katherine, upon meeting Maxentius, announces quite clearly her impression of Maxentius' favoring of pagan divinities, saying:

> Triumphant fame [and] the glory of an imperial rank (that you,
> wretch, defile, although sovereignty ought to be honored), oh king,
> have summoned what [my] mind, mouth, and tongue have desired:
> to set before [you] words about salvation as powerful tidings.
> (I.236-39)[258]

The term "incestas" and its cognates – not necessarily specifically related to incest, but, more generally, "to pollute, make impure" – are frequently used by Katherine to characterize pagan learning and culture, as opposed to those of "honorable" or "noble" Christian teaching, as, for example, later in her disputations with Maxentius' philosophers: "Ignorant of unchastity, but a lover of

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[257] On the trial by iron, see Hudson, *The Formation of the English Common Law*, 73-75. As Hudson states, the process involved "the accused…[carrying] a piece of red-hot iron for three paces. His [*sic*] hand was then bound, and examined on the third day after the trial. If it was infected, guilt was established; if clean, the person was cleared." The example of a trial by iron that Hudson then describes involves another woman accused. Furthermore, the trial by iron (and its companion, the trial by cold water) were more frequently offered than used – this could indicate either that Christina's case had come to a desperate point, and that she was resorting to desperate means of proof, or that the *Vita* author was making recourse more to a literary convention than an actual legal practice.

[258] "Fama triumphalis, decus ordinis imperialis, / Quem miser incestas, cum sit ueneranda potestas, / Rex, compellebant, quod mens, os, lingua uolebant, / Nuntia uirtutis prẹmittere uerba salutis."

honorable love" (II.124).[259] Here we can already detect a variance with

Christina's situation; whereas the latter is obliged to recognize and respond to

Fredebert's authority – particularly as a prior of the church to which she is so

devoted – Katherine's situation with Maxentius is clearly much more hostile, and

her rhetoric much more confrontational. Katherine, because of her status as the

guardian of the *honestus* knowledge of the Christian faith, has an authority that

Christina, by virtue of her conflict with other Christian authorities, lacks.

Katherine even finds herself at liberty to quote freely from the Psalms,

acknowledging openly that she is doing so:

> Behold, the prophet David, whom grace consecrated, whom God
> raised up from a low state; since as a shepherd he first fed his
> sheep, after he had been elevated from a most humble place, a king
> from a shepherd, he preaches with a divinely inspired mouth.
> (II.133-36)[260]

Christina, for her part, is obliged – as already mentioned – to claim ignorance of

the Scriptures, although her prayers and other dialogues frequently make use of

the Psalms and other scriptural texts, [261] probably under the influence of

Anselmian devotional models as discussed in Chapter 4.

The suffering of physical tortures or punishments is another factor that

seems to be a point of comparison between Christina's and Katherine's stories,

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[259] "Nescius incesti, sed amoris amator honesti."

[260] "Ecce propheta Dauid, quem gratia santificauit, / Quem sublimauit deus ex
humili, quia pauit / Pastor oues primo, post exaltatus ab imo / Rex de pastore
diuino predicat ore."

[261] Christina's first prayer, noted above in Chapter 4, is a good example of this
tendency. Her prayer at learning of Sueno's abandonment (57) is another, as is
her description of her situation to the Virgin Mary during her first vision (73-75).

though it, too, offers little in the way of concrete proof and is conceived of in very

different terms between the two works. Christina is subjected to beatings even at

her parents' home, most notably at the hands of her mother, who "pulled her hair

out and beat her until she was weary of it…leaving on her back such weals from

the blows as could never be removed as long as she lived" (75),[262] then made

Christina an object of derision among the family's assembled guests. As if

horrific scenes such as this one were not enough, Christina continues to suffer

once she is in hiding at Markyate with Roger, living as she does in a small,

confined cell which she is obliged to stay in all day long. The *Vita* author's

description of these sufferings is surprisingly graphic:

> The airless little enclosure became stifling when when [*sic*] she
> was hot. Through long fasting, her bowels became contracted and
> dried up. There was a time when her burning thirst caused little
> clots of blood to bubble up from her nostrils…more unbearable
> than all this was that she could not go out until the evening to
> satisfy the demands of nature. (102-04)[263]

Katherine, for her part, undergoes similar tortures and deprivations while in

prison on Maxentius' orders. Samuel Fanous has described Christina's

willingness to withstand threats of physical violence, including the trial by fire

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[262] Talbot's translation. "crinibus arreptam quamdiu lasata est verberavit...relictis
in dorso eius verberum vestigiis que nunquam potuerunt ipsa superstite deleri."

[263] Talbot's translation.   "Integerrima clausula nullum indulgebat refrigerium
estuanti. Longa inedia. contracta sunt et aruerunt sibi intestina. Erat quando pre
ardore sitis naribus ebullire<n>t frusta coagulate sanguinis. Hiis omnibus illi erat
intollerabilius. quod exire foras non nisi sero licebat. ad alia quedam necessaria
que natura postulabat."

mentioned above as well as her willingness to be cut to pieces by a sword,[264] possibly mirroring Katherine's own beheading. One oddity about Katherine's story as preserved in the *Passio*, however, is that the author gives surprisingly little description of Katherine's sufferings. Indeed, Christina's trials are described in much more graphic and disturbing terms than anything that Ricardus offers his readers. His sole description of Katherine's torments in prison is vague compared to other virgin martyr texts:

> With these things said, she is dragged away, stripped of her clothes, beaten with lashes, punished, and tortured in many ways. While the crowd of servants, obeying the commands of their lords, follows, [Maxentius] tortures [her]; after she is overcome, he withdraws. But the virgin, undisturbed, utters devout prayers of praise, hastening to the rewards which she awaits, and giving back thanks. (IV.247-52)[265]

The narrative then moves to a description of Maxentius' wonder at Katherine's steadfastness in the face of her tortures, and Katherine suffers physical harm again only at her beheading, near the end of the text. The striking variance from the typical virgin martyr fare cannot be missed by any reader of that genre – even the comparatively calm description of the torments in Clemence of Barking's *Vie* of Katherine includes specific mentions of her tender flesh and profuse bleeding at

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[264] Fanous, "Christina of Markyate and the Double Crown," 59.

[265] "His dictis rapitur, spoliatur ueste, feritur / Flagris, multatur, multisque modis maceratur. / Turba ministrorum dum preceptis dominorum / Parens succedit, dum torquet, uicta recedit. / Virgo sed immota laudum soluit pia uota / Ad bona quę tendit properans, gratesque rependit." The "uicta" of line 250 is puzzling (it is not clear why the crowd should be overcome, and it cannot refer to Maxentius), unless it is meant to refer ironically to Katherine; it is understood thus here.

the hands of her torturers (1457-64).[266] It is a distinguishing feature of the *Passio*

that it refuses to depend on scenes such as these for its narrative drive and sense

of pathos – more than almost any other version of the Katherine legend, the drama

of this *Passio* is an intellectual one, and Katherine's education and learning is

never far removed from the author's focus. Even Christina's experiences, which

are themselves not excessive within the genre, stand out as extreme against the

descriptions of Katherine's experiences here, and thus it seems that they must

have been inspired by other works than this version of the Katherine legend.

The crowning scenes in Katherine's and Christina's stories provide the

only point on which Katherine's *Passio* might be exerting influence over

Christina's *Vita*, though even here a direct influence seems improbable. Just

before her death, Katherine is comforted by a voice from heaven, stating:

> Behold, a blissful choir adorned by virginity is at hand coming to
> meet you; for you, all the assemblage comes out in a meeting
> above and rejoices to accompany [you] upwards as the devout
> company sings songs for you and crowns you, taken away from the
> earth, received by a heavenly throne. (VI.592-96)[267]

The celestial nature of Katherine's martyr crown is mirrored in the crown of

virginity granted to Christina in a similarly celestial manner. In response to her

doubts about her worthiness to make an official vow of virginity with the church,

a troop of angels comes to Christina at night and offers her a miraculous crown,

stating "[t]his has been sent to you by the Son of the Most High King. And know

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[266] See Watt, *Medieval Women's Writing*, 78.

[267] "Obuius ecce chorus tibi uirginitate decorus / Occurrit lętus, superum totus tibi
cętus / Exit in occursum gaudetque reducere sursum, / Vt pia turba sonet tibi
cantica teque coronet / Terris ereptam, cęlesti sede receptam."

that you are one of His own. You marvel at its beauty and the craftsmanship: but

you would not marvel if you knew the art of the craftsman" (129).[268] The nature

of both ceremonies, and the accompanying assurances of the women's places in

heaven, cannot but strike readers as similar – one important difference between

the two scenes, of course, is that Christina does not receive her crown as a

preliminary to her own death. While she does become convinced, later, of the

imminence of her own death due to a voice comforting her in regard to her final

destination (159), this is much later in the *Vita* and the two episodes were clearly

not meant to be connected. The fact that both the *Vita* and the *Passio* were

present (and both possibly written) at St Albans in the mid-twelfth century opens

the possibility of influence here, though as the torture and debate scenes have

shown, this influence could not have been more than a periodic one; the use of

Katherine as a consistent, planned pattern for Christina is highly unlikely.

Moreover, crowning scenes such as this were certainly not confined to these two

texts throughout the whole of the Middle Ages,[269] and if one of these examples

were present at St Albans, then the need for Katherine as an exemplar for

Christina disappears entirely.

       The question of influence becomes an even less probable one when the

more obvious differences between Christina's and Katherine's stories – episodes

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[268] Talbot's translation. "hanc tibi mittit unicus filius altissimi regis. et scito quod una es de suis propriis. Speciem miraris et opus. que nequaquam mirareris si nosses artem opificis."

[269] For example, Jerome, *Epistula* 22.41.1-5, describes similar scenes of virgins being thus miraculously crowned, casting more doubt on even this one point of possible influence on Christina's story from Katherine's *Passio*.

in one with no clear parallel in the other whatsoever – are examined. The most

striking divergence between the two portrayals can be seen between the lack of

any formal education for Christina in the *Vita* and the emphasis in the *Passio* on

Katherine's education and, more specifically, her connection with legal concerns

that seems to have been characteristic of St Albans' views of her cult. This

emphasis begins early in the *Passio* – soon after the prologue which opens the

work, Katherine is introduced, and is described as

> Educated with special and diligent care in the laws of the fathers
> and civil law, gifted in all Greek learning as well as Latin, and
> having been made the teacher of her teachers, she could not be
> defeated by the fortification of such a rampart, she did not err on
> [those] walls, she who radiated with these dowries, having been
> taught to defeat false arguments and to solve problems [that were]
> singularly obscure and woven into these her times. (I.36-43)[270]

Moments like this are not rare in the *Passio*, but this moment is especially notable

both because it creates a first impression of its version of Katherine and because it

contains a mention of most of the educational qualities associated with her

throughout the poem. Most curious is the distinction between Katherine's

knowledge of "laws of the fathers" [patrum…leges] and "civil law" [civica iura],

apparently a distinction between church and secular law, but a distinction totally

foreign, of course, to early fourth-century Alexandria.[271] Also strange is the

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[270] "docta patrum speciali / Ac vigili cura leges ac civica iura, / Omni doctrina
Greca simul atque Latina / Predita, doctorum doctrix et facta suorum / Non poterit
falli tanti munimine valli / Septa nec errabat, que dotibus his radiabat, / Fallere
docta modos fallaces, solvere nodos / Unique perplexes et ad hec sua tempora
nexos."

[271] Hudson, *The Formation of the English Common Law*, 48-50, details the
establishment of separate jurisdictions for church and secular courts soon

report of Katherine's knowledge of all types of "Greek and Latin learning"

[doctrina Greca…atque Latina], especially surprising as even other versions of the

Katherine legend do not present such a well-educated picture of the saint.

Clemence of Barking's *Vie* of Katherine, written nearly contemporaneously with

Christina's *Vita*, certainly spends a large portion of its narrative emphasizing

Katherine's argumentative and rhetorical skills in the regular scenes of her

debates with Maxentius' philosophers (199-1108), but it contains no such claims

of classical or legal learning on Katherine's behalf. Katherine's surpassing of her

teachers – even to the extent of becoming their "teacher" [doctrix] – adds to the

dramatic presentation of her intellectual achievements as well as prefiguring her

triumph over the philosophers that Maxentius brings forward to defeat her in

public debate.

   This unusually high amount of emphasis on Katherine's education

continues throughout her confrontation scenes with Maxentius, with Katherine

frequently relying on the concept of "reason" [ratio] and deploring Maxentius'

"error" [error] (e.g., I.262-86, II.103-12, II.337-40, III.2-7) to the point that the

two terms come to be associated thematically with these two principle characters

of the *Passio*. Despite assertions throughout the *Passio* that Katherine's

knowledge is better than the knoweldge obtained through classical learning – or

that her knoweldge is the appropriate lense through which to understand classical

learning – comments she makes such as "nothing of discourse for me, unless it

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following the Norman Conquest. Of particular interest is the fact that distinctions
between the two courts appear to have been remarkably clear, as there is "little
evidence of conflict" (50) between the two institutions, at least prior to 1154.

accords with reason" (III.5)[272] almost serve to undercut such a characterization

and threaten to present her as a patron, not of the "laws of the fathers" [leges

patrum] but of the classical philosophers. Katherine's own assertion that she does

not value ancient, pagan authors reads, for all modern audiences can tell, like a

summa of medieval knowledge of classical learning, and make us wonder how

uninterested Katherine is, exactly, in subjects that she appears to know so well:

> For I do not praise the doctrine of Philo nor that of Plato, not the
> ethics of Socrates nor the treatises of Hippocrates, though they be
> hundreds, not the work of Galen and not the many Pythagorean
> doctrines beyond this, though they be praised – they are seen by
> me through the law that came after. Nothing of those pleases [me],
> nor Aristotle, first among logicians. (III.14-20)[273]

Nor does the list stop there – it goes on to include Homer, though in this case the

author of the *Passio* almost certainly had in mind the Latin epitomes through

which most western medieval readers acquired their knowledge of the poet.[274]

Nevertheless, this would still fall back on a large body of Latin writing, which

only continues to pile up in support of Katherine's education. This trend

continues through to the very end of the *Passio*, where even as Katherine is on her

way to be beheaded, she upbraids those who are weeping for her impending

death: "but the virgin censures their *error* and soothes [their] anguish" (VI.485-

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[272] "Nil mihi sermoni, nisi concordet rationi."

[273] "Nam neque Phylonis laudo neque dogma Platonis, / Non ethicam Socratis neque tractatus Ypocratis, / Quamuis centeni sint, sed nec opus Galieni / Multaque preterea neque dogmata Pithagorea, / Quamuis laudentur, michi iure sequenda uidentur. / Nil placet istorum nec Aristoteles logicorum / Princeps."

[274] McKinley, "The Medieval Homer: The *Ilias Latina*" prints an edition and translation of one of these epitomes, along with an introduction.

86; emphasis added).[275] The terminology here recalls, again, the classical,

formulaic debates of Katherine and Maxentius, and the "laws of the fathers"

[leges patrum] and "civil law" [civica iura] that Katherine relies upon to sustain

her in those situations.

Nor is the St Albans community limited to merely the *Passio* for

depictions of Katherine in this light. A brief liturgical hymn to Katherine,

preserved in the St Albans manuscript now known as British Library, MS Royal

2.A.x, fol. 88v, presents Katherine as a second Moses – that is, a new lawgiver:

"God, who gave the law to Moses on the summit of Mount Sinai, and

miraculously brought the body of your blessed virgin and martyr Katherine there

through your angels, we ask that by her favors and intercession we might have the

strength to come through to the mountain which is Christ."[276] The difference

here, of course, is that while Moses received the law on top of Sinai, in

Katherine's case it is her body which is taken to the mountain and left there.

Nevertheless, the parallel is clear: it was from Mount Sinai that Moses brought

forth the law, and it was from Mount Sinai that Katherine's cult spread forth

during the Middle Ages.

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[275] "Sed harum / increpat errorem uirgo lenitque dolorem."

[276] "Deus qui dedisti legem Moysi in summitate Montis Synai & in eodem loco
per angelos tuos corpus beatę Katerine virginis & martyris tuę mirabiliter
collocasti. precamur ut eius meritis & intercessione ad montem qui xpistus est
ualeamus pervenire." The hymn was not unique to St Albans; see above, n. 241.
It clearly contributes, however, to the legal interpretation of Katherine played out
in the *Passio*, and its presence in the Royal manuscript shows that, whatever its
dates of use at St Albans, it was being employed during Christina's time there.

As already mentioned, the most interesting point about the emphasis on

Katherine's legal and classical education, at least for the purposes of this chapter,

is that it finds no parallel in Christina's *Vita* whatsoever.   The confrontation with

Fredebert, described above, happens on entirely different terms than Katherine's

confrontations with Maxentius in the *Passio*. When Christina's intelligence or

quick thinking is praised, it tends to be praised in comments much like the

introductory phrase to the description of her escape from Ranulph: "hear, then,

how prudently she acted" (42).[277] This characterization has been discussed

several times, perhaps most famously by Robert Hanning, who notes Christina's

reliance on personal ingenuity, instead of a more formalized academic

knowledge.[278] Indeed, no description is given throughout the *Vita* of any

education received by Christina, and the impression seems to be that she received

none. We are told that she owned a psalter (*Vita* 99), but not that she knew how

to read Latin, or even Anglo-Norman; the only evidence we have to indicate her

familiarity with any particular language is that Roger spoke English, that is to say,

Old English, to her (107). Christina's authority and intelligence are certainly not

demeaned in the *Vita*, however, and the discussion here should not be taken to

imply anything along that line – her encounters with Ranulph, Fredebert, and the

licentious but unnamed priest (not to mention Geoffrey himself, in his less-than-

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[277] Talbot's translation.   "Audi ergo quam prudenter egit."

[278] Hanning, *The Individual in Twelfth-Century Romance*, 34-50; see also Gray,
"Christina of Markyate: The Literary Background," 14.

shining moments)[279] are no less impressive than Katherine's navigation of her

conflict with Maxentius. The point is that she approaches them very differently,

with almost no hint of influence from Katherine's story whatever. Prudence and

ingenuity, not the laws of the fathers, inform Christina and her efforts to preserve

her virginity.

This one important difference between Christina's and Katherine's

hagiographies shows clearly the difficulty in claiming influence between the two

women's depictions. There are, however, other minor discrepancies between

conceptions of Katherine and Christina, especially when one considers aspects of

Katherine's cult and the typical roles of virgin martyrs in mid twelfth-century

England. Katherine's own cult, to begin with, was fairly new to England in

Christina's time and had a few constant aspects that probably would have

influenced the St Albans community's view of her and her saintly roles.[280] The

first among these is directly related to a central problem with Katherine's early

cult: a lack of physical relics with which to inspire devotion to her.[281] This

problem was tentatively solved in the ninth and tenth centuries by the distribution

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[279] Christina's encounter with Fredebert has already been discussed above; for the
other events referred to here, see Talbot, ed., *The Life of Christina of Markyate*,
43, 115-19, and 135-39, respectively.

[280] It should be noted that, unlike the majority of the material examined in this
study, it can not be proven that all of the following characteristics of Katherine's
cult were known at St Albans in the twelfth century. However, the consistent
nature of her veneration – preserved in the only periodic emergence of her cult in
the early twelfth century as well as via direct lines of influence from major cult
centers such as Rouen and Winchester – make it extremely likely that most, if not
all, of these aspects of the cult were known to Christina's local contemporaries.

[281] See Walsh, *The Cult of St Katherine of Alexandria*, 5.

of vials of the oil that was supposed to have exuded from Katherine's bones, and which was able to heal virtually any ailment. Emphasis on this miracle within her cult only increased when Katherine's finger bone turned up in Rouen sometime in the 1020s or 1030s.[282] While this aspect of Katherine's power was probably added to her cult based on the model of St Nicholas – a saint with whom she was frequently paired, and stories of whose relics and healing oils can be shown to have exercised a lexicographical influence over Katherine's corresponding post-mortem miracles[283] – the urgent need of some sort of relic for Katherine led to a wholesale adoption and promotion of her healing power beyond that of any known example in medieval devotion to Nicholas. It is difficult to know, though, exactly how to judge whether or not this material was deemed useful as a background to Christina's story for one simple reason: postmortem miracles of saints rarely bore any substantial relation to their activities in life. As Sarah Salih has said, "[p]rayers of invocation to saints often concentrated on their present heavenly power and glory rather than on the details of their past earthly lives."[284] Katherine's own cult bears impressive witness to this: notable forms of her intercession, aside from healing, include being invoked to find suitable husbands

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[282] Walsh, "The Role of the Normans," 21.

[283] Jones, "The Norman Cult of Sts. Catherine and Nicholas," 225.

[284] Salih, "Introduction: Saints, Cults, and *Lives*," 5.

for young women, to cure sterility, and to serve as a model for anchoresses[285] – none of which bears any similarity to actual episodes in *vitae* or *passiones* of Katherine. Christina's *Vita* does, however, have a healing episode, in which Christina cures a woman of the falling sickness by blessing water and having the woman drink it (119-21). Interestingly, however, Christina is adamant that everyone present should "join with her in praying for the mercy of God on this matter...to ensure that the grace of recovery should be attributed to their merits, not to hers" (121).[286] While this episode has little to distinguish itself from other stories of healing miracles, the wording used deserves our attention. Christina and the others only pray to God for "mercy" [misericordium], and the name of Katherine – or of any other saint for that matter – is not included anywhere in the episode. Thus, beyond the fact that Christina and her companions effect the sick woman's health through their prayer, the episode contains little that suggests any influence from material associated with Katherine and her healing abilities.

Nor do other stories at St Albans of virgin martyrs seem to have been inspirations for events in Christina's *Vita*. The late twelfth-century wall paintings at St Albans include no examples of Katherine or any other virgin martyrs (although St Zita of Lucca, known as a patron of domestic servants, is included next to portraits of St Alban and Amphibalus – a possible echo of Christina and

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[285] For each of these characteristics, see, respectively, Salih, "Introduction: Saints, Cults, and *Lives*," 7; Walsh, "The Role of the Normans," 27; and Withycombe, "'O mihti meiden! O witti wummon!'," 104.

[286] Talbot's translation. "Reliqui secum in commune flagitarent super hoc Dei misericordiam...ut non sibi sed illorum meritis videretur prestita gracia sanitatis."

the undergarments, sandals, and mitres she is remembered to have produced).[287]

The only other invocation of a virgin martyr mentioned anywhere near the

account of Geoffrey's abbacy in the *Gesta Abbatum* is of no help in this case

either – it involves abbot Robert (1151-66) calling on the aid of Margaret to avoid

a shipwreck (126).[288] Indeed, while Samuel Fanous has argued convincingly for

the use of virgin martyr tropes throughout the *Vita*,[289] it is hard to know exactly

how these tropes made their way to the *Vita*, other than possibly through the

Aedilthryda material in Bede's *Historia*, as discussed above in Chapter 3. The

most tempting option for the influence of virgin martyr tropes on the *Vita* may be

the story of Cecilia and Valerian, which Christina recounts to Burthred on their

wedding night, but this is hardly satisfactory as their story bears few similarities

to Christina's (Burthred, whatever else he may be, is no Valerian), and

furthermore, there is no major text for Cecilia's legend known to have been

present at St Albans to compare to the *Vita*. For the purpose of this chapter,

however, the important issue to note is that invocations of several virgin martyrs

other than Katherine at St Albans – whether Cecilia, Margaret, or Aedilthryda –

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[287] Roberts, *The Wall Paintings of St Albans Abbey*, 19-20. The omission of Katherine from this series of wall-paintings, some of which were produced a generation after Geoffrey's abbacy, provides further indication that Katherine's cult was associated more with Geoffrey himself than the abbey in general.

[288] The episode is curiously reminiscent of Germanus' appeal for divine aid to escape a storm at see in Bede's *Historia*, I.17. The echo may be intentional – St Albans authors were doubtlessly familiar with the episode immediately following this one, where Germanus visits Alban's tomb and takes with him a handful of soil stained with the protomartyr's blood. Regarding St Albans' uses and adaptations of material from the *Historia*, see above, Chapters 2 and 3.

[289] See above, n. 233.

casts a high degree of uncertainty about where virgin martyr tropes came from to influence Christina's story, if there is even a single source to which we can now point. Tropes themselves are far from sufficient to establish a connection with Katherine, and if the textual evidence of the *Vita* is any indication, then its author does not seem to have been particularly concerned to make any such connection.

In the meantime, however, a few more words should be said on the problems of ascribing any influence on Katherine's part over Christina's *Vita*, and on the implications of those problems for the goals of this study. As noted at the outset of this chapter, examining specific influences of Katherine-related texts on the *Vita* is difficult, not least because characteristics associated with Katherine tended to be shared by many other early virgin martyrs – or, in the case of her healing capabilities, with other saints whose cults developed around the same time as Katherine's, such as that of Nicholas. When dealing with twelfth-century Katherine material extant at St Albans, these problems are no less significant. While several scenes from the Katherine *Passio* of Ricardus can be shown to be vaguely similar to material in Christina's *Vita*, few, if any, can be definitively tied to the latter text – and, in the face of so many other possible sources, an analogue is not sufficient evidence to rely on. The disputations, tortures, and crowning scenes discussed above, while displaying similarities between the two texts, cannot be used to prove influence one way or the other, as any connection between them has been seen to be problematic. Furthermore, there is much in the *Passio* that could have been used by the author of Christina's *Vita* but was not, the legal and educational background being a prime example. Readers of Christina's

Vita might also wonder why no examples of divine intervention occur in her text, especially when such events are frequent in Katherine's *Passio*.[290] Indeed, Christina's *Vita* has been frequently noted for the absence of such events,[291] and this highlights again the unlikelihood of any influence of the *Passio* on the *Vita*.

The hagiographer's apparent lack of interest in connections between St Albans' Katherine material and Christina's *Vita* could be treated as fairly insignificant – there was certainly no lack of material at St Albans after which to pattern Christina, after all – except for one detail. The knowledge of Geoffrey's characteristic devotion to Katherine, as emphasized in the *Gesta Abbatum* through his composition of a dramatic representation of her life, his ordination on her feast day, and his elevation of her feast raises a possibility that appears striking in the light of contemporary Christina scholarship: that Geoffrey himself, although he was clearly a major tie between Christina and St Albans during his lifetime, as both the *Vita* and the *Gesta Abbatum* attest, may not have actually been connected to the composition of the *Vita* at all, or at least not as Christina's sole supporter. This does more than simply dispel the romantic conception of Christina and Geoffrey's relationship as the only factor contributing to her promotion, for if Geoffrey was not driving the process, someone else at St Albans was. Also, as

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[290] Two notable examples include the archangel Michael's appearance to affirm the validity of Katherine's arguments (II.360-66) and the well-known scene of the destruction of Katherine's wheel (VI.557-63).

[291] Hanning, *The Individual in Twelfth-Century Romance*, 45 is one notable example, though Fanous, "Christina of Markyate and the Double Crown," 53 has more recently drawn attention to the same issue, arguing that this element of the *Vita* has hitherto made it harder to see the underlying hagiographical aspects of the text.

the community as a whole was comfortable using Christina as a patron figure

before Adrian IV in their efforts to obtain from him a writ of *Incomprehensibilis*

(as discussed above in Chapter 2), our idea of Christina and her relationship with

St Albans appears to be in need of drastic revision. The only question that

remains to be asked, then, is what other factors prompted the author of the *Vita*, or

his supervisor, to begin such a work if Christina was never to be advanced to

candidacy for sainthood.

In order to answer this question, this study will now move to an

exploration of the immediate context for Christina in mid twelfth-century St

Albans: the tendency to promote, though not to seek sanctification for, local holy

figures immediately associated with the abbey as a way of publicizing itself to

Christendom at large – a practice that was described at the outset of this study,

concerning the case of Adrian IV and the appeal that the monks of St Albans

made to him in order to secure the future they so ardently desired for their abbey.

The extreme emphasis on local hagiography produced primarily for local

purposes is characteristic of St Albans' liturgical and hagiographical practices,

and viewing the *Vita* in this context provides several new points of comparison

and influence that establish the most convincing, and most revealing, context

within which to view St Albans' version of Christina.

Chapter 6

LITURGY, LITANY, AND COMMUNITIES OF SAINTS AT ST ALBANS

The various chapters of this study have so far discussed both the

possibility of reading Christina as a celebrated patron of St Albans Abbey as well

as the means by which Christina's *Vita* was authored so as to mirror significant

texts already present within the abbey, such as Bede's *Historia* and the devotional

prayers of (pseudo-)Anselm. The previous chapter has also discussed reasons that

we may have to consider Christina's presentation in the *Vita* as a product of the

abbey as a whole and not merely a result of the special interests of Abbot

Geoffrey. Having examined the textual precedents at St Albans for Christina's

Vita, it is, thus, time to return to the ground opened by the second chapter of this

study and ask what, after all, was the goal of St Albans in authoring the *Vita* in the

first place. If, as the discussion of her textual precedents at St Albans has shown,

she was seen as a figure of importance to the entire abbey and not merely to one

person, even if that person happened to be the abbot, why was she not more

widely employed as a patron, as she was in the case of St Albans' appeal to

Adrian IV for a writ of *Incomprehensibilis*? I argue in this chapter that

Christina's role at St Albans was never to be employed as a universal patron saint,

but rather as a figure of local devotion and an exemplar of local piety – a service

she was well-suited to perform, especially in light of her material gifts to Adrian.

The goal of this chapter is to support this view of Christina's role at St

Albans by employing the comparatively large amount of surviving liturgical

material from twelfth-century St Albans Abbey, especially its liturgical calendars

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and litanies, as well as its accounts of its own local history, as preserved in Christina's *Vita* and, especially, the *Gesta Abbatum*. From the period around the mid-twelfth century, four manuscripts with nearly complete liturgical materials survive, containing between them four liturgical calendars and three litanies that serve as the basis of discussion here. The aim of the chapter is not merely to discuss these items as sources of historical context, but rather as texts themselves. Liturgical elements from St Albans, I argue, can be read in such a way as to reveal a local emphasis within the supposedly universal celebration of the Church, to which the liturgy was meant to serve as a gateway for its community. In the case of liturgical records of Alban[292] himself and his feasts at St Albans it is important to ask what, in fact, is being celebrated: a martyr of the universal church, or a local patron saint and the protomartyr of England? As Arnaud Join-Lambert has asked in his study of modern litanies, "what is the Church holding up to view when there is too great a personalization?"[293] Is the true object of worship St Alban and his community, or rather the divinity and Church for which Alban was

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[292] The first Christian martyr in Britain, Alban's death traditionally occured on June 22nd, although the precise year is disputed; Bede places it sometime during the persecutions of Diocletian and Maximianus Herculius. After hiding a fleeing Christian – later identified by hagiographers as one Amphibalus (see the Conclusion, below), Alban himself converts and, in the tradition of the earliest Christian martyrs, refuses to recant his faith before a judge, leading to his own martyrdom and the simultaneous death of his executioner. The town of St Albans, previously known to the Romans as Verulamium, subsequently derived its name from Alban. During Christina's time in St Albans, Bede's version of Alban's martyrdom appears to have still been the standard one; soon afterwards, however, William of St Albans and Matthew Paris both produced *vitae* of the martyr; see Wogan-Browne and Fenster (trans.), *The Life of Saint Alban by Matthew Paris*.

[293] Join-Lambert, "The Personalization of the Litany," 225.

martyred? A discussion of this tension in liturgical texts ultimately paves the way

for an examination of the impact of liturgical activities upon other texts produced

at St Albans, particularly in the cases of Christina's *Vita* and the records of local

holy men and women in the *Gesta Abbatum*. The depiction of Christina in the

Vita, I argue, was constructed after the fashion of the St Albans liturgy as an

object of local (as opposed to universal) devotion; focusing on this method

explains not only the way in which Christina is linked with St Albans throughout

the *Vita*, but also why her cult did not spread beyond St Albans (and possibly

Markyate) except when, as in the case of the appeal to Adrian IV, it was

immediately beneficial for St Albans to present Christina as a patron of the abbey.

Despite their frequent mention in both literary and historical studies,

liturgical texts, whether calendars or other types, have never made a large place

for themselves within scholarship on medieval literature. They are, as Bruce

Holsinger has remarked, "both everywhere and nowhere in the cultural history of

pre-modern England."[294] Often ignored or passed over for primary reading in

favor of more narrative sources such as chronicles, hagiography, or sermons,

liturgical texts are most frequently used as a type of handy wellspring of cultural

context – readily available to be mined for information on what saint was

celebrated where, how they were celebrated, and at what time.[295] Offices of the

saints – when they are even edited – are cited even less frequently and usually to

the same end: that is, as static historical context, rather than as texts in their own

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[294] Holsinger, "Liturgy," 295.

[295] See, for example, Karkov, "The Body of St Æthelthryth."

right. It must be admitted that part of the difficulty – at least in the case of the

early and high medieval periods – lies in the paucity of extant source material. In

the case of Anglo-Saxon England, for instance, only twelve items that could be

termed "mass books" survive from the whole period, and of those, only half are in

any sense complete.[296] However, liturgical manuscripts form a significant body

of surviving written material, and, during the Middle Ages, made up a large

amount of the written material encountered by those with any sort of formal

training in Latin (especially monastics), and may also have been used by illiterate

readers (i.e., those lacking knowledge of Latin). On a daily basis, monks and

nuns, as well as resident friars and canons, perused, read through, and read out of

these books, in addition to creating them at astounding rates in scriptoriums.

Furthermore, beyond their immediate status as written material, liturgical books

contain, it might be said, records of the daily activities of those who used them –

the saints and festivals celebrated on an annual basis, catalogues of hymns and

other material sung in an annual or even weekly cycle, and litanies that, in

addition to a type of contemplative function, served as inventories of the saints

who were closest to a community's sense of itself and its own role within the

larger Christian world.

    The liturgical calendars from twelfth-century St Albans certainly represent

the widest picture of the community's annual celebrations. To begin with, when

compared side-by-side it seems that there are fewer differences between the

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[296] Holsinger, "Liturgy," 301.

calendars than has been implied.[297] This may be due in part to Francis Wormald's

presentation of the four calendars,[298] which takes the St Albans Psalter's calendar

as a base text and proceeds to list ways in which the other calendars differ.

However, the St Albans Psalter, as has already been discussed in previous

scholarship and as will be briefly re-examined below, is known to vary from

traditional St Albans usage in both its catalogue of feasts and in other ritual texts,

including its version of the litany. Therefore, using it as a base text of the twelfth-

century St Albans litany is likely to create misconceptions about what types of

saints were celebrated there.

  The three other manuscripts under discussion here – British Library MSS

Royal 2.A.x, Egerton 3721, and Additional 81804 – are for the most part

consistent in their presentation of feasts, though even here some variations occur

which cannot be entirely accounted for by dating some manuscripts earlier or

later.[299] Numerous feasts in St Albans calendars are significant for Christina's

Vita as well as other literature discussed in this study. Women virgin martyrs

make several appearances, as might be expected. Among the more prominent

examples are Anglo-Saxon virgins such as Juliana, who appears on February 16th

in the Egerton calendar (though not in the Royal calendar) and Aedilthryda, who

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[297] Geddes, *The St Albans Psalter*, 89-93 goes so far as to posit that the calendar
in the Psalter was not based on the St Albans liturgy at all but rather on calendars
from Ramsey Abbey, near Huntingdon.

[298] Pächt, Dodwell, and Wormald, *The St. Albans Psalter*, 32-45.

[299] Thomson, *Manuscripts from St Albans Abbey*, 92, 94, and 100, dates all of
these manuscripts in the mid-twelfth century.

appears consistently in the Egerton, Royal, and Additional calendars on June 23rd (Aedilthryda's translation is also listed on October 17th in the Egerton calendar). Several other virgin martyrs of the universal Church make their usual appearances, such as Cecilia on November 22nd and Katherine on November 25th (both in all calendars), both of whom bear a great deal of significance for Christina's story – Cecilia by her status as an exemplar for Christina during her attempts to persuade Burthred of the value of a chaste life, and Katherine for her conspicuous absence from Christina's story despite Geoffrey's high level of devotion to Katherine, as discussed in the previous chapter. Other saints receive the expected high level of attention, given St Albans' interests, and a careful examination of the calendar reveals several preferences for and slightings of saints that reflect a high level of influence for local interests. Alban himself is frequently represented, with the primary feast on June 22nd, the invention on August 2nd, and an octave curiously on August 8th. The usual Anglo-Saxon saints make their appearances, such as Cuthbert on March 20th and his translation on September 4th, though his feast is not a major one in any St Albans calendar, as it is in several surviving liturgies from other houses. Oswine is especially prominent of course, though interestingly enough his feast on August 20th is replaced by Oswald in the Additional calendar – possibly due to a scribal error, confusing the day with Oswald's original feast on August 5th. Strangely, Alexis is represented only in one calendar from St Albans – the calendar in the Egerton manuscript – despite evidence that his cult was celebrated there, the fact that there existed a chapel dedicated to him, and the presence of his *Vie* in the St Albans

Psalter.[300] Instead, his usual feast day – July 17th – is occupied by celebrations for

St Kenelmus (i.e. Cynehelm), an eighth-century Anglo-Saxon king and martyr

whose story bears a remarkable similarity to that of Alban, at least in the details of

Bede's account of his death (the Egerton manuscript lists both Alexis and

Kenelmus for July 17th). When Kenelmus' body is being brought back to

Winchecombe, a miraculous wellspring appears to refresh the monks so that they

can finish their journey – echoing, perhaps, the miraculous appearance of a

spring, at Alban's request, at the place of his execution in Bede's account of his

martyrdom (33). Kenelmus' sister, moreover, refuses to believe that her brother

has died, and vows that her eyes will fall out of her head if the news she hears is

true – which they, of course, promptly do, just as Alban's executioner's eyes fall

out of his head upon beheading Alban (33). It is possible that such a link was

exploited for devotional purposes by St Albans monks, with Kenelmus' feast day

coming more or less half-way between Alban's feast day and the celebrations of

his translation.[301] Continuing liturgical celebrations with the feast of a saint

whose story matched Alban's in so many particulars would have had the effect

not of casting doubt on either saint's story, as modern audiences might expect, but

of confirming the truth of each saint's story by showing the consistency among

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[300] The importance of Alexis and his *Vie* to Christina's role at St Albans is
discussed above in Chapter 2.

[301] It is also worth pointing out that St Kenelmus is not included in the St Albans
Psalter liturgy, and if I am correct here in assuming that Kenelmus was celebrated
as part of devotions to St Alban, this move would be in line with the general
downgrading of Alban's cult in the St Albans Psalter – see the discussion on
Alban's place in the litany below, p. 172.

examples of divine intervention.[302] This raises an interesting possibility, and one

that is further discussed later in this chapter – that some feasts on the liturgical

calendars from St Albans, while they may have been feasts widely celebrated in

England, as Kenelmus' feast was, may have been included in the St Albans

liturgy for purposes only tangentially related to the saints' actual cults and due

more, in fact, to their similarities to celebrations of local St Albans saints and

patrons.

The St Albans Psalter calendar, however, introduces a few changes in its

liturgical structure that represent a re-thinking of St Albans' participation in

specific saints' traditions. Although many scholars have accounted for these

differences in the Psalter calendar by pointing to its probable production for

Christina's use at Markyate,[303] the certainty of the Psalter's dedication to her has

never been established, and as Donald Matthew has shown,[304] evidence for other

recipients of the Psalter, such as Roger the Hermit, is just as convincing (and, I

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[302] Cf. Bede's hymn to virginity and its consistent treatment of the women it
discusses, as examined above in Chapter 3.

[303] Pächt, Dodwell, and Wormald, *The St. Albans Psalter* is a significant early
source to make such a connection, e.g. on pp. 24-25, 29. The connection seems to
be stated with particular emphasis in art-historical studies of the Psalter: see
Haney, "The Saint Albans Psalter," 148; Carrasco, "The Imagery of the
Magdalene"; and Powell, "Making the Psalter," which go so far as to refer to the
Psalter as "Christina of Markyate's Psalter."

[304] Matthew, "The Incongruities of the St Albans Psalter." Many of the problems
with ascribing the Psalter's creation to Christina's influence that Matthews
identifies – the problems of gifting a lavish psalter to an ascetic hermit, the
difficulty in determining what parts of the Psalter were added before or after its
presentation to Christina, and the question of Geoffrey's exact role in the process
(403) – could just as easily be applied to Roger's case; indeed, some of them
become problems for Matthews in the course of the same essay (406).

would add, problematic) as arguments for Christina's ownership. Furthermore, it must be considered that the Psalter may not have left St Albans at all – indeed, the well-known presentation of (presumably) Christina as an intercessor for a group of (presumably St Albans) monks in the initial to Psalm one hundred and five makes the most sense if the Psalter was still in the abbey's possession.[305] Indeed, it is not difficult to imagine the Psalter's liturgy being used at St Albans, as several of the feasts listed in it are already prominent in other St Albans calendars. The feast and translation of Alban are included, though his octave on August 8th is not. The appearance of virgin saints such as Juliana, Aedilthryda, and Brigid, while apparently implying a special interest in women's sanctity, are all included in the calendars already discussed, and so arguing for a specific reason for their inclusion here would be difficult – though if the Psalter was used elsewhere than St Albans, one could argue for differing levels of emphasis of these cults in a different locale.

　　Two woman saints, however, are added to the St Albans Psalter liturgy who warrant discussion here. The first is a certain "St Christina, Virgin" who is celebrated on July 24th. As tempting as it might be to identify this feast with the subject of the *Vita*, it more probably refers directly to one of a couple of early Christian saints who share the name and feast day and were thought to have suffered martyrdom as a result of refusing to sacrifice to pagan idols and/or

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[305] During personal discussions with Rodney Thomson, he also drew attention to the fact that some thirteenth-century calendars at St Albans appear to have been modeled after the calendar in the St Albans Psalter, further indicating its continued presence at the abbey.

destroying those idols. However, there remains an interesting possibility: another later Christina, Christina the Astonishing, when established as a saint, was granted July 24th for a feast day as well, probably in honor of the earlier Christina(s) and to legitimize the more recent saint's cult. This may have happened in the case of Christina of Markyate as well, though for obvious reasons, arguments on this point must remain, at best, tentative. Even if this is not referring to Christina of Markyate directly, however, it could have been included in honor of Christina of Markyate as a way of acknowledging her importance to St Alban's mid-twelfth century sense of itself – a phenomenon that Arnaud Join-Lambert, in his study of personalizations of litanic practices, has referred to as the "living homonym" problem. In other words, the original St Christina could have been included purely because her name is identical to Christina of Markyate's. The ecclesiological problem here is clear: celebrating a saint purely in the interests of honoring someone else throws significant doubt on the sincerity of that celebration; the universality of the Church is also called into question due to the apparent over-valuation of local figures. In any case, the addition of Christina – whichever Christina she was – to the St Albans Psalter after its initial composition[306] certainly reflects common practice at St Albans in the mid-twelfth century: a "St Christina" is included in every surviving version of the litany produced at St Albans at this time. If her addition to the Psalter calendar thus appears to have drawn on existing St Albans traditions, it must be asked what

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[306] Debate on when the St Albans Psalter was originally written have proposed several dates, ranging from the early 1120s to the mid 1150s; Geddes, *The St Albans Psalter*, 90-93, reviews the additions to the Psalter by various scribes.

traditions, specifically, were drawn on – the celebration of an early Christian

virgin martyr, or the honoring of a local holy woman?

The inclusion of a "St Hilda, Virgin" on November 17th in the Psalter

calendar presents a slightly more puzzling situation.[307] This certainly refers to

Hilda of Whitby, whose story is discussed above in Chapter 3, though numerous

aspects of her inclusion here are unclear. To begin with, how did St Albans even

gain access to Hilda's cult? As Christine Fell has shown, Hilda's cult was never

widespread in the Middle Ages, being limited almost exclusively to the region

surrounding the presumed location of her monastery, with only occasional

instance of the cult arising elsewhere in England. In the post-conquest period,

moreover, interest in Hilda's cult dropped off even further, making the Psalter

calendar one of the handful of examples of devotion to Hilda at this time in

England, and in a geographically unlikely location. Bede's account of Hilda in

the *Historia Ecclesiastica* may well have served as a source of inspiration for the

cult, but this account alone did not, so far as can be determined, inspire any

independent cults of Hilda during the Middle Ages. It is most likely that St

Albans acquired knowledge of Hilda's cult and its traditions through its

dependent holding of Tynemouth Abbey, which was located near Hilda's district

in Yorkshire, and which St Albans was already deeply involved with concerning

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[307] On the identification of Hilda as a virgin – a fact not attested by Bede but
which was assumed by many later calendars – see Fell, "Hild, Abbes of
Streonæshalch," 76, 79-80, who points out that later scribes probably would have
assumed any woman saint to have been a virgin. See also above, Chapter 3.
Watt, *Medieval Women's Writing*, 27-31, has discussed Hilda's inclusion here as
a form of colonial resistance to Norman influence on the church, but due to
Hilda's otherwise sparse presence in St Albans' liturgy, this seems unlikely.

the importance of St Oswine, whose cult was centered at Tynemouth and who also made his way into the St Albans liturgy.[308] However, in contrast to the importance of the previously discussed "St Christina" at St Albans, Hilda is not known to have been otherwise venerated at St Albans in any form, whether in liturgical, litanic, or other celebrations. Thus, her inclusion in the calendar indicates, more than any other items, perhaps, the author's (or reviser's) interest in women saints and women's sanctity – including well-known virgin saints is one thing, but including celebrations of cults of obscure women known only indirectly is another.

In light of the saints' cults discussed here, and the adaptations or preservations made from the three "traditional" St Albans liturgies in the St Albans Psalter, it must be asked what, after all, the purpose of the liturgical cycle there was. Was it, in fact, a rigid schedule adhered to out of tradition, or was it more fluid, adapting and changing according to the needs of the community? First of all, it must be said that several additions are known to have been made around the time of the abbacy of Geoffrey, from 1119-1147. Katherine, at least, had her liturgical feast elevated by Geoffrey's order (*Gesta Abbatum* 93), and St Margaret was added soon afterwards during the reign of Abbot Robert.[309] For our purposes, Geoffrey's elevation of Katherine's feast is perhaps the most

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[308] On the political importance of Oswine's cult, see above, Chapter 2.

[309] *Gesta Abbatum*, I.126, relates the story of Margaret's intercession to save the abbot's ship from a storm at sea; afterwards, "her name was put down in the litany, to be honored very willingly" (nomen eius in Letania poneretur, propensius honorandum).

interesting, since it seems clear that it was motivated by personal concerns based in Geoffrey's prior connections to Katherine – his production of a play about her life, which led to Geoffrey's profession as a monk, and his ordination as a priest on her feast day, November 25th. However, if the story of Margaret's addition to the calendar is to be believed, then both saints provide evidence for a tendency to value saints for local reasons – in other words, in Join-Lambert's terms, to "personalize" the liturgy.

Furthermore, comparisons of St Albans' twelfth-century liturgical cycle with that of other abbeys, such as that of Winchester and St Paul's in London, show at least a few interesting variations that lead us towards the conclusion that the formation of St Albans' liturgy was, in fact, motivated in part by local concerns. Alan Thacker, in his essay on the growth of the liturgy at St Paul's during the Middle Ages, notes several characteristics of the liturgical cycle there in the mid-twelfth century, the earliest date from which evidence for liturgical practices at St Paul's survives.[310] As at St Albans, figures of the universal Church such as St Paul (with the feasts for his conversion and his commemoration) and Gregory the Great are given prime importance, as are feasts for major saints of the English Church, such as Alban, Augustine of Canterbury, and Mellitus and Dunstan, two other archbishops of Canterbury. Other figures are also included, such as Katherine of Alexandria and Aedilthryda of Ely, though here they appear in a lower grade than at St Albans. In fact, despite the inclusion of these saints in the mid-twelfth century calendars of St Albans and St Paul's, the comparative

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[310] For the following, see Thacker, "The Cult of Saints and the Liturgy," 117-18.

gradations of their feasts indicate that the level of importance of even saints as

major as Paul and Alban could vary widely. St Paul's feasts, though they are all

included in St Albans liturgies, are not recorded in St Alban's calendars as major

feasts, whereas Alban's invention and the octave thereof are not even recorded in

the calendars of St Paul's. A figure as major at St Albans as Katherine, due to

Geoffrey's promotions, is fairly minor at St Paul's, and one can assume that the

monks of St Paul's probably lavished more attention on the feasts of Canterbury

archbishops Augustine, Mellitus, and Dunstan than did their counterparts at St

Albans, despite the fact that all three of these saints are celebrated at both abbeys.

One figure of special importance at St Paul's, St Erkenwald – a seventh-century

Anglo-Saxon saint and bishop of St Paul's from 675-693, now known primarily

through the brief miracle story about him that is possibly the work of the *Gawain*-

poet – had a particularly strong cult at St Paul's from an early date, which appears

to have continued throughout the Middle Ages, particularly at his home see of

London.[311] At St Paul's in the mid-twelfth century, both his deposition (April

30th) and translation (November 14th) are celebrated with high distinction –

though at St Albans, neither feast is ever mentioned in a single calendar. This is

especially interesting considering St Albans' otherwise high level of interest in

Anglo-Saxon saints – e.g., Aedilthryda, Hilda, Oswine, Edmund, and Guthlac,

just to name a few prominent Old English figures from the St Albans liturgy – and

particularly so considering the fact that Erkenwald's cult, based in London, was

extremely close to St Albans, and the latter community must have been aware of

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[311] Thacker, "The Cult of Saints and the Liturgy," 114-15.

it. On the other hand, Hilda's cult, as already mentioned, enjoyed no such immediate geographic or cultural connection with St Albans, but is included in at least the Psalter calendar. The opposite cases of these two saints – the inclusion of Hilda and the snubbing of Erkenwald – make it especially clear that the matter of building a liturgical canon was not always an issue of what saints were readily at hand, but rather an issue of what saints better served local institutional concerns.[312]

In sum, then, although celebrations at St Albans itself appear to be fairly static – with room for growth at the instigation of Geoffrey and other abbots – we have seen that there existed the potential for revision and adaptation between different calendars, even among the three primary witnesses from the mid-twelfth century: saints like Juliana and Nicholas float in and out of different calendars, as does the translation of Aedilthryda, and even the December 29th feast of the dedication of the church of St Albans is only mentioned in the Royal calendar. For the most part, as in the case of the Christina of July 24th, adaptations occurred using saints that were already known at St Albans, but on occasion "new" cults such as Hilda's could be discovered and incorporated. It is when compared

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[312] Morgan, "Notes on the Post-Conquest Calendar," presents evidence for the calendar at Winchester Cathedral, reconstructed by Morgan primarily from mid-to-late twelfth century materials. It, too, presents a liturgy at variance with that of St Albans, though perhaps not so drastically as in the case of St Paul's. Of the feasts related to Alban, only the primary feast day (June 22nd) is recorded in Winchester liturgies, and Erkenwald's deposition is included, though not his translation. On the other hand, woman saints such as Katherine, who is celebrated in a high grade similar to the fashion of St Albans calendars, and the ubiquitous "Christina" of July 24th are both included in Winchester's traditions as well. Other saints also celebrated at St Albans, such as Kenelmus, are included here as well, though the elusive Hilda is, once again, nowhere to be seen.

against calendars of other institutions, however, that the interest in local concerns becomes especially clear; major feasts for figures such as Alban are downgraded or removed entirely, while others, such as Erkenwald, are elevated in their place. It must certainly be admitted that many of these changes amount to only one feast day out of the year, but in those single impulses (and in all of them taken together), what are we to read – a desire to contribute local achievements to the celebration of the universal Church, or a turn away from the universality of that Church in order to celebrate a local achievement? Based on the various emphases at the houses discussed so far, the latter seems more likely, as these local saints tended not to spread to other houses, and if they did, a single feast day of a lower grade seems to be the rule, as opposed to a wholesale adoption of a series of major feasts commemorating different aspects of the career of someone else's local patron. The tendency to emphasize local saints, or ideologically relevant saints, can therefore already be observed in liturgical calendars; it is in celebrations of the litany, however, and especially in an analysis of different versions of the litany produced at St Albans during the twelfth century, that this devotion to local concerns can be observed even more clearly.

Of the three surviving witnesses of litanic celebrations from twelfth-century St Albans, two – those from the Royal and Additional manuscripts already discussed above – are remarkably consistent. In fact, the only significant variation between these two litanies may be a scribal error – the Additional litany omits Mary of Egypt from the list of virgin saints, possibly because the scribe's eye, having just copied Mary Magdalene, skipped down past the second Mary to

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Felicitas. Other than this, the Royal litany lists a St Leodegarus among the confessor saints (as opposed to the Leodegarus in the martyr saints) whereas the Additional litany lists a St Leo in this place – probably an abbreviation rather than a replacement. The fact that the omission of Mary of Egypt was never corrected in the manuscript may not necessarily indicate an acceptance of the omission, either – the lack of correction may be due to the fact that the list was for convenience of reference only, meant for readers – or chanters – who already knew the litany more or less by memory.

Given this consistency in the Royal and Additional litanies, then, it may be expected that the saints listed here would have been firmly established at St Albans and thus celebrated in other liturgical fashion, implying their presence in St Albans liturgical calendars. This, however, is not the case. Several saints listed in both of these early witnesses of a twelfth-century St Albans litany are celebrated nowhere in any St Albans calendar. These include, among the martyrs, Saints Polycarp, Nigasius, and Lucian;[313] among the confessors, Saints Athanasius, Basil, Hilarion, Pachomius, Macharius, Arsenius, Columbanus, and Maiolus; and among the virgins, Saints Mary of Egypt, Petronilla, Radegundis, Baltildis, Spes, Caritas, Geneviève, and Thecla. Saints Hilary and Antoni among the confessors and Cristina among the virgins are attested only in a single St

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[313] Not to be confused with the (apparently erroneous) recording of a "Luciana" in the lists of virgin martyr saints in the St Albans Psalter, where the name is probably a misspelling of "Juliana." See above, Chapter 5, n. 235.

Albans calendar, but are present in every witness of the litany.[314] It should also

be noted that, among the three groups of saints – martyrs, confessors, and virgins

– the martyr saints are the ones most consistently represented in both the litanies

and the calendars. Of the litanic confessors and virgins, each group presents eight

saints who do not appear in any St Albans calendars, with some interesting

patterns. Athanasius and Basil, fathers of the Eastern church, are both included in

the litany but not in calendars, as is Columbanus, who was of course so central to

the Irish tradition. Their inclusion here is probably due to the importance of all

three saints to the history of monasticism – Athanasius for his life of Antony, the

prototype of the Christian monastic; Basil for his rules; and Columbanus for his

missionary work founding monasteries in Scotland.[315] In the case of the virgin

litanic saints, though no clear pattern presents itself to explain their absence from

St Albans calendars, their number itself seems significant. Though the lists of

virgin saints and confessor saints both present eight saints that occur nowhere in

the St Albans liturgy, in the case of the virgins, this number (eight) constitutes a

full third of the number of saints (twenty-four) mentioned in the Royal and

Additional litanies, whereas the eight confessors not witnessed in calendars make

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[314] St Alexis is also listed only once in any St Albans calendar – this time the
Egerton calendar – though he is not included in the Royal and Additional litanies,
only in the St Albans Psalter litany, which will be discussed below. The list of
litanic saints not presented in calendars skips over the apostles, disciples,
evangelists, and archangels, all of whom were celebrated in the St Albans litany
but not all of whom were regularly venerated as saints in the Middle Ages.

[315] The inclusion of these "founders of monasticism" could be compared with a
remark by Alcuin, noted in LeClercq, *The Love of Learning*, 91, that Athanasius,
Basil, and John Chrysostom stand as examples of the riches given to the Latin
church by the early Greek church.

up less than a quarter of the full number of confessors (thirty-six) listed in the Egerton and Royal litanies. Statistically speaking, then, the virgin saints in the litany are by far the least likely to have been celebrated in the St Albans liturgy. Why this should be the case is, again, unclear, and seems especially confusing given St Albans' tendency to promote woman saints within its liturgy, as noted above. While an emphasis on martyrs is to be expected – particularly at St Albans, where the patron saint was the protomartyr of England – there seems no reason for such a gap between liturgical and litanic experiences of virgin martyr saints.

There are, however, points of consistency between the surviving litanies, particularly in the saints that receive special emphasis. In both the Royal and Additional litanies, the names of three saints are given in display script – the Virgin Mary, Peter, and Alban in the Royal litany, and the Virgin Mary, Alban, and Katherine in the Additional litany. Throughout all the litanies, Alban and Benedict are the only figures to receive a double invocation – a clear underscoring of St Alban's sense of its nature and its patron, and probably an echo of the inclusion of founding monastic saints (Athanasius, Basil, and Columbanus), as discussed above. Thus, while inclusion of martyrs seems to be fairly stable across litanies and liturgical calendars, inclusion of confessors and especially of virgin martyr saints is more mutable.

When the two litanies of these manuscripts are compared to the slightly different litany preserved in the St Albans Psalter, the differences between these two versions of the St Albans litany become even more illustrative, as the Psalter

litany seems to constitute a clear effort to revise the usual St Albans litany, as preserved in the Royal and Additional versions, though still to create a litany with clear St Albans connections. To begin with, there are several minor characteristics that distinguish the St Albans litany from that of the Royal and Additional manuscripts, starting with the beginning of the list of martyr saints. Here, the first place, given to Alban in the Royal and Additional litanies, is instead granted to Stephen, the protomartyr, usually placed second. Alban then takes second place, though his double invocation is preserved. This change alone is striking, as one would not expect St Albans' patron and protomartyr of the English to be removed from his prominent position, even if he is retained in the second place in the St Albans Psalter version. The oddities continue, however. Saints Oswald and Oswine, both Anglo-Saxon martyr kings, are both removed entirely from the Psalter litany; Oswine's absence is especially surprising, given his importance to twelfth-century St Albans ideology and cultural standing.[316] Wormald, in his analysis of the litany, even considers this omission alone to be proof that the litany in the Psalter "is not a truly St. Albans litany,"[317] though enough other characteristics of St Albans litanies seem to be preserved to make such a judgment premature at best.[318]

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[316] See above, Chapter 2, pp. 38-43.

[317] Pächt, Dodwell, and Wormald, *The St. Albans Psalter*, 30.

[318] Aside from the changes to Alban's and Oswine's positions, other adjustments in the St Albans Psalter of minor importance should be noted. Saints Marcellian and Peter, celebrated on June 2nd, are here invoked separately instead of together as in the Royal and Additional litanies; Saints Cosmo & Damian and John & Paul

However, it is the list of virgin saints that receives by far the most attention in the Psalter litany. In addition to limiting St Fides to a single entry in the listing – she is named (erroneously?) twice in both Royal and Additional litanies, not given a double invocation – the Psalter litany adds no less than thirteen virgin saints. In order, they are Margaret, Euphraxia, Elizabeth, Susanna, Brigid, Aedilthryda, Ursula & Corvula with their companions (all invoked together), Helena, Barbara, Florentia, Consortia, and Smeralda. While it may be surprising that a figure such as Aedilthryda was not already included in the St Albans litany, more surprising still is that, of all the virgin saints added to the Psalter litany, only three have any attestation of their cult in the surviving liturgical calendars – Margaret, Brigid, and Aedilthryda. This continues the trend noted in the Royal and Additional litanies above: of the three major groups of saints – martyrs, confessors, and virgin martyrs – the virgin martyr saints are the least likely to be included in liturgical calendars of the abbey. Aside from Margaret, Brigid, and Aedilthryda, the rest of the virgin martyrs added to the Psalter litany have no evidence for ever having been celebrated at St Albans at all, and the additions thus bear the stamp of a conscious effort at revision with a distinct interest in woman virgin saints – furthermore, Alexis' addition may be

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are added after Peter; and Saint Paulinus is added after St Audoenus. More significantly, the order of several confessors is adjusted – in particular, Germanus and Cuthbert are both moved down, though there seems no immediate reason for their new placement (Germanus is placed between Dunstan and Romanus, and Cuthbert between Romanus and Audoenus), which fits with the generally slight treatment given to Cuthbert in St Albans liturgies, as discussed above. Alexis, as also noted above, is added to this version of the litany in place of Egidus, almost certainly due to the inclusion of Alexis' *Vie* in the Psalter.

due to the same impulse behind the inclusion of the virgin martyrs, as his story in the *Vie* bears many more similarities to women's virgin martyr narrative than to traditional narratives of confessor saints such as Cuthbert, Basil, or Augustine. Indirectly, these gaps between litanies and liturgical calendars also re-emphasize the role of conscious selection in liturgical catalogues – St Albans clearly had knowledge of many more virgin martyrs than were officially celebrated there.

However, despite the reviser/adaptor's clear focus on virgin martyr saints in the Psalter litany, it seems unwise to suggest that this proves an interest in Christina specifically or that the Psalter was meant for her personal use, as several scholars have done.[319] Wormald, in his analysis of the litany, makes a bizarre comment on this subject: "[i]t would be dangerous to see in this selection [of virgin saints] any close relationship with the life of Christina of Markyate, yet at the same time the choice may reflect her interests."[320] If, as Wormald says and as seems prudent, connecting the Psalter to Christina on this basis is a dangerous argument, how are we to accept her influence as a patron or consultant for the Psalter's litany? True, her obit and those of her family members are recorded in the Calendar, but this proves only that the calendar's recipient/patron was interested in Christina – not that this person was Christina herself. For that matter, the death of the prioress of Sopwell, another women's priory founded by Geoffrey during his abbacy, is also recorded in the Psalter. If any conclusion can be safely drawn about the implications of the Psalter litany, it must be simply that

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[319] See above, n. 303.

[320] Pächt, Dodwell, and Wormald, *The St. Albans Psalter*, 30.

the Psalter betrays an interest in virgin woman saints, but this could prove any

number of owners/patrons, including Geoffrey himself, whose special devotion to

Katherine was outlined in the previous chapter.[321] Indeed, because the Psalter

appears to have been kept at St Albans following its production, Geoffrey may be

the most likely candidate for a recipient (or rather, producer and retainer) of the

Psalter.[322]

Taken together, the interest in woman/virgin saints, the high level of

additions to the Psalter litany that come from outside the St Albans liturgy, the

replacement of Alban as the first martyr invoked, and the removal of saints such

as Oswine imply a drastic revision to the usual St Albans litany, a revision that

could, I argue, only have been undertaken for personal goals.[323] In this sense, the

litany presented here seems best considered as something between a simple

revision and an entirely new text – one still produced at, and in realtion to, St

Albans, though not meant to be a mirror of the traditional St Albans litany.

Rather, this litany appears to reflect a particular, even individual, interest on the

part of its patron. In other words, the focus of this litany is local in the strictest

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[321] Geoffrey's devotion may also be behind the display script used for Katherine's entry in the litany of the Additional manuscript, noted above.

[322] See Matthew, "The Incongruities of the St Albans Psalter," for a detailed deconstruction of traditional arguments pinning Christina as the intended owner of the Psalter. On the other hand, Matthew's arguments for Roger as the intended recipient of the Psalter seem just as tenuous – see above, n. 304.

[323] Revision for institutional reasons is unlikely, due to the lack of interest in St Albans liturgical saints, and interest in saints of the universal church being unlikely due to the focused nature of the revisions. This continues to rely, of course, on evidence that places the Psalter at St Albans during and following Geoffrey's death.

sense – it is, as Arnaud Join-Lambert has termed it, an example of "personalization"[324] of the litany, though it can also be seen as an (unconscious?) example of the process that Bruce Holsinger has referred to as "detheologizing."[325] This phenomenon, more clearly than any other at work in the materials discussed in this chapter, underscores the tension between universal values and local values, and illustrates that local concerns could, occasionally, nearly (or even completely) call into question the liturgy's supposed universal focus.

When writing of his process of "personalization" of litanic celebrations, Join-Lambert refers to a practice of adjusting litanies recited at the ordination of priests in modern ceremonies, but the problems he discusses have a direct impact on the issues discussed here in relation to the St Albans litany. Much as present-day litanies can be stretched to include saints significant to ordinands, the twelfth-century litany of St Albans was, apparently, stretched to include figures significant to the community where it was celebrated, and in the case of the new

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[324] Join-Lambert, "The Personalization of the Litany," 220: "[Personalization] connects with the traditional liturgical concept of adaptation…[i]n the realm of specific cultures, notably in so-called mission countries, liturgical theology has reduced the concept over several decades by using the term inculturation. If we reduce the field of liturgical adaptation a little further by taking as criteria several particular individuals, we can legitimately use the term personalization in matters liturgical."

[325] Holsinger, "Liturgy," 297: "Whatever else it will entail, the pursuit of a liturgical history of early English writing demands what I want to call a detheologizing vision of liturgy and its objects: a critical self-consciousness toward the auto-ontological function of liturgy in medieval culture. By this I mean an awareness of the metaphysical process by which liturgy arrogates to itself the power to explain, reveal, and enact the properties, essences, and relations of all things."

litany presented in the Psalter, this stretching could prove to be quite extreme.

"The invocation of 'biographical' saints," (i.e., saints included in a litany purely

because of their connection to an ordinand being celebrated, such as a shared

biographical event or even simply a shared name) Join-Lambert claims, "poses

the most delicate ecclesiological question. What is the Church holding up to view

when there is a too great personalization?"[326] However, "[t]he personalization of

the liturgy of ordination is a good means of integrating the aspirations and

spirituality of the ordinands. Within this framework the litany of the saints

provides a wonderful opportunity, which entails however certain clear risks of

confusion, indeed of an ambiguous shift of emphasis."[327] This "ambiguous shift

of emphasis," as Join-Lambert calls it, manifests itself in the case of St Albans as

celebrations of various aspects of its own history: the importance of its founding

English protomartyr,[328] the importance of patron saints that brought large amounts

of revenue and legitimization to St Albans (such as Oswine), or an emphasis on

women's spirituality that lies outside the regular liturgical practice of St Albans

and which appears to have been encouraged by specific people, whether Geoffrey

or others. The ecclesiological problem, of course, is that this emphasis implies a

focus on something other than what the litany, or the liturgy as a whole, for that

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[326] Join-Lambert, "The Personalization of the Litany," 225.

[327] Join-Lambert, "The Personalization of the Litany," 229.

[328] Already a problematic position, since Alban was not English, or even British,
but rather a Roman official.

matter, is meant to celebrate. Here it may be worth referring further to Bruce

Holsinger's concept of detheologizing of the liturgy:

> In calling for a detheologizing analysis of liturgy, then, I seek to
> recover those moments when medieval culture stands outside its
> own overwhelming and overdetermined claims to be the ritual
> embodiment and continuity of the presence of God on earth...[o]n
> these terms, liturgy can be understood not simply as the ritual
> fusion of religious belief and religious practice, but also and
> simultaneously as the *space between professed belief and material
> practice*: a space, perhaps, where theology…becomes radically
> localized, particularized, decentralized, and miniaturized.[329]

The revisions and local emphases within the St Albans liturgy and litanies thus

have profound ecclesiological implications for how we understand St Albans'

sense of itself in the mid-twelfth century and why it produced the texts it did,

including the *Vita* of Christina. The emphasis on local pieties and personalities

reveals itself as another manifestation of St Albans' characteristically inward gaze

during this period – where the divine is the local and, as Freud asserted in *Totem

and Taboo*, the community itself "is the true object of [religious] worship"

(141).[330] We can see this echoed in the half-page illumination presented at the

beginning of the litany in the St Albans Psalter,[331] where a seemingly anonymous

community of nuns, led by an apparently anonymous monk, recite the litany in

front of a stylized representation of the Trinity as two identical men with a dove

perched, at rest, on their heads. This scene is at once a representation of the

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[329] Holsinger, "Liturgy," 298. Author's emphasis.

[330] It should be noted, however, that Freud is paraphrasing the theory of Durkheim
at this point, and that the present conclusion is not based on the psychoanalytic
anthropology Freud outlines in *Totem and Taboo*.

[331] Saint Albans Psalter (Hildesheim, Dombibliothek MS St Godehard 1), p. 403

continuous liturgical practice of the St Albans community, but it is also, as has been noted,[332] an echo of Christina's vision of the Trinity in her *Vita* (156-57). In this image the intertwining of local emphasis and universal worship become so conflated as to defy any attempt to extract them from each other, and thus here we have a key to St Albans' sense of the place of its local emphasis within the Church: the Trinity, like Christina herself in her *Vita*, is revealed as an object of devotion to which St Albans has special access of revelation and interpretation. Whether such a claim could be ecclesiologically justified, however, seems far from certain.

This tension between local and universal emphases, built into the very liturgical foundations of religious life at St Albans, unsurprisingly finds expression in many of the works produced there (particularly in the works discussed above in Chapter 2). In the case of Christina's *Vita*, however, not only does an examination of local emphasis provide further evidence for such a trend in St Albans devotional culture, it also provides the *Vita* itself with its most revealing historical context. Christina's story, I argue here and as expressed at the outset of this chapter, was always meant to be part of this intensely localized devotion, and the failure of any sort of cult or following to spread beyond St Albans – indeed, the very fact that she did not remain squarely in the abbey's cultural memory for long after her death – can be adequately explained with reference to this devotional scene.

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[332] Geddes, *The St Albans Psalter*, 99-101.

Evidence for local emphasis, even at the expense of universality, can be clearly seen in the *Vita*; two examples of this evidence will serve to illustrate how, precisely, the liturgical tendencies discussed above played out in a literary environment. The *Vita* grounds itself in a liturgical framework at its outset, when it orients Christina's early religious experiences by noting two important events in Christina's biography that occur on St Leonard's feast day, November 6th: her birth, "between six o'clock and nine o'clock of the same day" (37),[333] a time designation that itself places Christina within a liturgical temporality from the moment of her birth; and her initial decision to make her vow of virginity (39). It might be objected that these events are placed on the day of Leonard's feast because they did, in fact, happen on that day, but the fact that the author of the *Vita* so insistently points out the confluence seems to underscore a deeper point (he does not, after all, highlight other days with such liturgical regularity). With this in mind, it is perhaps not surprising that Leonard was revered as, among other things, a patron saint of childbirth and of those living in imprisonment; that is, he could serve as both an immediate protector for Christina and her mother during the end of her pregnancy, and as a foreshadower of Christina's own state of living within her parents' house, where she is regularly held captive and refused access to her friends or her church, as well as at Roger's hermitage at Markyate, where her trials are no less severe.

We may also see a tendency towards localization in the most unexpected of places – the consistent references to the Virgin Mary as a patron of Christina's

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[333] Talbot's translation. "inter primum et terciam eodem die."

virginity and a defense against those seeking to violate it. At first glance,

perhaps, no saint could seem less "local" than the Virgin – if anything, her

popularity rivals that of Christ himself at this point in the medieval Church.

However, throughout the early sections of Christina's *Vita*, we are given good

reason to interpret references to Mary as references to a form of local piety: the

church and monastery dedicated to Mary, to which Christina goes so frequently

for spiritual comfort in her early trials. Christina, to begin with, makes a startling

claim regarding her relationship to the "monastery of Our Lady" upon her

parents' refusal to allow her to visit it: "Even though you may deny me access to

the monastery…you cannot wrench its memory from my breast" (47).[334] This

internalization of the monastery at the outset of the *Vita* establishes the

importance it is to hold for Christina, and at the Gild merchant feasts her parents

host, Christina draws comfort from passing by an entrance to the hall which looks

out upon the monastery, an act that helps her keep the Virgin in her thoughts (49).

That is, her experience of the Virgin Mary is grounded in her experience of the

local church and monastery dedicated to her, as opposed to the status of the

church being elevated because of her knowledge of the Virgin.[335] The local,

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[334] Talbot's translation. "Etsi vos aditum monasterii mee dilectissime domine
michi intercluditis nunquam certe dulcem ipsius memoriam a pectore meo
divelletis."

[335] Comparing Christina to other woman mystics also helps illustrate how reliance
on the Virgin was not necessarily a foregone conclusion for holy women –
Margery Kempe, for example, relies on models such as Bridget of Sweden, not
the Virgin, as her exemplar for piety, and Elisabeth of Schönau is more likely to
pattern herself after Hildegard of Bingen. Bede, however, in his hymn on

tangible communities of piety inform the abstract divine – not the other way

around. To underscore this, it is worth pointing out that Christina, during her

escape from her parents to begin her life as a recluse, often returns to the Church

of the Virgin while awaiting her escort – but never once invokes the protection of

the Virgin herself. When her parents discover her missing, the church is the first

place they look for her beyond their home (95). And, of course, prior to her

introduction to Geoffrey, the Virgin forms a large part of Christina's mystical

experience, being the subject of her first vision (75) and the one who guarantees

Christina the place of Roger's successor at Markyate, as if ushering her forward

from her old devotional life at Huntingdon to her new one at Markyate. The

beginning of this devotion, it seems, lies not in veneration of the Virgin as a

universal saint, but rather her initial devotional experiences at her local church

during the early stages of her life and religious career – a process reflected in the

fact that Christina is inspired to make her initial vow of virginity during a trip to

St Albans, where she is impressed by the lifestyle of the monks (39).

It is not only in the *Vita*, however, that we find evidence to support placing

Christina within local devotional contexts. In the *Gesta Abbatum*, following the

description of Geoffrey's abbacy, we find a series of extracts discussing local,

prominent holy figures active during Geoffrey's tenure (a common narrative

structure for other abbots' entries in the *Gesta Abbatum*, as well). Most of these

extracts, it must be admitted, come from the *Vita* itself, but some of them have no

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virginity – discussed above in Chapter 3 – does posit Mary as the prototype of all
holy virgins, including Aedilthryda.

known source, and it is difficult to classify these descriptions of recluses as *vitae* in their own right. Rather, they can be said to form a series of significant *florilegia* from the *Vita* (apparently compiled together with other sources or original compositions) that reveal how St Albans viewed Christina and her role in the abbey: namely, as part of a local community of spiritual recluses, none of whom were sainted, but all of whom were revered and seem to have had a lasting influence on St Albans.

These brief extracts combine to tell the story, as previously mentioned, of three holy recluses at St Albans: Roger, Christina's predecessor at Markyate and himself a major presence in the *Vita*; Christina herself; and a certain Sigar, a monk and hermit of St Albans like Roger. Christina's and Roger's stories are heavily intertwined, and so the extracts focusing on them are best discussed together. To begin with, miraculous occurrences surrounding these two individuals are enthusiastically highlighted. Roger's experiences, in particular, form a clear mystical background for his history, starting with his foundation of his hermitage: "And when he returned from Jerusalem, three holy angels received him at Windsor" (97).[336] He is also noted to excel in contemplation and to enjoy, as a result, a prophetic ability (97). Two other miraculous events, also noted in the *Vita*, are related at length: in the first, Roger's contemplative ability is highlighted in the story, also told in the *Vita*, of Roger's resistance to the devil's plan to disrupt his contemplation by setting his cloak on fire: "When the devil, at

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[336] "Nam cum rediret de Ierusalem, acceperunt eam apud Wyndeleshoram sancti tres angeli."

one time, visibly inflamed and ardent, strove to interrupt his prayer, and ignited the hood hanging on the back of the praying man with a visible flame, he [the devil] did not make him [Roger] neglectful of his [Roger's] intention, nor was he able to distract him from prayer" (98).[337] The second story involves a miraculous appearance of a horse to aid Godescalc of Caddington and his wife, who had been enlisted by Roger to conduct Christina in secret to Redbourn in order for her to meet with the Archbishop of York. The appearance of a horse at night is clearly depicted as a miraculous event, coming immediately on the heels of their despairing cry at losing their first horse, "where, now, is the promise of the man of God?" (100).[338] Christina, for her part, is also described in miraculous terms, although her stories tend to focus on her ability to provide spiritual aid or comfort for Geoffrey. In an extract titled "On the Virtues of Christina, Prioress of Markyate" (101),[339] the story of Christina's initial encounter with Geoffrey, and her chastising of him for a certain plan he intended to carry out, is related as a miraculous intervention effected by Christina's vision of a deceased monk of St Albans, Alured, who describes to her Geoffrey's plans. Geoffrey's own vision of Alured, after his refusal to heed Christina's warning, is much less benevolent, as

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[337] "Cum diabolus olim, visibiliter incensus, et totus igneus, orationem suam interrumpere niteretur, igneque visibili cucullam orantis dorso inhaerentem incendisset, non eum ab intentione remissiorem reddidit, nec orationem valuit resecare." The version in the *Vita* is not the immediate textual source of this story – rather, the *Gesta Abbatum* version appears to be a loose retelling of the events described in the *Vita*.

[338] "Ubi nunc est promissio viri Dei?"

[339] "De Virtutibus Christinae, Prioressae de Markyate." *Gesta Abbatum*, I.101, prints "Christianae," a clear misprint of Christina's name.

he suffers numerous tortures at Alured's hands until he submits to Christina's advice. Thereafter, as the *Gesta Abbatum* account tells us, he constantly submits himself to Christina's judgment (101-02). Christina is also shown causing Geoffrey's release from obligations to travel to Rome, and preparing him for appearances before the "royal court" (104) [curiam regiam]. What Roger and Christina share most explicitly, however, is their prophetic ability; where Roger's is described at his introduction (97), Christina is said to receive her spirit of prophecy upon her assumption of Roger's role at Markyate following his death (101), as surely as if he had left her the ability of prophecy along with his hermitage.

A connection between Roger and Christina is emphasized in other places in the extracts as well, however. The two are not depicted as living lives of solitude, nor even with only each other – several other of Roger's companions at Markyate are referenced,[340] and it is important to keep in mind that, in addition to its devotional function as a hermitage, Markyate appears to have been something of a "school for mystics," with Roger as its resident instructor. In line with this general trend, depictions of Roger and Christina in historical records frequently emphasize Roger's tutelage of Christina. As in the *Vita*, one scene in particular has captured the attention of St Albans readers and historians: Christina's vision

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[340] *Gesta Abbatum*, I.98: "all those who lived with Roger as equals" (omnes qui cum Rogero pariter habitabant). Some members of this community are even named in the *Vita*, and are occasionally shown to voice dissenting opinions to some of Roger's judgments, especially the anchoress Alfwen, who supports Christina's continued presence at Flamstead when Roger plans to remove her to Markyate. Talbot, ed., *The Life of Christina of Markyate*, 93, 97, 101.

of Christ, in which he gives her a golden cross, and Roger's subsequent joy at hearing of this experience. Christina, having benefitted from numerous forms of instruction on Roger's part,[341] is greeted in her cell by Christ, who gives to her a cross that, he says, he gives "to all those who wish to go to Jerusalem" (99).[342] Roger's response, upon hearing of this vision from Christina, is immediate and enthusiastic: "When she had conveyed the vision to Roger, he began to weep for joy, saying thus: 'rejoice with me, my Sunday daughter' (he said in the vernacular), which means, 'my good daughter of the day of the Lord', because your tribulation will soon be ended" (99).[343] This incident between Roger and Christina, which provides evidence for spoken English in a period when precious little testimony of its use remains, is also recounted in the *Vita* (107), though with variations in wording which suggest that one of these texts can only be considered an indirect source of the other – as if the incident was read aloud to St Albans monks from one text, while one monk subsequently recalled the story from memory in the other text (it is not certain whether the *Vita* was the source of the *Gesta Abbatum* account, or the other way around). The story of this episode, or at least of Roger's tutelage of Christina in general, even spread beyond St Albans

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[341] *Gesta Abbatum*, I.99: "Verum amicus Dei, Rogerus, eam nunc doctrina, nunc exemplis, informabat, et docebat incredibilia pene de secretis coelestibus" ("The true friend of God, Roger, shaped her with teaching and by examples, and taught her almost unbelievable things of heavenly secrets").

[342] "Omnibus qui Ierusalem ire volunt."

[343] "Quam visionem cum Rogero retulisset, coepit flere prae gaudio; ita dicens, – 'Laetare mecum,' ait sermone vulgari, – 'Myn gode Sonendayes doȝhter,' id est, – 'Mea bona Dominicae diei filia' – quia vestra [*sic*] tribulatio est in proximo terminanda."

itself, and Christina's experience at Roger's hermitage appears to be one of the

few instances of her life that is recorded in a source produced outside of the abbey

– namely, in the *Gesta Pontificorum* of William of Malmesbury, which,

recounting a confrontation between Roger and Robert, bishop of Dorchester,

concerning Christina's presence at his hermitage, notes at least Christina's

presence if not her name (I.477).[344] Most interesting for the purposes of this

study, however, is the point that seems to lie behind St Albans' concern with this

story: it leads to Roger's epiphany that Christina is to be his successor at

Markyate: "Roger therefore, hope having been gathered from the multitude of

graces which he had observed to be in Christina, planned for her to be the heir of

his hermitage after he left" (99).[345] This fact leads directly to her prominence in

St Albans' institutional memory – Christina, it should be recalled, is recorded

during her obit in the St Albans Psalter as "Christina, first prioress of

Markyate."[346] Hence we can see in the local concern for this story (and possibly

its oral recall, as described above) both a concern to represent an instance of

devotional significance as well as institutional significance for St Albans – the

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[344] The absence of Christina – and, for that matter, Roger – from so many
historical and hagiographical collections produced outside of St Albans is
surprising, but can also serve to highlight St Albans' apparent lack of interest in
promoting local holy figures beyond its own community. See Koopmans, "The
Conclusion of Christina of Markyate's *Vita*," 695 for a discussion of Christina's
absence from Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum*.

[345] "Rogerus igitur, collecta spe ex multitudine gratiarum quas probaverat inesse
Christinae, illam sui haeredem heremi post se relinquere cogitabat."

[346] "Cristina, prima priorissa de Bosco [i.e., Markyate]." Saint Albans Psalter
(Hildesheim, Dombibliothek MS St Godehard 1), p. 14.

tension between universal and personalized elements of the St Albans liturgy here playing itself out in a literary/historical context.

One further extract from the end of the description in the *Gesta Abbatum* of Geoffrey's reign should be recounted – that of Sigar, a monk and hermit of St Albans. Sigar has never before been discussed in connection with Christina, an odd fact considering that St Albans saw fit to present a record of his life and sanctity alongside the records of Christina and Roger. He is not, it must be admitted, connected to Christina directly in the brief story of his life recorded in the *Gesta Abbatum*, but the two elements pointed out about his religious career relate directly to the motives and methods that underlie the presentation of Christina herself. The first of the two recorded events involves a single miracle, in which Sigar, who is distracted from his prayer by the singing of nightingales, prays for their removal. As the *Gesta* records, "it came about according to the wishes of the holy man, that not only in his own life, but even until the present time, the birds ("avuculae") of that type avoid his dwelling place" (105).[347] The second event involves Sigar's death and burial at St Albans – "he lies in the same arcade where [lies] Roger the Hermit," the *Gesta* informs us, while also relating that "not only common people were accustomed to visit their tombs, but even the

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[347] "Evenitque juxta vota viri sancti, ut non solum in vita sua, sed usque ad praesens tempus, illius generis avuculae locum habitationis suae fugiant." The editors of the *Gesta Abbatum* note on the same page the similarity of this miracle to one ascribed to Thomas à Becket.

very kings of England" (105-06).[348] To begin with, the local and seemingly

inauspicious miracle – Christina's flight from her family, Roger's tutelage of

Christina, and Sigar's banishing of the nightingales – all eventually lead to wide

recognition for St Albans, "not only common people...but even the very kings of

England" coming to express their devotion. Worth pointing out, too, is that in this

instance, it is not Church officials who come to visit Sigar and Roger's tomb, but

members of secular and noble society, possibly an indication of the somewhat

worldly concerns that led St Albans to seek institutional liberty from Adrian

IV.[349] Nevertheless, this may remind the reader of the indication in the *Vita* that

Christina "had frequent visits from the heads of celebrated monasteries in distant

parts of England and from across the sea, who wished to take her away with them

and by her presence add importance and prestige to their places…[b]ut she

preferred our monastery" (125-27).[350] Local miracles lead to worldly fame – a

formula certainly not unfamiliar to readers of medieval spiritual literature – but

here, those miracles occur at the instigation of people who were never promoted

for canonization, and which continue to benefit the monastery after their deaths

(in the case of Roger and Sigar) or their departure from St Albans' influence (in

Christina's case, following Markyate's independence from its founding house).

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[348] "Jacet in eodem arcu quo Rogerus Heremita...quorum sepulcra non solum
vulgares frequentare solebant, sed etiam ipsi reges Angliae."

[349] As discussed above in Chapter 2.

[350] Talbot's translation. "Venerunt ad illam frequenter non ignobilium
monasteriorum magni patres tam de remotis Anglie finibus quam de transmarinis
amplitudinibus cupientes illam secum abducere. et corporali quoque presencia
ipsius loca sua fulsire vel exaltare...[i]lla vero preelegit nostrum monasterium."

Most importantly, as the focus of this chapter has shown, this represents again the tendency at St Albans to focus its interests on local concerns and local sanctity at the expense of universal equivalents.

The importance at St Albans of local practice and local figures in building a liturgical celebration that is nominally centered on a universal Church is a paradox that has not perhaps received its due attention. As has been shown here, however, the use of liturgical calendars and litanies as literary texts in their own right as well as of local historical records demonstrates quite clearly the high level of interest St Albans had in its own community of saintly individuals as well as the tendency of those individuals' stories to stay primarily within local circulation.[351] More specifically, for the purposes of this study, viewing St Albans through the lens of its liturgical and historical texts provides answers for the question of what role, exactly, the *Vita* played within St Albans' devotional culture and why it was so quickly forgotten. It is not necessary, based on the contexts presented in this chapter, to argue that Christina's memory was deliberately erased from St Albans history – rather, it seems that Christina, and her *Vita*, were simply absorbed into a community not interested in promoting its own liturgical culture beyond its own boundaries except in cases where such a promotion provided an immediate material benefit to the abbey. St Albans was, on occasion, happy to serve as a textual production center for works not associated with its own history, as we have seen in Chapter 4 in the case of the prayers of (pseudo-)Anselm, or in Chapter 5 in the case of the *Passio Sancte*

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[351] See above, n. 344.

Katerine. For figures such as Roger, Sigar, and ultimately Christina, however, the case was different. Their purpose, in the eyes of the St Albans community, was not to be propagated and have their cults established, nor even to be sainted, but to serve as an anchor of historical identity and of devotional focus for the abbey they came from – and the abbey they continued to serve, in these ways, even after their deaths.

Chapter 7

CONCLUSION

The preceding study establishes, via successive literary and social

contexts, a view of Christina of Markyate and her presentation within her *Vita* as

integral to St Albans' historical and devotional culture in twelfth-century St

Albans and as a production of the wider cultural scene of the abbey, in contrast to

the current view in scholarship of Christina as a marginalized member of the

abbey's circle, supported only by Abbot Geoffrey, her spiritual advisor. The

literary contexts discussed – holy women portrayed in Book Four of Bede's

Historia Ecclesiastica as well as devotional and sacerdotal Anselmian prayers in

Verdun MS 70 – have established a clear grounding of the *Vita* in literature

present in St Albans and used to promote St Albans culture, either by

embellishing accounts of saints in Bede's *Historia* or by the assemblage of

devotional materials in the Verdun manuscript. The social contexts – the

promotion of Christina as a patron of the abbey according to the "*peregrinus*

aesthetic" and her place within liturgical and communal devotion centered around

local holy figures – have established that her place within the abbey and her use

as a patron figure or a focus of local devotion was entirely in step with St Albans'

own traditions. We need not, in light of this information, view Christina and her

Vita as in any way marginal to St Albans' sense of its own institutional and

communal identity during the mid-twelfth century. Moreover, the absence of any

clear influence of material related to Katherine of Alexandria, devotion to whom

seems to have been associated with abbot Geoffrey, underscores the possibility

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that the traditional narrative of Christina as existing under Geoffrey's sole protection at the abbey may not reflect the reality of Christina's historical situation, or at least the situation of the *Vita* itself.

Nevertheless, Christina does seem to have faded from the abbey's memory, with the exception of the brief account of her life and her *Vita* in the *Gesta Abbatum*. In this conclusion, I sketch a brief outline of developments in devotional culture at St Albans after Christina's time in order to suggest some reasons for her apparent disappearance (as well as to discuss possible evidence that she never disappeared at all). Devotional culture at St Albans during the twelfth century, it must be remembered, is characterized by constant development and adjustment. Around 1100, the names Oswine, Christina, and Amphibalus, as well as the devotional practices of Anselmian forms of prayer, were unknown to the abbey, then still subject to the authority of the bishop of Lincoln. By 1200, however, Oswine and Amphibalus had become primary fixtures of the abbey's devotional culture and history (and remain so today), St Albans was known as a center of distribution for English manuscripts of Anselmian material, and the abbey was subject only to the authority of the Pope, in terms of religious practice as well as financial liability. Indeed, developments at St Albans during the twelfth century would pave the way for later achievements of the abbey throughout the Middle Ages, including figures such as Thomas Walsingham,[352] a noted late fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century historian at the abbey in his own right as well as a compiler of the *Gesta Abbatum*. Thus, the image of Christina

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[352] Described recently in Clark, *A Monastic Renaissance at St Albans*.

and St Albans should not be taken to represent stable conditions over a long period of time – the developments and influences discussed here were in constant flux throughout the twelfth century, and soon after Christina's last known service to the abbey in 1156, even larger developments would drastically alter St Albans liturgical and devotional culture.

Although this is not the place to issue a full history of those developments, it may be worth considering briefly what appears to have happened at St Albans that so effectively and permanently displaced Christina from the focus of the abbey's devotional culture. Fortunately, a series of wall paintings, some possibly as old as the late twelfth-century but many from around the late the thirteenth century, are preserved on six piers on the north side of the nave in St Albans cathedral. Taken together, they tell a compelling story of developments in St Albans' religious culture and provide an outline for the new directions taken there in the years after Christina's presence at the abbey.

Many of the paintings are depictions of the crucifixion, all of which face towards the main entrance to the church at the west end, but four of them face south into the nave, and thus would greet, in succession, a visitor to the church as he or she moved east towards the altar. Though they were all painted at different times, their current order on successive piers seems an appropriate one, progressing – west to east – from less important saints in St Albans' liturgical and devotional culture to more prominent ones. The western-most of these depicts St

Christopher and dates approximately to the late thirteenth century.[353] Though

badly faded, an image of the saint holding the infant Christ is visible, as are

indications that the saint was originally walking on, or through, water. Though

the image of Christopher holding the Christ child may remind the reader of the

Vita of the scene of Christina's mystical consolation and her freedom from lustful

thoughts, such a connection is a loose one at best, and the image seems to have

little bearing on Christina and her relationship to St Albans. The second of the

surviving four images also does little to reinforce Christina's presence at the

abbey – it depicts Thomas of Canterbury, the famous martyr of that city and the

inspiration for so many cults in England, and serves as a reminder of the strength

of these cults immediately following his death in 1170. Indeed, his impact on

English devotion might be sufficient to explain the shift in emphasis away from

Christina, except for one fact: in the procession of saints leading to the head altar,

Thomas is placed third – hardly an auspicious location for a normally highly

celebrated saint and martyr, and a decision that highlights once again the

sometimes fiercely independent nature of St Albans and its devotional

preferences.

If Thomas' placement is surprising, however, the saint given the second

spot in the procession will be even more so: here can be seen a depiction of a

woman saint, probably St Zita of Lucca, a thirteenth-century Italian saint now

known as the patron of domestic servants. Though she is not now much

discussed, her cult was popular in England after her death in 1278 – indeed,

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[353] Roberts, *The Wall Paintings of Saint Albans Abbey*, 22.

outside of her home city in Italy, England seems to have been the strongest center of her cult in medieval Europe.[354] The identification of the image is, however, not certain – it has been suggested that St Osyth might also be the subject of the painting, based primarily on the faint outline of an inscription near the top of the figure which seems to include the letters S and C and possibly, near the end, an A. C. E. Keyser's suggestion that this indicates a depiction of St Citha (i.e., Osyth, a seventh-century queen of the East Saxons) has been assumed by some, though evidence for this is slight and St Zita seems the more appropriate candidate.[355] However, when viewing the figure, standing on an altar and holding up a rosary in a gesture of prayer and contemplation, it is tempting to wonder whether this might not be a depiction of Christina herself (an identification which would also fit Keyser's reading of the letters S, C, and A in the inscription: "Sancta Christina"[356]). Though it is impossible, of course, to be certain, if the painting could be dated to earlier in the thirteenth century (like the painting following it, discussed below), it would be difficult to rule Christina out; on the other hand, if

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[354] Zita's feast day is celebrated on April 27th. According to Barron, "The Travelling Saint," 192, Zita's cult had spread to England by 1356, when a "rector of St Sithe" is recorded in London. The cult seems to have spread throughout England from this central point, and would thus have been able to reach St Albans quickly, but the image here still appears to be a very early depiction of the saint in England. On the dating of Zita's cult and associated manuscripts, see also Sutcliffe, "The Cult of St Sitha in England," and Turville-Petre, "A Middle English Life of St Zita."

[355] See Roberts, *The Wall Paintings of Saint Albans Abbey*, 19 for reasons to prefer St Zita as the subject of the painting, particularly the (now-faded) rosary and key held by the figure, attributes particularly associated with Zita.

[356] Echoing, perhaps, the title given to Christina's *Vita* in the *Gesta Abbatum*, I.104, the "Vita Sanctae Christinae."

it were still taken to be an image of Zita, it would make the painting the earliest

evidence of her cult in England by a wide margin. Moreover, even if Zita is the

saint depicted, her reputation as a patron saint of domestic servants might recall

for us Christina's propensity to produce items of clothing for others as signs of

devotion, such as the undergarments she makes for Geoffrey (*Vita* 161) and the

miters and sandals for Pope Adrian. Christina may not have been wholly

forgotten after all, and it may well be that she, or a saint like her (in a move

reminiscent of "personalizations" of liturgies, discussed above in Chapter 6), was

placed above Thomas of Canterbury in this collection of wall paintings.

The final image, however, gives a decisive explanation for Christina's

displacement, if not her abandonment: the painting shows Saints Alban and

Amphibalus at the moment of their parting, after having exchanged clothes and

just prior to Alban's martyrdom. The image dates from early in the thirteenth

century and reminds us of the importance that Amphibalus rapidly assumed in St

Albans devotional culture following his invention, in both the medieval and

modern senses of the word. Commonly assumed to be a creation of Geoffrey of

Monmouth in his *Historia Regum Brittaniae* (131) – confusing the Latin term

"amphibalus," or "cloak," for the name of Alban's companion instead of the item

that he gave to Alban[357] – Amphibalus then became the subject, in about 1178, of

the latter half of William of St Albans' *Passio Sancti Albani*, following the

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[357] See Koopmans, "The Conclusion of Christina of Markyate's *Vita*," 696.

invention of Amphibalus' relics in that same year.[358] The year marked a

floodgate of activity concerning Amphibalus as he quickly assumed pride of place

in St Albans culture as the companion of the protomartyr of England and original

patron saint of the abbey itself – a place formerly saved, as the *Vita* tells us, for

Christina (127). Given the communal emphasis in St Albans' devotional

practices, discussed above in Chapters 4 and 6, the enthusiasm with which St

Albans adopted Amphibalus can clearly be seen to be part of devotional trends

already established at the abbey. Just as the pseudo-Augustinian prayer in the

Verdun manuscript enthusiastically invoked a litany consisting of not only the

"the chorus of angels...patriarchs...martyrs, confessors...virgins and all the just,"

but also prayers "for men and women, and for all priests who labor for your holy

name" as well as a vast procession of, among others, earthly virgins, married

couples, penitents, orphans, pilgrims, mourners, and (presumably metaphorical)

sailors (Wilmart 576),[359] St Albans monks readily embraced this newfound

historical companion for their patron, all the more so because he fit so seamlessly

into the pattern of local holy figures associated with the abbey.[360] If the

achievements of Roger were celebrated at the abbey, how much more would the

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[358] Wogan-Browne and Fenster, eds., *The Life of Saint Alban*, 133-65.

[359] "Chorus angelorum...patriarcharum...martyrum, confessorum...uirginum omniumque iustorum"..." pro uiris et feminis ac pro omnibus rectoribus qui pro tuo sancto nomine laborant."

[360] See also LeClercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*, 251: "[the liturgy] participated in the eternal praise that the monks, in unison with the angels, began offering God in the abbey choir, and which will be perpetuated in heaven."

achievements of Amphibalus be praised, as he was reputed to have been the one to convert Alban in the first place and make possible his martyrdom?

Thus, the very processes that allowed Christina to become prominent at the abbey – the emphasis on communal religious life and local sanctity so clearly emphasized in sources such as Bede's account of the Barking nuns, the pseudo-Augustinian and Anselmian celebrations of saintly and local devotional communities, and the parade of holy men and women in the *Gesta Abbatum* – continued after its promotion of her, culminating with the elevation of Amphibalus and his companions as the ultimate example of sanctity celebrated in common with Alban, the patron of the abbey. If Christina, as part of this process, was eventually swept into the archives of history, it is not necessary to say that this was done with malice; rather, it was due to the nature of her role in the inherently rapid development of devotional practices in twelfth-century St Albans. If the local, for St Albans, was always the holy, it must be remembered that the local is always transient, as the procession of abbots, hermits, and monks in the *Gesta Abbatum* illustrates in the sheer scope of its coverage. If Christina did not remain a permanent fixture of the St Albans community, her presence and impact certainly proved to be an important development in a process of cultural revisions that culminated in the creation and celebration of Amphibalus, finally established as the partner of Alban himself.

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