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Hrotsvit's Legends as Redemptive Pedagogy:
The "Nectar of Heavenly Grace"

By

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HROTSVIT'S LEGENDS AS REDEMPTIVE PEDAGOGY: THE "NECTAR OF HEAVENLY GRACE"

By

Sarah V. Bogue
M.Div., Princeton Theological Seminary, 2010
B.A., Davidson College, 2007

Advisor: Philip L. Reynolds, Ph.D.

An abstract of
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University
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Abstract

Hrotsvit's Legends as Redemptive Pedagogy: The "Nectar of Heavenly Grace"
By Sarah V. Bogue

This dissertation explores the work of tenth-century canoness Hrotsvit of Gandersheim, focusing on her eight hagiographic legends. This corpus presents a truly unique collection of saints, beginning with biblical archetypes of Mary and Christ, continuing with the "contemporary" martyrs Gongolf and Pelagius, then exploring two devil contract narratives that feature Theophilus and an unnamed slave, and concluding with classic saints Dionysius and Agnes. I argue that Hrotsvit's hagiographic corpus serves as a type of "redemptive pedagogy," assisting her audience in exercising their intellects in service of a more faithful understanding and practice of Christianity. As I demonstrate, the introduction to Hrotsvit's corpus commends such a pedagogical hermeneutic to her audience, grounding her work as a writer firmly in her own experience as a student. In her position as recipient of an extensive education, Hrotsvit takes on the role of educator in the saint's lives. She does this in two complementary ways. First, Hrotsvit emphasizes the value of education for the characters in her stories, depicting ideal saints as dedicated to their own educational opportunities, sensitive to lessons provided by miraculous events, and capable of articulating their faith in the service of educating others. Second, Hrotsvit weaves theological lessons into each of her saint's lives. These lessons interpret events in the narrative, offering explanatory asides that assist Hrotsvit's readers in exploring the complexities of the Christian faith.

After offering an overview of early medieval monastic education for women in chapter one, I explore the redemptive pedagogy found in each of the eight legends, comparing them to Hrotsvit's potential source material. As I prove, these legends are more than a mere repetition of existing work; they are a creative retelling, providing Hrotsvit's audience with the means to form their faith through the exercise of their intellects.

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My dissertation could not have been completed without the unfailing support of my family, to whom I dedicate this effort. My grandparents Russell, Elaine, and Marilyn have provided encouragement at every step of my academic journey. My in-laws, Pete and Claudia, have cheered me on from near and far over the years. My father, Russell, has always believed in my ability to overcome any obstacle. My sisters, Mary Reid and Elizabeth, offered both sympathy and humor, which were necessary antidotes to the negative aspects of the dissertation process. Special thanks are due to my mother, Jenny, whose support was both emotional and practical. She graciously provided a close reading of the full dissertation project. More importantly, she offered vital perspective by reminding me of all the mountains (academic and otherwise) that I have climbed to get to this point. Her confidence in my vision for this project sustained me in moments when I felt profoundly lost.

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HROTSVIT'S LEGENDS AS REDEMPTIVE PEDAGOGY:
THE "NECTAR OF HEAVENLY GRACE"

Table of Contents

READING HROTSVIT'S HAGIOGRAPHIC PEDAGOGY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The tenth-century canoness Hrotsvit of Gandersheim left behind an impressive corpus of sixteen works: eight hagiographic legends, six plays, and two epic poems that detail the history of the Ottonian imperial family and of her community at Gandersheim respectively. This self-described "strong voice" of Gandersheim (*clamor validus Gandeshemensis*) remains a biographical mystery, and information about her identity must be gleaned almost exclusively from her written work.[1] In the introductory material to the legends, she indicates she was trained by Gerberga, the niece of Otto I, which places Hrotsvit at Gandersheim during the 960s. Likewise, her history of the Ottonian family must have been begun by 965, since the work references the coronation of Otto II, which occurred in 967. Beyond these chronological markers, the corpus provides a picture of a woman exceptionally situated to lend her "strong voice" in service of Christianity in the Ottonian empire.

Hrotsvit designed her oft-ignored hagiographic corpus as a form of what I will term "redemptive pedagogy": a type of Christian education that allows her readers to exercise their minds and shape them into tools of divine praise. To do this, Hrotsvit emphasizes the value of education for the characters within her stories and adds explanatory lessons, theological, biblical, and ethical, to teach her audience how to interpret the stories themselves. Hrotsvit's hagiographic pedagogy, while exceptional, was not the only light illuminating the "darkness" of the early medieval world. Hrotsvit's legends exemplify

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[1] This phrase is found in the preface (*praefatio*) of Hrotsvit's Liber secundus, which includes the plays. This appellation may be a playful Latin pun on her name, the Old Saxon Hrothsuith: hruot means "voice" and suid translates as "strong." It could also be a reference to the "cum clamore valido" of Hebrews 5:7. Katharina M. Wilson, ed., *Mediaeval Women Writers* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), 31.

and contribute to the rich intellectual world of Ottonian women's communities. These communities were the beneficiaries of a long tradition of monastic learning, particularly Carolingian and Anglo-Saxon women's communities. But Gandersheim and its sister houses were also the product of a uniquely Ottonian environment, which offered women unprecedented access to power and education.

1.2 Monastic Education for Women

As I will show, powerful female monastic houses like Gandersheim represent a particular moment in Ottonian political, intellectual, and cultural history. Nevertheless, Hrotsvit and her fellow *sanctimoniales* were the heirs of a long tradition of women's education in Anglo-Saxon and Frankish monastic culture. For example, Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* depicts abbesses as capable leaders and learned intellectuals. Hild of Whitby receives particular praise for her guidance of five future bishops.[2] According to Bede, Hild's leadership reflected her frequent conversations with Bishop Aidan and "other devout men."[3] In addition to Bede's praise of women religious, there is ample evidence for Aldhelm's encouragement of female monastic education. Aldhelm's prose *de Virginitate* identifies Abbess Hildelith of Barking as *magistra*, praising her "rich verbal

[2] Bertram Colgrave and Roger Mynors, eds., *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 404–14.

[3] Ibid., 406–9. For more on this topic, see: Joan Nicholson, "Feminae Gloriosae: Women in the Age of Bede," *Studies in Church History Subsidia* 1 (1978): 15–29; Christine E. Fell, *Women in Anglo-Saxon England* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1986); Peter H. Blair, "Whitby as a Centre of Learning in the Seventh Century," in *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Michael Lapidge and Helmut Gneuss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 3–32; Susanmarie Harrington, "Women, Literacy, and Intellectual Culture in Anglo-Saxon England" (Ph.D., University of Michigan, 1990); Stephanie Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church: Sharing a Common Fate* (Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer Ltd, 1992).

eloquence" and facility in teaching her fellow nuns.[4] The treatise addresses nine other women, his *alumnae scolasticae,* who also appear throughout the text "as astute and sophisticated readers."[5] Aldehlm famously encourages women religious to approach their education like bees in search of flowers: "your remarkable mental disposition, unless I'm mistaken, roaming widely through the flowering fields of scripture, traverses with thirsty curiosity."[6] This passage also suggests that the nuns employ the four layers of scriptural interpretation and that they pursue reading in history, grammar, and poetry. Aldhelm's implied female "programme of learning" thus mirrors the "advanced studies in Latin that monks in the early Anglo-Saxon period are known for achieving."[7]

One recipient of such an education program was Leoba, commissioned to serve as a missionary in Germany by Boniface.[8] Leoba's *vita*, composed by Rudolf of Fulda (c. 836), offers compelling evidence for Carolingian female monastic education.[9] As Virginia Blanton and Helene Scheck note, Rudolf's very lengthy introduction has a pedagogical focus, describing Leoba's education in *divinum studium* by the "venerable

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[4] "Regularis disciplinae et monasticericae conversationis magistrae," (Prosa de virginitate, 6). Aldhelm, *Prosa de virginitate: cum glosa latina atque anglosaxonica*, ed. Scott Gwara, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, 124 A (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 27. Translation from: Michael Lapidge and Michael W. Herren, *Aldhelm: The Prose Works* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2009), 59.

[5] Prosa de virginitate, LX. 66. Translation from: Aldhelm, *Prosa de virginitate*, 760. Also see: Lisa Weston, "Conceiving the Word(s): Habits of Literacy among Earlier Anglo-Saxon Monastic Women," in *Nuns' Literacies in Medieval Europe: The Hull Dialogue*, ed. Virginia Blanton (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 151.

[6] Aldhelm, *Prosa de virginitate*, IV. 21-48, pp. 53–61; Lapidge and Herren, *Aldhelm*, 61–62. For a discussion of apian metaphor to discuss literacy, see: Anna Taylor, "Just Like a Mother Bee: Reading and Writing Vitae metricae around the Year 1000," *Viator* 36 (2005): 119–48.

[7] Virginia Blanton and Helene Scheck, "Leoba and the Iconography of Learning in the Lives of Anglo-Saxon Women Religious, 660-780," in *Nuns' Literacies in Medieval Europe: The Kansas City Dialogue*, ed. Veronica O'Mara, Virginia Blanton, and Patricia Stoop (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 12.

[8] Boniface corresponded with many Anglo-Saxon women religious, a fact Stephanie Hollis attributes to his background in teaching both men and women. Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church*, 132.

[9] Fulda was founded by Boniface, which facilitated Leoba's relationship with the male house. Rudolf reports Hrabanus Maurus requested the *vita*'s composition. Rudolf von Fulda, *Vita Leobae abbatissae Biscofesheimensis auctore Rudolfo Fuldensi*, ed. George Waitz, Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptores, 15.1 (Hannover: Hahn, 1887). Translation from: C. H. Talbot, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1954), 204–26.

abbess Tetta of Wimborne."[10] Leoba's intellectual skill commended her to Boniface as an ideal missionary to Bischofscheim, where she might share her knowledge. Rudolf's description of Leoba's education mirrors Aldhelm's suggestions, including the study of grammar, scripture, patristic authors, and "the decrees of the councils."[11] Even the visionary elements of the *vita* point to Leoba's role as a missionary and teacher. When Leoba's mother conceived after years of infertility, she had a vision that her womb contained a church bell, ringing "merrily."[12] Leoba's mother interprets this vision as a call to offer her daughter to the church.[13] Mere lines later young Leoba receives a vision of her own, which depicts a purple thread issuing from her mouth. Leoba pulls the thread out of her mouth until it forms a small ball in her hands. As Rudolf explains, the vision prefigures Leoba's work as a missionary: "the thread which comes from her viscera and issued from her mouth signifies the doctrine of wisdom proceeding from her heart through the ministry of the voice."[14] The resulting ball of thread symbolizes the "mystery of divine teaching," a cycle that begins in heaven, passes through missionary educators, and returns "upwards through the love of God."[15] Rudolf weaves this "iconography of

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[10] Blanton and Scheck, "Leoba and the Iconography of Learning," 18.
[11] Talbot, *The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany*, 215; Blanton and Scheck, "Leoba and the Iconography of Learning," 18.
[12] Vita Leobae, 6. Talbot, *The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany*, 210.
[13] Margaret Cotter-Lynch, "Rereading Leoba, or Hagiography as Compromise," *Medieval Feminist Forum* 46, no. 1 (2010): 13.
[14] Vita Leobae, 6. Talbot, *The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany*, 212. For more on this vision, see: Janet Nelson, "Women and the Word in the Earlier Middle Ages," in *Women in the Church*, ed. W. J. Sheils and Diana Wood, Studies in Church History 27 (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 66–67; Ulrike Wiethaus, *Maps of Flesh and Light: The Religious Experience of Medieval Women Mystics* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1993), 31–32; Mary Ellen Rowe, "Leoba's Purple Thread: The Women of the Boniface Mission," *Magistra* 17, no. 2 (2011): 3–20.
[15] Vita Leobae, 6. Talbot, *The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany*, 12.

learning" throughout the *vita*, solidifying Leoba as the "*magistra* destined to become the model for Carolingian women's monasticism."[16]

Leoba was not the only point of pedagogical connection between insular and continental women's communities, which also exchanged books and relics. Bertila, abbess of Jouarre and later Chelles, sent several manuscripts to communities in England.[17] This largess reflects the increasing literacy and textual production of female monastic communities in Francia. Chelles became a center of female monastic education, supported by connections to political elites: patronized by the widowed Frankish Queen Balthild and then led by Gisela, Charlemagne's sister.[18] Bernard Bischoff links series of manuscripts signed by female scribes to Chelles, suggesting that a large-scale scriptorium flourished at the monastery.[19] The Chelles scribes copied both patristic texts as well as newer standards like Gregory's *Dialogues*, indicating they were "as well equipped intellectually as any other copyists we can identify."[20] Chelles was not the only Frankish female community producing scribal work, although it did so on the largest scale. Rosamond McKitterick has also identified the work of female scribes at Jouarre, Rebais,

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[16] Blanton and Scheck, "Leoba and the Iconography of Learning," 6.

[17] Jo Ann McNamara, John E. Halborg, and E. Gordon Whatley, eds., *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), 279. For more on the exchange of books between Jouarre and continental monasteries, see Rosamond McKitterick, "The Diffusion of Insular Culture in Nuestria between 650 and 850: the Implications of the Manuscript evidence," in *La Neustrie: Les pays au nord de la Loire de 650 à 850*, ed. H. Atsma (Stigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1990), 406–12; Felice Lifshitz, *Religious Women in Early Carolingian Francia: A Study of Manuscript Transmission and Monastic Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 29–64.

[18] Gisela's correspondence with Alucin demonstrates her own exemplary education and her desire to shape the education of the Chelles community, where Charlemagne's other daughters were also trained. Valerie L. Garver, *Women and Aristocratic Culture in the Carolingian World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), 14–40.

[19] Bernard Bischoff, "Die Kölner Nonnenhandschriften und das Skriptorium von Chelles," *Mittelalterliche Studien* 1 (1965): 17–35.

[20] Rosamond McKitterick, "Nun's Scriptoria in England and Francia in the Eighth Century," *Francia* 19, no. 1 (1992): 1–35.

Faremoutiers, and Andelys-sur-Seine.[21] Contrary to the theories of earlier scholars, women's communities were a part of the Carolingian intellectual renewal, exemplified in Alcuin's call for educational reform in *De litteris colendis*.[22] The Aachen council of 816 officially endorsed the value of reading for women religious (*sanctimoniales*), but Frankish monastic women needed no such encouragement.[23] Carolingian monastic women were avid readers as well as scribes. This fact is particularly evident in a ninth-century *Sammelhandschrift* that was housed at Essen.[24] As Steven Stofferhan has shown, the creative presentation and selection of the biblical material indicates a pedagogical use for the collection: "the Carolingian master excerptor worked diligently to outline some of the ideal values young monks or nuns ought to espouse."[25] A schoolgirl's marginal note reinforces the collection's pedagogical value. The note is addressed to the girl's *domina magistra*: "give me leave to keep vigil […] and I affirm and swear to you with both hands

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[21] Rosamond McKitterick, "Frauen und Schriftlichkeit im frühen Mittelalter," in *Weibliche Lebensgestaltung im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. Hans-Werner Goetz (Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 1991), 65–118.

[22] For example, Jo Ann McNamara and Suzanne Wemple claimed that, given the lack of female-authored texts from the early medieval period, women's communities were not truly a part of Carolingian intellectual renewal. Suzanne Fonay Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the Cloister, 500 to 900* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 169; Jo Ann McNamara, *Sisters in Arms: Catholic Nuns through Two Millennia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 169. Helpful corrections to these theories have been provided, in particular, by Janet Nelson: Nelson, "Women and the Word in the Earlier Middle Ages." For an analysis of *De litteris colendis*, see: Douglas Dales, *Alcuin: His Life and Legacy* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2012), 95–98.

[23] "Ut erga puellas in monasteriis erudiendas magna adhibeatur diligentia" (cc. 22). Albert Werminghoff, ed., *Concilia aevi Karolini*, Monumenta Germaniae Historica Concilia, II.i (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1979), 452. Although this project focuses on monastic women, elite lay women were also the recipients of education. Dhuoda, a Carolingian noble, took on the role of *magistra* for her son, composing her famous *Liber manualis* as a "mirror" for his education. Marcelle Thiébaux, *Dhuoda, Handbook for Her Warrior Son: Liber Manualis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). McKitterick has suggested that Dhuoda's work may not have been exceptional, but rather indicates a standard of education for Frankish noblewomen. Rosamond McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 255–56.

[24] Düsseldorf, Landes- und Universitätsbibliothek Sammelhanschrift B.3. This collection of 306 folios was housed at the monastery of Essen and included scripture, exegetical works, hagiography, and patristic texts. For more details on the contents of this collection, see: Gerhard Karpp, "Bemerkungen zu den mittelalterlichen Handschriften des adeligen Damenstifts in Essen (9.-19. Jahrhundert)," *Scriptorium* 45, no. 2 (1991): 163–204.

[25] Steven A. Stofferahn, "Changing Views of Carolingian Women's Literary Culture: The Evidence from Essen," *Early Medieval Europe* 8, no. 1 (1999): 81.

that I shall not cease either reading or singing on our Lord's behalf the whole night."[26]

1.3 Ottonian Women Religious

The women of Ottonian monastic communities had much in common with their Carolingian predecessors, particularly their pursuit of education and manuscript production. However, the brief period of Ottonian rule represents a unique moment in early medieval history, with deeply entwined political and monastic realms.

1.3.1 *The Ottonian Context*

During their rule, Ottonian rulers battled consistent internal and external threats. The Liudolfing family, progenitors of the Ottonian dynastic line, has its roots in Saxony, perhaps the most troublesome of the duchies comprising Carolingian East Francia. Rosamond McKitterick recounts Charlemagne's difficulty with the region, claiming the "long-drawn-out war of conquest in Saxony [was] matched by the slow progress of Christianization and even longer process of conversion" in the region.[27] As discussed earlier, missionaries like Boniface and Leoba were instrumental in this process, however slow. After the division dictated by the treaty of Verdun, Louis the German, Charlemagne's grandson, took over East Francia, with a stronghold in Bavaria. Louis the German attempted to ally himself with the Saxon Liudolfings by marrying his son, Louis the Younger, to Liudolf's daughter Liutgard. In retrospect, this marriage "was a fateful step toward the establishment of Saxons as the successors to the Carolingians in East

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[26] Steven A. Stofferahn, "A Schoolgirl and Mistress Felhin: A Devout Petition from Ninth-Century Saxony," in *Women Writing Latin: from Roman Antiquity to Early Modern Europe*, ed. Phyllis Rugg Brown, Laurie J. Churchill, and J. Elizabeth Jeffrey, vol. 2 (New York: Routledge, 2002), 25–34.
[27] Rosamond McKitterick, *Charlemagne: The Formation of a European Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 252.

Francia."[28] However, Saxon leadership did not fully emerge until after the deaths of the last four, increasingly ineffective Carolingian rulers of East Francia: Louis the Younger (d. 882), Charles the Fat (d. 888), Arnulf (d. 899), and Louis the Child (d. 911).[29] Widukund of Corvey's *Res gesta Saxonae* describes the ascent of Duke Conrad as an election, carried out by "all of the Franks and the Saxons," that named Duke Conrad as *rex*. Widukind qualifies Conrad's election by noting that the "real" leader during Conrad's reign was Otto, son of Liudolf. [30] The Liudolfing family officially took control in 919, when Otto's son Henry "Fowler" was elected *rex.*[31] In her *Gesta Ottonis*, Hrotsvit identifies this election as the moment when "the King of Kings […] ordained that supreme power over the Frankish nation be passed on in succession to the famous Saxon tribe."[32] Henry I's long and largely successful rule laid the groundwork for the reign of his son Otto I, though each was plagued by uprisings within Saxony. Hrotsvit describes several rebellions during Otto I's reign, but as Karl Leyser notes there was a common thread to these attempts: "disaffected nobles with very few exceptions rose only when a member of the royal house [who was] equally resentful collected and led them."[33] The

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[28] Phyllis R. Brown and Stephen L. Wailes, eds., *A Companion to Hrotsvit of Gandersheim (fl. 960): Contextual and Interpretive Approaches* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 11.

[29] Rosamond McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians, 751-987* (New York: Longman, 1983), 306–39.

[30] Res gesta Saxonae, I.16. Widukind, *Deeds of the Saxons*, ed. Bernard Bachrach and David Bachrach, Medieval Texts in Translation (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014), 26.

[31] A full discussion of this "election" process and German *Sonderweg* lies outside the bounds of this project. For an overview, see: Timothy Reuter, "The Medieval German Sonderweg? The Empire and Its Rulers in the High Middle Ages," in *Kings and Kingship in Medieval Europe*, ed. Anne Duggan (King's College London Centre for Late Antique and Medieval Studies, 1993), 179–211.

[32] Gesta Ottonis, 1-6. Translation from: Katharina M. Wilson, *Hrotsvit of Gandersheim: A Florilegium of Her Works* (Rochester, NY: D. S. Brewer, 1998), 101. For more on this passage, see: Jay T. Lees, "Hrotsvit of Gandersheim and the Problem of Royal Succession in the East Frankish Kingdom," in *Hrotsvit of Gandersheim: Contexts, Identities, Affinities, and Performances*, ed. Phyllis Rugg Brown, Linda McMillin, and Katharina Wilson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 13–28.

[33] Karl J. Leyser, *Rule and Conflict in an Early Medieval Society: Ottonian Saxony* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Pub, 1989), 29.

frequency of uprisings speaks both to the unruliness of Saxon nobility and to the deep divisions within the Liudolf family. In addition to these internal pressures, both Henry I and Otto I had to address vulnerable borders on all sides of their kingdom. The Magyars and the Slavs continued to be a threat, as did the Danes.[34] Otto I also dedicated years of his reign to waging war in Italy, and his second wife Adelheid was the widow of Italy's King Lothar.

In order to maintain stability throughout their often tenuous holdings, the Ottonians developed a system of political authority that depended on ecclesial and monastic support. Beginning with the imperial coronation of Otto I in 962, the Ottonian dynasty presented their rule as a kind of sacral kingship, reinforced by liturgical rite of coronation and by the movements of the itinerant court.[35] Itinerant kingship had several advantages, including the consistent display of royal presence in regions prone to uprising: "in this way, the king-in-motion identified — even embodied — the society's center of power; and the royal progress [movements of the itinerant court] itself became the major institution of government."[36] The mobile Ottonian court included its own chapel, complete with relics. These objects allowed the king to conduct his face-to-face political agenda within the highly ritualized framework of the progress.[37] The pseudo-mystical

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[34] Charles R. Bowlus, *Franks, Moravians, and Magyars: The Struggle for the Middle Danube, 788-907* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995); Karl Leyser, *Communications and Power in Medieval Europe: The Carolingian and Ottonian Centuries* (London: Hambledon Press, 1994), 29–50; Gerd Althoff, *Die Ottonen: Königsherrschaft ohne Staat*, 2., Aufl. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2005), 88–108; Bernard S. Bachrach and David Bachrach, "Early Saxon Frontier Warfare," *Journal of Medieval Military History* 10 (2010): 17–60.

[35] Leyser, *Rule and Conflict in an Early Medieval Society*, 83–91; John W. Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship and Royal Monasteries in Early Medieval Germany, c. 936-1075* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 45–75; Henry Parkes, *The Making of Liturgy in the Ottonian Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 218–22.

[36] Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship and Royal Monasteries in Early Medieval Germany, c. 936-1075*, 46.

[37] Bernhardt's work is the best English language overview of the Ottonian itinerant court. For more on the nature of the royal "progress" and its function in the Ottonian empire, see: Eckhard Müller-Mertens, *Die*

nature of the progress gave Ottonian rule "a semblance of being coterminous with Christendom."[38] Bishops appointed by Ottonian kings were crucial in maintaining this sense of sacred authority, perhaps best exemplified in the activities of Bruno, Otto I's brother and archbishop of Cologne.[39] A second link in this structure of Ottonian power was provided by monastic houses, which offered local leadership and served as hosts for the itinerant court.

1.3.2 *Form and Function of Ottonian Female Monastic Communities*

The earliest monasteries in Saxony were founded as part of the Christianization of the area. Carolingian institutions like Corvey, Werden, Essen, and Herford would all play a role in the evolution of Ottonian monasticism.[40] In addition to these pre-existing Carolingian houses, the Ottonian period also saw the creation of an unprecedented number of new female monastic institutions in Saxony: Karl Leyser identifies thirty-six new communities founded between 919 and 1024.[41] These houses included traditional

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Reichsstruktur im Spiegel der Herrschaftspraxis Ottos des Grossen, Forschungen zur mittelalterlichen Geschichte 25 (Berlin: Akademie-Verl., 1980); Carl Richard Brühl, *Fodrum, Gistum, Servitium Regis*, Kölner Historische Abhandlungen 14 (Köln: Böhlau, 1968); Matthew Innes, *State and Society in the Early Middle Ages: The Middle Rhine Valley, 400–1000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 235–38.

[38] Henry Mayr-Harting, *Church and Cosmos in Early Ottonian Germany: The View from Cologne* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 5.

[39] Leyser, *Rule and Conflict in an Early Medieval Society*, 88–90; Althoff, *Die Ottonen*, 109–20; Mayr-Harting, *Church and Cosmos in Early Ottonian Germany*, 3–50.

[40] Timothy Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages, C. 800-1056* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 68–69. Given their location on the fringes of Carolingian authority, these monastic institutions were able to "to fashion their understanding of Christianity in their own image … adopting monastic institutions to their own purposes." Frederick S. Paxton, *Anchoress and Abbess in Ninth-Century Saxony: The Lives of Liutbirga of Wendhausen and Hathumoda of Gandersheim* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 9. Just one example of this "adaptation" could be found in the *Heliand,* a re-telling of the gospel in the genre of Old Saxon poetry. G. Ronald Murphy, *The Saxon Savior: The Germanic Transformation of the Gospel in the Ninth-Century Heliand* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[41] Leyser, *Rule and Conflict in an Early Medieval Society*, 63. Janet Nelson suggests a slightly higher number of forty-eight female communities: Janet Nelson, "Monastic Life of Women From the

Benedictine communities as well as canonical foundations, whose members lived according to the rules for canonesses outlined during Louis the Pious's reform councils (816-817).[42] Unlike fully cloistered nuns, canonesses maintained the right to leave the community and to own property.[43] The relative freedom afforded by canonical institutions was likely part of the economic and familial factors at play in this influx of new women's communities: they offered physical protection for unmarried girls and financial protection for the property of widows.[44] These tenth century monasteries were a far cry from the stringent communities envisioned by Caesarius: Ottonian women religious "mingled piety and abstinence with power and wealth, and served a variety of roles."[45]

In fact, the Ottonian period saw the rise of women's authority in both the political and monastic realms, which often overlapped. Jane Stephenson sees Byzantine and Italian influence in the "devolution of actual power to women," displayed most clearly in the

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Merovingians to the Ottonians," in *Hrotsvit of Gandersheim: Rara Avis in Saxonia?*, ed. Katharina M Wilson (Ann Arbor, MI: Marc Publishing, 1987), 35–54.

[42] Paxton, *Anchoress and Abbess in Ninth-Century Saxony*, 9; Nelson, "Monastic Life of Women From the Merovingians to the Ottonians." Gandersheim, as one example, included both a community of canonesses and, later, St. Mary's, a formal Benedictine house. Although Agius of Corvey, author of the *Vita Hathumodae*, desired a more formal relationship between the Gandersheim canonesses and the Benedictine network, no such connection was ever formally made. Josef Semmler has suggested that Gandersheim's founding was a part of the Benedictine reform movement that emanated from the Frankish abbey of Corbie, through the initial Saxon community at Corvey to the newer sites such as Essen. Josef Semmler, "Corvey und Herford in der benediktinischen Reformbewegung des 9. Jahrhunderts," *Frühmittelalterlich Studien* 4 (1970): 289–319.

[43] M. Parisse, "Les chanoinesses dans l'Empire germanique (IX-XI siècles)," *Francia. Forschungen zur Westeuropäischen Geschichte München* 6 (1978): 107–26.

[44] Leyser, *Rule and Conflict in an Early Medieval Society*, 57–67. Both Leyser and Nelson also suggest "protection" as the key role of these houses: Nelson, "Monastic Life of Women From the Merovingians to the Ottonians," 41; Jane Stevenson, "Hrotsvit in Context: Convents and Culture in Ottonian Germany," in *A Companion to Hrotsvit of Gandersheim (fl. 960): Contextual and Interpretive Approaches*, ed. Phyllis R. Brown and Stephen L. Wailes (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 40–41.

[45] Sean Gilsdorf, *Queenship and Sanctity: The Lives of Mathilda and the Epitaph of Adelheid* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 26.

regency of Queen Theophanu and Queen Adelheid for Otto III.[46] Ottonian queens acted as intercessors and advisors, managing the logistics of the royal household.[47] Ottonian royals also led monastic communities, whose principal members were elite women, many of whom were also related to the royal family.[48] Gandersheim has particular claim to that family connection, having been founded by Liudolf and his wife Oda in 852, as Hrotsvit reports in her *Primordia Gandershemensis*.[49] Three of Liudolf's daughters with Oda became abbesses at Gandersheim: Hathumoda, Gerberga (d. 896) and Christina. Another Gerberga (sometimes called 'the second'), the abbess to whom Hrotsvit addresses many of her works, was the niece of Otto I. Likewise, Sophia, the daughter of Otto II, became abbess of the community in 1002. Other women's communities boasted similar familial ties to the Ottonians, often functioning as hosts for the itinerant court and enacting liturgical celebration for the dynasty.[50] The histories and necrologies produced by these communities demonstrate that commemorating the dead was one of their primary duties.[51] As Elisabeth van Hoots puts it, "by preserving the memory of the dead, the nuns

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[46] Stevenson, "Hrotsvit in Context: Convents and Culture in Ottonian Germany," 40–41.

[47] Gilsdorf, *Queenship and Sanctity*, 10–14.

[48] Peter Dronke has famously claimed Gandersheim was more an "autonomous princedom" than a convent. Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages: A Critical Study of Texts from Perpetua to Marguerite Porete* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 58. Janet Nelson cautions against using these monastic communities to generalize about the experience of women in the post-Carolingian world. This was a very specific, very elite group. Nelson, "Women and the Word in the Earlier Middle Ages," 56.

[49] Walter Berschin, ed., *Hrotsvit Opera Omnia*, Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana (Monachii: Saur, 2001), 306–29. For a translation, see: Thomas F. Head, ed., "Hrotsvit of Gandersheim, The Establishment of the Monastery of Gandersheim," in *Medieval Hagiography: An Anthology* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 237–54.

[50] Scott Wells, "The Politics of Gender and Ethnicity in East Francia: The Case of Gandersheim, ca. 850-950," in *Negotiating Community and Difference in Medieval Europe: Gender, Power, Patronage, and the Authority of Religion in Latin Christendom*, ed. Katherine Allen Smith (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 113.

[51] Carolyn Edwards, "Dynastic Sanctity in Two Early Medieval Women's Lives," in *Medieval Family Roles: A Book of Essays*, ed. Cathy Jorgensen Itnyre (New York: Routledge, 1996), 3–20; Patrick Corbet, *Les saints ottoniens: sainteté dynastique, sainteté royale et sainteté féminine autour de l'an Mil* (Sigmaringen: J. Thorbecke, 1986). Althoff has shown how the Gandersheim Liudolfing women were gradually removed from the liturgical celebration of the dynasty, replaced by members of other monastic

"preserved the past" and then "took the opportunity to shape the past as they saw it."[52] Abbesses also wielded power through the management of vast estates kept in trust of monastic houses.[53] The abbesses of Gandersheim even exercised the privilege of producing coinage with their own images, controlled a personal army, and "played leading roles in the administration of the Ottonian Empire."[54] Scott Wells suggests that this power was both literal and metaphorical, because these communities anchored "the dynasty to its carefully asserted origins among the Saxon people" only recently converted to Christianity. [55] In this position of authority, women's communities like Gandersheim participated in all aspects of the cosmopolitan tenth century. Leyser has explored the connections between Ottonian female monastics and England, and, despite Liutprand of Cremona's diplomatic failures, princess Theophanu brought an undeniable Byzantine influence to the Ottonian world, particularly Gandersheim.[56] Hrotsvit even reports the potential presence of a Córdoban diplomat at Gandersheim, from whom she learned of the Spanish martyr Pelagius, who is the focus of her fourth legend.

These Ottonian women's communities were not without their share of conflict. The power of individual monastic communities was dependent on their relationship to ecclesial authorities and to the current Ottonian rulers. For example, Gandersheim's role within the ecclesiastical hierarchy was not fully articulated, which exacerbated the

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communities: Gerd Althoff, "Gandersheim und Quedlinburg: Ottonische Frauenklöster als Herrschafts- und Überlieferungszentren," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 25 (1991): 123–44.

[52] Elisabeth Van Houts, "Women and the Writing of History in the Early Middle Ages: The Case of Abbess Matilda of Essen and Aethelweard," *Early Medieval Europe* 1, no. 1 (1992): 53–68.

[53] Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship and Royal Monasteries in Early Medieval Germany, c. 936-1075*, 303.

[54] Paxton, *Anchoress and Abbess in Ninth-Century Saxony*, 45.

[55] Wells, "The Politics of Gender and Ethnicity in East Francia: The Case of Gandersheim, ca. 850-950," 113.

[56] Leyser, *Rule and Conflict in an Early Medieval Society*, 73–104; Van Houts, "Women and the Writing of History in the Early Middle Ages," 60; Rosamond McKitterick, "Ottonian Intellectual Culture in the Tenth Century and the Role of Theophanu," *Early Medieval Europe* 2, no. 1 (1993): 53–74.

contentious relationship between its abbesses and the bishops of nearby Hildesheim and Mainz.[57] Monastic communities relied on the authority granted to them through legal documentation of their "protection and immunity."[58] Gandersheim was officially granted the ability to self-select its abbesses, free from external interference and local jurisdiction, in a charter from 956. This freedom was confirmed in 968, when Pope John XIII granted the community a declaration of protection.[59] Like most monastic institutions, however, Gandersheim experienced a waxing and waning of imperial favor. As John Bernhardt has shown, Gandersheim was given two charters by Otto I and increasingly large property grants during the rule of the latter two Ottos.[60] But Gandersheim also had to compete with the new community of canonesses at Quedlinburg, founded in 936 by none other than Queen Mathilda.[61] In this way the contentious relationship between monastic houses reflected the "rivalry" among Ottonian royal women themselves.[62]

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[57] Intriguingly, Adam Cohen and Anne Derbes suggest that the depiction of Eve on the bronze doors of Hildesheim might have reflected Bishop Bernward's conflict with Sophia, abbess of Gandersheim, introducing a political layer of interpretation onto the multifaceted doors. Adam S. Cohen and Anne Derbes, "Bernward and Eve at Hildesheim," *Gesta* 40, no. 1 (2001): 19–38. For more on Sophia, see: Johanna Maria van Winter, "The Education of the Daughters of the Nobility in the Ottonian Empire," in *The Empress Theophano: Byzantium and the West at the Turn of the First Millennium*, ed. Adelbert Davids (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 86–98.

[58] Leyser, *Rule and Conflict in an Early Medieval Society*, 68.

[59] Hans Goetting, *Das Bistum Hildesheim: Das Benediktiner(innen)kloster Brunshausen, das Benediktinerinnenkloster St. Marien vor Gandersheim, das Benediktinerkloster Clus, das Franziskanerkloster Gandersheim*, Germania Sacra (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1974), 302–19.

[60] Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship and Royal Monasteries in Early Medieval Germany, c. 936-1075*, 139–61.

[61] Gerd Althoff, *Adels- und Königsfamilien im Spiegel ihrer Memorialüberlieferung* (München: W. Fink, 1984), 180–93. Katrinette Bodwardé has suggested a potential explanation for Hrotsvit's prolific literary career might be found in the resurgence of Gandersheim's importance during the mid-tenth century. If Gandersheim was indeed in a "crisis" of increasing insignificance, both the appointment of Gerberga and the work of Hrotsvit would bolster the community's reputation. Katrinette Bodarwé, *Sanctimoniales litteratae: Schriftlichkeit und Bildung in den ottonischen Frauenkommunitäten Gandersheim, Essen und Quedlinburg* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2004), 21–24.

[62] Leyser, *Communications and Power in Medieval Europe*, 86–93.

1.3.3 *Women's Education in Ottonian Saxony*

In addition to their political and spiritual roles, Ottonian women's communities were centers of education. As Helene Scheck notes, "royal women of Carolingian Francia and Ottonian Saxony enjoyed the same privilege, even duty, of becoming educated as their male counterparts."[63] There is ample evidence of Ottonian monastic women as patrons of book production, as scribes, as readers, and as authors. In this respect, they were not only the beneficiaries of the high regard for women in the Ottonian empire, but also the heirs of the Carolingian women religious before them: "in the area of education, the women's houses of tenth- and eleventh-century Germany carried on the legacy of Leoba and the other nuns who had helped to establish monastic life on the frontier."[64] Hathumoda, the first abbess of Gandersheim, received a personal copy of the life of Leoba from the author, Rudolf of Fulda (c. 852). In his dedication to Hathumoda, Rudolf suggests a pedagogical goal for the narrative, which reinforces his emphasis on pedagogy within the narrative. Rudolf believes his *libellum* will provide Hathumoda with "something to read with pleasure and to imitate conscientiously."[65] According to her own *vita,* penned by Agius of Corvey, Hathumoda took her education seriously: "letters, which others have to be compelled to learn, even by whippings, she begged for with willing zeal and mastered through tireless study."[66] Agius saw the *vita Hathumodae* as a pedagogical tool for the Gandersheim women, because "there [they] will discover how [their] life and habits

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[63] Helene Scheck, "Reading Women at the Margins of Quedlinburg Codex 74," in *Nuns' Literacies in Medieval Europe: The Hull Dialogue*, ed. Virginia Blanton (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 3.
[64] Alison I. Beach, *Women as Scribes: Book Production and Monastic Reform in Twelfth-Century Bavaria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 19.
[65] Paxton, *Anchoress and Abbess in Ninth-Century Saxony*, 43.
[66] Vita Hathumodae, 2 . Translation from: Ibid., 121.

[were] to be corrected."[67] Hathumoda was educated at Herford, a sister house of Corbie, which later educated Mathilda, wife of Henry I. Mathilda's *vita* reports a that she "entered the monastery of Herford not in order to become a nun, but to receive literary training."[68] In her later years, Mathilda used this education to facilitate the founding the monastic community of Quedlinburg.[69] Quedlinburg would go on to educate other royal women as well as men like Thietmar of Mersburg.[70] As McKitterick has shown, this pattern was typical of Ottonian women's communities: many noblewomen entered the monastery with an education and then used that education to enhance the community's pedagogical offerings.[71] Hrotsvit was a beneficiary of this system: her own abbess, Gerberga, had literary training in Latin and Greek provided by the monks of St. Emmeram.[72]

The intellectual guidance of Ottonian abbesses benefitted their communities in several concrete ways. Following in the footsteps of Carolingian monasteries like Chelles and Jouarre, Katrinette Bodarwé has proven that Gandersheim, Essen, and Quedlinburg all had active scriptoria.[73] The Dusseldorf 3 collection discussed earlier, with its

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[67] Vita Hathumodae, 28. Translation from: Ibid., 141.

[68] Vita Mathildae antiquor, 1. Translation from: Gilsdorf, *Queenship and Sanctity*, 75–76.

[69] Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship and Royal Monasteries in Early Medieval Germany, c. 936-1075*, 143.

[70] Claudia Moddelmog, *Königliche Stiftungen des Mittelalters im historischen Wandel: Quedlinburg und Speyer, Königsfelden, Wiener Neustadt und Andernach* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2012), 22–24.

[71] McKitterick, "Frauen und Schriftlichkeit im frühen Mittelalter," 115.

[72] Gerberga's sister, Hadwig, was taught Greek in preparation for her potential marriage with Romanos II. Stevenson, "Hrotsvit in Context: Convents and Culture in Ottonian Germany," 59. In the reverse situation, the Byzantine "princess" Theophanou brought Greek education to her role as Otto II's wife, supervising the education of her children in a "thorough and masterful way." Judith Herrin, "Theophano: Considerations on the Education of a Byzantine Princess," in *Unrivaled Influence: Women and Empire in Byzantium* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 238–60.

[73] Bodarwé, *Sanctimoniales litteratae*. The first study of Ottonian scriptoria was done by Hartmut Hoffmann, but he did not discuss newly created Ottonian communities (such as the spate of women's communities), focusing on previously established locations. Hartmut Hoffmann, *Buchkunst und Königtum im ottonischen und frühsalischen Reich* (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1986). He would later agree to the evidence for a scriptorium at Essen, at least: Hartmut Hoffmann, "Das Skriptorium von Essen in ottonischer und

schoolgirl praise of learning, was not produced at Essen. In the tenth and eleventh centuries, Essen began producing its own manuscripts, especially after a fire destroyed their library in 947.[74] The Essen scribes often wrote hastily, likely with the "pragmatic goal of fulfilling their urgent liturgical and educational needs."[75] Bodarwé suggests that at least one Essen scribe was aware of her inadequacy, noting the following in a marginal note: "*Scribere qui nescit, nullum putat esse laborem*."[76] Essen nuns may have been instructed by monks from nearby Werden, given the similarities in manuscripts produced by the two communities.[77] Although far less evidence remains for the Gandersheim scriptorium, secondary scholars have concluded that the single extant manuscript of Hrotsvit's corpus was indeed produced by Gandersheim nuns (see discussion in section 4.1).[78] Ottonian monastic houses often blended such copying and creative activity. Gandersheim and Quedlinburg produced necrologies as well as histories of the Ottonian dynasty. Abbess Mathilda, granddaughter of Quedlinburg's founder Queen Mathilda, oversaw the creation of the *Annales Quedlinburgensis*, which "display an enormous interest in the deeds of women and their motivations."[79] Hrotsvit's own historical works, the *Gesta Ottonis* and the *Primordia Gandershemensis*, reflect a similar focus on the

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frühsalischer Zeit," in *Kunst im Zeitalter der Kaiserin Theophanu*, ed. Anton von Euw and Peter Schreiner (Köln: Locher, 1993), 113–53.

[74] Bodarwé, *Sanctimoniales litteratae*, 117–21.

[75] Karen Blough, "Implications for Female Monastic Literacy in the Reliefs from St. Liudger's at Werden," in *Nuns' Literacies in Medieval Europe: The Kansas City Dialogue*, ed. Veronica O'Mara, Virginia Blanton, and Patricia Stoop (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 167.

[76] Bodarwé, *Sanctimoniales litteratae*, 115–16.

[77] Beach, *Women as Scribes*, 24.

[78] Bernhard Bischoff, *Latin Palaeography: Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, trans. Daibhm O. Cróinin and David Ganz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 213; Berschin, *Hrotsvit Opera Omnia*, X–XV; Tino Licht, "Hrotsvitspuren in ottonischer Dichtung (nebst einem neuen Hrotsvitgedicht)," *Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch* 43 (2008): 347–54. To prove this point, Bodarwé connected one of the five hands present in the Hrotsvit manuscript to one of the annotators of the Gandersheim Evangeliary. Bodarwé, *Sanctimoniales litteratae*, 98–104.

[79] Van Houts, "Women and the Writing of History in the Early Middle Ages," 58.

activities of Ottonian women.[80] Women likely wrote the two tenth-century lives of Queen Mathilda, commissioned either by Quedlinburg or by its daughter house of Nordhausen.[81]

In addition to scribal and authorial activity, Ottonian women's communities were also patrons of artistic work. The beautifully illuminated Uta Codex was produced for Uta, abbess of Niedermünster. David Cohen argues the gospel book "confirms the view of [Ottonian monastic] women as influential figures" capable of producing works that were "devoted to the propagation of monasticism and the intellectual explication of God's universe."[82] Uta and her nuns may well have used the illuminations as a focus for study, following the instruction of the illuminators to *scitote* and *discite* from their work.[83] Abbess Hitda of Meschede commissioned an illuminated gospel book with a similar dedication image.[84] In addition to female patronage of such works, McKitterick has noted "a striking feature of Ottonian manuscripts, indeed in contrast to those of the Carolingian period, is the frequent appearance of women, particularly in Christian and biblical books."[85] Many Ottonian illuminations feature gospel parables with female figures, which serve to provide models "for emulation or edification."[86] Karen Blough points to yet another iconographic testimony to women's literacy in the monastery of St. Liudger in Werden. A crypt wall frieze includes three seated women holding books,

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[80] Head, "Hrotsvit of Gandersheim, The Establishment of the Monastery of Gandersheim"; Lees, "Hrotsvit of Gandersheim and the Problem of Royal Succession in the East Frankish Kingdom"; Van Houts, "Women and the Writing of History in the Early Middle Ages."

[81] Corbet, *Les saints ottoniens*, 120; Van Houts, "Women and the Writing of History in the Early Middle Ages," 59; Gilsdorf, *Queenship and Sanctity*, 19.

[82] Adam S. Cohen, *The Uta Codex: Art, Philosophy, and Reform in Eleventh-Century Germany* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 189–99.

[83] Ibid., 193.

[84] Michael Schaefer, *Hitda-Codex: Evangeliar des Stifts St. Walburga in Meschede* (Heimatbund der Stadt Meschede, 2003).

[85] Rosamond McKitterick, "Women in the Ottonian Church: An Iconographic Perspective," in *Women in the Church*, ed. W. J. Sheils and Diana Wood, Studies in Church History (Cambridge, MA: Published for the Ecclesiastical History Society by Blackwell, 1990), 86.

[86] Ibid., 91.

turned toward each other in dialogue, suggesting "active learning on the part of monastic women."[87] Blough believes these images refer to the nearby Essen community, whose canonesses had particularly "lively intellects."[88]

Extensive libraries supported the training of those lively intellects, both at Essen and the other Ottonian monastic houses. Again, Bodarwé's catalogue offers invaluable evidence for the collecting habits of Gandersheim, Essen, and Quedlinburg. Libraries at these three houses included scriptural texts, exegetical commentaries, patristic authors, Greek and Roman authors, and roughly contemporaneous texts.[89] Gandersheim in particular housed a great number of saint's lives, though the fragments that remain only survive as binding for later texts.[90] Gandersheim nuns also had access to copies of the *Aeneid*, and Hrotsvit's own work testifies to her familiarity with many other classical works, Terrence in particular.[91] As one example of monastic readership, Helene Scheck analyzed a single codex of Jerome's letters housed at Quedlinburg (Quedlinburg Codex 74). Scheck's analysis identified substantive evidence of reader activity, including explanatory glosses, symbolic markers, and expansions of abbreviations. Marginal notes include both academic and personal thoughts about the text, including a short prayer: "*Hathuui …. amen deo gratias*."[92] The names of female readers as well as scribes are

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[87] Blough, "Implications for Female Monastic Literacy in the Reliefs from St. Liudger's at Werden," 162.
[88] Ibid., 168.
[89] Bodarwé, *Sanctimoniales litteratae*, 335–42; Stevenson, "Hrotsvit in Context: Convents and Culture in Ottonian Germany," 44–50.
[90] The vast majority of these fragments are held by the Wolfenbüttel Niedersächsisches Staatsarchiv and by the Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbüttel. Bodarwé catalogues these fragments by category and date in a helpful chart: Bodarwé, *Sanctimoniales litteratae*, 240–44.
[91] In particular, Hrotsvit claims her plays "rewrite" Terrence, using his style but with Christian themes (Praefatio, Liber Secundus, 5-8). Helene Scheck, *Reform and Resistance: Formations of Female Subjectivity in Early Medieval Ecclesiastical Culture* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008), 135–37; Bodarwé, *Sanctimoniales litteratae*, 416.
[92] Fol. 1504r. Bodarwé, *Sanctimoniales litteratae*, 29.

included in other marginal notes, proving that "women were left to read privately or in small groups, and responded to the manuscripts on a personal level."[93]

1.4 Hrotsvit's Hagiographic Corpus

1.4.1 *Manuscript Evidence*

Hrotsvit's corpus is representative of, rather than an exception to, the intellectual world of Ottonian women's communities. Indeed, as mentioned previously, the most complete extant Hrotsvit manuscript was a product of the Gandersheim scriptorium: Clm 14485, currently housed in Munich's Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (hereafter M).[94] M includes all of the legends and plays as well as the *Gesta Ottonis*. Originally housed at the monastery of St. Emmeram in Regensburg, M can tentatively be dated to c. 980, based on a catalogue of the monastery's literary holdings.[95] Conrad Celtis first published M in 1601, though he damaged the manuscript with injudicious handling and misguided attempts at "editing" the Latin. Nonetheless, this manuscript has provided the bulk of text for the three primary critical editions of Hrotsvit's corpus.[96] M contains five different hands, which are confined to specific sections of the manuscript. For example, two hands

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[93] Scheck, "Reading Women at the Margins of Quedlinburg Codex 74," 14.

[94] The *Primorida* (history of Gandersheim) has an independent manuscript tradition, stemming from a codex at Hildesheim (H1, H2). Several of the plays have been included in separate manuscripts as well. For the full manuscript tradition see: Berschin, *Hrotsvit Opera Omnia*, VII–XXX. For an English translation of Berschin's introduction, see: Walter Berschin, "Hrotsvit and Her Works," in *A Companion to Hrotsvit of Gandersheim (fl. 960): Contextual and Interpretive Approaches*, ed. Phyllis R. Brown and Stephen L. Wailes (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 23–34. M has been fully digitized and is available on the BSB's Münchener Digitalisierungszentrum Digitale Bibliothek website.

[95] Königlich Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, *Mittelalterliche Bibliothekskataloge Deutschlands und der Schweiz*, vol. 4 (München: Beck, 1918), 144. Though the strata of corrections on the manuscript can be difficult to determine, some of the emendations on M were made within a few decades of the text's production. For a comprehensive analysis, see Berschin, "Hrotsvit and Her Works," 25-35.

[96] Karl Strecker, ed., *Hrotsvitha Opera*, Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana (Lipsiae: Teubner, 1930); Helene Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera. Mit Einleitungen und Kommentar* (Munchen, Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöingh, 1970); Berschin, *Hrotsvit Opera Omnia*.

are responsible for the entire hagiographic corpus, which concludes on folio 79.[97] This suggests a progressive timeline for the manuscript's creation. Bernard Bischoff also notes the scribes included two double leaves at the end of the legends instead of a quaternion, further indicating the scribes received the work "piece by piece," likely from Hrotsvit herself.[98] This scribal demarcation of the individual corpus elements reinforces Hrotsvit's presentation of the text. With the exception of *Gongolf*, all of Hrotsvit's hagiographic works are written in leonine hexameters.[99] The hagiographic material is also separated from the rest of the corpus with distinct introductory material. Although the hagiographic corpus is presented as a functional unit within the broader Hrotsvit corpus, this material has received far less attention than the plays or historical works.[100]

1.4.2 *Hrotsvit's Audience*

The audience and purpose of the legends as distinct from the rest of the corpus has, however, been debated in recent scholarship. It seems likely *prima facie* that these hagiographic stories were read out loud during meals at Gandersheim. This theory is

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[97] For a chart presenting this handwriting analysis, see: Bodarwé, *Sanctimoniales litteratae*, 98–99.

[98] Berschin, "Hrotsvit and Her Works," 25–26.

[99] Gongolf is written in rhymed distichs.

[100] For example, although translations of Hrotsvit's plays are numerous, only a single translation of the legends has been produced: a 1936 doctoral dissertation that includes a translation of Hrotsvit's eight legends as well as the author's brief textual commentary. This translation is still used in secondary scholarship and remains the sole monograph-length work to address the legends as a conceptual unit within the broader Hrotsvit corpus. Gonsalva Wiegand, "The Non-Dramatic Works of Hrosvitha; Text, Translation, and Commentary" (Ph.D., St. Louis University, 1936). Earlier scholarship on the Hrotsvit corpus was often focused on methods for reading the corpus as a whole, particularly through identifying patterns in the arrangement of the legends and plays. Peter Dronke, for one, proposed a thematic "double cycle" that would create a "single *magnum opus,* with vast and elaborate internal symmetries." Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages*, 60. Building on the earlier work of Hugo Kuhn, Katharina Wilson attempted a similar corpus-wide analysis, focusing particularly on the numerological implications of the texts' arrangement. Hugo Kuhn, "Hrotsviths von Gandersheim Dichterisches Programm," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 25 (1950): 181–196; Katharina M. Wilson, "Mathematical Learning and Structural Composition in Hrotsvit's Works," in *Hrotsvit of Gandersheim: Rara Avis in Saxonia?*, ed. Katharina M. Wilson (Ann Arbor, MI: Marc Publishing, 1987), 99–113.

supported by the insertion of an eight-line prayer that falls between legends five and six in M.[101] This prayer is framed as a request that Christ bless food "placed on a table," rendering the meal "beneficial" to those who consume it.[102] The literary and theological complexity of the prayer suits the hagiographic corpus. In the prayer, Hrotsvit calls Christ the "one begotten before time," who, "pitying humanity" descended from heaven and "took on the true form of flesh from the Virgin in order to destroy the bitter taste of the first young woman."[103] The typological relationship between Mary and Eve appears throughout Hrotsvit's hagiographic corpus, as does her succinct assessment of Christ's salvific work in the incarnation.[104] The conclusion of the prayer reminds Hrotsvit's audience to embrace their identity as Christians: "whatever we are and whatever we eat or do, [may] the right hand of the creator and ruler bless [us] all."[105]

Helene Homeyer takes this prayer at face value, reading the preceding five legends as a collection designed for oral delivery during meals at Gandersheim.[106] Bodarwé concurs, concluding that Hrotsvit's "plan" for the legends as a *whole* was their oral recitation during meals at Gandersheim.[107] Berschin suggests the prayer was Hrotsvit's way of indicating one way in which the legends might be used, rather than a

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[101] These are *Theophilus* and *Basilius*, Hrotsvit's "deal with the devil" accounts.

[102] "Consecret apposite nobis pie fercula mense/ has faciendo dapes gustantibus esse salubris" (Benedicto, 5-6). Berschin, *Hrotsvit Opera Omnia*, 93.

[103] "Unicus altihtroni genitus retro tempora mundi,/ qui miserans hominis descendit ab arce parentis/ et carnis veram sumpsit de virgine formam,/ virginis ut gustum prime deleret amarum" (Benedicto, 1-4.)

[104] For just one example: "Quae parens mundo restaurasti, pia virgo,/ vitam, quam virgo perdiderat vetula" (Maria, 15-16).

[105] "Quod sumus et quod gustamus vel quicquid agamus,/ dextera factoris benedicat cunta regentis" (Benedicto 7-8).

[106] Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 152.

[107] Bodarwé, *Sanctimoniales litteratae*, 308. However, Bodarwé finds no evidence that M was used for this particular purpose. Ibid., 240. Bert Nagel offers a similar assessment, applying the mealtime prayer as evidence that the legends were *designed* for communal delivery even if M was not used thus. Bert Nagel, *Hrotsvit von Gandersheim* (Metzler, 1965), 24.

definitive testament to their purpose.[108] Moving even further away from a literal reading of the prayer, Stephen Wailes believes the prayer pays homage to Prudentius, particularly a section of his *Liber Cathemerinon*.[109] The *Cathemerinon*'s third poem also invokes a timeless yet incarnate Christ and requests a blessing for food before concluding: "all that we are, all that we do, is governed by the heavenly trinity."[110] Hrotsvit's table blessing is includes some of the many Prudentian references throughout the corpus, helpfully catalogued by Homeyer.[111]

Mealtime recitations were not the only monastic venue for engaging hagiographic texts. As was shown with the Dusseldorf 3 collection and the Quedlinburg codex, Ottonian women's communities fostered a robust practice of individual reading, likely including private *lectio divina*: "reading involved not only the eyes but also the lips and ears."[112] I believe the Gandersheim community was a possible, even primary, audience for the hagiographic corpus. Linda McMillan agrees, suggesting that the Gandersheim women are "Hrotsvit's most immediate audience;" yet she exclusively references the plays and histories as evidence of this point.[113] Wailes asserts the hagiographic corpus was too difficult for the canonesses of Gandersheim, pointing to the

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[108] Berschin, "Hrotsvit and Her Works," 24.

[109] Stephen L. Wailes, "The Sacred Stories in Verse," in *A Companion to Hrotsvit of Gandersheim (fl. 960): Contextual and Interpretive Approaches*, ed. Phyllis R. Brown and Stephen L. Wailes (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 89; Walter Berschin, "Tradition und Neubeginn bei Hrotsvit von Gandersheim (nach 968)," in *Berschin, Mittellateinische Studien*, 2005, 245.

[110] Note particularly Hrotsvit's imitation of the final line: "denique quod sumus aut agimus,/ trina superne regat pietas" (Cathemerinon, 3.19-20). Translation from: Nicholas Richardson, trans., *Prudentius' Hymns for Hours and Seasons: Liber Cathemerinon*, Routledge Later Latin Poetry (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), 38.

[111] Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 494–95.

[112] Anna A. Grotans, *Reading in Medieval St. Gall* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 18. See also: Beach, *Women as Scribes*, 19; Bodarwé, *Sanctimoniales litteratae*, 238–44.

[113] Linda A. McMillin, "The Audiences of Hrotsvit," in *A Companion to Hrotsvit of Gandersheim (fl. 960): Contextual and Interpretive Approaches*, ed. Phyllis R. Brown and Stephen L. Wailes (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 311–27.

complexity of the table blessing as emblematic of Hrotsvit's style throughout the legends. Surely, he suggests, the legends, "like the plays," were suited for a more "educated" audience of "sophisticated readers adept at interpreting poetry and prose."[114] Tino Licht concurs with Wailes, suggesting that Hrotsvit's audience would have included Bruno, Archbishop of Cologne, and other Ottonian nobles.[115] Limiting Hrotsvit's audience to male Ottonian nobles underestimates both the interpretive skill of the Gandersheim women and Hrotsvit's ability to guide her audience in interpreting her work. Following Phyllis Brown, I believe Hrotsvit intended the table blessing as a blessing of her work, a kind of metaphorical food that will nourish the minds and souls of her audience.[116] The hagiographic corpus was designed for just this purpose, offering a meal of redemptive pedagogy to Hrotsvit's audience, which certainly included the Gandersheim women.

1.4.3 *Hrotsvit's Pedagogical Vision*

There is no shortage of scholarship on the ways in which Hrotsvit's work demonstrates her own education.[117] Using the preface (*praefatio*) to the legends as a

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[114] Wailes, "The Sacred Stories in Verse," 89.

[115] Bruno was a well-known literary patron who had a professed interest in Terence. Much scholarship on Hrotsvit's plays has focused on the possibility that, with Bruno's facilitation, they might have been performed at court. Licht, "Hrotsvitspuren in ottonischer Dichtung (nebst einem neuen Hrotsvitgedicht)," 348. Hans Mayr-Harting has also examined a number manuscripts likely produced during Bruno's tenure in Cologne. By looking at the marginalia and glosses, Mayr-Harting has explored the nature of Bruno's episcopal school and, by extension, the state of education at the time. Mayr-Harting, *Church and Cosmos in Early Ottonian Germany*, 22–64.

[116] Phyllis R. Brown, "Hrotsvit's Apostolic Mission: Prefaces, Dedications, and Other Addresses to Readers," in *A Companion to Hrotsvit of Gandersheim (fl. 960): Contextual and Interpretive Approaches*, ed. Phyllis R. Brown and Stephen L. Wailes (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 259. The theme of words as a kind of spiritual food will appear again, particularly in the *Maria*: "Per angelicum sumpsit sacra virgo ministrum/ omni namque die missam sibi caelitus escam" (Maria, 367-368).

[117] Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages*, 83–92; David Chamberlain, "Musical Imagery and Musical Learning in Hrotsvit," in *Hrotsvit of Gandersheim: Rara Avis in Saxonia?*, ed. Katharina Wilson (Ann Arbor, MI: Marc Publishing, 1987), 79–98; Janet Davis, "Hrotsvit, Strong Voice of Gandersheim," *Advances in the History of Rhetoric* 3, no. 1 (2000): 45–56; Stevenson, "Hrotsvit in Context: Convents and Culture in Ottonian Germany."

hermeneutical key to interpreting their content, however, I will show how Hrotsvit designed her hagiographic corpus *as* an education. Hrotsvit makes her pedagogical agenda clear by grounding her work as a writer firmly in her own experience as a student. She begins the *praefatio* with typical protestations of authorial inadequacy, but almost immediately moves to address her audience: those "wise and kind" readers who will correct, rather than criticize, her work.[118] She describes her "secret" compositions, soon destroyed in frustration, which were inspired by the "content of the writings which I obtained within our monastery of Gandersheim."[119] The evidence for Gandersheim's library and scriptorium confirms the breadth of "writings" available to such an enterprising student.

Still, Hrotsvit did not reap the full benefits of this literary bounty until she received instruction from two teachers, Rikkardis and Abbess Gerberga.[120] Hrotsvit emphasizes Gerberga's education, which befitted a "niece of the emperor": she was "advanced in learning" and trained by "learned teachers." It was Gerberga's benevolence in passing on the benefits of her own education that allowed Hrotsvit to nurture her nascent talent: "she, exceedingly kind, educated me in those authors that she learned previously from most educated [teachers]."[121] Hrotsvit writes because writing is a faithful response to the divinely designed human mind. Hrotsvit understands intellect as a

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[118] Praefatio, Liber Primus, 1. For Hrotsvit, these self-effacing statements are far from a mere trope. In fact, as Wilson and Wailes (among others) have shown, they are, more often than not, a cue to her audience to read between the lines. Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages*, 66–67; Katharina M. Wilson, *Hrotsvit of Gandersheim: The Ethics of Authorial Stance* (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 6.

[119] Praefatio, Liber Primus, 6.

[120] In addition to Rikkardis, Hrotsvit also thanks "others" that taught when Rikkardis was absent, suggesting a number of potential educators were available within the Gandersheim community.

[121] Praefatio, Liber Primus, 7.

gift (*talentum ingenioli*) that must not be "consumed by the rust of neglect."[122] Instead, Christians should "assiduously" subject their minds to "the mallet of devotion." If Christians train their minds properly, they will be able to produce sounds of "divine praise" as Hrotsvit has done.[123] Hrotsvit views this practice as a self-sustaining pedagogical cycle. With proper study, the mind can become an "instrument of value," capable of ringing as loudly as Leoba's bell to guide others onto the path of redemptive pedagogy.[124]

In her position as a recipient of an extensive education, Hrotsvit takes on the role of educator by writing the saint's lives. She does this in two complimentary ways. First, Hrotsvit emphasizes the value of education for the persons in her stories. She depicts ideal saints as dedicated to their own educational opportunities, sensitive to lessons provided by miraculous events. Such characters are often capable of articulating their faith in the service of educating others. Hrotsvit also includes cautionary tales of characters who meet unsavory ends as a result of their failure to respond to potential educational moments. Secondly, Hrotsvit encourages the opportunity for her readers to participate in a unique theological education by experiencing the legends themselves. Each legend weaves lessons into the narrative, often couched explicitly in the voice of an omniscient pedagogue such as angelic messengers, members of the Godhead, or Hrotsvit herself. These lessons interpret events as they occur within the text, assisting Hrotsvit's readers in understanding the complexities inherent in the Christian faith.

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[122] Praefatio, Liber Primus, 8.
[123] "Sed sedule malleo devotionis percussum aliquantulum divine laudationis referret tinnitum" (Praefatio, Liber Primus, 8).
[124] "Utilitatis transformaretur instrumentum" (Praefatio, Liber Primus, 8).

The notion of hagiographic material serving a didactic purpose is by no means new, nor is the concept that the monastery served as a site of education.[125] Still, Phyllis Brown has only recently begun thinking about Hrotsvit's emphasis on education throughout her corpus.[126] Brown appropriately contextualizes Hrotsvit's didactic emphasis within the framework of the great commission, given that Hrotsvit's *Ascensio* repeats the Matthean Christ's instructions that the disciples "teach" the commandments.[127] Furthermore, like Katharina Wilson, Brown notes the significance of speech in this educational system, particularly the cases in which characters are not permitted to speak as a result of spiritual pollution.[128] Hrotsvit also employs rhetorical ability as evidence of a character's proper training. Well-trained and faithful characters are capable of "sweet" speech, while sinners and non-Christians speak "fraudulently" and incoherently.[129] Wilson and Brown have touched on what I perceive to be essential elements of Hrotsvit's pedagogical purpose; but neither has offered an in-depth analysis of the legends and their characters, which are uniquely suited to this purpose. As Anna Lisa Taylor has shown, "epic vitae" like Hrotsvit's are the primary vehicle for monastic

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[125] Consider, for just one example, the prologue from *The Rule of Benedict*: "Constituenda est ergo nobis dominici schola servitii" (The Rule of Benedict, 45).

[126] Focusing on Boethian elements in the plays, Brown suggests that education often plays a role in a character's "proclivity towards sin." Those characters that had experienced some form of spiritual development were far more likely to resist earthly and diabolical temptation. Phyllis Brown, "Authentic Education: The Example of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim," in *Fromme Frauen als gelehrte Frauen: Bildung, Wissenschaft und Kunst im weiblichen Religiosentum des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit*, ed. Edeltraud Klueting and Harm Klueting (Köln: Erzbischöfliche Diözesan- und Dombibliothek, 2010), 88.

[127] Brown, "Hrotsvit's Apostolic Mission: Prefaces, Dedications, and Other Addresses to Readers," 236.

[128] Both Theophilus and the unnamed *servus* who enter into contracts with the devil will remain silent for the first half of their legends (*Theophilus* and *Basilius*). Wilson, *Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 30.

[129] This logic follows the classic rhetorical tradition, since writers such as Plato, Quintillian, and Augustine believed that rhetoric was intrinsically tied to virtue: "the entire success of oratory depends on a preexisting state of moral character in the speaker." Nan Johnson, "Ethos," ed. Theresa Enos, *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric and Composition: Communication from Ancient Times to the Information Age* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 1996), 244–46. Though it is tempting to read Hrotsvit's corpus as a proto-feminist account lauding the feminine intellect, her positive and negative characters include both sexes. Katrinette Bodarwé, "Hrotsvit and Her Avatars," in *A Companion to Hrotsvit of Gandersheim (fl. 960): Contextual and Interpretive Approaches*, ed. Stephen Wailes and Phyllis Brown (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 342-43.

education in the early medieval period.[130] These vitae are used both in personal devotion and in formal classroom settings, providing a comprehensive education: providing classical training in grammar and literature as well as Christian theology and virtues worthy of *imitatio*.[131]

The poetic form and engaging content of these vitae ensure the attention of Hrotsvit's audience, allowing the underlying didactic content to take effect. Hrotsvit's pedagogical voice speaks through a compelling and utterly unique cast of characters.[132] She begins with biblical archetypes, holding up the Virgin Mary as an ideal monastic (*Maria*) and depicting Christ as a commissioning educator to the disciples (*Ascensio*). The next legends shift to contemporary history, presenting a Spanish martyr (*Pelagius*) and a Burgundian noble (*Gongolf*) as martyrial exempla, in contrast to their evil oppressors. Hrotsvit also provides two "deal with the devil" narratives, featuring both a church leader (*Theophilus*) and a *servus* (*Basilius*) that require saintly intercession to return to faith. Finally, Hrotsvit concludes with two traditional martyrs, the virginal ideal (*Agnes*) and the evangelizing cephalophore (*Dionysius*). These stories are not only evidence of Hrotsvit's own ingenuity and education, they are intended to be an education in and of themselves.

Hrotsvit's legends are more than a simple narration of hagiographic material; they are carefully and elegantly written. They are also accessible, including explanatory asides designed to help Hrotsvit's audience digest this edifying, intellectual meal. For example, Hrotsvit's *Maria* includes a pair of didactic exempla that contrast the rewards of faith

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[130] Anna Lisa Taylor, *Epic Lives and Monasticism in the Middle Ages, 800-1050* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
[131] Ibid., 5–14.
[132] Taylor discusses the inherent "ventriloquism" of epic vitae: Ibid., 24–26.

with the consequences of unbelief. The first exemplum occurs during Mary and Joseph's travel to Bethlehem. Mary experiences a cryptic vision: two men stand nearby, one laughing and one crying. Joseph is unable to see the vision and rebukes Mary for speaking "foolishly." Hrotsvit does not leave her audience blind, like Joseph, to the significance of the vision; an angelic messenger appears to interpret the sign. The weeping man represents the Jews, while the laughing man represents Christians who have experienced the "great sacrament of faith."[133] In addition to this angelic explanation, Hrotsvit reports that that Mary "did not see with her corporeal eyes, but with the eyes of the mind [*mentis ocelli*]."[134]

To help her audience exercise their own "mind's eyes," Hrotsvit follows this vision with a second didactic exemplum, contrasting the two midwives that attend Mary after the birth of Christ. Zelemi immediately recognizes Mary's sanctity and Christ's divinity, testifying to her belief (*credo*) in a lyrical speech that explores the mechanics of the incarnation.[135] Salome, by contrast, refuses to believe (*non credere*). When she reaches out to touch Mary, her transgressive hand is "struck with a painful affliction." Salome tries to defend her actions, calling God himself as a *testis* on behalf of her prior good deeds. In her position as narrator, Hrotsvit explains that Salome was, "by Jewish custom" trusting in "a false justice" (*iustitia simulata*) rather than the Christian law of grace. In this way, Hrotsvit prompts her audience to compare Mary's vision with the experience of the midwives, using their "mind's eyes" to make new theological and typological connections.

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[133] Maria, 560-563.
[134] "Aspexit non corporeis, sed mentis ocellis" (Maria, 549).
[135] Maria, 594-601.

There are many different settings wherein Hrotsvit's legends might have been engaged pedagogically, including recitation at communal monastic meals as well as private reading. However, as I will show, there is no doubt that Hrotsvit designed her legends to be read as a form of redemptive pedagogy. The hagiographic corpus demands that Hrotsvit's audience exercise their minds to further their faith. Hrotsvit's legends both demonstrate and provide the means for this task: helping her audience to "hammer" their intellects into tools capable of "singing" true divine praise.

MARIA AND *ASCENSIO*: A LESSON IN ARCHETYPES AND APOCRYPHA

2.1 INTRODUCTION

2.1.1 *Overview*

Hrotsvit's hagiographic corpus begins with the *Maria* and the *Ascensio*, which are creative retellings of the lives of Mary and of Christ respectively. Hrotsvit used non-canonical texts as sources of material for both narratives. The first of these two narratives features the "praiseworthy nativity and conduct of the virgin mother of God."[1] At almost nine hundred lines, the *Maria* is more than double the length of any of her other legends, emphasizing its importance within Hrotsvit's corpus.[2] Although it is often difficult to identify Hrotsvit's sources, she claims she has based *Maria* on a work written by "the blessed James, brother of the Lord."[3] The structure of Hrotsvit's metrical *Maria* follows the prose narrative of the Latin *Pseudo-Gospel of Matthew*, itself a creative expansion of the Greek *Protoevangelium of James*.[4] Most scholars concur with this assessment, although Karl Streker and Stephen Wailes are correct in

[1] "Historia nativitatis laudabilisque conversationis intactae dei genetrix" (Maria, title). The Latin text for Hrotsvit's *Maria* comes from: Walter Berschin, ed., *Hrotsvit Opera Omnia*, Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana (Monachii: Saur, 2001). Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

[2] The hagiographic *Maria* should not be confused with Hrotsvit's play of the same name (occasionally also called *Abraham*), which narrates the redemption of Mary, a former anchorite turned prostitute, through the intervention of her former foster-father Abraham. For more on the dramatic *Maria*, see: Katharina M. Wilson, *Hrotsvit of Gandersheim: A Florilegium of Her Works* (Rochester, NY: D. S. Brewer, 1998), 66–80. Marian devotion was often a central aspect of Ottonian women's communities, perhaps most prominently at Essen, as Katrinette Bodarwé has shown. Katrinette Bodarwé, "Roman Martyrs and Their Veneration in Ottonian Saxony: The Case of the Sanctimoniales of Essen," *Early Medieval Europe* 9, no. 3 (2000): 345–65.

[3] "Quam scriptam repperi sub nomine sancti Jacobi fratris domini" (Maria, title).

[4] A further expansion can be seen in the Gospel of the Birth of Mary, or the *Libelllus de nativitate Sanctae Mariae*. Likely dating to the eleventh century, this Latin account adapts the first eight chapters of *Pseudo-Matthew* and then concludes with material from the canonical gospels. This version removes issues of theological concern, including the previous marriage of Joseph, for example. This text served as the inspiration for the Mary portions of Jacobus de Vorgaine's *Golden Legend*. For more see: Rita Beyers, ed., *Libri de nativitate mariae: Libellus de nativitate Sanctae Mariae*, Corpus Christianorum. Series Apocryphorum 10 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997).

acknowledging the impossibility of identifying the exact version of the *Pseudo-Matthew* that Hrotsvit used for this legend.[5]

Although she has versified her source, Hrotsvit's *Maria* and the *Pseudo-Matthew* follow a parallel path, beginning with a discussion of Mary's parents, Anna and Joachim, who endure shame as a result of their infertility. Joachim flees to the wilderness after being chastised for daring to participate in a temple event despite his infertility. While Anna mourns the loss of her husband, an angel appears to her, promising the imminent birth of a miraculous child. The same angel appears to Joachim, prompting his return. Nine months later, Mary is born and subsequently presented at the temple. After her presentation, Mary resides as a virgin in the temple, and, as a teenager, defends her right to remain unmarried. Eventually, the priests decide that Mary must be betrothed, and after a series of rituals, Joseph is selected. Following Mary's arrival in Joseph's home, Hrotsvit's *Maria* summarizes several sections of the *Pseudo-Matthew* before re-entering the standard narrative with Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem. Mary gives birth and is subsequently attended by two midwives. The narration continues with a discussion of the *magi* and Herod's unsuccessful attempts to discover Christ's location. The final portion of this shared narrative is devoted to the holy family's flight into the desert, including Jesus' miracles there as well as in Egypt and Aphrodisias.

Hrotsvit's second legend, *Ascensio*, may be read as an epilogue to her *Maria.*[6] The *Ascensio* begins with the events preceding Christ's ascension to heaven, including the

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[5] Helene Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera. Mit Einleitungen und Kommentar* (Munchen, Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöingh, 1970), 41–47; Stephen L. Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim* (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 2006), 50; Karl Strecker, *Hrotsvits Maria und Pseudo-Matthaeus.* (Dortmund: Crüwell, 1902).

[6] Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages: A Critical Study of Texts from Perpetua to Marguerite Porete* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 60–63; Wilson, *Hrotsvit of Gandersheim: A Florilegium of Her*

commissioning of the disciples and a farewell to Mary. The story concludes with Christ's dramatic entrance into heaven, accompanied by an angelic cohort led by King David. The conversions that result from Christ's miracles in the conclusion of the *Maria* might serve as an example for the proselytizing mission of the disciples in *Ascensio*. Furthermore, the *Ascensio* culminates in Christ's grand entrance into heaven, completing the cycle which began with his descent to the earthly plane in the incarnation, as described in the *Maria.*

It is true that the style and content of the two legends do not lend themselves to an entirely seamless single narrative. Moreover, the most complete extant manuscript of Hrotsvit's corpus (M) presents *Maria* and *Ascensio* as two separate stories.[7] In contrast to the lengthy and primarily narrative structure of the *Maria,* the *Ascensio* is a loose collection of speeches totaling a mere 146 lines.[8] Hrotsvit claims she draws her story from a Greek text translated into Latin by an otherwise unknown "Bishop John" (*Iohannes episcopus*). Scholars agree that Hrotsvit's *Ascensio* builds on a sermon, but no single homily has been conclusively identified as her source. Hrotsvit's versified *Ascensio* "narrative" is delivered almost exclusively by divine voices, including Christ, God the Father, and angels. As such, the *Ascensio* serves as its own testament to the power of words, operating in tandem with the *Maria* as a call for and means of redemptive pedagogy.[9] Following Homeyer's lead, I will consider Hrotsvit's *Maria* and *Ascensio* as a sequenced pair rather than a single account; they are individual narratives that share the "same religious imagery and mood."[10] Together they present Hrotsvit's biblical archetypes: Mary and

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Works, 9; Hugo Kuhn, "Hrotsviths von Gandersheim Dichterisches Programm," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 25 (1950): 181–196.

[7] In M, the *Maria* and *Ascensio* are clearly separate texts, with different titles and introductory material.

[8] The *Basilius* and *Dionysius* are both around two hundred and fifty lines, making the *Ascensio* more than one hundred lines shorter than any of the other legends in the hagiographic corpus.

[9] "Sermonem vobis tantum faciemus ab illis,/ rarius in templo que creduntur fore dicta" (Maria, 541-542).

[10] "Die Gedicht über die Himmelfahrt Christi ist von der gleichen religiösen Vorstellungswelt und Stimmung beherrscht, die für die Marienlegende charakteristisch sind." Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 81.

Christ, who offer the exemplum of their lives and words for the edification of Hrotsvit's audience.

2.1.2 *Hrotsvit's Didactic Goals*

Building on her apocryphal source material, Hrotsvit constructed her Marian and Christological narratives as the pedagogical foundation for her hagiographic corpus.[11] In service of this goal, Hrotsvit demonstrates the value of theological education *within* the narrative and then uses the narrative to offer her audience just such an education.

Just as Hrotsvit included a pedagogical hermeneutic in the introduction to the full hagiographic corpus, she also includes a similar reminder in the introduction to the *Maria*. Again, a didactic focus is woven into Hrotsvit's understanding of herself as an author. In her capacity as author Hrotsvit is an exemplum of the Christian response to the divine gift of intellect. Casting the *Maria*'s introduction as a first person address to Mary, Hrotsvit identifies herself as a suppliant (*supplex*) and an authoress composing a "new song."[12] Hrotsvit praises the power of the God whose grace permits her to write: "if it pleases him, he is able to loosen my tongue and to touch my heart with the dew of his esteem."[13] This divine gift of inspiration allows Hrotsvit to "compose thanks to [God], and also to you virgin [Mary], with the gentle gift of his piety."[14] Both the reception of the gift and the response to it are essential for Hrotsvit. Responding to the gift of inspiration permits Hrotsvit to avoid being "discredited, rightly, as an

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[11] Prior to Hrotsvit's *Maria*, no extant poetic versions of the *Pseudo-Matthew* have been found, and the extant prose versions are, in Homeyer's estimation, composed of "sober and unadorned" Latin. Ibid., 41.
[12] "Tu dignare tuae famule clementer adesse,/ Hrotsvithae votis carminulisque novis" (Maria, 17-18).
[13] "Si placet, ipse meam potis est dissolvere linguagm/ et cor rore sue tangere gratiole" (Maria, 37-38). Hrot svit's examples of God's past gifts include allowing Balam's ass to speak, an "audacious but not blasphemous" move on her part. Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 48.
[14] "Grata sibi pangam, te quoque, virgo, canam" (Maria, 40).

ally to the ungrateful and lazy (*pigelli*), whom it pains to sing to the one on high, according to their own measure."[15] God does not require more than each person is capable of producing; he only requires a song produced *pro modulo*, according to a small measure.[16] Christians who stubbornly remain "pained" to sing praise to the divine, then, are worthy of disdain. Hrotsvit's response to the gift of intellect allows her to sing her own song, a poem that is truly "new."[17] In this way, Hrotsvit models the ideal response to the divine gift of intellect, cultivating her own skills and, through the creation of this work, encouraging her audience to follow suit.

Hrotsvit does not merely warn her audience against joining the ranks of the intellectually lazy (*pigelli*). She also provides the opportunity to participate in a theological education by experiencing her work. The introduction to the *Maria* begins this process, identifying the major themes that will dominate Hrotsvit's Marian narrative. The introduction describes Mary with a dramatic series of epithets indicating her power: "one hope of the world, matchless ruler of the sky, holy parent of the king, and bright star of the sea."[18] Hrotsvit roots the expansiveness of Mary's influence in her virginity, identifying her as *virgo* six times in the introduction. This virginal identity is repeated in Mary's theological significance as one half of the female archetypal pair: only Mary, the *pia virgo* par excellence, has the power to "restore life to the world, which the *vetula virgo* destroyed."[19] The *vetula virgo* must be Eve, that "ancient woman" whose sin initiated the fall of all mankind. This typological dichotomy between Mary and Eve,

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[15] "Ne comes ingratis condampner iure pigellis,/ quos piget altithrono psallere pro modulo" (Maria, 41-42).
[16] Although the phrase *pro modulo* could be construed as a reference to meter, or the type of song being sung, I believe Hrotsvit is referencing the ability of the singer. An apt comparison can be found in Augustine's discussion of scripture readers bringing their own interpretation to passages that are unclear: "tantum id conantes pro modulo nostro, quantum adiuuamur, efficere, ne aliqua absurditas uel repugnantia putetur esse in scripturis sanctis" (*De Genesi ad litteram*, 5.8).
[17] "Tu dignare tuae famulae clementer adesse/ Hrotsvithae votis crminulisque novis" (Maria, 17-18).
[18] "Unica spes mundi, dominatrix inclita celi,/ sancta parens regis, lucida stella maris" (Maria, 13-14). The "star of the sea" epithet alerts the reader to Hrotsvit's awareness of Isidore's etymological analysis of Mary's name; Hrotsvit will include an expanded discussion of the epithet at line 275.
[19] "Quae parens mundo restaurasti, pia virgo,/ vitam, quam virgo perdiderat vetula" (Maria, 15-16).

which parallels the relationship of Christ and Adam, is well represented in patristic and medieval texts.[20] As the counterpoint to Eve, Mary is also Christ's partner in the quest to repair the broken post-lapsarian relationship between human and divine.[21] To help her audience understand the significance of Mary's role in the salvific process, Hrotsvit consistently pairs Mary and Christ. For example, Hrotsvit promises that she will celebrate both the "origins of your [Mary's] blessed birth and also that of your royal offspring."[22] Hrotsvit's narrative pairs the miraculous infancy accounts of Mary and Christ, emphasizing their mutual participation in human salvation. Mary's paradoxical status as *virgo* and *genetrix* will also be a crucial locus of theological significance, as Hrotsvit indicates in her introduction: Mary shines "beyond" angelic praise because she carried "in her virginal womb, hidden, the one who rules all things in power."[23]

Hrotsvit's introduction to the *Ascensio* continues this theological education with a precise summation of the incarnation, noting its redemptive and didactic significance for all Christians.[24] This introduction begins by locating the *Ascensio* narrative at the end of Christ's time as a mortal, earthly human, when he was "covered with a fleshly veil."[25] This language recalls Mary's

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[20] For just two examples, see: Irenaeus's *Adversus haereses*, III.22.4 (PG 7.959-960), and Tertullian's *De carne Christis*, 17.5-6. In the Carolingian period, the comparison between Eve and Mary became even more popular, celebrated liturgically in the *Ave maris stella* hymn composed (ca. 800): "Ave, maris stella/ Dei mater alma/ atque semper virgo, felix caeli porta. Sumens illud Ave/ Gabrielis ore, funda nos in pace/ mutans nome Evae." Peter G. Walsh, trans., *One Hundred Latin Hymns: Ambrose to Aquinas* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 465; Joseph Szövérffy, *Marianische Motivik der Hymnen: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der marianischen Lyrik im Mittelalter* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 14.

[21] This typological comparison between Eve and Mary is also reflected in the magnificent eleventh-century bronze doors of Hildesheim, located forty-five miles from Gandersheim. Ernst Guldan suggested that Bernward was familiar with Hrotsvit, which is possible because the composition of the *Maria* predated the production of the doors (ca. 1007-1015). Ernst Guldan, *Eva und Maria. Eine Antithese als Bildmotiv* (Köln: Böhlau, 1966), 13–20. Furthermore, Adam Cohen and Anne Durbes claim that the representation of Eve implicitly depicts Bernward's contentious interaction with Sophia, abbess of Gandersheim in the early eleventh century. Adam S. Cohen and Anne Derbes, "Bernward and Eve at Hildesheim," *Gesta* 40, no. 1 (2001): 19–38.

[22] "Exoptans vel summatim attingere saltim/ laudis particulam, virgo, tue minimam/ ortus atque tui primordia clara beati/ necnon regalem pangere progeniem" (Maria, 22-24).

[23] "Hunc quia virgineo portasti ventre puella/ inclusum, cuncta qui regit imperio" (Maria, 29-30).

[24] Homeyer suggests a threefold analysis of the introduction, which includes Jesus's life, sacrificial death, and commissioning. Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 83.

[25] "Postquam corporeo Christus velamine tectus/ temporis implevit spacium sacri venerandum" (Ascensio, 1-2).

role as the first "veil" that "concealed" Christ, indicating Hrotsvit's conviction that both mother and son were necessary to open a path for human redemption.[26] Hrotsvit's *Ascensio* explains the mechanics of that redemption, noting that Christ was "alone" able to live without "any sin at all" during his time on earth.[27] This notion is repeated four lines later, when Hrotsvit reminds her readers that Christ alone "was without the stain of Adam's error."[28] Just as Mary reversed Eve's offense, so too does Christ redeem Adam's primordial sin: a cycle that has the potential for repetition in each individual Christian life. Hrotsvit alerts her audience to their role in this process by explaining that Christ's life was to serve as an exemplum for humanity. Christ lived without sin "so that he might demonstrate, through himself, for redeeming the earth, the glory of eternal life once sadly destroyed."[29] The earthly life of the incarnate Christ thus serves a didactic purpose equal in value to the salvific purpose of his death. Hrotsvit balances these two themes in the *Ascensio*'s introduction, moving from Christ's sinless life to parsing the details of atonement: "after the sacred, triumphant, and faithful death, which he patiently endured for our sake, he, as a victor in a great battle, destroyed the most harsh weapons of the enemy of the human race."[30] Hrotsvit explains Christ's death and the logic of the atonement by suggesting that his blood was the "great ransom" freely offered on the cross.[31] The resurrection proves that death has been destroyed and that a way has been opened to eternal life.[32]

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[26] "Qui post corporeae tectus velamine formae,/ ascensum graduum cunctis patefect in aeveum" (Maria, 309-310).
[27] "Qui solus maculis potuit sine vivere cunctis" (Ascensio, 4).
[28] "Qui solus culpae fuerate sine sordibus Adae" (Ascensio, 18).
[29] "Ut per se mundo demonstraret redimendo/ gaudia perpetuae quondam male perdita vite" (Ascensio, 5-6).
[30] "Postque trumphalem sanctamque piam quoque mortem,/ quam nostri causa patienter pertulit ergo,/ dum victor magno fregit luctamina tela" (Ascensio, 7-9).
[31] "Sanguinis et precium proprii gratis dedit amplum/ pro nobis animam deponens in cruce caram" (Ascensio, 11-12).
[32] "Atque quater denis diei spaciis replicatis,/ in quis discipulis apparens sedulo caris/ esse sua nostrum monstrat cum morte peremptam/ nec mortis vinclis se posse tenerier artis" (Ascensio, 14-17). Note the parallel language with lines five and six: *demonstraet*/*monstrat* and *perdita*/*peremptam*.

In these introductions, Hrotsvit identifies Mary and Christ as partners in the redemption of humanity. These introductions encourage her audience to engage the subsequent narratives on an intellectual level: first, understanding the theological mechanics of the salvation provided by Mary and Christ and, second, recognizing the importance of modeling their own lives on these exemplary archetypes. To paint this complicated picture, Hrotsvit uses material from apocryphal and homiletic sources to fill the gaps left by the canonical gospel accounts.

2.2 HROTSVIT'S SOURCES

2.2.1 *Maria and the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*

With the exception of Luke, the canonical gospel accounts remain virtually silent about the life of the Virgin Mary before she gave birth to Jesus.[33] Luke also offers the only canonical account of Jesus' childhood activities, including his circumcision and presentation in the temple. Because of the dearth of canonical testimony, the infancy narratives of both Mary and Christ were explored in a number of extra-biblical or apocryphal texts. The earliest of these texts is the so-called *Protoevangelium of James*, which dates to the second half of the second century.[34] The author of the *Protoevangelium* identifies himself as James, the step-brother of Jesus by Joseph's first marriage, a relationship that uniquely suits him to deliver an expanded account of Mary's early life.[35] The *Protoevangelium* is found in almost two hundred extant Greek manuscripts as

[33] The entirety of Luke's narrative on Mary's life prior to the birth of Christ is contained in his first chapter. Luke's account includes both the Annunciation and Mary's visit to Elizabeth, along with the so-called "Magnificat" speech.
[34] The *terminus ad quem* can be found in the work of Origen (On Matthew, 10.17) and Clement (Stromates, 7.16.93), both of whom reference elements of *Protoevangelium*, specifically the nativity scene occurring in a cave and the existence of Joseph's first marriage. Lily C. Vuong, *Gender and Purity in the Protevangelium of James* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 32–39.
[35] Protoevangelium of James, 25.1. For a translation of the *Protoevangelium*, see: J. K Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 57–67. In order to supplement the limited canonical accounts, the *Protoevangelium* includes a detailed history of Mary's parents, Joachim and Anna, as well as Mary's birth, childhood, and marriage to Joseph. It also

well as in Coptic, Syriac, and Armenian translations.[36] Though a handful of Latin versions remain, they are far later in date and comparatively fragmentary.[37] This scarcity of Latin translations can be explained by the increasing popularity of the so-called *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* (hereafter *Pseudo-Matthew*), which combined portions of the *Protoevangelium* with elements from other non-canonical infancy narratives. Dating to the sixth or seventh century, the *Pseudo-Matthew* offers a Latin translation of the first seventeen chapters of the *Protoevangelium*, followed by new accounts of the holy family's flight into Egypt.[38] The author of the *Pseudo-Matthew* was likely a monk or nun, given the text's detailed account of Mary's life in the temple, which mirrors the prescribed hourly activity set out in the *Rule of St. Benedict*.[39]

The *Pseudo-Matthew* served as the chief source for medieval Marian devotion and it is found in over two hundred extant Latin manuscripts. Its popularity was amplified by the addition of a spurious letter exchange between Jerome and two bishops that approved the *Pseudo-Matthew* account and condemned other apocryphal infancy narratives.[40] The letters could not have belonged to the original *Pseudo-Matthew* text, but they do attest to the general patristic

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contains a new version of Jesus' birth (in a cave, rather than a stable), as well as an expanded discussion of Herod and the *magi*.

[36] J. K Elliott, *A Synopsis of the Apocryphal Nativity and Infancy Narratives* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), xii.

[37] The earliest extant Latin manuscript of the *Protoevangelium* is Irish. For a translation and transcription of this manuscript, see Martin McNamara, Jean-Daniel Kaestli, and Rita Beyers, eds., "Latin Infancy Gospels: The J Compilation," in *Apocrypha Hiberniae*, Corpus Christianorum. Series Apocryphorum 14 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 618–880.

[38] Gijsel suggests the early seventh century, while Mary Clayton suggests a date as early as 550: Jan Gijsel, ed., *Libri de nativitate Mariae: Pseudo-Matthaei Evangelium*, Corpus Christianorum. Series Apocryphorum 9 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 66–67; Mary Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 18.

[39] Jan Gijsel, *Die unmittelbare Textuberlieferung des sog. Pseudo-Matthaus* (Brussel: AWLSK, 1981), 13. The *Pseudo-Matthew* devotes over fifty lines to a description of a day in Mary's life among the cloistered virgins of the temple, framing that description with chronological markers that resemble the hours of Benedict's Rule. M. Berthold has also suggested that the virginal and monastic elements of the *Pseudo-Matthew* might draw inspiration from Ambrose's *Vita Agnetis*, as mediated through Aldehelm. M. Berthold, "Zur Datierung des Pseudo-Matthäus-Evangeliums," *Weiner Studien* 102 (1989): 247–49.

[40] Found in about half of the extant *Pseudo-Matthew* manuscripts, this epistolary prologue purports to be from "Bishops Cormatius and Heliodorus" to "their well-beloved brother Jerome the Presbyter." J. K Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 91–92; Gijsel, *Libri de nativitate Mariae: Pseudo-Matthaei Evangelium*, 279–86.

concern over the use of apocryphal texts.[41] The spurious episcopal approval is the source of the erroneous identification of Matthew as author.[42] According to Jan Gisjel, the original '*Pseudo-Matthew*' prologue contained a first-person announcement of James as the author of the text: *Ego Jacobus*.[43] Gisjel, who has compiled the most recent critical edition of the *Pseudo-Matthew*, identifies author identification as the primary difference between the two oldest manuscript traditions of the *Pseudo-Matthew*.[44] The split between the traditions has its roots in the Carolingian period, as extant manuscripts from the ninth century include attestations to both Jacob and Matthew.[45] The structure of Hrotsvit's account follows the main narrative points of the Pseudo-Matthean tradition, to which Hrotsvit had access, although it is impossible to identify which *Pseudo-Matthew* manuscript she might have used. Both the *Pseudo-Matthew* and Hrotsvit's *Maria* cover extensive chronological ground, ranging from Mary's own miraculous conception to Christ's birth and the holy family's journey in the desert. Both the *Maria* and its apocryphal source navigate a parallel path through these narrative elements. The precision of this

[41] Jerome did, in fact, violently critique any suggestion that Joseph had been previously married, both in his *Against Helvidius* and *Against Jovinian*. Both Hilary of Poitiers's commentary on the gospel of Matthew and Augustine's *Contra Faustum* (1.31) also offer less than approving accounts of the *Protoevangelium* material. Margot Fassler, "Mary's Nativity, Fulbert of Chartres, and the Stirps Jesse: Liturgical Innovation circa 1000 and Its Afterlife," *Speculum* 75, no. 2 (2000): 398.

[42] Constantin von Tischendorf, a ninteenth century biblical scholar, produced one of the first editions of the *Pseudo-Matthew* and identified the author as Matthew, following the epistolary preface. When Tischendorff's *Evangelia Apocrypha* became the standard critical edition of the *Pseudo-Matthew*, Matthean authorship became inextricably tied to the text. Tischendorff's *Pseudo-Mathew* also included the dubious addition of sections from the *Infancy of Thomas.* Constantin von Tischendorf, ed., *Evangelia apocrypha* (Lipsiae: Avenarius et Mendelssohn, 1853), 93–112. Gijsel offers a thorough critique of this error, attributing the mistake to the fact that all three of the *Pseudo-Matthew* manuscripts used by Tischendorf were from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries. Gijsel, *Libri de nativitate Mariae: Pseudo-Matthaei Evangelium*, 265–75.

[43] For Gijsel's reconstruction of this original introduction, see: Gijsel, *Libri de nativitate Mariae: Pseudo-Matthaei Evangelium*, 277.

[44] Ibid., 83–88. Gijsel designates these two traditions as P and A: the P family retains the original *ego Jacobus*, while the A family does not.

[45] Palatinus lat. 430, for example, follows the P tradition and is suggested by Gijsel as a possible source for Hrotsvit's work. Jan Gijsel, "Zu welcher Textfamilie des PseudoMatthäus gehört die Quelle von Hrotsvits Maria?," *Classica et Mediaevalia* 32 (1979): 279–88. Paschasius Radbertus and Rabanus Maurus also discuss Matthean authorship of Marian texts in the hope of connecting them to the canonical gospel and inserting them in liturgy. Fassler, "Mary's Nativity, Fulbert of Chartres, and the Stirps Jesse," 398.

parallel structure highlights Hrotsvit's additions, particularly her theological explanations of the narrative.

2.2.2 *Ascensio and a Greek Homiletic Source*

Like Hrotsvit's *Maria*, her *Ascensio* is partly based on biblical accounts, which offer a complex narrative of the events following Christ's crucifixion. The *Ascensio* contains Christ's commissioning of the disciples and a discussion with Mary, concluding with his ascension into heaven. Hrotsvit sets the entirety of this narrative on the Mount of Olives, which she renders *mons olivifer*.[46] In the biblical accounts, Christ's commissioning of the disciples is found in both Matthew 28 and Mark 16, while Luke 24 and Acts 1 include the only visible ascension descriptions in the New Testament.[47] Of these, both Matthew's commissioning scene and the Acts ascension narrative are set on the Mount of Olives.[48] Hrotsvit follows the basic outline of these New Testament sources, but she identifies a different source as her literary foundation. According to the title of the *Ascensio*, Hrotsvit based her work on a Greek narrative of the ascension, translated into Latin by a "Bishop John."[49] There are no extant Latin accounts of Christ's ascension that follow this particular format, and scholars do not have any theories about the identity of this *Johannes episcopus*.

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[46] "Postremo caris isdem monstratur amicis/ montis oliviferi precelso vertice quidni" (Ascensio, 20-21).
[47] John 1:50-53 also includes a discussion, rather than description, of Christ's future ascension. See Henk Jan de Jonge for the conflicting chronology of the Luke-Acts ascensions: Henk Jan de Jonge, "The Chronology of the Ascension Stories in Luke and Acts," *New Testament Studies* 59, no. 2 (2013): 151–171. J.G. Davies offers a compelling narrative of the ascension's place in Christian history, beginning with the canonical biblical accounts, through the doctrinal debates of the fourth and fifth century, and culminating with early medieval constructions of the event. J.G. Davies, *He Ascended into Heaven: A Study in the History of Doctrine.* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1958). Johanna Kramer follows the early patristic debates to Anglo-Saxon England in her work on the liminality of the ascension. Johanna Kramer, *Between Earth and Heaven: Liminality and the Ascension of Christ in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014).
[48] Trent Rogers suggests the commissioning on the Mount of Olives serves as as a symbolic conclusion to the Matthean casting of Jesus as Moses. Trent Rogers, "The Great Commission as the Climax of Matthew's Mountain Series," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 22, no. 3 (2012): 383–98.
[49] "Hanc narrationem Iohannes episcopus a Graeco in Latinum transtulit" (Ascensio, title).

Still, it is clear that Hrotsvit's *Ascensio* must be drawn from a source beyond the canonical biblical accounts. *Ascensio* lacks the narrative structure that undergirds the biblical episodes, for it is presented as a series of speeches by divine characters (Christ, God the Father, angels). Given the highly rhetorical nature of the *Ascensio*, it seems likely that Hrotsvit employed a homily as her source. There is a rich homiletic tradition around Christ's ascension in both the Greek East and the Latin West, because of the popularity of the Ascension feast day. Furthermore, many Greek homilies made their way into the western intellectual world through translations, such as those offered by Paul the Deacon in his *Homilarium*.[50] Helene Homeyer, the only scholar to suggest a *specific* potential homiletic source, identifies a sermon on Christ's ascension that was, in antiquity, spuriously attributed to John Chrysostom.[51] J.P. Migne denotes this false attestation by including the sermon in the *Spuria quaedam* section of the Chrysostom volumes in his Patrologia Graeca, preliminarily (though unhelpfully) identifying the actual author as Eusebius of Alexandria.[52] Hrotsvit's *Ascensio* follows the pattern of a generic ascension sermon: 1) Christ and the disciples ascend to the Mount of Olives, where Christ speaks to the group, commissioning them; 2) Christ speaks to Mary, commending her care to the disciples; 3) a cohort of angels and prophets appears to escort Christ to heaven. There can be no certainty in identifying Hrotsvit's homiletic source, given the brevity and generality of the *Ascensio*'s narrative structure.

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[50] The homiliary was completed as part of Charlemagne's broad educational reforms in the empire, with a particular focus on clerical literacy. For the ascension sermons in particular, see: PL 95, 1565D-1574A. Cyril Smetana, "Paul the Deacon's Patristic Anthology," in *Old English Homily and Its Background*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1978), 75–97.

[51] Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 81–84.

[52] PG 64. 45-48. Henrik Stander offers no alternative theories of authorship, but suggests the homily dates to the "late fifth century or early sixth century." Hendrik Stander, "Fourth and Fifth Century Homilists on the Ascension of Christ," in *The Early Church in Its Context: Essays in Honor of Everett Ferguson*, ed. Abraham Johannes Malherbe, Frederick W. Norris, and James W. Thompson (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 272.

In many ways, Hrotsvit's *Ascensio* serves to complete her construction of the Christological and Marian archetypes. In contrast to the ascension narratives found in the biblical canon, Hrotsvit includes Mary in Christ's commissioning to the disciples. Christ's final words to Mary hint at Mary's assumption, which has a clear apocryphal parallel in the *Transitus Mariae* tradition.[53] According to Mary Clayton, Latin Marian texts were "uniformly in favor" of Mary's assumption when "first composed," but over time these endings were altered as part of the increased anxiety around the questionable nature of apocrypha.[54] Homeyer cites this trend as evidence for Hrotsvit's choice of a sermon that only obliquely references Mary's assumption, couching it as a future promise rather than depicting the event.[55]

2.2.3 *Maria and Ascensio as Complementary Non-Canonical Exempla*

Although this chapter will present *Maria* and *Ascensio* in chronological order, I do not mean to suggest that they comprise a single, continuous account. Rather, they operate together to present Mary and Christ as complementary archetypes of Christian living. By creatively combining non-canonical sources in these accounts, Hrotsvit offers her audience a unique theological education. The *Maria*, with the apocryphal *Pseudo-Matthew* at its base, identifies

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[53] For more, see Hans Förster's masterful book on the topic: Hans Förster, *Transitus Mariae* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006).

[54] Mary Clayton, *The Apocryphal Gospels of Mary in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 66. Gregory of Tours, an early proponent of Marian ascension, clearly described Mary's ascent to heaven in the fourth chapter of his *De gloria martyrum* (PL 71.70). Gregory notes that the archangel Michael, in his capacity as psychopomp, carries Mary's soul to heaven, accompanied by Christ and his angels. But, in contrast to Hrotsvit, Gregory also suggests a full bodily ascension: "He [Christ] took the holy body in a cloud and ordered it to be brought to Paradise, where, after regaining her soul, Mary now rejoices with his elect and enjoys the goodness of eternity that will never perish." Raymond Van Dam, ed., *Gregory of Tours: Glory of the Martyrs* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1988), 22.

[55] Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 82. As well as including Mary in this crucial commissioning, Hrotsvit highlights King David's presence during Christ's ascension, drawing on Christologically prophetic verses from Psalm 46 and 109. During Hrotsvit's construction of the ascension event, David composes and performs psalms, acting as cosmic herald and personal muse. Hrotsvit specifically notes that David's words "urge" Christ to heaven: *hortatur* (Ascensio, 97) and *suadens* (Ascensio, 103).

Mary as learned monastic turned holy mother, while the person of Jesus grows into his identity as God-Man. The *Ascensio,* based on a homiletic expansion of the biblical text, commissions Mary along with the apostles and presents Christ's ascension as a new song composed by Hrotsvit.

Hrotsvit used non-canonical sources deliberately. In the introduction to her hagiographic corpus, Hrotsvit conceals her theory about the value of apocryphal narratives within protestations of authorial inadequacy. She acknowledges the possibility that there might be an objection "in the estimation of some … that portions of this work are taken from apocryphal sources."[56] Rather than admit fault outright, Hrotsvit claims that this was an error of ignorance, rather than "a crime of evil presumption," because she was not aware that the material was questionable when she began her work.[57] But, having realized her "error," Hrotsvit declines to remove the non-canonical material, offering the following explanation: "because, what seems to be false will perhaps be proven to be true."[58] Stephen Wailes claims that Hrotsvit is "thumbing her nose at her critics" with these statements, "questioning the truth" of her imaginary critics' judgment.[59] A more nuanced interpretation can be found in Katharina Wilson's suggestion that Hrotsvit has redefined veracity "in rhetorical rather than empirical terms … when the reliability of the source can no longer be taken for granted, she substitutes for that truth the truth of intention."[60] Non-canonicity need not correlate to falsehood, and Hrotsvit suggests the quality of *veritas* is flexible. The truth found in the *Pseudo-Matthew* text and in the ascension sermon is a didactic one, with the

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[56] "Si autem obicitur, quod quaedam huius operis/ iuxta quorundam aestimationem sumpta sint ex apocrifis" (Praefatio, Liber primus, 3).
[57] "Non est crimen praesumptionis iniquae, sed error ignorantiae, quia, quando huius stamen seriei coeperam ordiri, ignoravi dubia esse, in quibus disposui laborare" (Praefatio, Liber primus, 3).
[58] "At ubi recognovi, pessumdare detractavi, quia, quod videtur falsitas, forsan probabitur esse veritas" (Praefatio, Liber primus, 4). This statement is followed by another lengthy list of Hrotsvit's inadequacies, explaining her need for assistance (*iuvamen*) in parallel to her earlier plea for criticism and correction (*expurgandum; corrigerum*).
[59] Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 50.
[60] Katharina M. Wilson, *Hrotsvit of Gandersheim: The Ethics of Authorial Stance* (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 5.

potential for edification regardless of historical accuracy.[61] Hrotsvit's presentation of the non-canonical material is enhanced by her addition of instructional asides, which help her audience interpret narrative content and complex theology. In both the *Ascensio* and the *Maria,* Hrotsvit's archetypes teach by word and by deeds—living out the ideals of the Christian life, which are then explained in authorial asides or instructional speeches.

2.3 Mary's Saintly Credentials

Following traditional hagiographic patterns, Hrotsvit's *Maria* begins with Mary's family, focusing on her parents Joachim and Anna. Their story serves two main purposes: first, it illustrates the existence of God's providential plan even in the face of contrary evidence; second, it identifies the miraculous nature of Mary's birth, paralleling the miraculous nature of Christ's future birth. For Hrotsvit, this multi-generational family story is evidence of divine faithfulness. As she reminds her audience in the opening lines of the narrative, Mary's family story fulfills the predictions of "truthful prophets."[62] Both the *Pseudo-Matthew* and Hrotsvit report that Mary's father Joachim was a member of the tribe of Jesse, fulfilling the ancient prophecy.[63] But Hrotsvit's introduction extends the scope of the *Pseudo-Matthew*'s equivalent family history,

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[61] A similar notion of pedagogical *veritas* can be found in the work of Notker of St. Gallen, Hrotsvit's tenth century contemporary. According to Notker of St. Gallen, apocryphal acts ought to be considered at least as legitimate as hagiography: "The church dismisses the authority of the *historiae* that are written about Andrew and John and also of the passions of the other apostles. Of these, however, you know that the passion of Bartholomew is very near the truth…[these and other *historia*] must be read for instruction." Els Rose, *Ritual Memory: The Apocryphal Acts and Liturgical Commemoration in the Early Medieval West (c. 500-1215)* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 65–68.

[62] "Incepit quando felix etatula sexta,/ qua deus impleri iussit pietate fideli,/ quicquid veraces iam precinuere prophetae, qui mundo Iesum mox predixere futurum" (Maria, 46-48). By contrast, the *Pseudo-Matthew* account moves directly from the spurious Jerome letter into the narrative. For more on Hrotsvit's use of *etatula*, see: Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 49.

[63] "Germine de Iuda quidam surrexerat ergo/ Israel in terra senior sub lege vetusta/ ortus regali David de germine magni" (Maria, 50-52); "Erat vir in Israel nomine Ioachim ex tribu Iuda" (Pseudo-Matthew, 1.1.1). Later, both accounts will also note that Anna was from the line of David (Maria, 81; Pseudo-Matthew, 1.2.4.). All citations from the *Pseudo-Matthew* will be taken from Gijsel's critical edition: Gijsel, *Libri de nativitate Mariae: Pseudo-Matthaei Evangelium*. Unless otherwise noted, translations are my own.

using Joachim's pastoral occupation to remind her readers of the eschatological hope found in Christ. Joachim's earnest care for his sheep rendered him worthy to be the ancestor of Christ, the "true shepherd."[64] Christ does not "disdain to carry his own sheep on his shoulders," showing them the way to the "joys of the praiseworthy life."[65] Hrotsvit balances this didactic, imitative value of Christ's earthly life with the salvific act of his death: Christ endures death "through his great love of us, about to redeem the guilty with the price of his own dear life."[66] Hrotsvit presents Joachim's pastoral occupation as prefiguring the salvation provided by his grandson, the "true Shepherd."[67]

Despite his demonstrated good works, Joachim and his wife Anna are unable to conceive a child.[68] The couple's infertility will serve as a demonstration of divine faithfulness, although Anna and Joachim model diametrically opposed responses to the situation. Joachim is chastened for his infertility when he attempts to make a sacrifice in the temple and he flees in shame, leaving Anna alone.[69] Following five months of solitude, Anna pours forth her grief to the heavens, the apparent loss of a spouse only compounding her shameful infertility: even the birds

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[64] "Hoc quoque continuo fuerat sua maxima cura,/ ut gregis ipse sui bene pasceret agmina magni/ designans veri sese pastoris haberi/ dignum quandoquidem terrestri carne parentem" (Maria, 56-59).
[65] "Qui portare suos humeris non distulit agnos/ in propriis vitae ducens ad gaudia laetae" (Maria, 60-61).
[66] "Passurus mortem magnum nostri per amorem/ empturusque reos anime precio sibi care" (Maria, 62-63).
[67] The *Pseudo-Matthew* dedicates a single sentence to Joachim's pastoral occcupation, which is not connected to Christ's role as "true shepherd" (Pseudo-Matthew, 1.1.2-3).
[68] Joachim divided his fortune between the widows, orphans and temple service; this charity resulted in God blessing his resources further, such that his net worth surpassed "all the nobles of his own people" (Maria, 73-74). The *Pseudo-Matthew* also reports acts of charity with similar results: "Haec autem illo faciente multiplicabat deus greges ipsius, ita ut non esset similis illi homo in populo Israel" (Pseudo-Matthew, 1.2.1-2).
[69] In this episode, Joachim attempts to worship in the temple during a festival season, despite the shame of a childless twenty year marriage. According to Hrotsvit, Joachim was standing among those "considered worthy to place incense" at the sacred altars when a scribe of the temple took offense at Joachim's presence. The scribe, named Reuben, "hated" this apparent insult, and "bitterly" told Joachim that sacrifice was forbidden to those whom God had "denied the gift of offspring." Though Joachim does not reply to Reuben's words, he feels the insult deeply: he flees his home, seeking "distant lands" and "secret" places with his flock, pondering the "serious shame" inflicted by the "harsh words of Reuben" (Maria, 85-102). The *Pseudo-Matthew* reports the incident in very similar language (Pseudo-Matthew, 2.1).

in her garden are granted offspring, while she remains childless.[70] An angelic messenger appears to offer *solamina* for her grief, advising her to "put down the sorrow of [her] heart, and believe that by the greatest plan of God there will be a child."[71] This reminder of divine providence allays only of some of Anna's fears; she seeks her bed and the comfort of Psalmic recitation throughout the night.[72] In the midst of this fear and confusion, Anna is confronted by the "disdain" of her servant, whose neglect of her mistress culminates in taunts (*opprobria*) that parallel the earlier critique of Joachim: "If God despises you, making you sterile, what does that divine blame have do to with me?"[73] Anna bears this shame (*opprobrium*) "patiently," exchanging Joachim's cowardly flight for tearful endurance.[74]

Thus far, Hrotsvit has presented her readers with two parallel accounts of Mary's parents as they experience the shame of infertility. Hrotsvit merges these storylines when Anna's angelic messenger appears to Joachim to prompt his return.[75] According to Hrotsvit, Joachim fixates on his shame in his response to the angel: "I departed from the temple full of bitter shame … and you incite me, disdained, drenched in such malice, to return and to subject myself to former

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[70] Both the *Pseudo-Matthew* and Hrotsvit describe an initial speech by Anna that culminates in her watching birds building a nest to house recently hatched young. This heartbreaking image underscores Anna's grief at her continued infertility (Maria, 105-124 ; Pseudo-Matthew, 2.2). Homeyer describes the connections between these accounts of Anna's speech and sections of 1 Samuel: Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 52.

[71] "Cordis depone dolorem,/ consilioque dei germen tibi credito summi" (Maria, 143-144).

[72] "Et tremefacta diem psalmorum lege perorat/ effusis noctem precibus ducendo sequentem" (Maria, 150-151). Hrotsvit's version depicts Anna as actively confronting her fears. By contrast, the *Pseudo-Matthew* describes Anna's nocturnal prayers as a sort of trance: "ingressa est cubiculum suum et iactavit se in lectum quasi mortua, et totam diem atque totam noctem in tremore nimio et in oratione permansit" (Pseudo-Matthew, 2.3.6-8).

[73] "Si te despexit sterilem faciens deus, inquit,/ dic rogo, divinie cause quid pertinent ad me?" (Maria, 158-159). This episode foreshadows the critique of Mary by one of her midwives, Salome; in each case, the serving women fail to recognize the comparative sanctity of their mistress.

[74] "Anna sed obprobrium patienter pertulit istud/ effundens tantum lacrimas subtristis amaras" (Maria, 160-161). The Pseudo-Matthean account lacks any suggestion of Anna's patience, focusing entirely on her tears of grief: "et haec audiens Anna emittens vocem cum clamoribus flebat" (Pseudo-Matthew, 2.4.5).

[75] Hrotsvit's account is clear that this is "the same" angel: "Scilicet hac ipsa Ioachim praedictus in hora/ angelus apparens inter montana refulgens" (Maria, 162-163). The *Pseudo-Matthew* merely implies this connection (Pseudo-Matthew, 3.1.1-2).

shame?"[76] Joachim's shame overshadows his faith, prompting a lengthy corrective speech from the angelic messenger. The speech promises Joachim that he and Anna will "conceive a child, praiseworthy for all ages" because "through her the greatest blessing will come to the world."[77] Having received this promise, Joachim offers a sacrifice, rededicating himself to faith by undertaking the very action that had been the cause of his former shame.[78]

Only Hrotsvit's account explains the macrocosmic theological significance of this microcosmic reconciliation in the life of Joachim.[79] As the angel ascends, born aloft by the smoke of Joachim's sacrifice, so too does God's grace shine down on the world, repairing the "former discord" between heaven and earth.[80] The repercussions of this redemptive cycle even affect the angels, who will now embrace a human race that was tainted by postlapsarian sinfulness.[81] Human sinfulness was unavoidable until Christ, the new Adam, initiates the redemptive cycle by being sent "into the virginal womb."[82] Though Christ was "born of the supreme father, without beginning," he takes on flesh to ensure human salvation.[83] Christ's cosmic sacrifice is thus reflected in Joachim's sacrifice of an earthly lamb: Hrotsvit's reminder

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[76] "Insuper obprobriis discessi pleus amaris/ nuper de templo causa confusus ab ipsa:/ et me despectum tantisque malis saturatum/ hortaris regredi subdi primoque pudori" (Maria, 169-172). The *Pseudo-Matthew* account goes in to far less detail about Joachim's shame (Pesudo-Matthew, 3.1.4-7).

[77] "Concipiet natam cunctis seculis venerandas" (Maria, 181); "ac per quam veniet mundo benedictio summa" (Maria, 184). There is much discussion surrounding Hrotsvit's use of the future tense for *concipiet*. Karl Strecker suggests that it is a contradiction to Hrotsvit's timeline (see v. 261), while Homeyer believes it is a homiletic convention. Karl Strecker, ed., *Hrotsvitha Opera*, Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana (Lipsiae: Teubner, 1930), 12; Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 54. The *Pseudo-Matthew* makes this promise far more concrete. The angelic messenger reports that Anna will be pregnant when Joachim returns: "descende de montibus et reverte ad coniugem tuam, et invenies eam habentem in utero" (Pseudo-Matthew, 3.2.8-10).

[78] Unlike the *Pseudo-Matthew*, Hrotsvit specifically construes the sacrifice as a means of erasing Joachim's shame: "he took a one-year-old lamb from his flock, hoping to put to rest the old shame of Reuben" (Maria, 203-204).

[79] The *Pseudo-Matthew* narrative moves directly from Joachim's sacrifice (3.3) to the reappearance of Joachim's servants (3.4). Homeyer compares this section to Hrotsvit's introduction in its tone and content: Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 55.

[80] Maria, 207-211.

[81] "Cum sua celestes primum consorcia cives/ olim terrigenas promittebant habituros,/ quos prius e meritis Adam sprevere parentis" (Maria, 212-214).

[82] "Proprium qui mox post tempora natum/ mittere virgineum miserans disponit in alvum" (Maria, 216-217).

[83] "Ut sine principio natus de patre superno/ carnem virgineo sub tempore sumeret alvo/ omnes atque suo salvaret sanguine sacro" (Maria, 218-220).

of the unfolding relationship between God and humanity. God will not abandon humanity to the snares of the devil, that "crafty enemy of the human race."[84] Hrotsvit ends this brief theological lesson by reminding her audience that human salvation represents the will of all three Persons of the Trinity, "equal in form, strong under the triune name."[85]

Following this theological digression, Hrotsvit returns to her storyline, describing Joachim's return to Anna.[86] After a journey of thirty days, Joachim meets Anna at the Golden Gate, where she offers praise for the return of her husband and for the miraculous conception of their daughter. The chronology of this conception is far from clear, though Anna's speech implies that she is already pregnant when Joachim returns to her.[87] Hrotsvit makes no attempt to clarify this confusion, merely stating that nine months after Joachim's return, he and Anna welcomed the birth of the long awaited child, "venerable to all the ages."[88]

2.4 Mary's Exemplary Youth

The miraculous nature of Mary's conception compliments Hrotsvit's description of her childhood. Again, this narrative follows hagiographic tropes, but expands the Pseudo-Matthean account to emphasize Hrotsvit's particular theological interests.

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[84] "Ne post haec generis humani callidus hostis/ gauderet mundum laqueis retinere malignis" (Maria, 221-222).
[85] "Sed patris et nati numen quoque pneumatis almi/ aequali forma pollens sub nomine trino/ finetenus stabilem regnaret iure per orbem" (Maria, 223-225).
[86] The *Pseudo-Matthew*'s account of this encounter implies Joachim is far more reluctant to return; the angel must appear on two separate occasions and Joachim's servants have to convince him to follow the angel's orders (Pseudo-Matthew 3.1-4).
[87] "Tempore que longo iam permasi viduata/ queque fui sterilis, concepi gaudia prolis" (Maria, 260-261). Hrotsvit's use of the perfect tense for *concepi* mirrors the *Pseudo-Matthew* account: "sterilis eram et ecce concepi" (Pseudo-Matthew, 3.5.9).
[88] "Venit summa dies, in qua praenobilis Anna/ progenuit natam cunctis seclis venerandam" (Maria, 265-266).

2.4.1 *Naming and Presentation*

Mary's miraculous childhood begins with her unusual naming ceremony. The *Pseudo-Matthew* devotes a mere four words to the event: "she was called Mary."[89] By contrast, Hrotsvit's version of Mary's naming ceremony also includes a lengthy description of heavenly intervention, followed by theological explanation. Although Hrotsvit indicates that high priests are responsible for naming children eight days after their birth, it is Joachim who begins the ceremony at the temple with a prayer. Joachim addresses the divine as the one who "place[s] names on the stars," foreshadowing the selection of Mary's own celestial name.[90] Hrotsvit does not follow the Pseudo-Matthean decision to have Anna assign the name, nor does she permit one of the collected men who are present — not even Joachim or the high priests — to do the honors.[91] Instead, Hrotsvit marks this ceremony as a liminal space between heaven and earth: "a strong voice from heaven" sounded from the skies to declare that the *egregia puella* would be named Mary.[92]

Hrotsvit's narrative also includes an etymological analysis of the name, explaining that "Mary sounds like 'star of the sea' (*stella maris*) in the Latin language."[93] Hrotsvit further clarifies the significance of that etymology : "this name was deservedly assigned to the sacred

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[89] Pseudo-Matthew, 4.1.2.
[90] "Rex caeli, stellis solus qui nomina ponis" (Maria, 271).
[91] "Post haec autem expletis mensibus novem peperit Anna filiam et vocavit nomen eius Mariam" (Pseudo-Matthew, 4.1.1)
[92] "Dixerat, et subito sonuit voc fortis ab alto/ mandans egregiam Mariam vocitare puellam" (Maria, 274-275).
[93] "Stella maris lingua quod consonant ergo latina" (Maria, 276). The *stella maris* etymology has a lengthy history, beginning with Jerome's *Liber interpretationis hebraicorum nominum*. Jerome claimed that Mary's name came from the Hebrew word "mar" meaning bitter and "yam" meaning "sea"; this resulted in his etymology "*stilla maris*," translating to "a drop from the sea" (PL 23, 841-842). Bede also discusses the *stella maris* conundrum in his *In Lucae Evangelium expositio*: David Hurst, ed., "In Lucae Evangelium exposito," in *Bedae Venerabilis opera. Pars II*, Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina 120 (Turnholti: Typographi Brepolo Editores Pontificii, 1960), 31; Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England*, 249–51. By the time of Isidore's *Etymologies*, that *stilla* had been rendered *stella*: resulting in "star of the sea." The same title was used in the *Ave stella maris* hymn, which circulated in the ninth century and was often erroneously attributed to Venantius Fortunatus. For more, see: Heinrich Lausberg, *Der Hymnus Ave maris stella* (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 2013); Jaroslav Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 94.

girl, because she is the illustrious star that shines in the eternity of the king, and in the clear diadem of the eternal Christ."[94] Hrotsvit's etymological lesson not only confirms the validity of the title (*merito*), but also connects Mary to her eschatological position alongside the Trinity. Hrotsvit continues to highlight Mary's theological significance in her description of Mary's temple presentation, which foreshadows the fact that Mary would "be the future temple of God one day."[95] Two-year-old Mary races up the fifteen steps of the temple without a backwards glance at her parents.[96] Both Hrotsvit and the *Pseudo-Matthew* mention the specific number of steps, which recall the fifteen steps of the temple in Jerusalem and indicate Mary's relationship with the Hebrew past.[97] However, only Hrotsvit's version of the narrative includes yet another explanatory aside, presented as commentary on the amazement of the crowd experiencing this event.

Hrotsvit begins this theological digression by comparing the young Mary's non-childlike behavior with the true paradox of her future: "What can be believed to be, or what can actually be greater than the girl who carried in her virginal womb the great creator of the world and her own parent? So, it is not miraculous if the slight child with her tender limbs began to establish her steps on high."[98] Hrotsvit does not make this comparison to detract from the marvelous nature of Mary's early life. On the contrary, God the father "enriched [Mary] with the sacred flame (Holy Spirit) while she was enclosed in the womb of [her] sacred mother."[99] God's care for

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[94] "Hoc nomen merito sortitur sancta puella,/ est quia praeclarum sidus, quod fulget in evum/ regis aeterni claro diademate Christi" (Maria, 277-279).
[95] "Quae templum domini fuit immo futurum" (Maria, 284). As Homeyer notes, this is a common theme in patristic treatment of Mary. Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 58. Still, Hrotsvit's imagery consistently uses the metaphor to emphasize the value of Mary's role as both temple and "veil."
[96] Maria, 288-291. The use of *limine* here is originally Strecker's suggestion; the text in M reads *limite*. Karl Strecker, *Hrotsvitha Opera*, 13. Homeyer uses the original *limite*, while Berschin uses Strecker's *limine*: Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 58; Berschin, *Hrotsvit Opera Omnia*, 14.
[97] Maria, 289; Pseudo-Matthew, 4.1.7.
[98] Maria, 299-303.
[99] "Quam pater alme tuo ditasti flamine sacro,/ dum fuerat sanctae genetricis condita ventre" (Maria, 304-305).

Mary began at her own conception; God knew that "she alone would be worthy to give birth" to Christ.[100] According to Hrotsvit, the parallels between Mary and Christ include not only their miraculous conception, but also their role in providing a path to human salvation. "After covering himself with the veil of human form," Christ provided the opportunity for all humanity to recover their full relationship with God: he "opened the ascending steps into eternity for all, through which they all reach out to return to the lost homeland."[101] Just as Mary ascended the steps of the earthly temple (*ascensum graduum*), so too does Christ ascend to heaven (*ascensum graduum*); both Mary and Christ were necessary to open (*patefecit*) this redemptive path for humanity.[102] Mary concealed (*tectus*) Christ for a time, serving as the *templum* from which his glory would eventually be revealed.[103] Using repetitive language to guide her audience, Hrotsvit has successfully identified Mary as the site of Christ's concealment and first revelation.[104]

2.4.2 *Early Life in the Temple*

Mary's theological significance is not limited to her role as *genetrix*. On the contrary, Hrotsvit's Mary is an ideal monastic, well-educated and skilled in rhetoric. After her miraculous

[100] "Prescius hanc solam certe consistere dignam/ ad proprii patrum nati per saecula voti" (Maria, 306-307).
[101] "Qui post corporeae tectus velamine formae/ ascensum graduum cunctis patefecit in aevum,/ per quos ad patriam tendunt remeare relictam" (Maria, 308-310).
[102] Maria, 289; Maria, 309. Wailes also notes this parallel as part of his discussion of the conflict between spiritual and physical in the *Maria*. Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 43.
[103] Later in the narrative Mary is the only virgin entrusted with the weaving of the purple cloth for the curtain of the temple, a reference to her central role as *templum* and *velamen* of Christ himself (Maria, 500-504).
[104] A compelling visual analog to Hrotsvit's theological description of Mary can be found in the Bernward Gospels, an Ottonian illuminated manuscript produced at the request of Bernward of Hildesheim. In fol 17v, the archangels Gabriel and Michael hold a crown over Mary, seated in majesty with Christ on her lap (a *sedes sapientiae* type). Two *tituli* run across the arches behind Mary, again repeating Hrotsvit's assessment of Mary's role in the incarnation. The first echoes Hrotsvit's primary epithet, saying, "Hail Star of the Sea, shining through the grace of the son." The second recalls the notion of Mary as the temple, claiming: "Hail temple unlocked by the Holy Spirit." Jennifer P. Kingsley, "Picturing the Treasury: The Power of Objects and the Art of Memory in the Bernward Gospels," *Gesta* 50, no. 1 (2011): 19–39.

presentation at the temple, Mary remains cloistered there for several years.[105] Both Hrotsvit and the *Pseudo-Matthew* describe this portion of Mary's life in typical hagiographic style. For example, both claim that her outward beauty reflects the purity of her heart, and Hrotsvit suggests that Mary even heals the sick with her touch.[106] Hrotsvit places particular emphasis on Mary's opportunities for education while a resident at the temple. She reports that Mary continues to display the maturity seen at her presentation, despite her youth, setting a "noble example" (*praenobile exemplum*) for her cloistered companions with good deeds.[107] Mary devotes herself (*studiosa*) to a recitation of the psalms and to the study of the law.[108] In Hrotsvit's estimation, Mary's education and goodness are best displayed in her speech, for she "poured out words from her mouth that were seasoned with the nectar of heavenly grace."[109]

Hrotsvit's version of the story continues by expanding the Pseudo-Matthean account of Mary's typical day, which follows the pattern of monastic hours.[110] Hrotsvit's description pairs Mary's devotion to the textile arts with her dedication to the life of the mind. Throughout the day, Mary would produce "purple thread," while during the evening she devoted herself to

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[105] Following Mary's presentation, Anna makes a speech thanking God for the gracious gift of a child. Both Hrotsvit and the *Pseudo-Matthew* report that Mary's birth empowers Anna (and likely Joachim) to again participate in religious activities (Maria, 314-322; Pseudo-Matthew, 5.1).

[106] Maria, 336-339; 346-351. The *Pseudo-Matthew* offers a similar, though more abbreviated, account of Mary's goodness, exemplified in her beauty, prayer, and dedication to the textile arts (Pseudo-Matthew, 6.1).

[107] "Exemplumque suis in se praenobile cunctis/ preponit sociis iam cunctigene bonitatis" (Maria, 346-347). Mary serves as an example for monastic women in the work of several patristic authors, including Ambrose and Augustine: Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 60; David G. Hunter, "Helvidius, Jovinian, and the Virginity of Mary in Late Fourth-Century Rome," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 1, no. 1 (1993): 47–71; Virginia Burrus, "Reading Agnes: The Rhetoric of Gender in Ambrose and Prudentius," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3, no. 1 (1995): 25–46; Rachel Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800-1200* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 10–15.

[108] "Ast in praeceptis fuerat iustissima legis,/ necnon carminibus semper studiosa Davidis" (Maria, 334-335). Compare to the *Pseudo-Matthew*, which only briefly mentions Mary's prayers with no reference to the law (Pseudo-Matthew, 6.1.5).

[109] "Quae nempe suo profluxit ab ore loquela,/ nectare gratiolae fuerat condita supernae" (Maria, 341-342).

[110] Maria, 353-266; Pseudo-Matthew, 6.2. As discussed earlier, this monastic schedule led to the assumption that the *Pseudo-Matthew*'s author was a monastic. Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 61; Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England*, 21.

prayers and "persevered in these things with an eager mind [*studium mentis*]."[111] Mary's "eager mind" is evident in other areas of her cloistered life: in her devotion (*studiosa*) to reciting the psalms and in her dedication (*studium mentis*) to distributing any food she received to the poor.[112] Along with the *Pseudo-Matthew*, Hrotsvit implies that Mary has no need for physical food, instead receiving sustenance from angels who sent food (*esca*) to her "from heaven every day."[113] However, unlike the *Pseudo-Matthew*, Hrotsvit immediately clarifies the nature of this heavenly *esca*. The angels bring intellectual food, comprised of "frequent friendly words" exchanged with Mary.[114] Hrotsvit presents these conversations as the source of a new education supporting the legal and theological education already available in the temple. From these angelic conversations, Mary "learned to spurn terrestrial love and to preserve her chaste mind for the eternal king."[115]

2.4.3 *Defense of Virginity*

The results of Mary's combined religious and angelic education are evident when Mary's cloistered life is threatened. Abiathar, a local priest, is so intent upon betrothing Mary to one of his sons that he bribes the local priests to obtain that right.[116] Yet it is Mary, not any of the local

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[111] "Sed mox ut nona Phebus descendit in hora,/ se precibus solito reddit famosa puella/ ac studio mentis bene perduravit in illis" (Maria, 364-366). Compare to the *Pseudo-Matthew*'s simple report: "Hanc autem sibi ipsa regulam statuerat ut mane usque ad horam tertiam orationibus insisteret, a tertia usque ad nona textrino se opere occuparet. A nona vero hora iterum ab oratione non recedeabt" (Pseudo-Matthew, 6.2.1-4).
[112] "Et quam pontifices dederant de more potentes,/ hanc studio mentis cicius concessit egenis" (Maria, 369-370).
[113] "Per angelicum sumpsit sacra virgo ministrum/ omni namque die missam sibi caelitus escam" (Maria, 367-368). Similiarly: "Cotidie autem esca quam de angeli manu accipiebat ipsa tantum reficiebatur, eam vero quam a pontificibus templi consequebatur pauperibus dividebat" (Pseudo-Matthew, 6.3.10-13). Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 44.
[114] "Denique caelestis lapsi de sidere cives/ hanc crebro verbis consolabantur amicis" (Maria, 371-372).
[115] "Spernere terrestrem quo mox didicisset amorem/ et castam regi mentem servare perenni" (Maria, 373-374). The *Pseudo-Matthew* reports that Mary speaks to angels, but neither characterizes those conversations as "food" nor connects them to Mary's chastity: "Frequenter videbat cum ea angelos loqui, et quasi carissimae obtemperabant ei" (Pseudo-Matthew, 6.3.14-15).
[116] Maria, 377-385; Pseudo-Matthew, 7.1. Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 62.

religious authorities, who defends herself against a forced marriage. In fact, the other priests support Abiathar, claiming that God is best honored though the raising of children.[117] In Hrotsvit's version of the narrative, Mary offers a rhetorically and legally sophisticated speech in praise of virginity, supported with biblical examples.[118]

Hrotsvit's alterations to her source begin with Mary's opening words. According to the *Pseudo-Matthew*, Mary first claims that "God is esteemed and honored in chastity."[119] Hrotsvit expands Mary's initial assessment of the value in virginity: "For God rejoices to remain in the pure temple, in chaste minds, and he does not take pleasure in those whom sensual desire stains with great sin."[120] Because God resides both in the physical temple and in believers themselves, both dwellings must be put in order. Hrotsvit's double reference to purity (*templo mundo … mentibus sobriis*) serves as a sharp contrast to the *lasciva libido* that renders its victims contaminated by sin. Like *Pseudo-Matthew*, Hrotsvit's Mary uses the biblical examples of Abel and Elijah to support her argument, but she subtly alters those paradigms.[121] Abel is indeed the first recipient of the double crown, but Hrotsvit ranks the two crowns in order of dignity: "one [crown] of martyrdom, because of his death by his murderous brother, and a second, more gleaming [crown] because of his virginity."[122] Elijah's example is also clarified in Hrotsvit's text.

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[117] Maria, 385-389; Pseudo-Matthew, 7.1.
[118] Hrotsvit's Theophilus will also present a speech supported by biblical examples when he requests the assistance of Mary as an intercessor (Theophilus, 237-272).
[119] "Deus in castitate primo omnium probatur et colitur" (Pseudo-Matthew, 7.1.7). This may be a reference to 1 Cor 7, which is often used in discussions of monasticism. Gijsel, *Libri de nativitate Mariae: Pseudo-Matthaei Evangelium*, 344.
[120] "Nam deus in templo gaudet requiescere mundo/ mentibus et sobriis nec delectatur in illis,/ crimine quos magno maculat lasciva libido" (Maria, 391-392).
[121] The *Pseudo-Matthew*'s Mary explains that God was certainly pleased by Abel, the first to achieve the double crown of martyrdom and virginity: "duas tamen coronas accepit" (Pseudo-Matthew, 7.2.2). God was also pleased by Elijah, elevated to heaven because he "guarded" his virginity. From her infancy, Mary knew that it was possible for "virginity to be dear to God," and, as a result, she has resolved to never know a man. (Pseudo-Matthew, 7.2.7-8).
[122] "Scimus Abel duplam merito sumpsisse coronam,/ qui primus mundo iustus fuerat protoplaso,/ unam martirii fratris de cede peracti/ atque magis nitidam pro virginitate secundam" (Maria, 394-397).

Elijah "remained a virgin," because he "did not violate his body with sinful desire."[123] This expansion recalls Mary's introductory thesis, contrasting Elijah's powerful virginity with the contamination of desire.

In the conclusion to Hrotsvit's version of the speech, Mary offers a specific explanation for her knowledge of God's preference for chastity. Mary says, "I learned these things, having been instructed in the reasons of the law."[124] The *Pseudo-Matthew*'s Mary does not attribute her knowledge to a particular source, but Hrotsvit's Mary firmly grounds her opinion about virginity in the *ratio legis*.[125] This directly contradicts the priests' statements on the superior value of childbearing, which they described as the "*lawful* posterity of the people of Israel."[126] In Hrotsvit's text, Mary explicitly ties her knowledge of a divine preference for virginity to her education, describing the process precisely: "Learning [these things], I, attentive, have entrusted them to my fixed mind."[127] In Hrotsvit's version, Mary's mindful attention to study parallels the *sobrius mens* lauded at the beginning of her speech. Focused study leads Mary directly to her vow of chastity.[128] Hrotsvit's version of Mary's speech contains repeated reminders of the education Mary received in the temple (*didici, docente, discens*). This education, cultivated by angelic conversations and by her own attentiveness (*sedula*), resulted in Mary's ability to offer a

[123] "Credimus Heliam caelum petiisse secretum/ corpore cum vero, mansit quia virgo potenter/ nec corpus maculis umquam violavit amaris" (Maria, 397-400). As Homeyer notes, the *Pseudo-Matthew* version makes Elijah's assumption more explicit than Hrotsvit's oblique reference. Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 63.
[124] "Haec didici certe legis ratione docente" (Maria, 401).
[125] "Haec ergo in templo dei didici ab infantia mea quod satis cara deo possit esse virgo" (Pseudo-Matthew, 7.2.6-7).
[126] "Nonne deus colitur digneque potens venerator/ in plebis Iudae legali posteriate" (Maria, 387-388). Mary's proper understanding of the law will also be juxtaposed with the invalid deployment of the law later in the narrative by Salome, the Jewish midwife present after Christ's birth.
[127] "Et discerns animo mandavi sedulo fixo" (Maria, 402)
[128] "Meque puellarem vovi retinere pudorem" (Maria, 403).

complex legal speech in defense of chastity. The speech's success is evident in Mary's "fourteen years" of uninterrupted chastity until she is, yet again, faced with marriage.[129]

2.4.4 *Divinely Ordained Marriage*

Despite his initial failure to ensure a marriage for Mary, Abiathar is successful in his second plea to the temple priests. However, he learned his lesson: rather than decry the entire notion of virginity, he exploits a new limit on the tenure of temple virgins. Abiathar claims that continued residence in the temple at an advanced age is "contrary to tradition" and that Mary cannot make a vow of perpetual virginity.[130] The local priests agree and initiate an elaborate scheme to select a husband for Mary.[131] Though reluctant because of his age and existing family, Joseph is eventually selected as Mary's spouse.[132] Concerned about their age difference, Joseph asks some of Mary's cloistered companions to accompany her into the marital home. Joseph believes having companions will be a comfort to Mary, given "her elderly spouse."[133] However, these women are a source of ridicule rather than protection from it.

Following the pattern set by Joachim and the priest Reuben, as well as Anna and her unnamed maid, Mary must endure *opprobrium* inflicted by those around her. The virgins resent

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[129] Maria, 404; Pseudo-Matthew, 8.1.1.
[130] This decsision is first made by the Pharisees (Maria, 405-407). Then, Abiathar uses the new rules to target Mary: "More sed insolito sperat se virgo Maria/ posse placere viris domini pro nomine spretis" (Maria, 424-425). The *Pseudo-Matthew* reports that the priests identify "womanhood" as the reason for expelling virgins from the temple: "iam pro consuetudine feminae in templo dei illam morari non posse" (Pseudo-Matthew, 8.1.2). This is likely a reference to mensturation, perhaps even a specific reference to Lev 15:19-23. Gijsel, *Libri de nativitate Mariae: Pseudo-Matthaei Evangelium*, 348.
[131] This process includes selecting, by lot, the tribe of Judah from the among the twelve tribes, followed by the miraculous growth of a branch provided by one of the tribe's non-married men. Maria, 430-460; Pseudo-Matthew, 8.2-4.
[132] Joseph was clearly designated by the miracle of the rod and the dove, which a heavenly voice declared would "alone will deservedly the promised sign" (Maria, 464).
[133] Both Hrotsvit and *Pseudo-Matthew* report that Joseph believes he will look after Mary, taking her as a true spouse at a later date: Maria, 485-489; Pseudo-Matthew, 8.4. For more on Hrotsvit's designation of Joseph as a *senior*, see: Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 64, 66.

the fact that the "gleaming purple was entrusted to Mary alone, for working into the precious veil of the temple of the Lord."[134] The girls are unable to understand the appropriateness of Mary's creating a veil for the temple, which foreshadows Mary's pivotal role as *velum* for Christ *in utero*. Hrotsvit's version of this conversation roots the issue in *opprobrium,* specifically noting that "the women present spoke for the sake of reproach."[135] They taunt Mary: "Surely it is not fitting that you be our 'queen' after this, just because the weaving of purple cloth is entrusted to you alone. After all, you are younger than us by many years!"[136] Ever the symbol of faithful humility, Mary does not respond to the misinformed critique of her companions. Instead, as with Anna and Joachim, an angelic messenger appears to offer perspective. The *Pseudo-Matthew* reports that the angel rebukes Mary's jealous companions directly.[137] In Hrotsvit's account, the angel speaks to Mary rather than to her adversaries: "I do not ask, virgin, whether such words disturb you, because they are speaking with a future voice, in the manner of the prophets, because you will be the sole queen eternally, and the glorious ruler of the starry sky."[138] This ironic reversal of the group's taunts explicitly recalls the Marian epithets and the prophetic setting of Hrotsvit's prologue to this legend, bringing the first half of Hrotsvit's *Maria* to a close.[139]

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[134] "Purpura sed sanctae fulgens operanda Mariae/ creditur ad velum domini templi pretiosum" (Maria, 502-503). The *Pseudo-Matthew* account attributes Mary's selection to lots (Pseudo-Matthew, 8.5.5-7).
[135] "Hic super accense praesentes quippe puellae/ obprobrii causa dixerunt taliter ergo" (Maria, 504-505).
[136] "Num te reginam constat post hec fore nostrum/ iam texenda tibi quia purpura creditor uni,/ non parvo cum sis iunior tu tempore nobis?" (Maria, 506-508). The *Pseudo-Matthew* reports a similar taunt: "Cum sis ultima et humilis, purpuram obtinere meruisti? Et haec dicentes in fatigationis sermone coeperent eam reginam virginum appellare" (Pseudo-Matthew, 8.5.8-10). Gijsel believes the *Pseudo-Matthew* is the first to use the "Queen of the Virgins" epithet. Gijsel, *Libri de nativitate Mariae: Pseudo-Matthaei Evangelium*, 374.
[137] Pseudo-Matthew, 8.5.12.
[138] Maria, 513-517. The *Pseduo-Matthew* includes a far less complex speech: "Non erit iste sermo inemissus, sed in fatigationem missus, sed in probationem prophetatus" (Pseudo-Matthew, 8.5.11-12).
[139] "Dominatrix inclita caeli … lucida stella maris" (Maria, 13-14); "Incepit quando felix etatula sexta/ qua deus impleri iussit pietate fideli/ quicquid veraces iam precinuere prophetae/ qui mundo Iesum mox predixere futurum" (Maria, 46-48).

2.5 *Maria*'s Reorientation: Hrotsvit's Editorial Intervention

The first half of Hrotsvit's *Maria* has followed the *Pseudo-Matthew* narrative closely, with the addition of her own emphases and commentary: Hrotsvit focuses on shame in the story of Anna and Joachim, explains the etymology of Mary's name, highlights Mary's education in the temple, and explores Mary's rhetoric in light of that education. Following the angelic messenger's criticism of Mary's companions, Hrotsvit steps outside the narrative into a first person address that explains a new editorial choice. Rather than proceed with the story as presented by the *Pseudo-Matthew*, she has chosen to summarize several narrative scenes in a short list.[140] Though brief, the list includes precise descriptions designed to call these episodes to the minds of her audience. These episodes are: 1) the Annunciation, the "conversation between the blessed mother of Christ and the sacred messenger, narrating the mystery of the virgin birth"; 2) Joseph's response to the pregnancy, "the great grief and harsh sadness of Joseph … when he had understood the girl was pregnant"; and 3) Gabriel's appearance to Joseph, who "was ordered to keep care of the spotless virgin and of the son."[141]

Hrotsvit's explanation for this summary is crucial to understanding her didactic goals. First, she pleads authorial inadequacy, explaining that "all these things [in the summarized list] are described in the gospel books, and indeed they exceed our fragile strength."[142] But, Hrotsvit goes on to say she has "passed over" the episodes "because the knowledge is evident to everyone."[143]

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[140] As in her introduction, these summaries include first person acknowledgment of Hrotsvit as author as she notes: "it is not necessary that we sing [these things] in dactylic strands" (Maria, 531).
[141] Maria, 532-537. This summarized material is included in *Pseudo-Matthew* sections 9-12. As Wailes notes, the description of the Annuciation, in particular, "ensures that all her readers will inwardly recite Mary's words of perfect submission." Stephen L. Wailes, "The Sacred Stories in Verse," in *A Companion to Hrotsvit of Gandersheim (fl. 960): Contextual and Interpretive Approaches*, ed. Phyllis R. Brown and Stephen L. Wailes (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 101. In a second editorial instance some one hundred lines later, Hrotsvit will summarize two more iconic scenes, namely the "vision of the shepherds" as well as "the circumcision of the Christ child himself" (Maria, 630-634). This summarized material is included in *Pseudo-Matthew* sections 13.6-15.2.
[142] "Haec evangelici demonstrant cuncta libelli,/ nostras et fragiles excedunt denique vires" (Maria, 538-539).
[143] "His nos transmissis, constat quia congnita cunctis" (Maria, 540).

Instead of repeating common knowledge, Hrotsvit has chosen to make "a *sermo* for you, from those things which it is believed are said rarely *in templo.*"[144] Gijsel cautions against making too much of this statement, which he believes is purely rhetorical, given the frequent use of this apocryphal material both in artwork and liturgy.[145] But this passage proves that Hrotsvit has exerted considerable editorial authority over the *Pseudo-Matthew* text, following "her own interests and literary purposes."[146] Such an editorial intervention is more than a mere "flourish of authorial autonomy"; it is a testament to Hrotsvit's didactic goals.[147] Hrotsvit describes this legend as a *sermo*, a flexible term whose semantic range includes conversation, speech, homiletic material, and instruction. By calling her *Maria* a *sermo,* Hrotsvit indicates both its intimacy and its edifying potential for her audience (*vobis*).[148]

Falling roughly half-way through the nine hundred lines of the legend, this editorial intervention marks a shift in the tenor of Hrotsvit's text. Following the first summarized list, Hrotsvit's narrative moves away from Mary as the main character and begins to focus on Jesus. But, after announcing that she would confine her comments to "rare" aspects of Mary's life, Hrotsvit immediately launches into a pair of didactic exempla that precede the shift in focus to Christ as protagonist. Because these scenes directly follow Hrotsvit's editorial announcement, they take on an even greater significance: they have been deemed worthy of narration, rare enough to be uniquely edifying to Hrotsvit's audience. Though these scenes are taken from the standard *Pseudo-Matthew* narrative, they have been altered to assist Hrotsvit's audience in

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[144] "Sermonem vobis tantum faciemus ab illis,/ rarius in templo que creduntur fore dicta" (Maria, 541-542). Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 68.
[145] Gijsel, "Zu welcher Textfamilie des PseudoMatthäus gehört die Quelle von Hrotsvits Maria?," 287–88.
[146] Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 50.
[147] Wailes, "The Sacred Stories in Verse," 101.
[148] Wiegand renders *sermo* as "instruction," and Hoemeyer suggests the *vobis* could refer to readers or audience members in an oral setting. Gonsalva Wiegand, "The Non-Dramatic Works of Hrosvitha; Text, Translation, and Commentary" (Ph.D., St. Louis University, 1936), 44; Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 68.

accessing their non-literal interpretation. The first scene, which involves Mary experiencing a vision, alerts Hrotsvit's readers to their heightened role as interpreters by explicitly noting that Mary "did not see with her corporeal eyes, but with the eyes of the mind [*ocelli mentis*]."[149] This sentence is not present in any of the extant Pseudo-Matthean manuscripts. Hrotsvit thus emphasizes the role of these "eyes of the mind," which are tools of interpretation and introspection. In both of these episodes, Hrotsvit's readers, like characters within the narrative, are escorted through the process of interpretation through angelic intervention. To further assist her readers in exercising their "mind's eyes," Hrotsvit juxtaposes these didactic exempla: each explores a failure to truly see or perceive a crucial element of faith.

2.6 Lessons in "Sight" and Interpretation

2.6.1 *Mary's Vision*

Hrotsvit's first allegory comes in a vision that occurs just as she and Joseph arrive in Bethlehem, traveling at the behest of the imperial census. Upon reaching the walls of the city, Mary perceives, with her "mind's eyes," "two men standing near, one laughing and the other crying."[150] When Mary tells Joseph what she has seen, he rebukes her rather than attempting to interpret or validate the vision: "only keep yourself properly on the mule. And do not, I pray, speak any meaningless words."[151] Because Joseph is able to see neither the vision nor its potential significance, an angelic messenger appears to interpret the vision. In a scene

[149] "Aspexit non corporeis, sed mentis ocellis" (Maria, 549).
[150] "Comminus alma duos virguncula stare popellos,/ unam ridentem necnon alium lacrimantem" (Maria, 550-551). The *Pseudo-Matthew* gives these words to Mary as direct speech and has an alternate pair of participles describing the two men: "duos populous video ante me, unam flentem et alium gaundentem" (Pseudo-Matthew, 13.1.8). For a discussion of the *Protoevangelium*'s version of this scene, see: Vuong, *Gender and Purity in the Protevangelium of James*, 183. Wailes suggests this scene is a "precis" of the transition from Law to Grace, as exemplified in Hrotsvit's *Maria*. Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 45.
[151] "Contine subiecto tantum te rite iumento/ et noli, posco, narrare superflua verba" (Maria, 553-554).

reminiscent of the angels that defend Anna, Joachim and Mary against jealousy in previous episodes, this angel queries Joseph: "Why do you say that Mary has not spoken true words, indignant that she alone discerns a mystery?"[152] The Pseudo-Matthean version of the angel's rebuke makes no mention of jealousy, simply questioning Joseph's assessment of Mary's words as "superfluous."[153] For Hrotsvit, Joseph's indignant incredulity has doubly blinded him, rendering both the vision and its interpretation invisible.

Despite Joseph's jealousy, the angel leaves neither Joseph nor Hrotsvit's audience blinded to the significance of Mary's vision. Hrotsvit's angelic interpretation affirms the validity of Mary's vision and clarifies its prophetic character: "She, deservedly, saw the weeping man of the Jews, who will soon withdraw from the Lord with an evil heart, and on the other side, the gentile, overflowing with joy, because he will come to the great sacrament of faith."[154] The *Pseudo-Matthew* rather confusingly claims that the Gentile has already approached the Lord, a fulfillment of the promise that Abraham's seed would be a "blessing to all the nations." [155] Hrotsvit's version clarifies that the Gentiles are "overflowing with joy" because they *will*, only after the birth of Christ, come into the "great sacrament of faith."[156] Participation in the "great sacrament" can only come after Christ's birth, when believers are granted access to salvation through the incarnation. After this pronouncement, Hrotsvit's angel then turns to Mary and

[152] "Cur dicis Mariam non verbula vera locutam/ indignatus eam secretum cernere solam?" (Maria, 558-559).
[153] "Sede et tene iumentum et noli verba superlua mihi loqui?" (Pseudo-Matthew, 13.1.10).
[154] "Nam flentem populum merito vidit Iudaeorum,/ qui mox a domino discedet corde maligno/ contra gentilem sed leticia fluitantem,/ ad fidei magnum quia perveniet sacramentum" (Maria, 560-563).
[155] Pseudo-Matthew, 13.1.12-17. While the reinterpretation of the Abrahamic promise is certainly in line with a typological reading of the Old Testament, it is nonetheless puzzling in conjunction with such an emphatic rejection of the weeping Jew who has "departed from his God."
[156] The future tense of *prevenient* is cructial to Hrotsvit's explanation: "ad fidei magnum quia perveniet sacramentum" (Maria, 563).

informs her it is time for her to "give birth to Christ," the event that will provide the means (Christ) for the fulfillment of her prescient vision.[157]

2.6.2 *The Midwives*

The second episode following Hrotsvit's editorial declaration is also a juxtaposition of faith and unbelief, this time with the exemplum provided by two midwives who attend Christ's birth in a cave.[158] Though the chronology of the events is somewhat muddled, both Hrotsvit and *Pseudo-Matthew* claim that Mary gives birth in the cave, which is then visited by a host of rejoicing angels.[159] Hrotsvit alone uses this opportunity to remind her audience of Christ's salvific role in restoring the relationship between God and man: Jesus is "coming to fulfill the prophecies of the ancient prophets, foretelling that he would come to the world to save us and make peace with heavenly and terrestrial citizens."[160] After the description of angelic visitation, both the *Pseudo-Matthew* and Hrotsvit report that Joseph brings two midwives to the cave, Salome and Zelemi.[161] The pair represent the same moral contrast as that presented by the weeping and laughing men in the previous scene. Again, though Hrotsvit clearly makes use of the Pseudo-Matthean framework, she alters the narrative to make the implications of the exemplum clear to her audience.

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[157] By contrast, the Pseudo-Matthean angel simply instructs Mary to enter a cave, without any explicit mention of the impeding birth: "Et cum haec dixisset, iussit stare iumentum, et praecepit descendere de animali Mariam et ingredi in speluncam" (Pseudo-Matthew, 13.2.1-3). Several other texts describe Christ's birth in a cave, including the *Protoevangelium* (18.1). Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 69.

[158] The cave, so dark, according to Hrotsvit, that it "does not know light," is now illumined by Mary's glow (Maria, 564-574).

[159] In alternate apocryphal accounts of the birth, the midwives arrive before the birth, as in the Arundel 404, a manuscript from the J Compilation. Vuong, *Gender and Purity in the Protevangelium of James*, 183; Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 69; McNamara, Kaestli, and Beyers, "Latin Infancy Gospels: The J Compilation."

[160] "Solvere qui veterum veniens oracula vatum/ se pro salvando venturum prescia mundo/ pacem caelicolis fecit cum civibus orbis" (Maria, 578-580).

[161] The *Protoevangelion* only attests to a single midwife, Salome. Bart Ehrman and Zlatko Plese, *The Apocryphal Gospels: Texts and Translations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 131.

When they arrive at the cave, *Pseudo-Matthew* suggests that both midwives are reluctant to enter because of the bright light, which is still being produced by Mary's radiance.[162] Hrotsvit, however, immediately differentiates between the two women, saying that "Zelemi alone entered, but Salome feared to touch the cave, replete with splendor, with her foot."[163] In contrast to Salome's reluctance, Zelemi quickly assesses the situation, offering a speech about Mary's virginity and Christ's divinity. Zelemi's speech in the *Pseudo-Matthew* focuses entirely on Mary's paradoxical birth and intact virginity, concluding that "a virgin conceived, a virgin has produced, and a virgin remains."[164] Hrotsvit's account provides further theological depth in keeping with her didactic purpose. In Hrotsvit's version of the speech, Zelemi illumines the significance of this virgin birth:[165] "Look, the lofty boy recently from a royal line testifies [*declarant*] that his mother is lacking a spouse. And the pious virgin parent, alone, nurses the child from her chaste breasts, made full from the law of heaven. There is no grief or pain from the mother, nor are there stains of birth, and I believe [*credo*] such things to be a divine arrangement."[166] Hrotsvit's presentation of Zelemi's revelation emphasizes the midwife's immediate belief and her ability to make a theologically robust statement of that belief. [167]

[162] "Ego tibi Zelemi et Salome obsetrices adduxi quae ecce foris ante speluncam stant et prae splendore nimio huc non possunt introire" (Pseudo-Matthew, 13.3.4-6). After prompting, Zelemi alone enters.
[163] "Sola sed ingreditur Zelemi, Salomeque veretur/ tangere speluncam pedibus splendore repletam" (Maria, 591-592).
[164] "Virgo concepit, virgo peperit, virgo permanet" (Pseudo-Matthew, 13.3.16). Gijsel, *Libri de nativitate Mariae: Pseudo-Matthaei Evangelium*, 420.
[165] Hrotsvit has Zelemi ask and then answer her own question: "Quid sibi non nuptae partus vult iste novellus?" (Maria, 595).
[166] Maria, 594-601.
[167] Zelemi was "well-believing such a sign" as soon as she held Jesus: "exlamans, signi dixit bene credula tanti" (Maria, 594).

Meanwhile, although Salome has heard Zelemi's testimony, she refuses to accept the miracle unless she touches Mary "with her own hands."[168] Because she lacks true belief, Salome's transgressive hand is struck with a painful affliction.[169] The Pseudo-Matthean account of Salome's response follows the same narrative as Hrotsvit's, but Hrotsvit's text more clearly differentiates Salome's disbelief from Zelemi's faithfulness.[170] First, Hrotsvit draws a direct contrast between Zelemi's *credo* and Salome's *non credere*: Salome "spurned the voice [of Zelemi] which was not speaking falsehood, and said that she did not believe [*non credere*] the spoken words."[171] Hrotsvit also consistently characterizes Salome's attempts to touch Mary as presumptuous, repeating cognates of the adjective *audax* twice in her description: "Boldly advancing, she began to extend her right hand," but "such boldness conferred an appropriate punishment" and soon "she endured great pain justly."[172] Finally, Hrotsvit offers a unique explanation for Salome's subsequent speech in defense of her actions: "having lost her right hand, by Jewish custom she spoke aloud her own merits, being confident in false justice [*iustitia simulata*]."[173] None of the extant apocryphal accounts explicitly attributes Salome's speech to a "Jewish custom," although the parallels to Mary's vision in the previous scene are obvious.

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[168] "Hanc Salome vocem spernens non ficta loquentem/ dixerat auditis sese non credere verbis,/ ni probet ipsa sacram palma tangendo Mariam" (Maria, 602-604); "Audiens hanc vocem alia obstetrix nomine Salome dixit: Quod ego audio non credo nisi forte ipsa probavero" (Pseudo-Matthew, 13.4.1-2).
[169] A similar event will occur in the third legend of Hrotsvit's hagiographic corpus: the wife of the legend's protagonist, Gongolf, endures the withering of her hand as punishment for her transgressions (Gongolf, 390-412).
[170] The *Pseudo-Matthew* states that Salome "cried out," claiming she has "always feared" God as evidenced by her charitable work. Still, the Pseudo-Matthean Salome admits that she has been "made wretched on account of my disbelief, because I dared to test your virgin" (Pseudo-Matthew, 13.4.11-12).
[171] "Hanc Salome vocem spernens non ficta loquentem/ dixerat auditis sese non credere verbis" (Maria, 602-603). Compare this notion to another clear parallel in the Gongolf legend: like Salome, Gongolf's wife also rejected words "not speaking falsehood": "scilicet auditis verbis non falsa loquentis" (Gongolf, 563).
[172] Maria, 605-609. Hrotsvit also omits the fact that Mary granted Salome permission for her touch, which is included in the Pseudo-Matthean narrative (Pseudo-Matthew, 13.4.4-5).
[173] "Moreque Iudaico proprium meritum recitando/ necnon iusticia sat confidens simulata" (Maria, 612-614).

Homeyer suggests the midwives might best be allegorically understood as Ecclesia (Zelemi) and Synagoga (Salome), adding yet another level to Hrotsvit's didactic exemplum.[174]

Hrotsvit is likewise unique in her suggestion that Salome's confidence is rooted in *iustitia simulata*, which emphasizes Salome's erroneous religious reasoning and continues the legal tone of Zelemi's prior "testimony."[175] Salome's own speech continues the theme, when the midwife then attempts to call God himself as a *testis* on her behalf, laying out evidence of her prior good acts: "you, witness of all things, you know that I have been attentive (*sedula*) in following the law" and now, "for such merits, I endure such a serious grief."[176] The Pseudo-Matthean account describes Salome as recognizing her error by the end of her speech, but Hrotsvit's Salome remains defiant. Mary's attentiveness to the law (*sedula*) was perfected with pure intention, but Salome's legalistic attention (*sedula*) is self-serving and ultimately false.

After Salome's speech, both the *Pseudo-Matthew* and Hrotsvit attest to another angelic intervention, which serves to interpret the episode. The angel directs Salome to touch the Christ child, who cures her afflicted hand. Through this second miraculous event, Salome is finally convinced of God's power and authority. Now a believer, Salome is able to address the Lord properly, "to tell the wonderful things which she had seen," according to the *Pseudo-Matthew*.[177] Hrotsvit's description of this dénouement explicitly references the introduction to the *Maria*. Salome would have been counted amongst the lazy (*pigelli*) who were unwilling to offer divine praise. Now, as a believer, Hrotsvit's Salome is able to offer "thanks to the Lord with a resonant

[174] Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 70. Wailes offers a similar suggestion, pointing to the prevelance of this iconography in medieval art. Wailes, "The Sacred Stories in Verse," 101. Neither author connects the midwives exemplum with the previous vision, which would only strengthen the possibility of an Ecclesia/Synagoga interpretation.

[175] Hrotsvit's choice of verbs throughout Zelemi's speech rendered it a legal and theological testimony (*declarat, iure, credo*).

[176] "Testis cunctorum consolatorque laborum,/ tu scis praeceptis fueram quod sedula legis … et nunc pro meritis patior dampnum grave tantis" (Maria, 615-616, 620).

[177] "Exiens autem foras clamare coepit et dicere magnalia virtutum quae viderat" (Pseudo-Matthew, 13.5.6-7).

voice [*voce canora*], for he had deigned to confer such health on her."[178] Salome provides a compelling example of true conversion: moving from stubborn disbelief to sonorous, ringing belief. [179]

2.7 A Desert Education

Hrotsvit's juxtaposition of the previous two didactic exempla provides a compelling narrative of belief and disbelief. Following these episodes, Hrotsvit adds a second editorial intervention, in keeping with her previous pattern: she begins with a summarized list, followed by didactic vignettes and theological explanation. Here, Hrotsvit summarizes the following episodes as occurring in this "enumerated order" (*ordine digesto*): 1) the angelic appearance to the shepherds as well as the shepherds' pilgrimage to Christ's manger, and 2) Christ's circumcision and naming.[180] Hrotsvit also reorders the events around Christ's presentation, inserting the ceremony into her truncated narrative of Herod and the magi.[181] Following this second editorial intervention, the final three hundred lines of the *Maria* are increasingly episodic, focusing on Christ rather than Mary. The bulk of this discussion is set during the holy family's desert journey, undertaken to escape Herod's purge. The episodic nature of this narrative section

[178] "Et grates domino reddebat voce canora,/ qui sibi dignatur talem conferre salutem" (Maria, 628-629).
[179] Compare to the introduction: "Sed sedule malleo devotionis percussum aliquantulum divine laudationis referret tinnitum" (Praefatio, Liber primus, 8).
[180] Maria, 630-634.
[181] Homeyer suggests this significant rearrangement might serve as evidence that Hrotsvit used a non-extant version of the *Pseudo-Matthew* narrative as her source. Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 72. The extant *Pseudo-Matthew* manuscripts present the narrative in the following order: after the episode with the midwives, the shepherds follow the star to visit Jesus (13.6-7), where he is being worshiped by farm animals (14). Then, the holy family proceeds to the temple, where Jesus was circumcised and presented in the presence of Simeon and Anna (15). The magi meet with Herod before they visit Jesus, returning by a different route to avoid Herod (16), whose subsequent rage sends the holy family into the desert (17). Hrotsvit's account reorders the narrative: she summarizes the shepherd and circumcision scenes (Maria, 630-634), then moves straight to the *magi*, including their initial meeting with Herod, visit to Jesus, and return by a different route (Maria, 635-658). Then Herod is called to Rome (Maria, 659-670), while Jesus is being presented at the temple with Anna and Simeon (Maria, 671-682). Two years after the presentation, Herod institutes the slaughter of the innocents, and the holy family then proceeds to the desert (Maria, 683-703). For a close reading of these sections in the *Pseudo-Matthew* and the *Maria*, see: Gijsel, *Libri de nativitate Mariae: Pseudo-Matthaei Evangelium*, 427–47; Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 71–74.

facilitates the presentation of several didactic exempla, illustrating issues of theological complexity. This section is introduced with another of Hrotsvit's deceptively simple theological asides, which should alert her audience to engage their "mind's eyes." This aside employs the motif of light and darkness, noting that the holy family flees under the leadership of Christ, who dominates the "darkness of earthly fear."[182] Indeed, by virtue of the miracles he performs, Christ "illuminates," both literally and figuratively, "the ancient shades of Egypt with his own light."[183] Christ, in the person of the infant Jesus, will shine a salvific light on all who remain in darkness.[184] This metaphorical introduction sets the stage for subsequent didactic vignettes, which explore the impact of the incarnation.

2.7.1 *Taming Animal Natures*

The first vignette occurs during an early stage of holy family's desert wandering. Mary has been weakened by the journey and requires frequent rest. During one such stop, a horde of snakes emerges from a nearby cave, causing panic among the group of travelers. The infant Jesus stands in front of the "gnashing beasts" and calms their "disturbed minds." His influence renders the wild animals "peaceful" and capable of worshipful obedience.[185] Despite this miracle, Mary and Joseph remain subject to the "fragile" human fear that their son might be injured.[186] Jesus,

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[182] "Sed somnis monitus Ioseph venerandus/ pergit in Aegyptum vasti per devia secum/ deducens heremi Iesum cum matre tenelleum/ nocti terrestris Christo dominante timoris" (Maria, 696-699). Note that Hrotsvit differentiates between the human Jesus and Christ, the incarnate second member of the Trinity. Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 73.
[183] "Talia sed solito fecit pietate superna,/ Egipti tenebras propria quo luce vetustas/ mox illustraret per se penitusqe fugaret" (Maria, 700-703). This understanding of the desert as a wild and untamed place is well attested in patristic and medieval texts. Dag Øistein Endsjø, *Primordial Landscapes, Incorruptible Bodies: Desert Asceticism and the Christian Appropriation of Greek Ideas on Geography, Bodies, and Immortality* (Peter Lang, 2008); Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 73.
[184] Wailes claims this passage represents Christ "literally" turning his "back on the Jews," while moving forward to "grace the gentiles." Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 45.
[185] "Iesus, sacratis stabat mitis quoque plantis/ contra fredentes turbata mente dracones;/ qui subito proni ceciderunt mansuefacti/ orantes tacitis factorem nutibus orbis" (Maria, 712-715).
[186] "Examines fragilis pro consuetudine carnis/ facti sat pavitant puerum ledique timebant" (Maria, 719-720).

the ultimate "observer of mind and witness of hearts," must then remind his parents and Hrotsvit's audience to look deeper into the mystery of the incarnation.[187] Mary and Joseph should not be deceived by Jesus's human form, even though they cannot fully understand the "eternal power of [his] will."[188] Out of the mouth of the divine infant comes Hrotsvit's succinct explanation of the incarnation's basic mechanics: "Although I am but a small child, with human limbs, nevertheless, I am all-powerful, wielding strength in divine will."[189] The *Pseudo-Matthew* account lacks this expansive theological digression, focusing instead on the reaction of the animals.[190] By contrast, Hrotsvit frames the animal activity as a natural result of Christ's divine nature operating within his human form. Speaking through the infant Jesus, Hrotsvit declares that it is "thus fitting that all the beasts in the wild are tamed before [Jesus], having put aside their savagery rightly."[191]

After this speech, lions and leopards also approach in order to worship Christ, causing more panic for Mary. The infant Jesus offers a second speech reminding Mary not to heed her physical response (*carnaliter*) to the animals.[192] Instead, like Hrotsvit's readers, she should focus her mind to understand the fundamental change he has wrought in their natures: "they come only to pay

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[187] "Inspector mentis testis quoque cordis" (Maria, 721). This appellation fits well with Hrotsvit's insistence on the dual (*mens*, *cor*) levels of Christian devotion, seen both in Mary's devotion in the temple and later in the speeches of Agnes (Agnes, 160-165). Homeyer suggests this might be a reference to Prov 24:12. Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 74.

[188] "Quare lactantes tantum tractabitis artus,/ in me, virtutem capitis nec mente perennem?" (Maria, 723-724).

[189] "Quamvis humanis sim parvus homuntio membris,/ vir tamen omnipotens summo sum numine pollens" (Maria, 725-726).

[190] The *Pseudo-Matthew* characterizes the animals' new activity as "worship," but says nothing about the change wrought in their nature: "Illi autem dracones, adoraverunt eum et cum adorassent eum abierunt" (Pseudo-Matthew, 18.1.7-8).

[191] "Condecet atque feras silve mansuescere cunctas/ me coram rabie dimissa rite priore" (Maria, 727-728). The *Pseudo-Matthew* simplifies and flattens this statement of divine agency: "necesse est ut omnes ferae silvarum manuescant ante me" (Pseudo-Matthew, 18.2.5)

[192] "Non te, virgo, rogo, pollens, genetrix mea cara,/ permoveat signi novitas carnaliter almi" (Maria, 736-737). The *Pseudo-Matthew* makes no distinction between Mary's physical and intellectual response to the animals.

homage, not because they wish harm, nor are they are even able to harm."[193] With these words, Jesus "dispelled the anxiety of [Mary's] heart" and the newly tame animals, including a symbolic lion and lamb, accompany the holy family in the desert.[194] While the *Pseudo-Matthew* account ends with this catalogue of animal companions, Hrotsvit offers a further explanation of the scene's significance. The animals have not simply been overcome by Christ's presence; rather, their very natures have been transformed by God's love.[195] As Hrotsvit explains, this scene is a window into the potential future for all of humanity, if hearts and minds are opened to the transformative power of faith. Hrotsvit explains that this shift happened "not undeservedly, because the true peace of the heavens" strengthens the minds of the animals, "with their nature having been changed."[196] The desert animals prefigure a future wherein human beings have likewise tamed their animal natures: turning, like Mary, away from their human nature, and training their hearts to ascend the steps of eternity opened in the incarnation. Only then can the faithful re-enter a harmonious relationship with God, restoring true (pre-lapsarian) human nature through faith.[197]

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[193] "Obsequii sola veniunt istae quia causa,/ non quod te vellent vel saltem ledere possent" (Maria, 738-739). Again, *Pseudo-Matthew* lacks any discussion of the transformation in the animals's nature: "Noli timere, mater, non enim ad inuriam tuam sed ad obsequiam tuum venire festinant" (Pseudo-Matthew, 19.1.6-7).

[194] "His quoque discessit dictis angustia cordis" (Maria, 740).

[195] As Hrotsvit describes it, they have "forgotten" their animal natures: "oblita rabie naturalique furore" (Maria, 745).

[196] "Sed non inmerito, caelorum pax quia vera,/ quo regit inmensum, firmavit foedere, caelum,/ illarum mentes mutate more fideles" (Maria, 750-753). Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 75–76.

[197] This animal lesson is followed by a horticultural metaphor. Mary stops for a break under a palm tree, lamenting her inability to reach its fruit. Joseph, returning to his role as elderly unseeing buffoon, rebukes Mary. Jesus steps in to mediate this parental dispute, ordering the palm to offer its fruit to Mary. Throughout the episode, the palm is described as obedient and Jesus rewards that obedience by the palm to live in heaven, serving as a symbol of triumph (Maria, 753-825). While the *Pseudo-Matthew* acknowledges the palm's heavenly ascent, it does not make Hrotsvit's connection between obedience and paradise (Pseudo-Matthew, 21.1.12). For Hrotsvit, the palm's *magnum studium* in obeying Christ's orders was essential for its heavenly ascent, just as concentrated devotion is essential for the eschatological hope of all Christians. Pelagius, Dionysius, and Agnes will all receive the palm of victory following their martyrdoms.

2.7.2 *Pagan Conversion*

Hrotsvit concludes her didactic exempla with a demonstration of Christ's power, which initiates the new relationship between God and man.[198] After miraculously speeding his family's journey through the desert, Jesus and his family come to an Egyptian city known as Sotinen.[199] Sotinen's temples are full of "false gods" and people who cling to their "perverse" customs.[200] Mary entered one such temple with the infant Jesus in her arms, causing an earthquake. As the temple shook with Christ's power, "all idols of the false gods fell flat on the ground."[201] The *Pseudo-Matthew* explains that the destruction "made it known" that the statues were "nothing."[202] For her part, Hrotsvit implies that the statues sacrificed themselves, somehow gaining an understanding of their error: they fell on the ground "knowing [*cognoscentes*] that the eternal king had come with great power, the true God of Gods."[203] In both accounts, the earthquake serves to fulfill the prophet Isaiah's declaration that God would "shake" the idols of Egypt.[204] News of the temple's destruction travels north to Aphrodisia, and the Aphrodisian governor makes a trip to investigate the damage. In their naiveté, the priests of the Sotinen temple hope the governor intends to reestablish their pagan faith and to punish the ones who

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[198] Wailes describes these conversions as "founding the first community of believers." Wailes, "The Sacred Stories in Verse," 102.
[199] M renders this city as "Soniten," though Berschin prefers Sotinen. Berschin, *Hrotsvit Opera Omnia*, 33; Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 78. According to Gijsel, the P family of *Pseudo-Matthew* manuscripts identifies the city as *Sotinen*, whereas the A family uses *Sohennen*. Gijsel, *Libri de nativitate Mariae: Pseudo-Matthaei Evangelium*, 472–73.
[200] Maria, 825-829. The *Pseudo-Matthew* describes the holy family's entrance to the temple as an unfortunate necessity: "et quoniam in ea nullus erat notus apud quem hospitari potuissent, templum ingressus sunt" (Pseudo-Matthew, 22.2.3)
[201] "Mox sed ut intravit sancta cum prole Maria,/ omnia falsorum pariter simulacra deorum/ in terram subito ceciderunt" (Maria, 830-832).
[202] "Et omnia ipsa idola iacentia in facies suas comminuta sunt, ita ut nihil se esse evidentius praedicarent" (Pseudo-Matthew, 23.1.3-4).
[203] "Iam cognosentes regem venisse perennem/ atque deum verum magna virtute deorum" (Maria, 833-834).
[204] Isa 19:1.

destroyed their "stupid gods."[205] Instead, the governor is overcome by the sight of the splendid statues scattered in pieces on the floor, compelled into a moment of profound conversion. Hrotsvit claims the governor has been "set on fire with the light of divine love and truth," causing conversion, mirroring the earlier transformation of the desert animals.[206] Having been transformed, the governor makes an eloquent statement of faith, recognizing that the pagan statues had acted correctly in prostrating themselves in front of the true God: "Look, the Lord, powerful above all, appears openly, whom, with silent murmuring, our gods rightly witness that he is alone the true God."[207] The governor pledges that he and his companions will also venerate God with "devoted minds."[208] The governor's true, faithful understanding is immediately evident in his correct interpretation of the biblical encounter between God and Pharaoh: he remembers "what [God] has done to Pharaoh, our king, who despised the sacred commands and thrust us all into the dark pit of death."[209] Hrotsvit's governor thus ascribes a willful ignorance to Pharaoh, whose decisions condemned his descendants to the darkness of unbelief, until the light of Christ dispelled that darkness.[210] It is fitting that this final episode in Hrotsvit's legend concludes with the newly converted governor prostrate in front of Christ, enthroned on Mary's lap, overseeing

[205] "Quod cum pontifices temple sensere profani,/ sperabant illum variis mox perdere poenis/ hos, qui damna diis fecerunt talia stultis" (Maria, 843-845).
[206] "Ipse sed in terra cernens simulacra decora/ obtutu prono passim volutare minuta/ lumine caelestis raptim succensus amoris/ et fidei sacre mutate denique corde" (Maria, 846-849).
[207] "Ecce patenter adest dominus super omnia pollens,/ quem fortasse dii tacito cum murmure nostri/ iure deum verum contestantur fore solum" (Maria, 851-853). The *Pseudo-Matthew* reports similar logic in the governor's speech, though it does not ascribe any speech (murmuring) to the fallen idols (Pseudo-Matthew, 24.1.10).
[208] "Restat, ut ipsorum prostrati more deorum/ devota regem veneremur mente perennem" (Maria, 854-855).
[209] "Que fecit regi memorantes iam Pharaoni,/ qui sua plus iusto sprevit mandamina sacra,/ ne nosmet foveam mortis detrudat in atram" (Maria, 856-858).
[210] The A family of Pseudo-Matthew texts makes no note of Pharaoh's disposition to the god of Israel, while the P family mentions his "contempt" without discussing the ramifications of that contempt for the Egyptian people: "sicut evenit Pharoni regi qui deum contempsit audire" (Pseudo-Matthew, 14.1.16). Neither account contains Hrotsvit's continued metaphor of light and darkness. Gijsel, *Libri de nativitate Mariae: Pseudo-Matthaei Evangelium*, 480–81.

his new converts from the *sedes sapientiae* position.[211] This final image brings the narrative arc of the *Maria* full circle, reminding Hrotsvit's audience of Mary and Christ's partnership in opening and illuminating the path to salvation. This path was eloquently described in the speech of a new convert who truly understood the lesson of the earthquake, dedicating his mind and heart to the worship of the one true God.

2.8 *Ascensio*

Just as Hrotsvit's *Maria* concludes with the dramatic conversion of the governor of Aphrodisia, the *Ascensio* continues with the theme of evangelism, using a rhetorical rather than narrative format. Hrotsvit construes evangelism as an essentially didactic activity, which she continues to demonstrate in the design of her text. As discussed previously, Hrotsvit's *Ascensio* begins with her summation of the incarnation. Both Christ's assumption of the "fleshly veil" and his crucifixion have practical salvific consequences for humanity: his sinlessness serves as an example for human life, while his atoning death made eternal life available. The series of speeches that follow this theological introduction affirm the didactic nature of Christ's human life and commend a type of redemptive pedagogy to the disciples as they begin their ministry.

[211] The "throne of wisdom" type presents Mary in a position of power, drawing on her role as *genetrix* and first revelation of Christ. For more on the history of this iconographic type, see: Ilene H. Forsyth, *The Throne of Wisdom: Wood Sculptures of the Madonna in Romanesque France* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972); Penny Schine Gold, *The Lady and the Virgin: Image, Attitude, and Experience in Twelfth-Century France* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 49–50.

2.8.1 *Commissioning*

Hrotsvit sets Christ's ascension speech on the "very highest summit" of the Mount of Olives. Here, Christ speaks to his *ministri*, framing their commissioning as a natural extension of his own incarnational commissioning: "As my father sent me, dear to him, into the world, thus I send you, my beloved friends."[212] The nature of the mission is inherently pedagogical, as the disciples are to "teach" (*docete*) all peoples "the mandates of eternal life."[213] These lessons are accompanied by the sacramental practices of the church, particularly baptism. Hrotsvit's description of this rite again includes a pointed reminder of the saving work of the atonement: "cleansing the believing ones in the sacred waters, in the name of the father and equally of the son and also the Holy Spirit, by which they shed the charge of the ancient stain."[214] While the disciples are endowed with powers of healing and exorcism, they are also exhorted to see their whole lives, both the miraculous and the everyday, as part of their didactic mission: preserving "sweet charity" for those who will try to "hurt you with bitter hatred."[215] The apostolic mission again mirrors Christ's, offering a positive *exemplum* for believers and future converts. Christ suggests that this lived exemplum is the true marker of the Christian life: in this way, everyone will "know that you are my dear disciples … if you cherish your enemies with a pure spirit."[216]

The disciples should imitate the patience displayed by Christ, who "without blame, has suffered" for the sake of humanity.[217] Indeed, Christ describes the painful experiences

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[212] "Ut pater in mundum me promisit sibi carum,/ sic ego mitto meus dilectos vosmet amicos" (Ascensio, 23-24). While this phrasing alludes to John 20:21 ("as the Father has sent me, so I am sending you"), Hrotsvit's addition of the *carus* (Christ) and *dilectus* (apostles) parallel makes the comparison even more precise.
[213] "At vos in gentes cicius cunctas abeuntes/ illas perpetue vite mandata docete" (Ascensio, 25-26).
[214] "Credentes sacra purgantes ocius unda/ in patris et nati pariter quoque flaminis almi/ nomine, quo veteris deponant crimina sordis" (Ascensio, 27-29).
[215] "Illis predulcem servantes mentis amorem,/ laedere vos odiis qui temptant semper amaris" (Ascensio, 34-35).
[216] "Ex hoc percerte possunt prenoscere cunctae/ gentes discipulos vos esse satis mihi caros,/ si colitis vestros puris animis inimicos" (Ascensio, 35-37).
[217] "Omnes quae vestri causa passus fuerim sine culpa" (Ascensio, 39).

surrounding his death, contrasting the microcosmic physicality of his crucifixion with his role as cosmic creator: "they fix my hands on the wood with cruel nails, [the hands with which] I formed the beautiful first man from dirt, and stretched out the lofty heavens."[218] Despite these indignities, Christ explains that he preferred to pray for those who persecuted him, "persuading them by such an example [*exemplum*]" of patience and mercy.[219] Christ's message is "trustworthy" because he practiced exactly what he taught, and the disciples must follow in his footsteps if their own version of the message is to be considered valid.[220] Christ, then, has served as *magister* for the disciples in both word and deed, a position that he will cede to the Holy Spirit upon his death: "I will not leave you behind as orphans in the world, I will quickly send the dear grace of the holy spirit to you, who teaches [*docet*] you the truth within."[221] This progressive model, which involves both lived examples and interior contemplation, reflects Hrotsvit's understanding of redemptive pedagogy, which is displayed throughout the hagiographic corpus.

2.8.2 *Farewell to Mary*

In Hrotsvit's version of this story, Christ moves directly to address Mary following his commissioning of the disciples. As mentioned previously, this speech references Mary's future assumption, though it does not describe the event itself. Christ's speech to his mother follows Hrotsvit's pattern in the *Maria*, praising Mary's virginity as well as her role as the site of Christ's

[218] "Atque manus clavis ligno fixere cruentis,/ de limo pulchrum quis plasmavi protoplastum" (Ascensio, 44-45).
[219] "Oravi patrem clementius omnipotentem/ illis continuo dimittere crimina tanta/ suadens exemplo tali, qua sunt facienda" (Ascensio, 54-56). The Jews are a particular target for Christ's criticism here, connecting the *Ascensio* to the pair of exempla in the *Maria* that contrasted Jew and Gentile (the weeping/laughing men and the two midwives). Wailes suggests that Mary is yet another exemplum of patience and humility that might be followed by the disciples and by Hrotsvit's audience. Wailes, "The Sacred Stories in Verse," 103.
[220] "Ut mea caelstis fieret doctrina fidelis,/ et ne quis fictis auderet dicere verbis:/ 'Ecce quod ipse pati respuit nos ferre suasit,/ et quod non fecit, faciendos nos fore dixit'" (Ascensio, 56-60).
[221] "Quia non vos relinquam/ ceu desolats in mundo namque pupillos:/ sacri gratiolam vobis sed flaminis almam/ emittam cicius, quae vos verum docet intus" (Ascensio, 69-72). Despite his ascension, Christ assures the disciples that he will indeed remain with the disciples "to the end of time" (Ascensio, 73-74).

first revelation: here, Christ not only addresses his mother as "dear virgin" and "splendid light of the world," but he also calls her the "holy temple" and "incorruptible crown of life."[222] Just like Christ and the disciples, Mary is an exemplum of the Christian life, specifically the life of pious virginity.[223] According to Christ, Mary's soul will also be ushered into heaven with song and celebration.[224] Until her assumption, Christ commends Mary's care to John, a disciple also distinguished by virginity: John "gleams rightly with the gems of virginity, so that [Mary's] splendid life gleams more greatly" in the presence of another virgin.[225] Just as the disciples offer a didactic exemplum both in their words and in their actions, Mary's life and speeches (in the *Maria*) present the good news of the chaste life, which is equally celebrated by Hrotsvit's version of this dual great commission.

2.8.3 *Ascension*

Following his farewell to Mary, Christ is immediately surrounded by a grand heavenly cohort, which includes both angels and prophets. Among these prophets is King David, playing his famous harp using the words of his "own" Psalms to usher Christ into heaven and to spur the collected angels to further praise.[226] This glittering, eloquent cohort accompanies Christ aloft as he exhorts the disciples: "Peace be with you, my faithful brothers, who have done what I wanted; may you never do otherwise."[227] Christ ascends "with his own power," a testament to his status

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[222] Ascensio, 77-81.
[223] Because of her pious virginity, she alone was worthy to "have begotten" Christ: "Inveni solam pre cunctis te quia castam/ condignamque meum corpus generasse sacratum" (Ascensio, 82-83).
[224] Ascensio, 84-87.
[225] "At nunc Iohannenm tecum remanere fidelem/ impero, qui gemmis fulget bene virginitatis,/ ut tua vita magis praefulgeat inclyta, castis/ sepius obsequiis circumdata virginitatis" (Ascensio, 90-93).
[226] Maria, 127-132.
[227] "Pax vobis, fratres, semper mihi rite fideles,/ velle meum que fecistis necnon faciatis" (Ascensio, 109-110).

as "victor" over death.[228] As Christ stands in heaven, observed by the "intent eyes" of the crowd below, Hrotsvit reminds her audience that the members of the crowd, including Mary and the disciples, are recipients of Christ's redemptive pedagogy.[229] Angels speak from the heavenly plane to affirm Christ's multi-temporal identity for the crowd: "this *is* truly Christ, the one taken from you, who crosses above the highest sky; he *will* come as judge in this form which goes to the heavens."[230] God the Father also speaks, again affirming Christ's identity as the second member of the trinity: he is both a "dear son" and the "true Word of the father" and "true wisdom from the sky."[231] Hrotsvit concludes Christ's ascension with yet another concise summation of the incarnation. Christ, who "rules for all the ages" has "completely conquered death, and, dying, redeemed the world so that he might make his servants rule throughout the ages."[232] As Hrotsvit has explained through the *Maria* and the *Ascensio*, Christ's incarnation not only presented humanity with the model for their human lives, but also opened the path to eternal life.

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[228] "Cicius propria virtute levatus/ ascendit diri victor super aethera loeti" (Ascensio, 113-114).

[229] "Quem sursum fixis cum respexisset ocellis/ plebs doctrix fidei claustris caeli patefactis" (Ascensio, 116-117). *Doctrix* could refer to Mary, who remained part of the crowd, but Homeyer prefers to render it an adjective: "plebs doctrix; die Schar der die Lehre verkündenden Jünger." Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 89. Wiegand's translation seems to eliminate the word entirely: "While with eyes fixed on high the faithful throng had seen Him ascend." Wiegand, "The Non-Dramatic Works of Hrotsvitha," 80. However *doctrix* is rendered, the word taps into Hrotsvit's emphasis on the didactic nature of evangelism.

[230] "Hic certe Iesus, vobis mirantibus unus/ assumptus caelos qui transcendit super altos,/ hac veniet iudex forma qua pergit ad aethra" (Ascensio, 124-126). Wailes suggests this particular speech reinforces Christ's bodily resurrection, and thus also the bodily resurrection of all humans. Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 54.

[231] "Tu meus es carus percerte filius unus,/ semper iure mihi qui multum complacuisti,/ tu sine principio verbum patris quoque verum/ et mea de caelo solus sapientia vera" (Ascensio, 134-137). This is a conflation of several scriptural quotations, including Matt. 3:17 and John 1:1.

[232] Note the forceful alliteration in Hrotsvit's description of Christ's death: "qui regnaturus in aveum, *mortem devicit moriens mundumque redemit*,/ ut regnare suos faceret per saecula servos" (Ascensio, 144-146).

2.9 Conclusion

In both the *Maria* and the *Ascensio,* Hrotsvit's conclusions remind her readers of the themes from complementary narratives. The *Maria*'s conclusion flows out of the final narrative scene, where the recently converted Aphrodisian governor prostrates himself in front of Mary and Jesus. This conclusion reminds Hrotsvit's audience of the narrative's many lessons, which particularly emphasized the theological paradox of the incarnation. Hrotsvit marvels that Christ, "born without beginning from the heavenly father" would then fulfill the divine will by "assuming, for a time, a corporeal form."[233] Hrotsvit uses paradoxical language to laud the generosity of the incarnation, noting that "you who are able to enclose the world in your own hand, did not refuse to be bound in thin little swaddling clothes."[234] Even the flight in the desert was an accommodation for human edification, since Christ did not actually fear Herod, but desired to show (*demonstraret*) "the true form of the flesh, faithfully."[235] Such redemptive pedagogy is essential to the incarnation, according to Hrotsvit. Christ's activities not only softened the "rocky hearts of the pagans" but also allowed them to "understand" (*sentire*) divine power and to "know" (*scirent*) Christ in the "divine signs" preformed in the desert.[236] Hrotsvit's narration of these signs and exempla is also testament to divine mercy, which was initiated in God's words of creation and foreshadowed in all the "songs of the prophets."[237]

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[233] "Tu sine principio natus de patre superno/ per praecepta patris complesti viscera matris/ ex hac corpoream sumens sub tempore formam" (Maria, 870-873).

[234] "Quique vales proprio mundum conculdere palmo,/ panniculis stringi non raris respuisti" (Maria, 873-874). Hrotsvit hammers home the cosmic significance of Christ's assumption of human flesh, eloquently describing for her audience how Christ, "who resides in a throne above the starry heavens, having been shrunk, you lay in a crib, and who named the multitude of stars … you were patiently silent as a fragile boy" (Maria, 875-877, 880).

[235] Insuper Herodem nulla formidine regem,/ sed sola certa fugisti pro pietate,/ quo carnis veram demonstrares pie formam (Maria, 882-884). Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 80.

[236] "Ex mox absque mora fecisti saxea corda/ nam paganorum mollescere non domitorum/ et sentire tuum solidum per tempora regum,/ quo te divinis moniti scirent fore signis" (Maria, 885-889).

[237] "Qui solo fecisti secula verbo,/ et quem cunctorum cecinerunt carmina vatum" (Maria, 889-890). For Hrotsvit, this activity is also essentially Trinitarian, as she concludes (emphasis added): "therefore may glory and eternal praise remain to the *eternal father*, from all creatures through the ages, who did not know to spare his beloved Son,

In the final lines of the *Maria,* Hrotsvit reminds her audience that Mary plays a crucial role in this divine pattern of creation and edification. The *Maria*, a creation made possible only with the gracious "faithfulness" of the cosmic Creator, also serves to illumine the "divine signs" in the story of the entire holy family. God offers "all gifts," but humanity must respond to that generosity and join the angels in praising "the true God enthusiastically."[238] The *Ascensio*'s conclusion reiterates this theme, asking Hrotsvit's readers to pray that she, as author, be able to "continue in divine praise."[239] These conclusions draw attention to the role of words throughout this cycle: that they are a means both of praise and of understanding. The lengthy cycle of the *Maria* and *Ascensio* allowed Hrotsvit's audience to practice interpretation and theological analysis. Inspired and educated by Hrotsvit's *novum carmen*, her audience is now capable of raising their own voices in understanding and praise of the divine.

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and to you *Christ*, eternal glory, victory and power, who redeemed the doomed world with blood and with the *Holy Spirit* through the ages, through whom all heavenly grace is granted" (Maria, 891-897).

[238] "His super angelicae caelorum posco caterve/ collaudare deum non cessent sedulo verum" (Maria, 902-903).

[239] Ascensio, 147-150.

GONGOLF: A LESSON IN TRIAL AND ERROR

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Hrotsvit's third legend moves away from biblical archetypes, turning instead to two contemporary martyrs. The first of these martyrs is Gongolf, a Burgundian soldier who suffers death at the hands of his adulterous wife and her lover. As will be shown, his fate does not comply with the usual conditions associated with martyrdom. Hrotsvit's presentation of this legend emphasizes the complimentary halves of the saint's life.[1] The story begins with a discussion of Gongolf's saintly credentials, which culminate in the didactic exemplum of a miraculous spring, demonstrating the authenticity of Gongolf's faith. The second half of the story describes the adultery of Gongolf's wife and his subsequent death.

The first portion of Hrotsvit's narrative diptych presents Gongolf as an ideal Christian nobleman. He demonstrates precocious skill in the areas of education and military strategy. He offers charity to those around him, building a reputation based on the quality of his character rather than the nobility of his lineage. During Gongolf's return from a successful campaign, Hrotsvit includes an extended exemplum on the nature of faith, represented by Gongolf's interactions with a miraculous spring. Gongolf decides to buy the spring from the poor farmer who owns the roadside property. Gongolf's men find this purchase laughable, mocking their leader for his apparent stupidity. Who buys a

[1] Hrotsvit's *Gongolf* is often described as a "diptych." Stephen L. Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim* (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 2006), 56; Walter Stach, "Die Gongolf-Legende bei Hrotsvit: Bemerkungen zu ihrer literarischen Technik," *Historische Vierteljahrschrft* 30 (1935): 369; Dennis J. Billy, "Translatio fontis et passio martyris: Narrative Diptych in Hrotsvitha's Gongolfus," *Germanic Notes* 22 (1991): 67. Anita Guerreau-Jalabert prefers a tripartite approach to the narrative: Gongolf's early life (19-76), Gongolf's miracles (77-332), and Gongolf's marriage (333-582). Anita Guerreau-Jalabert, "Saint Gengoul dans le monde: l'opposition de la Cupiditas et de la Caritas," in *Guerriers et moines: conversion et sainteté aristocratiques dans l'occident médiéval, IXe-XIIe siècle*, ed. Michel Lauwers (Antibes: APDCA, 2002), 267.

spring miles away from their homeland? Gongolf does not respond to this criticism, but allows the men to send one of their own to investigate the spring. The emissary cannot find the spring in its original location, later realizing that the spring had been transformed into a small cloud hovering over Gongolf's head. The cloud follows Gongolf back to his homeland, but the spring remains hidden, even after Gongolf symbolically plants a staff in one of his own fields. The next day, Gongolf sends a page to pull the staff from the ground; the cloud then pours forth the spring into the hole left by the staff. The relocated spring becomes a site for miraculous healing, symbolizing the benefits of faith like Gongolf's.

The second half of the narrative focuses on Gongolf's marriage. Though Gongolf's wife appeared to be an ideal mate, she carries on an affair with a cleric in Gongolf's employ. News of the affair reaches Gongolf and he allows his wife to undergo a version of the trial by ordeal: she may prove her innocence by touching the miraculous spring. When she touches the spring, her hand is scalded, proving her guilt. Gongolf shows his wife mercy, banishing her from their home in lieu of execution. The cleric is exiled but soon returns to plot Gongolf's death. Though the cleric and the adulteress succeed in murdering Gongolf, their victory is short-lived. The cleric suffers spontaneous disembowelment, and the wife, after denying miracles occurring at Gongolf's grave, passes gas every time she tries to speak. Hrotsvit's version of this story uses the disparate halves of the narrative to the same pedagogical end. The exemplum of the spring represents the rewards of the Christian life, while Gongolf's wife serves as a vivid warning against the rejection of faith.

3.2. HROTSVIT AND THE *VITA GANGULFI*

The Gongolf legend was popular in the early medieval period. The prose *Vita Gangulfi prima* (hereafter VGP), dating to the late ninth or early tenth century, remains extant in over sixty manuscripts.[2] Hrotsvit's work represents the sole extant metrical engagement with the Gongolf narrative. As will be shown, Hrotsvit's *Gongolf* follows the main narrative arc of the VGP. Despite this familiarity, Stephen Wailes suggests that "Hrotsvit develops the story independently of any written tradition currently known."[3] There can be no certainty about the exact version of the VGP Hrotsvit employed. Still, I concur with the editors of Hrotsvit's corpus in attributing the uniqueness of her poem to creativity rather than reliance on an entirely unknown source.[4] In addition to Hrotsvit's metrical recreation, at least two other prose versions of the Gongolf narrative were based on the VGP.[5] The VGP reached the widest audience, referred to and quoted by many other early medieval authors, including Vincent of Bauvais.[6]

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[2] BHL 3328. Wilhelm Levison identified sixty-five manuscripts of the VGP, beginning with the ninth century Clm 19162 of the Munich Bayersische Staatsbibliothek. Wilhelm Levison, "Vita Ganulfi martyris Varennensis," in *Passiones vitaeque sanctorum aevi Merovingici cum supplemento et appendice*, vol. 7, Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptorum rerum Merovingicarum (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1920), 142–70. Monique Goullet identifies Hrotsvit's work as the *terminus ante quem* of the VGP. The Norman invasions of the ninth century are the likely the *terminus post quem*, given the VGP's introductory references to raids. Monique Goullet, "Les Vies de saint Gengoul, époux et martyr," in *Guerriers et moines: conversion et sainteté aristocratiques dans l'occident médiéval, IXe-XIIe siècle*, ed. Michel Lauwers (Antibes: APDCA, 2002), 237. J.P. Poly suggests the "raids" may instead refer to the Hungarian invasions in the mid-tenth century: J.P. Poly, "Gengoul, L'époux martyr. Adultère féminin et norme populaire au Xe siècle," in *La femme au Moyen Âge*, vol. 2, Collection des journée de la Faculté de droit Jean-Monnet (Paris, 1992), 48.

[3] Stephen L. Wailes, "The Sacred Stories in Verse," in *A Companion to Hrotsvit of Gandersheim (fl. 960): Contextual and Interpretive Approaches*, ed. Phyllis R. Brown and Stephen L. Wailes (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 105. For more discussion on Hrotsvit's use of the *Vita prima*, see: Helene Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera. Mit Einleitungen und Kommentar* (Munchen, Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöingh, 1970), 90–93; Goullet, "Les Vies de saint Gengoul, époux et martyr," 245–69.

[4] As Homeyer notes, both Von Winterfeld and Strecker follow Levison's assertion. Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 91; Levison, "Vita Ganulfi martyris Varennensis," 171.

[5] A second prose version of the life that was written in Toul (the so-called *Vita secunda*) on the occasion of the translation of Gongolf's relics in 970. However, this version enjoyed none of its predecessor's popularity. A third and final edition was compiled in the eleventh century, though it moved away from the

In her version of the narrative, Hrotsvit describes Gongolf as a Burgundian nobleman in the service of a certain "Pippin," whose identity is never made explicit.[7] The VGP offers no more historical detail than Hrotsvit. Scholars must explore other extant sources to piece together Gongolf's biography. The eighth-century *Vita Ceolfridi* mentions a "Gangolf" who is the "lord of the region" of Langres, located in northern Burgundy.[8] According to the ninth-century Treaty of Meersen, a monastery in the region was dedicated to "Saint Gongolf," but "the abbey itself probably disappeared in the early tenth century."[9] This scant historical evidence adds little to the narrative details of the VGP, leaving scholars in the dark about the identity of this mysterious Burgundian.[10]

The Gongolf legend remained an enduring part of the literary landscape throughout the former Carolingian empire. Hrotsvit's inclusion of the story reflects the increasing prominence of the Gongolf cult in Ottonian Germany. In the late tenth century Gongolf's relics were translated from Varennes-sur-Amance to Toul, the see of Bishop Gerhard, a

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passio context, preferring a recitation of the miracles occurring at Gongolf's grave. Goullet, "Les Vies de saint Gengoul, époux et martyr," 235, 243–45.

[6] Ulrich Nonn, "Wer war der heilige Gongolf?," in *Vielfalt der Geschichte: Lernen, Lehren und Erforschen vergangener Zeiten : Festgabe für Ingrid Heidrich zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Sabine Happ and Ulrich Nonn (Berlin: WVB, Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 2004), 56–58; Steffen Patzold, "Laughing at a Saint? Miracle and Irony in the Vita Gangulfi Prima," *Early Medieval Europe* 21, no. 2 (2013): 200.

[7] Both Wailes and Patzold suggest Pippin III, with little substantive evidence to support that claim. Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 61; Patzold, "Laughing at a Saint?," 200. Paul Dräger suggests either Pippin II or Pippin III. Paul Dräger, *Das Leben Gangolfs: Lateinisch/ Deutsch* (Trier: Kliomedia, 2011), 154.

[8] Ceolfrid, famed abbot of Wearmoth–Jarrow, died on his journey to Rome in 716 while transporting the Codex Amiatinus. The anonymous *Vita Ceolfridi* contains this reference to a Burgundian who receives the traveling Ceolfrid just before his death: Ceolfrid is greeted by "Gangulpho, regionum illarum domino" (Vita Ceolfridi, 35). Christopher Grocock and I.N. Wood, eds., *Epistola Bede ad Ecgbertum Episcopum* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 116. Goullet (following Levinson) also identifies a reference to Gongolf in a seventh century charter from Clothar III included in the Chronicle of Bèze. Goullet, "Les Vies de saint Gengoul, époux et martyr," 240; Levison, "Vita Ganulfi martyris Varennensis," 143. Nonn and Patzold reject this charter as a forgery: Patzold, "Laughing at a Saint?," 200, fn. 15; Nonn, "Wer war der heilige Gongolf?," 58–59.

[9] Patzold, "Laughing at a Saint?," 201. Goullet suggests that the author of the VGP was familiar with the region of Varennes-sur-Amance, where the abbey was purportedly located. Goullet, "Les Vies de saint Gengoul, époux et martyr," 238–40.

[10] For her part, Goullet explains this lack of historiographical evidence by suggesting the VGP represents a conflation of Christian hagiography and local pagan tradition. Goullet, "Les Vies de saint Gengoul, époux et martyr," 241.

"protégée" of Otto the Great's brother Bruno.[11] The marriage of Otto and the Burgundian princess Adelheid in 951/2 would also make the story of a Burgundian noble relevant for an Ottonian audience.[12] Wailes further suggests that the story of an ideal noble is particularly appropriate for an Ottonian community that relied on local dukes for stability.[13]

Hrotsvit's contribution to the VGP tradition is unique, both in format and in focus. She presents Gongolf as a paragon of Christian purity: more monk than solider, more martyr than cuckold. Secondary scholarship has tried to explain the disparate elements of Hrotsvit's unusual story by assigning it to several different literary categories. J. P. Poly focuses on the *fabliaux* style of the adulteress's murder plot, while Wailes understands the story as manifesto on Ottonian dukedom, and Anita Guerreau-Jalabert renders it a testimony to chastity.[14] Such attempts at categorization run the risk of eliminating the internal coherence of Hrotsvit's legend, which is above all a lesson on the proper response to the Christian faith. The effectiveness of Hrotsvit's lesson lies in the fact that it connects the salvific and hagiographic past to her audience's current reality.

3.2 Hrotsvit's Didactic Goals

As was demonstrated with the *Maria,* Hrotsvit uses introductions to present the theological and didactic purpose of her legends. *Gongolf*'s introduction follows this

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[11] Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 65. Also see: Poly, "Gengoul, L'époux martyr," 54; Goullet, "Les Vies de saint Gengoul, époux et martyr," 239.
[12] Goullet suggests this, but notes that it would be difficult to separate the influence of the marriage from the relic translation. Goullet, "Les Vies de saint Gengoul, époux et martyr," 246.
[13] Hrotsvit calls Gonoglf *dux* on several occasions, which can be translated as "duke" depending on the context. Wailes, "The Sacred Stories in Verse," 107; Karl Leyser, *Communications and Power in Medieval Europe: The Carolingian and Ottonian Centuries* (London: Hambledon Press, 1994), 34–50.
[14] Poly, "Gengoul, L'époux martyr"; Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 56–67; Guerreau-Jalabert, "Saint Gengoul dans le monde: l'opposition de la Cupiditas et de la Caritas."

pattern, explaining Hrotsvit's belief that individual human lives reveal God's salvific purpose.[15] Hrotsvit's introduction connects the divine act of creation with the composition of this legend: both are expressions of the divine provision for humanity.[16]

Hrotsvit begins by dedicating her *Gongolf* to the God who painted the sky with stars and continues to rule from those "starry courts."[17] The celestial imagery reinforces the conception of God as cosmic actor, "holding all with divine will and ruling with power."[18] Hrotsvit emphasizes the divine activity of creation, beginning with the manifestation of "the triple universe" and culminating in the formation of humanity.[19] God's creation of the human person was an intimate act, for God breathed being into Adam with the "divine nectar" of his mouth, forever marking humanity as the work "of his own hand."[20] This intimate care did not end with the initial act of creation. God continues to provide for individual believers, a benevolence doubly present in this work. God acts through the inspiration, or "dew of grace," offered to Hrotsvit as author and

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[15] Excluding the unusual presentation of the *Basilius* legend, Hrotsvit's *Gongolf* is the sole legend to include introductory material prior to legend's title. Although Hrotsvit occasionally includes invocations or addresses (to Gerberga, or her readers) between legends, at least six of the other legends include introductions *after* their titles. All Latin from Hrotsvit's *Gongolf* will be taken from Berschin: Walter Berschin, ed., *Hrotsvit Opera Omnia*, Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana (Monachii: Saur, 2001), 42–62. Unless otherwise noted, translations are my own.

[16] The VGP introduction mentions the lack of previous written accounts of Gongolf's life, suggesting he was emblematic of the church (VGP, 1). For a translations of this introduction, see: Dräger, *Das Leben Gangolfs*, 13–15; Jean-Phillipe Royer, "La vie de Saint Gengoul (BHL 3328)," *Annales de Bourgogne* 75 (2003): 358–60.

[17] "O pie lucisator, mundi rerumque parator,/ qui caelum pingis sideribus variis/ solus et astrigera regnans dominaris in aula" (Gongolf, 1-3).

[18] "Numine cuncta tenens imperioque regens" (Gongolf, 4).

[19] "Tu, qui per proprium fecisti saecula natum/ et rerum trinam ex nihilo machinam" (Gongolf, 5-6). Note the parallels to Prudentius: "Ipse iussit et creata, dixit ipse, et facta sunt/ terra, caelum, fossa ponti, trina rerum machina,/ quaeque in his vigent sub alto solis et lunae globo" (Cathemerinon, 9.13-15). For more on this passage, see: Arthur Sumner Walpole, *Early Latin Hymns: With Introduction and Notes* (Zürich: Georg Olms Verlag, 1966), 123–24; Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 99.

[20] "Quique protoplasto de terra rite creato/ oris divini nectare nempe tui/ sensus vitalem sufflasti forte liquorem,/ ut fixum digiti esset opus proprii" (Gongolf, 7-10).

through the life of Gongolf, the subject of her creative work.[21] Hrotsvit's narrative is thus a means of mediating God's grace, which is offered to all Christians. Hrotsvit assures her audience that every Christian will receive "the reward" of eternal life: though they experience the "slight wounds of this life" they can anticipate spending eternity in the "kingdom of flowing light."[22] Thus, God operates simultaneously on a cosmic and an individual human level. As Hrotsvit proves, it is the story of individual human salvation that best illustrates God's cosmic purpose.[23]

3.3 GONGOLF AS SAINTLY NOBLE

For her first non-biblical subject, Hrotsvit has chosen Gongolf, whom she identifies as a martyr in the introduction and in the title of the legend.[24] Though Gongolf's claim to martyrdom will not conform to traditional standards, Hrotsvit is invested in presenting him as such to her audience. The more complex manuscript tradition of the VGP includes identifications of Gongolf as both a martyr and a confessor.[25] Hrotsvit never names

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[21] "Tu dignare tuae perfundere corda famellae/ Hrotsvithe rore tis pie graciolae,/ carmine quo compto valeam pia pangere facta/ sancti Gongolfi, martyris egregii" (Gongolf, 11-14). Hrotsvit consistently describes faithful intellectual activity as divinely bestowed dew or nectar: "Et cor rore suae tangere gratiole" (Maria, 38); "et fac exigui supero de rore rigari/ pectoris obscurum iam mis clementius antrum" (Pelagius, 5-6). She also characterizes knowledge as a spring in the *Theophilus*: "de sophie rivis septeno fonte" (Theophilus, 13). This trend will continue in *Gongolf*.

[22] "Qui post bella tuis grata dabis famulis/ premia perpetuae tenui pro vulnere vitae/ mandans in regno vivere luciflo" (Gongolf, 16-18). Note the parallel between Hrotsvit's initial designation of God as *lucisator* and this concluding description of resurrected Christians as dwelling in a "light flowing region" (*regno lucifluo*).

[23] Homeyer rightly notes that this introduction reflects a heavy Prudentian influence: "Bereits in der Invocatio macht sich der Einfluß des Prudentius auf Wortschatz unt stilistiche Wendungen bemerkbar." Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 99. In her index to the corpus, Homeyer cites over thirty direct references to Prudentius in *Gongolf*, more than triple the Prudentian references in any of the other legends. Gonsalva Wiegand concurs about the particular concentration of Prudentian references in Gongolf: Gonsalva Wiegand, "The Non-Dramatic Works of Hrosvitha; Text, Translation, and Commentary" (Ph.D., St. Louis University, 1936), 121.

[24] "Carmine quo compto valeam pia pangere facta/ sancti Gongolfi, martyris egregii" (Gongolf, 13-14); "passio sancti Gongolfi martiris" (Gongolf, title).

[25] The MGH critical edition chooses to identify Gongolf as a martyr in the title: "Incipit vita sancti Gangulfi matyris Christi." Gongolf is then rendered a confessor in the narrative's opening lines: "veneranda

Gongolf as a confessor, and she also alters certain aspects of Gongolf's history as they are relayed in the VGP.

Both Hrotsvit and the VGP report that Gongolf was born during the reign of "Pippin" in East Francia.[26] As a youth, Gongolf is marked by the traditional attributes of future sainthood: physical beauty and grace, as well as prudence and generosity.[27] "From the womb" Gongolf believed in the God "who created all things out of nothing with his word."[28] This interior belief led to action. Gongolf did not become complacent in his nobility and instead proved his faith with "kind behavior."[29] Gongolf also underwent baptism to cleanse himself from "the ancient error, which our first parents caused."[30] Hrotsvit's version of this history specifically attributes Gongolf's sacramental initiation (baptism and anointing) to his mother. By contrast, the VGP portrays Gongolf's parents as a unit, equally responsible for his faith formation.[31] For Hrotsvit, Gongolf's mother is a source of both physical and spiritual nourishment: "while he cries in the cradle, he is fed fully by the doctrine of the faithful trinity; as often as he suckled milk, he also took up the sacred aspects of faith as he was suspended on his mother's twin breasts."[32] Saints

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commemorati beatissimi Gangulfi, egregii confessoris Christi" (VGP, Prologue). All citations from the VGP will be taken from Paul Dräger's recent critical edition, noting any divergence from the MGH edition: Dräger, *Das Leben Gangolfs*; Levison, "Vita Ganulfi martyris Varennensis." Unless otherwise noted, translations are my own.

[26] "Tempore, quo regni gessit Pippinus eoi/ Francorum sceptra regia" (Gongolf, 19-20). "Ea tempestate regnum Francorum Pippinus strenue gubernaabat" (VGP, 3).

[27] Gongolf, 23-27.

[28] "Ipsius e matris gremio spes pendet in illo,/ qui verbo cuncta condidt ex nihilo" (Gongolf, 29-30). Note the continued emphasis on language as the vehicle for divine creation.

[29] "Germinis et tanti sese non credit honori, sed transit meritis almiciem generis*"* (Gongolf, 31-32).

[30] Note the complicated micro-and macrocosmic aspects of salvation at play in this description of baptismal efficacy: "ocius abluitur vetulis baptismate culpis,/ quas protoplastes obtinuere patres" (Gongolf, 35-36).

[31] "Vir itaque Domini Gangulfus alto parentum germine et suberbi sanguinis nobilitate Burgundia extitit oriundus et disciplinis christiani dogmatis a parentibus adprime eruditus est" (VGP, 1). Dräger, *Das Leben Gangolfs*, 84–85.

[32] "Pascitur et plene fidei mox dogmate trine,/ dum vagit cuna corpore lacteolo:/ Lac quocies suxit, tocies fidei sacra sumpsit/ suspensus matris uberibus geminis*"* (Gongolf, 39-43). The same maternally influenced education occurs in the Theophilus narrative, and to a certain extent in the early stages of Anna's activity in the *Maria*. Guerreau-Jalabert notes the maternal focus, suggesting that Hrotsvit was describing the role of

are expected to demonstrate precocious devotion to the faith.[33] But this image also specifically recalls the spiritual food (*esca*) provided to the cloistered Mary in Hrotsvit's *Maria*.[34] Like Mary, Gongolf continues his faithful intellectual development and graduates from "spiritual" milk. He meditates "on the thoughts of old age" and is "never absent from sacred study," despite his youth.[35] This emphasis on intellectual development recalls similar emphases in Hrotsvit's *Maria*, *Theophilus*, *Dionysius*, and *Agnes.*

In due course, Gongolf's gifts attract attention, resulting in his promotion to the court of Pippin.[36] But Gongolf remains humble, scorning "such honors with a humble heart, desiring instead the gifts of the starry courts."[37] Gongolf also distributed his parental estate to the poor, modeling his charity after Job. He assists the infirm and uses his position at court to serve as an advocate.[38] Hrotsvit even renders Gongolf's hunting, a quintessential Carolingian noble activity, as a testament to his sanctity: he moves his "beautiful limbs in careful hunting."[39] Each of Gongolf's successes is a "divinely carried victory" because he was "protected with divine help."[40] Hrotsvit's account of Gongolf's early adulthood eliminates the marriage reported by the VGP. The VGP suggests that

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the Church (as mother) in all Christian lives. Guerreau-Jalabert, "Saint Gengoul dans le monde: l'opposition de la Cupiditas et de la Caritas," 269.

[33] Homeyer dismisses these lines as just such a trope, noting similar expressions in Augustine's *Confessions* (3.4) and Prudentius's *Peristephanon* (10. 684-685): Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 100.

[34] Maria, 367-368. Hrotsvit uses similar food-based metaphors to describe the fruits of evangelism in *Dionysius*: "tuque tuum populum serva pietate paterna,/ quem pascens fidei tibimet sermone nutrivi" (Dionysius, 220-221). The most obvious scriptural parallel for Hrotsvit's vision of Gongolf's education can be found in 1 Cor 3:1-2.

[35] "Talibus incubuit, lactis dum gurgite vixit;/ hinc pulsus gravido ferbuit ingenio,/ caniciemque senum membris meditando tenellis/ non raro sacris nepe vacat studiis" (Gongolf, 43-46). Again, Homeyer suggests this focus on mental aptitude is a mere hagiographic trope. Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 100–101.

[36] "Quem mox inberbem tota probitate vigentem/ gracia Pippini principis almifici/ regali non inmerito sisti ubet aula/ ardenter talem corde colens iuvenem" (Gongolf, 47-50).

[37] "Turgenti fastu non tamen erigitur,/ pectore sed tales humili fastidit honores/ suspirans aulae munera sideree" (Gongolf, 54-56).

[38] Gongolf, 56-66.

[39] "Sedulo venando lassat quoque membra decora" (Gongolf, 71).

[40] "Aufert semper sed ab hoste triumphum/ tutus divino caelitus auxilio" (Gongolf, 75-76). Berschin, *Hrotsvit Opera Omnia*, 44; Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 102; Dräger, *Das Leben Gangolfs*, 42.

Gongolf's early marriage to a woman of "dissimilar character" was a divine test, a way for Gongolf to conceal his merits and virtues.[41] Hrotsvit interprets Gongolf's wife differently and relocates the marriage to the second half of her narrative. In this way, Hrotsvit's audience must understand Gongolf's marriage in light of her initial lessons on faith, particularly her expanded exemplum of the spring.

Hrotsvit returns to her authorial voice in the conclusion of Gongolf's saintly origins. Although Hrotsvit humbly notes that she is unable to do justice to the many "signs" of Gongolf's sainthood, she will continue with her "uncultured speech," barking (*latrabo*) like one of Gongolf's devoted hounds in praise of this "chosen one."[42] Such modesty is common a hagiographic trope, particularly prevalent in Hrotsvit's corpus.[43] But this authorial aside reminds Hrotsvit's audience they will not be abandoned in the narrative without a guide. Hrotsvit will explain each and every *signum* in Gongolf's miraculous life.

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[41] "Quae licet nobillissimis adforet orta natalibus, dissimilis tamen extitit moribus" (VPG, 2). Royer, "La vie de Saint Gengoul (BHL 3328)," 361; Dräger, *Das Leben Gangolfs*, 17. Patzold argues that this section, along with others in the VGP, is a subtle nod to readers: the initiated would see the parody for what it was, rather than a ridiculous, inconsistent attempt at hagiography. Patzold, "Laughing at a Saint?," 205–7.
[42] Gongolf, 77-83.
[43] Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 102; Phyllis R. Brown, "Hrotsvit's Apostolic Mission: Prefaces, Dedications, and Other Addresses to Readers," in *A Companion to Hrotsvit of Gandersheim (fl. 960): Contextual and Interpretive Approaches*, ed. Phyllis R. Brown and Stephen L. Wailes (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 235–65; Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages: A Critical Study of Texts from Perpetua to Marguerite Porete* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 74–70; Katrinette Bodarwé, *Sanctimoniales litteratae: Schriftlichkeit und Bildung in den ottonischen Frauenkommunitäten Gandersheim, Essen und Quedlinburg* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2004), 303–8.

3.4 The Spring: An Exemplum of Faith

3.4.1 *Discovery*

Nearly a third of Hrotsvit's *Gongolf* is devoted to one such miraculous sign: the relocation of a spring, which she construes as evidence of the saint's pure faith.[44] The miracle narrative begins with Gongolf on campaign, subduing a people "very haughty in war."[45] Gongolf distinguished himself on and off the battlefield, even practicing diplomacy: "signing an agreement with the hostile people, having been made subject to his law."[46] Gongolf does not leave the area until a "peace had been given."[47] On the road home, Gongolf and his soldiers pass by the property of a "certain pauper." The land is paradisal, "hidden away, with growing flowers and shaded with many buds and foliage."[48] The centerpiece of this remarkable landscape is a spring, clear as glass, which moistens "the fields with a rippling river" (cf. Gen 2:10).[49] Gongolf becomes transfixed by the spring, so "captured by love" of the clear waters that he orders his troops to halt.[50]

After being summoned by messenger, the owner of the property receives an audience with the noble Gongolf. In an intentional reversal of social status, Gongolf humbles himself before the poor man, requesting the privilege of purchasing his property

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[44] In Hrotsvit's version, this section occupies over two hundred lines, in contrast to the two sections of the VGP (Gongolf, 82-332; VGP, 4-5).
[45] "Capturus populum Marte satis tumidum" (Gongolf, 84). Hrotsvit will use similar language in describing Córdoba: "urbs augusta nova Martis feritate superba*"* (Pelagius, 13).
[46] "Gentibus adversis proprio quoque iure subactis/ censum signavit" (Gongolf, 87-88).
[47] "Pace data rediit" (Gongolf, 88).
[48] Gongolf, 89-92. For more on Hrotsvit's *locus amoenus* imagery, including the use of diminutives, see: Goullet, "Les Vies de saint Gengoul, époux et martyr," 252–55; Dräger, *Das Leben Gangolfs*, 120.
[49] "Necnon fronticulus vitreo candore serenus/ profluxit rivo rura rigans stridulo" (Gongolf, 93-94). Hrotsvit will use similar language a few lines later: "clarus vitreis" (Gongolf, 109). Homeyer suggests the glass imagery echoes Prudentius: Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 103.
[50] "Firgoree captus limphe paulisper amore/ substitit et placitis tardat iter morulis" (Gongolf, 97-98). In the VGP, Gongolf and his men stop in order to rest. Gongolf's initial engagement with the spring is a result of this practical necessity, rather than the fascination presented by Hrotsvit (VGP, 4).

"with sweet words."[51] Both Wailes and Homeyer suggest that this humble attitude reflects Hrotsvit's vision of Christian nobility, perhaps specifically a vision for the Ottonian *dux*.[52] With the posture of noble humility, Gongolf honors the pauper by addressing him as *dulcis amice* before offering to purchase the spring.[53] Hrotsvit describes the pauper as more desperate than enterprising; his heart begins to race, thirsting for the "doubtful hope" Gongolf might provide.[54] The poor man recognizes Gongolf as a "worthy man, second to none in piety, whom the people of the east honor."[55] The pauper speaks with deference, aware that he must accede to the noble's desire, "however serious or difficult it is."[56] A less scrupulous noble could simply take ownership of the land, offering the pauper nothing. But Gongolf offers the exorbitant price of one hundred gold *solidi* for the spring before continuing the journey home. It is unclear at this point how Gongolf plans to enjoy the use of the spring, given its distance from his home. Hrotsvit presents this episode as a testament to Gongolf's beneficence, in stark contrast to the VGP's presentation of the same events. The VGP highlights the manipulation of the spring's clever owner (*homuntio*), who capitalizes on Gongolf's

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[51] "Aggreditur blandis protinus alloquiis/ atque rogans humilis tota dulcedine mentis*"* (Gongolf, 104-105).
[52] Wailes is correct to note that Hrotsvit's identification of Gongolf as *dux* has no precedent in the extant Gongolf narratives. However, there is no evidence to support his suggestion that Hrotsvit had a specific duke in mind. Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 65–65; Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 103.
[53] Here, Hrotsvit describes the poor man as an "*exigua persona*" (Gongolf, 114). For more on the role of free peasants in the Carolingian period, see: Adriaan Verhulst, *The Carolingian Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 31–61.
[54] "Tunc miser in talem cepit prorumpere vocem/ ultra, quam credas, spem dubiam siciens" (Gongolf, 117-118).
[55] "O nostrate decus, ulli pietate secundus,/ quem colit eous mente, fide populus" (Gongolf, 119-120).
[56] "Et quicquid mihi per verbum sancis faciendum" (Gongolf, 123).

gullibility, believing that he will keep both the spring and the exorbitant price extorted from Gongolf.[57]

3.4.2 *Hrotsvit's Reimagined Fons*

According to Hrotsvit, certain members of Gongolf's retinue assume a similarly mocking tone, "blaspheming their leader with whispered murmuring, and condemning the work of the pious man as if it was a crime."[58] In addition to casting the spring owner as a clever charlatan, the VGP implies that these grumblings are legitimate critiques of a somewhat buffoonish Gongolf. Who buys property several days journey from his home?[59] Hrotsvit reframes the episode by identifying the miracle of the spring as an exemplum of faith and the nature of true "sight."[60] She alerts her audience to the nature of this exemplum by noting the disgruntled soldiers cannot "see" the spring's future significance: they "were not aware of the sign that must be honored, a miracle which the one on high was about to do."[61] The complaints of these unknowingly blind soldiers reach Gongolf, who confronts their disbelief directly: "Why does it please you, dear allies, to chastise me with illicit words, more than is just, saying that I have handed over money to a unknown and strange man, all on account of [my] stupidity?"[62]

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[57] VGP, 4.8-10. Patzold reads this section as yet another example of the VGP's ironic presentation of Gongolf, where "serpentine cunning" is mistaken for "foolish simplicity." Patzold, "Laughing at a Saint?," 211.
[58] "Blasphemare ducem tacitis cepere susurris/ et pietatis opus spernere ceu facinus" (Gongolf, 139-140).
[59] In the VGP, these critiques are attributed to Gongolf's wife, to whom he has been married for the duration of the narrative (VGP, 4. 19-25). Goullet, "Les Vies de saint Gengoul, époux et martyr," 248; Dräger, *Das Leben Gangolfs*, 94.
[60] There is no precedent for this section in any of the extant Gongolf narratives. The VGP moves directly from the purchase of the spring to the dramatic movement of the spring.
[61] "Tunc, qui non gnari fuerant signi venderandi,/ olim facturus quod fuit altithronus" (Gongolf, 137-138).
[62] "Cur libet, o socii, vosmet reprehendere, cari,/ plus iusto verbis me satis illicitis/ causa stulticie dicentes me tribuisse/ nummos ignoto extraneoque viro" (Gongolf, 145-148). Dräger, *Das Leben Gangolfs*, 122.

Instead of simply chastising the soldiers for their impertinence, Gongolf suggests a solution that will allow them to "calm [their] agitated minds."[63] The group will elect a representative to return and examine the merits of the spring.[64] In this way, the soldiers could prove that the *rusticus* had indeed deceived Gongolf, continuing to enjoy his property while also keeping Gongolf's gold. The soldiers agree to this proposition, and their representative makes the long trek back Gongolf's purchased land. Once he arrives, the soldier, delayed by the prickly thorn bushes and wild shrubs that encircled the property, cannot locate the spring.[65] The soldier presses forward with his "arrogant neck unbent," "hoping" that the beautiful spring was hidden under the foliage.[66] But, as Hrotsvit tells her audience, the man "sought in vain with his searching eyes, because the spring was completely dried up and had left that place."[67] The soldier examines the ground in disbelief, licking the "land that used to flow with strong water."[68] The soldier finally recognizes "the pious act of the sacred Gongolf, and grieved that he had not wished to believe in [Gongolf's] pious merits."[69] These words explain one aspect of Hrotsvit's exemplum for her audience: the man's fruitless search, his struggle with the

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[63] "Mentes sed motas prestat componere vestras" (Gongolf, 155).
[64] The messenger is to be "knowledgeable in winds and breezes," which foreshadows the meteorological conclusion of the impending miracle (Gongolf, 158). It might be possible to interpret this phrase as describing the speed of the investigator's journey, but Homeyer, Wiegand, and Dräger all prefer to translate it as a description of the investigator's skills. Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 105; Wiegand, "The Non-Dramatic Works of Hrotsvitha," 96; Dräger, *Das Leben Gangolfs*, 47. Walter Stach's suggestion to invert v. 157 and v. 158 only results in further confusion: Stach, "Die Gongolf-Legende bei Hrotsvit: Bemerkungen zu ihrer literarischen Technik," 367.
[65] Gongolf, 165-176. For more on the horticultural vocabulary represented here, including *paliurus*, see: Goullet, "Les Vies de saint Gengoul, époux et martyr," 252–54; Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 105; Dräger, *Das Leben Gangolfs*, 123–24.
[66] Gongolf, 181-184.
[67] "Sed tamen adtonitis frustra prospexit ocellis,/ fons quia desinerat prosus et hinc aberat" (Gongolf, 177-178).
[68] Gongolf, 185-190.
[69] "Tandem Gongolfi sensit pia facta sacelli/ se dolet et meritis credere nolle piis" (Gongolf, 191-192).

tangled bushes, and even his desperate licking of the dry ground are all dramatic visualizations of his lack of faith.

Once the emissary confronts his lack of faith he begins to understand Gongolf's miraculous, charitable act. When the soldier returns to Gongolf's cohort, he is able to see a mysterious cloud floating near Gongolf's head. This cloud will soon reveal the contents of the spring.[70] The messenger does not keep this revelation to himself, but shares it with his incredulous allies. The soldier urges the cohort to "put down doubt in their hearts and to believe the merits of the holy one."[71] Even though the men of the cohort discuss the messenger's findings, they, like Hrotsvit's audience, are not yet permitted to "see" the final results of the miracle.[72] The spring has still not appeared when Gongolf arrives at his home estate. Instead, returning to the narrative path of the VGP, Hrotsvit reports that Gongolf symbolically plants a staff into the ground before abandoning it.[73]

3.4.3 *Revelation*

In Hrotsvit's version of the story, Gongolf celebrates his return by hosting a banquet for his troops and for the poor, who were "accustomed to eat at his table often."[74] While the soldiers feast upon the "Bacchic gifts," Gongolf takes a comparatively modest repast

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[70] As Goullet clarifies, the spring was previously "dérobe au profane" before it reappears "dans la propriété de Gengoul." Goullet, "Les Vies de saint Gengoul, époux et martyr," 253.
[71] "Hanc capiens oculis cepit depromere verbis/ fontis defectum, quem didicit, subitum,/ suaserat et sociis dubium deponere cordis/ et meritis sancti iam credulos fierei" (Gongolf, 197-200).
[72] "Talia colloquiis dum verba loquuntur amicis" (Gongolf, 201).
[73] Gongolf, 205-208; VGP, 5. Both versions use *baculum* to describe Gongolf's chosen implement. The use of a staff to produce water has ample precedent in the Christian tradition, including Moses striking the rock in Exodus and Columba's production of a spring to facilitate baptism: Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 107; Dräger, *Das Leben Gangolfs*, 126.
[74] "Sed prius invalidam iussit procedere turbam,/ quam suevit mensa pascere sepe sua" (Gongolf, 213-214). This sort of generosity supports Hrotsvit's earlier assertions about Gongolf's charity efforts, ostensibly modeled after Job (Gongolf, 58-62). This scene is not present in the VGP.

before spending the night in a prayerful vigil.[75] Despite her initial classification of Gongolf as an ideal noble, Hrotsvit's description of the saint becomes increasingly monastic. Gongolf even briefly feigns sleep lest an inquisitive page interpret his prayer practice as false pride.[76] When the page "awakens" his master, Gongolf invites the entire military cohort into his home just before requesting water for ablutions. However, the nearby well fails to produce water, providing the opportunity for the spring's miraculous revelation.[77] "Firm in his devotion to Christ," Gongolf sends a lowly page to remove the staff he had placed in a field the day before.[78] When the boy pulls the staff from the ground, the mysterious cloud bursts open, "pouring forth the swelling waters of the aforementioned spring" in "the place where the staff had been set."[79] The page races back to the house to tell the collected soldiers of the "new sign" provided by God.[80] Unlike Gongolf's soldiers, Hrotsvit's audience knows that the sign is not truly "new," but the culmination of the spring exemplum.

In another scene unique to Hrotsvit's narrative, the page tries to attribute the miracle to Gongolf, who "has been chosen for such glory." Gongolf replies with humility, reminding the crowd of Christ's ultimate faithfulness: "it is not right that you should attribute [the miracle] to my merit, since I have earned nothing. But it remains that we

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[75] Gongolf refuses to eat until the others have been served, and his pious post-meal activity stands in stark contrast to the lethargy of his fellow diners (Gongolf, 217-218, 221-224). This description has many classical and Christian parallels, including Vergil's *Aeneid* (2.268) and Prudentius's *Cathemerinon* (6.17): Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 108; Dräger, *Das Leben Gangolfs*, 127–28.

[76] "Sed dux paulisper siluit somnum quoque finxit,/ post velut e somno evigilans gravido" (Gongolf, 231-232). For more on the presentation of Gongolf as a monk, see: Guerreau-Jalabert, "Saint Gengoul dans le monde: l'opposition de la Cupiditas et de la Caritas," 275–78.

[77] In the VGP, the staff is removed one day after Gongolf and his troops return home; the narrative makes no reference to a banquet or Gongolf's nighttime vigil.

[78] "Tunc vir securus Christi pietate beatus" (Gongolf, 237).

[79] Gongolf, 247-252. Dräger, *Das Leben Gangolfs*, 129–30; Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 109. The VGP account of this revelation makes no mention of a cloud, focusing instead on waters that spring up from the ground (VGP, 5). Patzold, "Laughing at a Saint?," 213.

[80] "Atque novi narravit guadia signi,/ que rex milicie annuit angelice" (Gongolf, 255-256).

offer many thanks to Christ, who is always present for his own servants."[81] To seal the significance of the miracle, Hrotsvit's Gongolf ritually immerses himself in the spring. This reaffirmation of baptism is repeated in Gongolf's subsequent speech praising "divine grace."[82] This speech echoes and expands the theological lesson presented in Hrotsvit's introduction. Here, Gongolf connects the miracle of the spring to previous divine activity, including the production of "sweet water for the Jewish people" in the Old Testament.[83] Gongolf has not "forgotten" the evidence of past divine activity in the world, present in both the biblical witness and in Hrotsvit's hagiographic corpus.[84] Speaking through Gongolf, Hrotsvit exhorts her audience to follow the saint's example and truly "learn" (*discant*) the lesson of divine grace evidenced in this generous "sign."[85] The VPG, in contrast, makes no reference to Gongolf's baptism and only briefly references potential theological interpretations of the spring's miraculous appearance.[86]

Hrotsvit presents this miracle as a multifaceted exemplum, contrasting the blindness of disbelief with the joys that await faithful believers. The exemplum culminated in the revelation of the spring's healing powers: the spring washes away disease and all who touch its waters leave "strong and healthy."[87] The spring is an earthly representative of atemporal, divine *cura animarum*. Hrotsvit highlights this parallel by

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[81] "Non decet haec meritis, inquid, sat credere nostris,/ umquam tantilli nil quia commerui;/ restat multiplices Christo sed pangere grates, qui praesens famulis sember adest propriis" (Gongolf, 275-278).
[82] "O vis divine maxima gratiole" (Gongolf, 282).
[83] Gongolf, 285-290.
[84] "Inde potestatis non inmemor" (Gongolf, 291).
[85] "Hoc nunc et nostris voluisti credere terris/ indicium magne nobile gloriole,/ quo discant teretem degentes sepe per orbem,/ te semper solum esse fuisse deum" (Gongolf, 293-296).
[86] VPG, 5. The VGP uses the same biblical example, likely from Num 20:11. The author attributes the curative powers of the spring to Gongolf's saintliness, making no reference to the community's involvement in appreciating or interpreting this sign. Dräger, *Das Leben Gangolfs*, 95; Royer, "La vie de Saint Gengoul (BHL 3328)," 365; Guerreau-Jalabert, "Saint Gengoul dans le monde: l'opposition de la Cupiditas et de la Caritas," 273–74.
[87] "Abluat ut morbos iste liquor varios,/ quo te dulcisonis conlaudet vocibus omnis,/ qui se salvatum sentiat et validum" (Gongolf, 297-300).

comparing the contemporary spring to Old Testament spring of Bethesda, which was likewise touched by a "heavenly doctor."[88] Just as believers throughout history have done, visitors to "Gongolf's" spring offer thanks to the ultimate source of healing: "returning thanks to Christ for the great gift, Christ who gives grace to the miserable."[89]

3.5 Adulteress on Trial

The final section of Hrotsvit's *Gongolf* shifts to focus on the saint's wife, whose appearance Hrotsvit has suppressed until the final third of her narrative. Here, Hrotsvit follows the basic outline of the VGP, but alters several key details. First, in keeping with her increasingly ascetic characterization of Gongolf, Hrotsvit suggests that his decision to marry had more to do with duty than desire. Gongolf's advisors must convince him, "with great prayers," to marry a "worthy woman … lest the renowned line of the royal race come to an end with a lack of posterity."[90] Gongolf was "convinced" by these pleas, and married a beautiful noblewoman.[91] According to Hrotsvit, Gongolf exhorts his new wife to live a "pure life," exemplified by "chaste morals and desires" (cf. Tob 8:7).[92] This counsel may indicate the couple did not consummate their relationship, but a spiritual marriage would not address Gongolf's need for heirs.[93]

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[88] Gongolf, 312-316.
[89] Gongolf, 325-330. In her own self-deprecating voice, both as a summary of this section and as a transition to the next, Hrotsvit laments her inability to fully articulate Gongolf's true greatness, a task she ironically suggests is best left in the hands of more "learned" poets (Gongolf, 337-338).
[90] Gongolf, 341-346. The VGP introduced Gongolf's wife in the opening lines of Chapter 2: "dehinc, decursis adolescentiae metis, cum robur virilis evasisset aetatis, genere consimilem sortitur uxorem*"* (VGP, 2.1).
[91] "Igni conspicuam proprio iungebat amicam/ regalem genere et nitidam facie" (Gongolf, 349-350).
[92] "Hanc iussit liquidam semper deducere vitam/ compositam castis moribus et studiis" (Gongolf, 351-352). Hrotsvit used the same adjective (*liquidus*) to describe the spring (Gongolf, 96).
[93] Dräger notes conclusions about a chaste marriage could be problematized by the previous line's description of Gongolf's *proprius ignis* (Gongolf, 349). Dräger, *Das Leben Gangolfs*, 135. Guerreau-Jalabert also construes the marriage as a means for Gongolf to be tempted by "sexuality and the devil." Guerreau-Jalabert, "Saint Gengoul dans le monde: l'opposition de la Cupiditas et de la Caritas," 276. For

In Hrotsvit's version of the story, the relationship soon fails. The noble lineage and attractive features of Gongolf's wife conceal her true character. As Hrotsvit tells her audience, Gongolf's wife is unteachable (*indocilis*) and she will never learn from the example of her saintly husband.[94] The slippery "serpent of desire" easily corrupts her, for she soon begins an affair with a *clericus* in Gongolf's service.[95] This relationship is offensive on both religious and social levels. Gongolf's wife not only ignores her husband's request for purity, but she rejects him, her "lawful lord," for a lowly cleric.[96] According to Hrotsvit, the devil "enticed" the woman into her affair and "itched to expose the crime, which he knew had been made by his own trick."[97] Hrotsvit will continue to present Gongolf's wife as a willing participant in the devil's plot. The devil exploited the woman's *indocile ingenium,* but she remains accountable for her actions.

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more discussion of the marital relationship in Hrotsvit and the VGP, see: Stach, "Die Gongolf-Legende bei Hrotsvit: Bemerkungen zu ihrer literarischen Technik," 363; Rachel Stone, "Masculinity without Conflict: Noblemen in Eighth- and Ninth-Century Francia," in *What Is Masculinity?*, ed. John H. Arnold and Sean Brady (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2011), 84–86.

[94] "Et mihi, sed coluber cupidus, versutus, amarus/ ingenium nupte illicit indocile" (Gongolf, 353-354). Both Dräger and Homeyer note the Prudentian parallel: "hic draco perfidus indocile virginis inlicit ingenium" (Cathemerinon, 3.111-115). Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 113; Dräger, *Das Leben Gangolfs*, 135.

[95] The VGP also attributes the wife's affair to the "ancient serpent" (*antiqus serpentis*), but makes no mention of any underlying flaws in her character, focusing instead on the failings of the cleric who has betrayed his faith (VGP, 6). The VGP also does not identify the cleric as part of Gongolf's household; Dräger suggests Hrotsvit's choice to include that detail intensifies his crime. Dräger, *Das Leben Gangolfs*, 136. Wailes believes that Hrotsvit's *clericus* should be understood as the "chaplain of the estate," following the familiar *fabliaux* pattern. Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 247.

[96] "Pro dolor, haec male victa dolo serpentis amaro/ infelix cicius aestuat in facinus/ inherens servo cordisque calore secreto/ legalem dominum respuit ob famulum" (Gongolf, 357-360). This is only marginally less offensive than Proterius's daughter, promised to a monastic house, marrying an actual *servus* in Hrotsvit's sixth legend (*Basilius*). The VGP offers no analysis of the relationship between Gongolf's wife and the cleric, designating it as an "unspeakable union" (VGP, 6).

[97] "Crimina tunc hostis scalpsit nudare feralis,/ que caluit proprio structa fuisse dolo" (Gongolf, 361-362). As Homeyer notes, Prudentius's *Psychomachia* also describes Discord as a *bestia feralis* (719). Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 113. The VGP does not include these further details of the devil's involvement, simply noting that, though the affair began in secret, news of his wife's activities eventually reaches Gongolf (VGP, 6).

Even though Gongolf learns of his wife's infidelity through embarrassing rumors, he is a model of humility and restraint.[98] Gongolf considers both the punishment required by the law and the value of forgiveness, nearly overwhelmed by his competing obligations as a noble and a Christian.[99] Gongolf prefers to show mercy, because "it would not please him to slander [his wife]" any further; his goal is to "prevent further guilt."[100] Rather than rush to judgment, Gongolf decides to speak with his unruly wife (*lasciva coniunx*), "addressing serious things with peaceful words."[101] As with all of Gongolf's rhetoric, this speech is both persuasive and measured. Gongolf outlines the allegations made against his wife, reminds her of his desire to remain impartial until a decision is reached, and lays out his proposed solution.[102] He suggests a trial, safe from the prying eyes of the public, judged by God and mediated through the waters of the miraculous spring.[103] Gongolf offers his wife the opportunity to prove her innocence by touching the spring: a version of the trial by ordeal motif that will extend the spring exemplum.[104] Although neither Hrotsvit nor the VGP mentions it directly, a biblical precedent for this trial could be found in Numbers 5, which outlines a procedure for

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[98] "Dum fuerat vulgo res diffamata dolenda/ Francorum gentis omnibus indigenis,/ pulsu linguarum tenues conflatur ad aures/ Sancti Gongolfi consulis almifici" (Gongolf, 365-368).
[99] Gongolf, 373-377; VGP, 6.
[100] Gongolf, 379-383. Dräger notes Hrotsvit's consistent use of legal language in this section, compared to a lack of such language in the VGP: Dräger, *Das Leben Gangolfs*, 137.
[101] "Coniunx lasciva affuerat subito,/ quam mox pacificis affatur denique verbis/ talia dictando ore satis gravido" (Gongolf, 388-390). Citing Romans 12:19, the VGP attributes Gongolf's decision to his desire to honor God, not to protect his wife (VGP, 6).
[102] Gongolf, 391- 398. Hrotsvit's version of the speech combines two different speeches in VGP, which separate Gongolf's acknowledgement of the rumors and his suggestion to use the spring as arbiter (VGP, 7).
[103] Gongolf, 399-402. As Stach notes, in this section Hrotsvit does not explicitly name the spring as miraculous, but Gongolf's wife would certainly know the spring's miraculous history: Stach, "Die Gongolf-Legende bei Hrotsvit: Bemerkungen zu ihrer literarischen Technik," 373. In the VGP, Gongolf asks his wife to retrieve a small pebble in the spring, rather than simply touching it (VGP, 7).
[104] For more on the intricacies of the judicial ordeal, particularly as it pertains to water trials see: Jean-Marie Carbasse, *Introduction historique au droit penal* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1990), 72–75; Robert Bartlett, *Trial by Fire and Water: The Medieval Judicial Ordeal* (Brattleboro, VT: Echo Point Books & Media, 2014), 13–33.

investigating potential adulteresses. There, the suspected woman must drink the "water of bitterness": if she is guilty, the holy water will destroy her bowels and uterus.[105]

Despite credible reports of her crime, Gongolf's wife remains confident in her ability to feign innocence as she approaches the trial. Prompted by the devil's continued encouragement, she steels her "haughty heart" and "hopes" that no punishment will materialize.[106] To the woman's shock, the formerly cool spring scalds her hand, confirming her guilt.[107] This scene recalls the midwife Salome's punishment; she too endured a withered hand, burned when she touched Mary without permission.[108] Both women learned painful lessons due to their lack of faith.[109] Because she "disdained to yield to peaceful words," Gongolf's wife was forced "to yield to heavenly authority."[110] The spring strips the skin from the adulteress's hand, "a bloody judgment of the crime that she had denied."[111] After the test proved her guilt, Gongolf's wife expects that she will also suffer "the appropriate punishment of death" as dictated by law.[112] Instead,

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[105] W. McKane, "Poison, Trial by Ordeal and the Cup of Wrath," *Vetus Testamentum* 30, no. 4 (1980): 474–92.

[106] "Que tunc plus iusto confidens corde superbo/ confortante suam demone duricam/ fundo nudatam committit denique palmam/ nil sperans damni posse sibi fieri" (Gongolf, 403-407). The VGP version of these events does not attribute her confidence to continued demonic influence (VGP, 7).

[107] "Scilicet in madidis audax ardebat harenis/ uritur et flammis acriter aequoreis" (Gongolf, 409-410). The VGP also specifically describes the shift in temperature: "ecce fons in propatulo positus, quem non ultra modum algidum reddit algor frigidus nec ferventem nimium facit calor fervidus" (VGP, 7). Trials by ordeal rarely include a temperature change, which has led several commentators to question the validity of designating this episode as an ordeal: Poly, "Gengoul, L'époux martyr," 50; Guerreau-Jalabert, "Saint Gengoul dans le monde: l'opposition de la Cupiditas et de la Caritas," 276.

[108] Maria, 600-615.

[109] "Inter friorgeas ardens sed comperit undas,/ quid posset nostri dextera celsa dei" (Gongolf, 407-408).

[110] "Et que pacificis fastidit cedere verbis,/ cogitur aeterne cedere iusticie" (Gongolf, 411-412).

[111] "Nam que iactando tinxit se, triste dolendo/ exuitur tincti pellicula brachii;/ nec mora, cum palmam retulit, quod forte negavit,/ portavit crudum criminis indicium" (Gongolf, 415-418). This language mirrors the VGP account: "ita ut in summitate digitorum pendens, carnem cerneres nudatam cute" (VGP, 7).

[112] "Ultra nec victe spes fuerat veniae,/ tantum certa mori corruptelamque piari/ loetali poena ocius apposita" (Gongolf, 420-422). The punishment for adultery could vary widely, based on biblical and legal precedent. For one pertinent example, Hrotsvit had only to look to Hincmar's extensive treatise on the divorce, and alleged adultery, of Lothar II and Theutberga. Karl Josef Heidecker, *The Divorce of Lothar II: Christian Marriage and Political Power in the Carolingian World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010), 84–86.

Gongolf continues to show mercy.[113] Moved to grief rather than to rage, Hrotsvit's Gongolf "pities the miserable woman," giving her "the honor of forgiveness" while banishing her from the marital bed.[114] Furthermore, unlike the VGP, Hrotsvit takes pains to note that the cleric also escaped a just execution. Gongolf exiles the cleric, who is free to "lament his crime" until his death.[115] Despite Gongolf's mercy, his wife remains *indocilis*. She refuses to learn the lesson of faith, despite ever-mounting evidence. Instead, she plots Gongolf's death, which is eventually carried out by her lover.

3.6 Destroying a Saint

Reports of Gongolf's mercy spread throughout the empire.[116] In Hrotsvit's account, the devil is incensed by Gongolf's example of Christian forgiveness. As a result, the devil attempts "to destroy [Gongolf's] good reputation with ancient fraud and shrewdness of every kind."[117] The VGP makes no mention of the fact that Gongolf's individual actions threaten the devil's plans for humanity. Hrotsvit tells her audience that Gongolf's mercy combats sin: the devil fears "lest the people, persuaded by such an

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[113] The VGP claims Gongolf offered his wife the possibility of penance if she would "leave behind" her *perversitas* (VGP, 8). Patzold suggests that this scene challenges the VGP's readers to examine themselves, particularly in their supposed "superiority" to the characters in the text. Patzold, "Laughing at a Saint?," 215–26.

[114] "Et donat miseram veniae miseratus honore,/ ultra sed proprio non locat in thalamo" (Gongolf, 429-430). By contrast, VGP suggests that Gongolf allows his wife to remain on their current property, moving himself to a region in Champagne: "in Avalensi territorio" (VGP, 8). Hrotsvit's explicit reference to exile from the *thalamus* might conflict with her earlier suggestion that Gongolf had a chaste marriage. Dräger, *Das Leben Gangolfs*, 140; Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 116.

[115] "Mandans ut propria damnandus clericus ergo/ expulsus subito pergeret e patria,/ quo sua finetenus mala defleret scelerosus/ seclusus patri et datus exilio" (Gongolf, 425-428).

[116] "Post haec Gongolfi fama crescente beati, laudatrix vitae que fuit almifice" (Gongolf, 431-432). This language recalls a line from Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*: "laudatrix fama popularis" (3.4). Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 116; Dräger, *Das Leben Gangolfs*, 140.

[117] "Vaffer deceptor hominum captorque reorum/ evolvens bilem invidiae veterem/ fraudibus omnigenis antique calliditatis/ temptavit famam evacuare bonam" (Gongolf, 433-436).

example, give their previously haughty necks over to the Lord."[118] The diabolical attempts to undermine Gongolf's piety are unsuccessful for a time. The devil eventually returns to his initial plan and recruits the cleric and Gongolf's wife to murder the saint. The cleric, a helpless pawn in the devil's machinations, is "infused with bitterness," burning for Gongolf's death.[119] Returning from exile, the *clericus* seeks out Gongolf's wife, the "whore, his equal in ferocity."[120] Though the pair plots to kill Gongolf together, Hrotsvit reserves much of her critique for Gongolf's wife. According to Hrotsvit, she has willfully "forgotten the past forgiveness that absolved her from a rightfully prepared punishment."[121] She is not merely "ungrateful" for her husband's mercy. The "she-wolf" still "burns" for her servile lover.[122]

According to Hrotsvit, Gongolf's wife plans the murder herself: the cleric will commit the murder by entering Gongolf's bedroom at night.[123] At the designated time, the cleric approaches Gongolf and strikes the fatal blow in the saint's groin.[124] Sometime after the murder, Hrotsvit's cleric flees the country in a futile attempt to outrun divine justice. "By heavenly decree" the cleric suffers spontaneous disembowelment, a death

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[118] "Ne gens exemplo tali tantoque suasa/ ante superba sua colla daret domino" (Gongolf 437-438).
[119] "Tali suffusus subito cum felle misellus/ in mortem iusti estuat atque pii" (Gongolf, 447-448). The VGP also attributes the renewed attack of the *clericus* to the devil: "tunc ille clericus, furia mentis agitatus a Deo alienus et diaboli vas effectus" (VGP, 9).
[120] "Ac parili repetens ganeam feritate malignam/ illi nudavit omnia que studuit" (Gongolf, 449-450). The VGP does not include a similar assessment of the wife's character anywhere in Ch. 9, referring to her simply as *infelix mulier* (VGP, 9). For more on Hrotsvit's choice of epithets for Gongolf's wife, see: Dräger, *Das Leben Gangolfs*, 141; Stach, "Die Gongolf-Legende bei Hrotsvit: Bemerkungen zu ihrer literarischen Technik," 383.
[121] "Tendit et insidias iusto clam nempe nefandas/ inmemor antique penitus venie/ qua se de poena solvit iam rite paranda/ nec patitur vitam morte perire ream" (Gongolf, 453-456).
[122] "His ingrata magis socio consensit iniquo/ servilique lupa uritur igniculo" (Gongolf, 457-458). The repeated reminders of the cleric's social inequality find a parallel in Hrotsvit's presentation of the *servus* in her *Basilius*.
[123] The VGP does not include Gongolf's wife in its description of the murder (VGP, 9).
[124] Gongolf, 459-472. The VGP offers a different account of this attack, claiming that the *clericus* attempted to strike Gongolf in the neck, but Gongolf's quick reflexes result in the blow landing on his hip instead. Gongolf lives for several more days, dying only after receiving last rights (VGP, 8-9). Dräger, *Das Leben Gangolfs*, 141–42; Royer, "La vie de Saint Gengoul (BHL 3328)," 367–69.

that the VGP notes is reserved for the arch-enemies of the faith, like Judas and Arius.[125] Lest her audience forget the implications of this complicated crime, Hrotsvit explains the cleric was "overcome" with love for his *indomita domina*. He never knew a "lawful love."[126] As a result of his sexual and moral failings, the cleric "poured forth his *viscera*" only recently "swollen with happiness."[127] The man who flouted Gongolf's mercy received no such mercy from the divine judge. In the end, the cleric still lost the whore that he "purchased with his life."[128] In Hrotsvit's narrative, the punishment of the cleric immediately follows his sin, while the VGP postpones that punishment for several chapters.[129]

In Hrotsvit's compressed version of these events, the gruesome punishment of the cleric serves as a sharp contrast to Gongolf's joyful entry into heaven after death. In a scene that echoes the heavenly ascent of Hrotsvit's Dionysius and Agnes, a company of angels surrounds Gongolf at the moment of his death. The shining cohort testifies to the excellence of Gongolf's life, encouraging him to "cast off" his earthly body.[130] Gongolf "exhales his spirit" as a martyr, having been "washed in the radiant blood of the crimson

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[125] VGP, 12. For more on the issue: Guerreau-Jalabert, "Saint Gengoul dans le monde: l'opposition de la Cupiditas et de la Caritas," 278–79; Ellen Muehlberger, "The Legend of Arius' Death: Imagination, Space and Filth in Late Ancient Historiography," *Past & Present* 227, no. 1 (2015): 3–29.
[126] "Raptus amore sue indomite domine/ sed non legalis finem ceu nescit amoris" (Gongolf, 466-467). Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 117.
[127] "Viscera sed subito profudit caelitus acta,/ pridem leticia que fuerant tumida" (Gongolf, 469-470). Although the sexual nature of this humor is abundantly clear, some translators have chosen to sanitize the image so that it does not refer to arousal. For more a discussion of the issue, see: Wiegand, "The Non-Dramatic Works of Hrotsvitha," 114; Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 117; Dräger, *Das Leben Gangolfs*, 143; Stach, "Die Gongolf-Legende bei Hrotsvit: Bemerkungen zu ihrer literarischen Technik," 385.
[128] "Sicque miser celsa prostratus vindice dextra/ vita mercatam perdiderat ganeam" (Gongolf, 471-472).
[129] The cleric strikes his blow in Ch. 9, Gongolf dies in Ch. 10, his body is translated to Varennes in Ch. 11, and finally, in Ch. 12, the cleric dies unceremoniously on the latrine.
[130] "Astabat coetus comminus angelicus/ voce ciens stabilem corpus deponere testem/ contextum venis fictile languidolis" (Gongolf, 476-479). Compare to Agnes: "Ocius angelici coetus de sidere lapsi/ astantes animam niveo candore coruscam" (Agnes, 414-415).

lamb."[131] Thus Hrotsvit reminds her audience that Christ's sacrificial death provided the means for Gongolf's ascent "on the starry path of heaven."[132] Christ himself greets Gongolf at heaven's gate, offering the laurel and palm of victory, the symbol of martyrial success.[133] Christ clothes Gongolf in white robes, displaying the purity that the saint achieved in baptism, reaffirmed in his merciful rule, and sealed in his martyr's death.

Marianne Schütze-Pflugk believes Gongolf's death is a familial dispute that has almost "nothing" to do with traditional martyrdom.[134] It is true that Gongolf does not die at the hands of pagan political actors, like Hrotsvit's other three martyrs.[135] However, Gongolf dies as a direct result of his faith, particularly his Christ-like mercy. As Hrotsvit reminds her readers throughout the narrative, the events leading up to Gongolf's death were arranged by the devil because Gongolf was such an effective Christian *exemplum*. Gongolf's heavenly ascent, which is not included in the VGP, completes the traditional cycle of martyrdom: a symbolic *imitatio Christi* that is reflected in all three of the subsequent martyr narratives in Hrotsvit's hagiographic corpus.[136]

3.7 A Fragrant Farewell

Following the description of Gongolf's heavenly ascent, Hrotsvit offers an equally effusive description of the miracles that occurred at the saint's grave.[137] The VGP claims

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[131] "Ocius expirans animam martir bene lotam/ agni lucenti sanguine purpurei" (Gongolf, 481-482).
[132] "Tollitur ex aura vehiturque per astra serena,/ in celi porta sistitur et domino" (Gongolf, 483-484).
[133] According to Hrotsvit, the palm of victory was discovered by the holy family in the desert (Maria, 760-812).
[134] Marianne Schütze-Pflugk, *Herrscher- und Märtyrerauffassung bei Hrotsvit von Gandersheim*, Frankfurter historische Abhandlungen (Wiesbaden: Steiner Verlag, 1972), 54.
[135] Hrotsvit's hagiographic corpus designates Gongolf, Pelagius, Dionysius, and Agnes as martyrs.
[136] Goullet, "Les Vies de saint Gengoul, époux et martyr," 254; Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 118; Dräger, *Das Leben Gangolfs*, 142–44.
[137] For more on Gongolf's early cult activity, see: Paul Schlitzer, "Gangolfskult und Gangolfssagen," *Fuldaer Geschichtsblätter* 44 (1968): 37–52.

that Gongolf's body is transported to a monastic chapel in Varennes.[138] According to Hrotsvit, mourners translate Gongolf's body to a place "called Tul."[139] This detail moves Gongolf's story from the realm of history into current news, since Bishop Gerhard had only recently overseen this very translation of Gongolf's relics.[140] In a lengthy series of rhetorical questions, Hrotsvit describes the miracles granted "by the most triumphant martyr." She focuses on the healing that occurred at his tomb, a symbolic echo of the healing spring that was Gongolf's first miracle.[141] The blind, the deaf, and the lame all receive a cure for their ailments as news of these miracles spread throughout the world.[142] The divine grace that enabled the spring's movement and Gongolf's heavenly ascent is present in the medical miracles occurring in Hrotsvit's own time. Hrotsvit's narrative collapses time and space for her audience, using Gongolf's story to depict God's eternal mercy.

The recitation of these miracles would serve as an ideal conclusion to Hrotsvit's narrative.[143] Yet, Hrotsvit does not conclude with this lyrical testament to divine generosity, returning instead to the story of Gongolf's wife. Wailes, in particular, feels the need to apologize for this conclusion, explaining that although "this design may not

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[138] VGP, 11. Poly, "Gengoul, L'époux martyr," 249; Patzold, "Laughing at a Saint?," 202.
[139] "Eligiturque locus tumulo locuples venerando,/ quem tradunt veteres Tul vocitare patres" (Gongolf, 493-494). Dräger, *Das Leben Gangolfs*, 145–46.
[140] Hrotsvit does not mention the first burial at Varennes, which is attested by the VGP (11). For more on Gerard: John Nightingale, "Bishop Gerard of Toul (963-94) and Attitudes to Episcopal Office," in *Warriors and Churchmen in the High Middle Ages: Essays Presented to Karl Leyser*, ed. Karl Leyser and Timothy Reuter (A&C Black, 1992), 41–62; Henry Mayr-Harting, *Church and Cosmos in Early Ottonian Germany: The View from Cologne* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 25; Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 65–66.
[141] Gongolf, 505-524. A fulsome description of the miracles occurring at Gongolf's tomb forms the epilogue to the VGP (VGP, 15). Hrotsvit's narrative conclusion, which is predicated on the denial of these miracles by Gongolf's wife, is only briefly present in the VGP: Gongolf's wife reacts to a servant's single vague reference to such miracles much earlier in the narrative (VGP, 13).
[142] "Hinc se felicem iactat Tul terra per orbem,/ que molli gremio confovet ossa sacra" (Gongolf, 525-526).
[143] Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 67; Dräger, *Das Leben Gangolfs*, 148; Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 120.

appeal to modern readers," it is nonetheless "perfectly intelligible."[144] Hrotsvit recognizes the nature of this stylistic and narrative shift, but she feels it is necessary to "speak in simple speech [*tenue sermo*] about that miserable whore, the unworthy spouse [of Gongolf]."[145] Hrotsvit explains that this concluding *sermo* will discuss the "sign" (*signum*) that confirms the adulteress's willful rejection of faith. The bawdy vignette inverts the exemplum of the spring. Rather than describing the rewards of faith, this conclusion leaves Hrotsvit's audience with a potent exemplum of sin and its consequences.[146]

Gongolf's wife remains true to her *indocilis* nature throughout the narrative, a stubbornness that culminates in her refusal to acknowledge the miracles occurring at Gongolf's grave. The "she-wolf" even travels to Gongolf's tomb to affirm her incredulity.[147] When she arrives at the site, a man paying homage to the saint happens to recognize her.[148] Though the man disparages her "unjust mind," he, like Gongolf, shows mercy and offers the adulteress a path to repentance.[149] He "pitied" the woman and offers her "the best remedy [*medicamina*] of sensible counsel."[150] This *medicamina* offers Gongolf's wife a final opportunity to overcome the pervasive disease of her sin. The

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[144] Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 59.
[145] "Restat uti tenui repetam sermone misellam/ illius indignam coniugio ganeam" (Gongolf, 529-530). Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 120.
[146] In the VGP, this final narrative does not occur at the saint's grave, unfolding instead in the adulteress's home as a conversation with a servant (VGP, 13).
[147] Hrotsvit undoubtedly intends her audience to infer the dual animalistic and sexual connotations of this term.
[148] No such character is present in the VGP (13), as Dräger notes: "die didadaktische Strafrede des Pilgers ist Hrotsvits Erfindung." Dräger, *Das Leben Gangolfs*, 149.
[149] "O nimis infelix flammis credenda meretrix,/ iamne piget fraudis, penitet aut sceleris/ in sanctum domini non iusta mente patrati,/ solo lascivi consilio socii?" (Gongolf, 543-546).
[150] "Nam miserando tui pando medicamina sani/ optima consilii mox capienda tibi" (Gongolf, 547-548). For more on the notion of penance as *medicamina,* see: Albrecht Classen, "Mental and Physical Health, Spirituality and Religion in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age," in *Mental Health, Spirituality, and Religion in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2014), 26–27.

pilgrim suggests that she go to Gongolf's tomb and wash away "the stain of her sin with tears."[151] Though the wise stranger does not promise that she will succeed in this endeavor, he does "hope that [she], though miserable and undeserving, receives forgiveness, if [she] grieves for [her] guilt."[152] Despite this third opportunity to acknowledge the error of her ways, Gongolf's wife remains unmoved. She is corrupted by "every vice" and refuses to follow the path of an upright life.[153] Gongolf's wife embraces the uncertainty of the "deceitful life," shunning the certain glory of heaven.[154]

Hrotsvit's audience can hardly be surprised that Gongolf's wife "disdains to believe the peaceful words" of the stranger.[155] Gongolf's wife has fully committed herself to the transitory things of this word, abdicating any hope for the eternal gifts offered by Christ.[156] In light of this final rejection of faith, Hrotsvit allows Gongolf's wife to speak for the first and only time in the narrative, "barking from her pestilential mouth."[157] Gongolf's wife claims that the miracles happening at her late husband's grave "certainly are not proven true."[158] According to her, "*signa* are as likely to occur at Gongolf's grave as they are to occur at my anus."[159] As soon as she speaks these words, Gongolf's wife

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[151] "Suadens ut sacrum queras maerenda sepulchrum/ abstergas fusis et maculas lacrimis" (Gongolf, 549-550).
[152] "Et licet indignam spero te posse misellam,/ si defles culpam consequier veniam" (Gongolf, 553-554).
[153] "Pestiferis sed mens vitiis male dedita totis/ ad vite rectam rennuit ire viam*"* (Gongolf, 555-556).
[154] "Solaque nunc lete complectens lubrica vite/ non curat patrie gaudia perpetue" (Gongolf, 557-558). Dräger, *Das Leben Gangolfs*, 150.
[155] "Sic hec infelix commissi criminis auctrix/ fastidit verbis credere pacificis" (Gongolf, 559-560).
[156] "Se quia credebat causis totam perituris/ nec spem mansuris gestit habere bonis" (Gongolf, 561-562).
[157] "Exagitat caput indomitum inpacienter in illum/ et latrat rostro talia pestifero*"* (Gongolf, 565-566). Hrotsvit's description of the woman's bloody eyes (Gongolf, 564), parallels Prudentius's description of Ira: "sanguinea intorquens subfuso lumnia felle" (Psychomachia, 114): Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 121.
[158] "Cur loqueris frustra simulans miracula tanta/ sedulo Gongolfi pro meritis fieri?/ Haec que dicuntur certe non vera probantur" (Gongolf, 567-569).
[159] "Non desint signa illius ut tumulo/ haut alias, quam mira mei miracula dorsi/ proferat extrema denique particula" (Gongolf, 570-572). Wiegand translates this a bit more conservatively: "Nor do miracles occur at his grave any more than do wondrous manifestations take place about my person." Wiegand, "The Non-Dramatic Works of Hrotsvitha," 119. I follow Dräger and Wailes in interpreting the "*extrema particula dorsi*" as a "euphemistic" reference to the buttocks or anus. Dräger, *Das Leben Gangolfs*, 150–51; Wailes,

receives a final didactic *signum* herself, an embarrassing affliction commensurate to the embarrassment of her continued ignorance.[160] From this moment forward, every time she opens her mouth, she produces flatulence along with her words.[161] Gongolf's wife is a walking *exemplum* of bad speech, her voice forever drowned out by the sound of passing gas. In contrast to the melodious hymns that marked Gongolf's heavenly ascent, his wife is left with "a disgusting melody, which it is shameful to speak about."[162] Hrotsvit encourages her audience to laugh at the situation, noting that Gongolf's wife was "the cause of laughter to everyone."[163] But Hrotsvit concludes by reminding her audience that the woman carried "the mark of her own shame" until the end of her days on earth.[164] Gongolf's wife had twice escaped execution, though her sins merited such a punishment. Her true punishment lies in living out all the fragrant days of her life, knowing that heaven is forever out of reach. This story is a darkly humorous reminder of the dangers inherent in rejecting faith.

3.8 Conclusion

By presenting Gongolf's story as a diptych, Hrotsvit presents her audience with complementary positive and negative exempla, furthering her pedagogical goals for the narrative. In the first half of the story, Hrotsvit's audience follows the saintly Gongolf as

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Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim, 60. The VGP offers a similar image: "Statim ut haec vox nafanda ab ore exit, a parte obstrusa corporis obscenus sonus prodiit (VGP, 13).

[160] "Dixerat, et verbum sequitur mirabile signum/ illi particule conveniens proprie" (Gongolf, 573-574).

[161] "Et post hec verbum quociens formaverat ullum,/ reddidit incultum hunc tocies sonitum" (Gongolf, 577-578). For more on the role of bodily functions in hagiographic literature, see: Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993); Albrecht Classen, "Farting and the Power of Human Language," in *Scales of Connectivity*, ed. Paul Maurice Clogan (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 57–76; Valerie Allen, *On Farting: Language and Laughter in the Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

[162] "Ergo dedit sonitum turpi modulamine factum,/ profari nostram quale pudet ligulam" (Gongolf, 575-576).

[163] "Sit risus causa omnibus immodica" (Gongolf, 580).

[164] "Finetenusque sue ported per temopra vite,/ indicium proprii scilicet obprobrii" (Gongolf, 581-582).

he dispenses diplomacy and mercy. The extended exemplum of the spring demonstrates the results of a steadfast faith. Gongolf alone is able to see the potential in the spring, while his incredulous soldiers are blind to the miraculous activity of the divine. When the spring is finally revealed, Hrotsvit connects its healing power to God's eternal provision for humanity.

In contrast to the VGP, Hrotsvit moves all discussion of Gongolf's wife to the second half of her narrative, clearly distinguishing the woman's actions from Gongolf's saintly past. The devil capitalizes on the *indocile ingenium* of Gongolf's wife, inciting her to an affair with a cleric. Still, Hrotsvit reminds her audience that Gongolf's wife is responsible for her consistent refusal to learn from Gongolf's example. When her adultery is confirmed by the test of the spring, she rejects Gongolf's mercy and plots his death instead. Although the devil orchestrated Gongolf's death to silence him, Gongolf's martyrdom enhances, rather than eliminates, his exemplum of Christian faith. Both his ascent to heaven and the miracles that occur at his grave are a testament to his faithfulness. Gongolf's mercy serves as poignant contrast to the sin of his wife and her lover. The *lupa* and the *clericus* each suffer punishments that recall their bodily sin. Though only the cleric suffers the just reward of death, Gongolf's wife can never again deny the faith: farts will muffle any further ignorant words.

Pelagius: A Lesson in *Luxuria* and the Christian Life

4.1 Introduction

In contrast to Gongolf's dubious "martyrdom," the title of *passio* is an entirely appropriate description of Hrotsvit's fourth legend. This story is set during a ninth-century Umayyad attack on the Christian kingdoms of Spain. Hrotsvit's account focuses on the activities of the Córdoban caliph Abd ar-Rahmann III, who captures a group of Spanish Christians.[1] Pelagius, a pious and exemplary youth, offers to serve as hostage in the place of a captured relative. While incarcerated in Córdoba, Pelagius's beauty and eloquence attract the attention of the caliph. The caliph is overwhelmed with desire for Pelagius, whom he attempts to seduce. Though Pelagius defends himself verbally and physically, he is punished for denying the caliph's advances: the saint is tortured and eventually dismembered. Enterprising fishermen discover his remains in a river and sell them to a nearby monastic community, which tests the relics in a fire to verify their authenticity.

As with Gongolf, this legend demonstrates Hrotsvit's awareness of contemporary politics, particularly the uneasy diplomatic relationship between the Ottonians and the Umayyad caliphs of Córdoba. This legend also provides a theological history of the Iberian Peninsula, which culminates in the specifics of the Pelagius narrative. Though Hrotsvit's *Pelagius* contains an explicitly anti-Saracen polemic,[2] she reframes this "contemporary" narrative as a classic early Christian martyrdom, casting the Córdoban

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[1] Hrotsvit renders the caliph's name as "Abdrahemen" (Pelagius, 74). When discussing Hrotsvit's text I will refer to him as such.

[2] While Hrotsvit most often refers to the residents and leaders of Córdoba as "*pagani*," she also uses the term "*barbarici*" (Pelagius, 32, 38). On one occasion, she refers to the Umayyad invaders as "*gens Saracenorum*" (Pelagius, 24). As will be shown, Hrotsvit had some awareness of Umayyad rule in al-Andalus, but no direct knowledge of "Islam" as a religion. When discussing the historical situation in medieval Spain, I will refer to Córdobans as "Muslim," but in my discussion of Hrotsvit's work, I will use her designation of "Saracen."

caliph as the archetypal Roman tyrant. Similarly, although much has been made of this narrative's negative view of homosexuality, Pelagius is rendered "androgynous" by virtue of his beauty and youth.[3] The homosexual advances of the caliph mirror a pagan oppressor's attack on a virgin Christian female. By presenting Pelagius's *passio* in the formulae of traditional martyrdom accounts, Hrotsvit provides her audience with a familiar and thus surmountable enemy.[4] Hrotsvit also appends an original conclusion to her Pelagius narrative, which highlights the value of Christian monastic communities like Gandersheim. In this way, Hrotsvit's *Pelagius* includes both individual and communal Christian *exempla*.

4.2 Sources for Pelagius's Passion

4.2.1 *Religion in al-Andalus*

For her second contemporary martyr tale, Hrotsvit chose the little known Pelagius, martyred only fifty years prior to the composition of her hagiographic corpus. The rhetorical effect of this narrative must be understood in light of the complex relationship between Christianity and Islam in medieval Europe. In the decades following the initial Umayyad incursion into Visigothic Spain in 711, Christian anxiety about appropriation and enculturation increased. As a legally protected subordinate class, or *dhimmi*, conquered Christians were granted "virtual autonomy to govern the affairs of their own

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[3] Ronald Stottlemeyer suggests that religious desire is androgynous, "a rapturous identification with an unstained incorporeal beauty that is both male and female." Ronald Stottlemyer, "The Construction of the Desiring Subject in Hrotsvit's Pelagius and Agnes," in *Hrotsvit of Gandersheim: Contexts, Identities, Affinities, and Performances*, ed. Phyllis Brown, Linda McMillin, and Katharina Wilson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 105.

[4] Jerold Frakes notes that Hrotsvit's *Pelagius* is "in many ways" reflective of early martyrdom tropes, but he makes no effort to enumerate those similarities. Jerold C. Frakes, "Muslims in Hrotsvit's 'Pelagius' and the Ludus de Antichristo," in *Vernacular and Latin Literary Discourses of the Muslim Other in Medieval Germany*, The New Middle Ages (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 52.

religious communities."[5] Independent Christian kingdoms and smaller Christian communities existed on the periphery of Andalusian Umayyad authority, but these were often under attack.[6] Iberian Christians were somewhat removed from Christian authority as it developed under the reform-minded Carolingians and the increasingly powerful papacy. This disconnection is reflected in the letter written by Pope Hadrian (772-795) to the bishops of Spain about the Adoptionist heresy, which included an explicit denunciation of marriage between Christians and Muslims.[7]

Concern about Christian-Muslim relations in Córdoba came to a head in the ninth century, when forty-eight Christians were martyred over the course of nine years. Prior to these martyrdoms, there was no systematic Umayyad attack on Christians in al-Andalus. These Christians sought martyrdom, often by denouncing Muhammad in the presence of a *quadi* (judge). As a result, many Córdoban Christians believed these "spontaneous" martyrdoms were "a mixture of ideological fanaticism and personal resentment."[8] An account of these martyrdoms was provided by eyewitnesses, particularly the Córdoban Christian Eulogius, himself martyred in 859, and his friend Paul Alvar.[9] Eulogius's *Documentum martyriale* and *Liber apologeticus martyrum* are addressed to the Christian

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[5] Kenneth Baxter Wolf, *Christian Martyrs in Muslim Spain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 10.
[6] Roger Collins, *Caliphs and Kings: Spain, 796-1031*, History of Spain (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 25–31.
[7] Cullen J. Chandler, "Heresy and Empire: The Role of the Adoptionist Controversy in Charlemagne's Conquest of the Spanish March," *The International History Review* 24, no. 3 (2002): 505–27; Collins, *Caliphs and Kings*, 220–23; John C. Cavadini, *The Last Christology of the West: Adoptionism in Spain and Gaul, 785-820* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993).
[8] Jessica A. Coope, *The Martyrs of Cordoba: Community and Family Conflict in an Age of Mass Conversion* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 33.
[9] Wolf, *Christian Martyrs in Muslim Spain*, 51–62; Coope, *The Martyrs of Cordoba*, 16–35; Ann Rosemary Christys, *Christians in Al-Andalus (711-1000)* (London: Routledge, 2011), 52–79.

community in Spain, arguing for the validity of the martyrs' vision.[10] Abd ar-Rahman II, the current caliph, ordered local Christian clergy to convene a council to try and solve the issue. The Christian council released a statement, which "though hardly a vote of confidence for the martyrs, still did not bring any significant ecclesiastical pressure to bear on Christians who might have been considering the same course."[11] The Christian population of Córdoba was largely unsympathetic with the fanaticism of the ninth-century martyrs, who had upset the delicate legal and religious *status quo*.[12]

4.2.2 *"Raguel's" Passio S. Pelagii*

In contrast to the numerous accounts of ninth-century martyrdoms, Pelagius's *passio* is extant in only two accounts: Hrotsvit's metrical legend and a prose account found in a handful of Hispanic passionaries.[13] A single instance of this prose passion, found in a manuscript of the *Passionary of Cardena*, contains a marginal note identifying Raguel, an otherwise unknown priest: "*presbiter doctor fuit huius passionis cordobensis*."[14] Many scholars now attribute Pelagius' prose *passio* to Raguel, but Ann Christys stresses the ambiguity of the note: *doctor* could refer to either author or scribe, while the adjective

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[10] For a thorough analysis of the primary sources for this period of Andalusian history, in addition to the works of Eulogius and Paul Alvar, see: Edward P. Colbert, *The Martyrs of Córdoba (850-859): A Study of the Sources* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1962).

[11] Wolf, *Christian Martyrs in Muslim Spain*, 16.

[12] As Wolf puts it, Christians had learned to "balance the cooperative attitudes that would facilitate their incorporation into Andalusian society with their ongoing need to preserve their religious identity." Ibid., 86.

[13] The vast majority of the early passionary manuscripts that include Pelagius come from the monasteries of Silos and Cardeña. For more on these manuscripts and their dating, see Christys, *Christians in Al-Andalus (711-1000)*, 82–88.

[14] Some scholars, perhaps most prominently Mark Jordan, have employed the gloss as further evidence of Raguel's perceived "teacherly pretensions." Mark D. Jordan, *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 11. Christys notes prevailing opinion has identified the north as the key locus of Christian learning in early medieval Spain, concluding that "the Passion of Pelagius could have been composed in the north." Christys, *Christians in Al-Andalus (711-1000)*, 91.

cordobensis could identify the location either of the martyrdom or of the writing.[15] The author's knowledge of Pelagius's martyrdom is assumed to be first-hand, but nothing in the text confirms that assumption.[16] There is also no way to date the account associated with Raguel, though it might be connected to the translation of Pelagius's relics from Córdoba to León in 966/7.[17] Having noted the ambiguity in the manuscript evidence, for simplicity's sake, this chapter will refer to the prose *Passio S. Pelagii* (hereafter PSP) as "Raguel's" work.

4.2.3 *Hrotsvit's Eyewitness Report*

Hrotsvit's connection to the *passio* of Pelagius can be traced with only slightly more certainty. There is no evidence that Hrotsvit knew of Raguel's account. Her version differs in many key narrative elements.[18] Hrotsvit claims that her knowledge of the *passio* is drawn entirely from a "native of the city" (*indigena civitatis*) who saw the events and can vouch for their authenticity.[19] As Enrico Cerulli explains, Hrotsvit's reception of this

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15 Christys, *Christians in Al-Andalus (711-1000)*, 89.

16 Jordan, for one, claims the *passio* represents a collection of the "testimony of eyewitnesses," perhaps conflating Raguel's account with Hrotsvit's own "eyewitness" report. Jordan, *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology*, 11.

17 Christys, *Christians in Al-Andalus (711-1000)*, 97.

18 Both Homeyer and Wailes believe that Hrotsvit could not have had access to Raguel's account: Helene Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera. Mit Einleitungen und Kommentar* (Munchen, Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöingh, 1970), 124–25; Stephen L. Wailes, "The Sacred Stories in Verse," in *A Companion to Hrotsvit of Gandersheim (fl. 960): Contextual and Interpretive Approaches*, ed. Phyllis R. Brown and Stephen L. Wailes (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 57.

19 Hrotsvit does not include this description within the Pelagius narrative, but appends it to the conclusion of the entire hagiographic cycle. She claims she has used "ancient books" for all her works except the *Pelagius*: "Excepta superius scripta passione sancti Pelagii, cuius seriem martirii quidam eiusdem in qua passus est indigena civitatis mihi exposuit, qui ipsum pulcherrimum virorum se vidisse et exitum rei attestatus est veraciter agnovisse" (Explicit, Liber primus, 1). It would be difficult to hypothesize about the placement of these of authorial explanations, given the single extant manuscript of Hrotsvit's full hagiographic work (M). However, Hrotsvit seems to relegate any discussion of her sources to supplementary locations. For example, Hrotsvit's discussion of her apocryphal source (for the *Maria*) is included in the prologue to the legends rather than in the texts themselves. Phyllis R. Brown, "Hrotsvit's Apostolic Mission: Prefaces, Dedications, and Other Addresses to Readers," in *A Companion to Hrotsvit of*

narrative likely depends on the intricate network of Andalusian and Ottonian diplomacy.[20] Hrotsvit's "native" Córdoban informant could have been Recemund, a bishop sent to the court of Otto I in return for the diplomatic mission of John of Gorze to Córdoba in the early 950s.[21] Regardless of her immediate source, Hrotsvit's awareness of this particular legend speaks to the cosmopolitan nature of the Gandersheim community. Given Otto's negotiations with Córdoba, "the story of Pelagius was no doubt familiar in its broad outlines to the Ottonian court."[22] The anti-Saracen tone of Hrotsvit's legend reflects the increasingly "aggressive" nature of the Ottonian-Umayyad political relationship.[23] This legend also speaks to Hrotsvit's interpretation of the Ottonian political situation as representative of the universal battle between good and evil. In this way, Pelagius's *passio* provides Hrotsvit's audience with a story that is both timeless and timely.

Gandersheim (fl. 960): Contextual and Interpretive Approaches, ed. Phyllis R. Brown and Stephen L. Wailes (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 235–66.

[20] Enrico Cerulli, "Le Calife 'Abd Ar-Raḥmān III de Cordoue et le martyr Pélage dans un poème de Hrotsvitha," *Studia Islamica*, no. 32 (1970): 69–76.

[21] Although Recemund is the most likely "eyewitness," there is no scholarly consensus on this point. Ruldof Köpke claims that since Hrotsvit "knew" Recemund she would not have referred to him as mere *indigna civitatis*. Rudolf Köpke, *Hrotsvit von Gandersheim: Zur Literaturgeschicte des zehnten Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Ernst S. Mittler und Sohn, 1869), 76–77. Wailes and Christys remain agnostic on the matter: Wailes, "The Sacred Stories in Verse," 107; Christys, *Christians in Al-Andalus (711-1000)*, 96–97. By contrast, Kenneth Wolf goes so far as to say that Hrotsvit must have received the Pelagius narrative from Recemund: "If [Hrotsvit] did not actually meet Recemund, she clearly spoke to people who had." Kenneth Baxter Wolf, "Convivicencia and the 'Ornament of the World'" (Southeastern Medieval Association, Spartenburg, South Carolina, 2007).

[22] Wailes, "The Sacred Stories in Verse," 107.

[23] Karl Leyser, *Communications and Power in Medieval Europe: The Carolingian and Ottonian Centuries* (London: Hambledon Press, 1994), 134.

4.3 Córdoban History and Christian Identity

4.3.1 *The Role of the Hagiographer*

Hrotsvit uses introductions to identify the theological and pedagogical agenda of her legends. The introduction to Hrotsvit's *Pelagius* includes an entire history of Córdoba.[24] Hrotsvit uses this history to identify her *passio* as a point of intersection between the typological past, the present, and the eschatological future.[25] Raguel understood his role as hagiographer in similar terms: he reports current events that are "nevertheless not disconnected from beginnings."[26] Hrotsvit highlights the liminality of Pelagius's *passio* by juxtaposing current and cosmic events. The passion's title emphasizes the relevance of Pelagius, "who, in our time, was crowned with martyrdom in Córdoba."[27] But Pelagius endured martyrdom in service of the perennial Christ, the "king ruling throughout all the ages."[28] Pelagius's martyrdom is thus an imitation of Christ's crucifixion: both martyrs "conquered the cruel world nobly, having bought the splendid palm [of victory] with blood."[29] Hrotsvit's *Pelagius* creates an interpretive space for her audience to explore these connections among past events, current reality, and the

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[24] As Homeyer and Wailes have noted, this treatment goes far beyond typical hagiographic conviction. Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 125–26; Stephen L. Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim* (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 2006), 68.

[25] By contrast, Raguel's introduction is far shorter than Hrotsvit's, and while it does link contemporary events to cosmic salvation, it does not identify the obvious connection between Christ's death and Pelagius's martyrdom. Raguel instead compares Pelagius to the early Christian martyrs: "Et licet nostra scriptio martirium disponere nititur fidelissimi testis sui, tamen primordiis non disiungitur, ubi supplicium paratum extitit populis Christianis" (PSP, 4-5). All citations of this text come from the most recent critical edition of the *passio*: Celso Rodríguez Fernández, *La pasión de S. Pelayo: edición crítica con traducćion y comentarios* (Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, 1991). Translations are taken from: Jeffrey A. Bowman, "Raguel, The Martyrdom of St. Pelagius," in *Medieval Hagiography: An Anthology*, ed. Thomas F. Head (New York: Routledge, 2001), 227–35.

[26] "Tamen primordiis non disiungitur" (PSP, 5).

[27] "Passio sancti Pelagii preciosissimi/ martiris, qui nostris temporibus in/ Corduba martirio est coronatus" (Pelagius, title).

[28] "Inclite, Pelagi, martir fortissime Christi/ et bone regnantis miles per secula regis" (Pelagius, 1-2).

[29] "Quam nobiliter mundum cum morte cruentum/ vicisti nitidam mercatus sanguine palmam" (Pelagius, 10-11).

eschatological future.[30] In the conclusion of her introduction, Hrotsvit requests that Pelagius look kindly on her *carmen*, which reflects the dedication of her "devoted mind."[31] Pelagius will ensure that the "dew" of heavenly inspiration renews the "darkness" of Hrotsvit's "small mind."[32] Only this combination of divine inspiration and divinely inspired intelligence can "worthily" (*condigne*) guide Hrotsvit's pen, as it in turn guides her audience.

4.3.2 *Córdoban History*

Hrotsvit's *Pelagius* begins with a lengthy history of Córdoba, understood in light of God's salvific plan for humanity.[33] According to Hrotsvit, Córdoba was once "rich" in both military conquest and intellectual patronage, "particularly replete with the seven streams of knowledge."[34] The city was devoted to Christ, having "brought forth many sons to the Lord."[35] Unfortunately, Córdoba was overcome by the "indomitable

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[30] Hrotsvit's self-characterization reflects recalls Prudentius's claim that hagiography reflects the eschatological inscription of the martyr's names on the book of heaven (Peristephanon, IV. 169-172).
[31] "Respice Hrotsvitham miti pietate misellam,/ me, tibi subiectam devota mente famellam,/ que te mente colo, carmen quoque pectore prono" (Pelagius, 3-5). Note the parallels to Hrotsvit's presentation of Mary possessing a similarly "devoted mind" (Maria, 341-342, 402, etc.). By contrast, Raguel prays directly to God, rather than benefiting from Pelagius's intercession (PSP, 6).
[32] "Et fac exigui supero de rore rigari/ pectoris obscurum iam mis clementius antrum" (Pelagius, 6-7).
[33] Raguel's *passio* lacks such a precise historical introduction. He simply notes that Pelagius's *passio* occurs at a time when Christians were suffering: "igitur temporibus illis, cum sevissima orta fuisset tempestas Christianis contigit" (PSP, 10-11). Raguel also implies that if the region of "Galicia" fell to the Saracens, then "these outsiders would have wielded power over all the faithful" (PSP, 11-12).
[34] "Inclita deliciis, rebus quoque splendida cunctis,/ maxime septenis sophie repleta fluentis/ necnon perpetuis semper praeclara triumphis" (Pelagius, 16-18). Hrotsvit will use a similar phrase to describe the education of Theophilus, the protagonist of the fifth legend: "ipsius ingenuum mentisque rigaret agellum/ de sophie rivis septeno fonte mantantis" (Theophilus, 12-13). In both cases, she likely refers to the *trivium* and *quadrivium*.
[35] "Olim que Christo fuerat bene subdita iusto,/ fudit et albatos domino baptismate natos" (Pelagius, 19-20). This description likely refers to the period of Christian Visigothic rule in Spain. Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 131.

Saracens."[36] Hrotsvit explains that these invaders altered the course of Christian history, "snatching" the "fate" of a formerly great empire.[37] Hrotsvit construes this invasion as a spiritual disease spreading throughout the Iberian Peninsula. The leaders of "the barbarian race" advance the "error of wicked dogma," collecting allies for further attacks.[38] They pollute faith "with barbarous rituals" and "intermix" pagans with the rightful Christian inhabitants of the region.[39]

Still, Hrotsvit recognizes that a tenuous balance was maintained between Christianity and this "false religion" by means of a nuanced legal code: Christians were permitted to "preserve their faith without punishment" if they did not "speak against" the "gods" or the Saracen leaders.[40] This compact statement reveals much about Hrotsvit's knowledge of her Umayyad neighbors. Hrotsvit understands the legal status of subordinated religions in al-Andalus: she outlines the verbal element of blasphemy, echoing the provisions of the Umayyad legal code.[41] Hrotsvit's polytheistic description of the "Saracens" also reflects common medieval Christian misconceptions. Saracens were lumped together with other pagans, "mentioned in the same breath" as unbelievers,

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[36] "Perfida nam Saracenorum gens indomitorum" (Pelagius, 24). For more on Hrotsvit's use of the term "Saracen" see: Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 74; Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 131.

[37] "Eripuit regni sortem sibi vi quoque clari/ extinxitque bonum regem baptismate lotum" (Pelagius, 26-27). This same language of "fate" is used a few lines later, to similar effect: "vindicat imperii sortem sibi denique tanti" (Pelagius, 34).

[38] "Bellica sed subito virtus bene condita iura/ mutavit sacrae fidei spargendo nefandi/ dogmatis errorem populum laesitque fidelem" (Pelagius, 21-23).

[39] "Polluit et veterem purae fidei genetricem/ barbarico ritu, quod nam miserabile dictu,/ paganos iustis intermiscendo colonis" (Pelagius, 37-39). Hrotsvit reinforces the danger of this religious contagion by alluding to concept of pollution five times in less than ten lines.

[40] Pelagius, 52-58.

[41] In ninth-century Córdoba, there were actually only two instances when a Christian could legally receive a capital punishment: 1) when a Christian came to the faith by converting from Islam (apostasy); 2) when a Christian blatantly denounced the tenets of Islam (blasphemy). The almost comic attempts of the early Córdoban martyrs to seek out a *quadi* to denounce Muhammad and achieve martyrdom would fit in the second category. Christys, *Christians in Al-Andalus (711-1000)*, 52–53; Coope, *The Martyrs of Cordoba*, 45–54. For a precise accounting of these crimes in the ninth century, see: Janina M. Safran, "Identity and Differentiation in Ninth-Century Al-Andalus," *Speculum* 76, no. 3 (2001): 573–98.

known collectively as the "*mali Christiani.*"[42] As Jeffery Jerome Cohen clarifies, Saracens "are fantasy products of the Christian imaginary that, like all monsters, could take on an uncanny life and agency of their own."[43] It is true that, "logistically," Hrotsvit would know "very little" about any non-Christian religious practice.[44] The Saracen characters in her *Pelagius*, as well as in the rest of her corpus, are rendered as a generic type, following the traditional hagiographic critique of Roman polytheism. In this way, Hrotsvit contains this new menace within a familiar literary framework.

Some might have praised the legal compromise between Umayyad leaders and their Christian subordinates. According to Hrotsvit, this was a "false peace": an illusion shattered by the bold actions of the original Córdoban martyrs who were "inflamed by the fire of the love of Christ" and imbued with "a thirst for martyrdom."[45] These brave souls suffered capital punishment and then ascended to heaven, their souls "washed in blood."[46] As a result of this extensive historical review, Hrotsvit's readers will understand Pelagius's future martyrdom both in the light of Christ's crucifixion and in the tradition of valiant Christians taking a stand against the Saracens.

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[42] Leyser, *Communications and Power in Medieval Europe*, 32–33.
[43] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Hybrids, Monsters, Borderlands: The Bodies of Gerald of Wales," in *The Postcolonial Middle Ages*, ed. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 88.
[44] Frakes, "Muslims in Hrotsvit's 'Pelagius' and the Ludus de Antichristo," 51.
[45] "His ita digestis simulata pace quievit (Pelagius, 61). Hrotsvit again clarifies this blasphemy occurred "with words" (*dictis*) (Pelagius, 64). As we have seen, Córdoban Christians had a far more negative reaction to these original martyrs, considering their "devotion" mere fanaticism in light of the religious tolerance displayed by the Umayyads.
[46] "Sed superos anime petierunt sanguine lote" (Pelagius, 68).

4.3.3 *Contemporary History*

Hrotsvit also uses this historical introduction to create a contrast between earlier Umayyad leaders and Abdrahemen, the current caliph.[47] Abdrahemen serves as a linchpin to move Hrotsvit's audience from the past into a story of their "own time."[48] For Hrotsvit, Abdrahemen is an archetypal representation of *luxuria*, "polluted by luxuries of the flesh, arrogant in the sumptuousness of the kingdom."[49] He pretended to maintain the legal provisions provided for Christians by his forefathers, but often "wet the land" with innocent Christian blood.[50] Hrotsvit identifies the root of Abdrahemen's sinfulness as pride, implying that his swelling ego is commensurate with his ever-expanding military conquests. Abdrahemen's pride drives him to fixate on a remote region that maintained its Christian identity, "refusing to be subdued by a corrupted master."[51] The recalcitrance of this region infuriates Abdrahemen, who bears "the bile of the ancient serpent" deep within his heart.[52]

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[47] Hrotsvit's account does not accurately reflect the rule of Abd ar-Rahmann III. In addition to praising his leadership, Mahmoud Makki suggests that the caliph was the "most brilliant leader … in the history of al-Andalus." Mahmoud Makki, "The Political History of Al-Andalus," in *The Legacy of Muslim Spain*, ed. Salma Khadra Jayyusi (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 38. Frakes also points out that the caliph was "one of the most enlightened and culturally tolerant rulers of the age." Frakes, "Muslims in Hrotsvit's 'Pelagius' and the Ludus de Antichristo," 47.

[48] Pelagius, 69-73.

[49] "Luxu carnis maculatus/ Abdrahemen dictus, regni splendore superbus" (Pelagius, 73-74).

[50] "Sepius innocuo madefecit sanguine rura/ corpora iustorum consumens sancta virorum,/ qui Christo laudes ardebant pangere dulces" (Pelagius, 81-83). Again, Hrotsvit notes that these Christians dared "to critique [Abdrahemen's] false gods with words [*verbis*]" (Pelagius, 84). Technically, Abdrahemen was well within his legal rights to execute such blasphemers. Homeyer seems to misunderstand the development of these legal provisions: Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 132.

[51] "Quae sua continuo temptaret spernere iura/ velle negans dominis olim fore subdita pravis" (Pelagius, 95-96). Both Hrotsvit and Raguel describe Pelagius's home as *Gallicia*: "Gallicia regione sitam belloque superbam" (Pelagius, 93); "ut totius Hispanie hostes contra Galleciam moverentur" (PSP, 11) This term did not necessarily refer to modern day Galicia, which is located in the far north of the Iberian peninsula. For a discussion of the term, see: Christys, *Christians in Al-Andalus (711-1000)*, 89–90; Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 134; Fernández, *La pasión de S. Pelayo*, 35.

[52] "Quo rex comperto fervebat demonis ira/ corde gerens veterem serpentis denique bilem" (Pelagius, 97-98). The protagonists in Hrotsvit's "deal with the devil" legends (*Theophilus* and *Basilius*) experience a similar goading by the devil. Here, as Wailes suggests, Abdrahemen is simply "the devil's tool." Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 70.

The surest evidence of Abdrahemen's corruption lies in his speech, which serves as an indicator of moral standing throughout Hrotsvit's hagiographic corpus. While exemplary characters speak with "sweet" words, Abdrahemen "barks" from his "pestilent snout."[53] When Abdrahemen collects his allies to attack the stubborn Christians, his motivational speech recalls the military activity described in Hrotsvit's introductory history lesson. Like his forefathers, Abdrahemen believes "all kingdoms that touch the oceans have lived under our laws."[54] The caliph provides false justification for his conquest, claiming the Christian region is "ungrateful for past kindness."[55] When the attack occurs, it is carried out with precision. First, the Christian leaders are eliminated. Then, the rest of the community is subjected "to the unjust yoke of the perverse king."[56] The community was able to rescue many of its captured soldiers, but the exorbitant ransom for their leader was insurmountable.[57] Financial spoils were not Abdrahemen's priority. According to Hrotsvit, he set an arbitrarily high ransom because he "was eager to put the leader of the people to death."[58] From the midst of this hopeless situation, Pelagius finally emerges, absent for almost one hundred and fifty lines of his own *passio*. Hrotsvit's initial description of her hero, the only son of the captured *dux*, focuses disproportionately on his appearance: he "shone" in beauty and was "composed with

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53 "Talia pestifero latrando verbula rostro" (Pelagius, 103-104).
54 "Non latet imperio reges succumbere nostro,/ vivere nostrarum necnon moderamine legum/ omnes, oceanus gentes quas circuit altus" (Pelagius, 104-106).
55 "Gratiole resputant ut foedera nostre/ et tandem veteris sint ingrati pietatis" (Pelagius, 108-109).
56 Pelagius, 124-128. Hrotsvit reports Abdrahemen captured exactly twelve of the rebellious leaders, which Wailes suggests "underlines the eschatological significance of the event." Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 70; Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 135.
57 This is a sharp diversion from Raguel's text, which states that Abdrahemen captured clergy in addition to nobles: "ut etiam ipsi episcopi cum aliquantis fidelibus captivi tenerentur" (PSP, 17). Among the captured group of the "faithful" is one Bishop Ermogrius, whom Raguel identifies as Pelagius's uncle, rather than his father. Fernández, *La pasión de S. Pelayo*, 38–40.
58 "Non sitiens tantum precii, quod defuit, aurum/ quantum rectorem populi gestit dare morti" (Pelagius, 142-143). Raguel's version makes no mention of ransom at the initial negotiation, although Ermogrius does "hope" to trade other prisoners for his nephew at a future date (PSP, 20-23).

splendid form."[59] Like his fellow female saints, Pelagius's external beauty is matched by his internal qualities: he is "prudent in thought, gleaming with all goodness."[60] Hrotsvit will extend this hagiographic trope by linking Pelagius's excellence with his rhetoric. Just as Abdrahemen's ugly speech revealed his corruption, so too will the elegance of Pelagius's speech reveal his faithfulness.[61]

4.4. Pelagius in Prison

4.4.1 *Abdrahemen's "Victory"*

Hrotsvit supplements her initial depiction of Pelagius's physical beauty with a scene that combines purity of spirit and elegant rhetoric.[62] Once Abdrahemen indicates that he will not release Pelagius's father, the captured *dux*, Pelagius offers himself as a substitute.[63] Pelagius's father will not agree to this hostage exchange, however, and Pelagius must convince his father of the plan's merits. Though Pelagius addresses his father with respect, the core of his argument relies on the contrast between his father's age and his own youth: his father's muscles "have lost their previous strength," but he is strong enough to endure prison.[64] The *dux* remains unconvinced, because Pelagius is his

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[59] "Praenitida compostus corpore forma,/ nomine Pelagius, forme splendore decorus" (Pelagius, 144-145).
[60] "Consilio prudens, tota bonitate refulgens" (Pelagius, 146). Hrotsvit describes Mary and Agnes in very similar terms (Maria, 336-339, 346-351; Agnes, 28-32).
[61] For an analysis of the confluence of rhetoric and faith in the legends, see: Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff, "Eloquence and Heroic Virginity in Hrotsvit's Verse Legends," in *Hrotsvit of Gandersheim: Rara Avis in Saxonia?*, ed. Katharina M. Wilson (Ann Arbor, MI: Marc Publishing, 1987), 229–37.
[62] Throughout this episode, Hrotsvit codes Pelagius's speech positively: "Tali merentem blanditur voce parentem*"* (Pelagius, 150). Pelagius describes his own words with similar language: "Precibus blandisque rogabo" (Pelagius, 158).
[63] As mentioned previously, Raguel's version suggests the captive (Bishop Ermogrius) offers Pelagius (his nephew) as a replacement (PSP, 20-24).
[64] Pelagius, 153-56. Pelagius's argument is reasonable, since Abdrahemen might accept a ransom or prisoner exchange during Pelagius's lifetime. By contrast, his father could perish before sufficient ransom could be collected (Pelagius, 158-161). Stottlemeyer breaks down the rhetoric of Pelagius's speech, suggesting Pelagius is Hrotsvit's "male alter-ego" by virtue of his eloquence. Stottlemyer, "The

only son. As such, Pelagius represents the future of his family and his nation: "you [Pelagius] are the only hope of a subjugated people."[65] Pelagius refuses to let the argument drop and uses more "sweet" words to persuade his father.[66] As a result, Pelagius is led to "haughty Spain," accompanying the apparently "victorious" Abdrahemen.[67]

Lest her audience believe this situation reflects positively on Abdrahemen, Hrotsvit interrupts her narrative. She addresses her audience directly, ordering "no one" to believe that "this happened on account of the king's merit."[68] Because all events occur according to the "just judgment" of God, the "secret judge," Hrotsvit explains that there are two possible interpretations of Pelagius's imprisonment.[69] First, the situation might be a lesson for the Christian region, a reminder that everyone should "weep for the sins, shared by them all."[70] This initial interpretation casts God as divine pedagogue, arranging circumstances to educate his people about the power of sin. Hrotsvit's second interpretation focuses on Pelagius, suggesting that God orchestrated the situation as an opportunity for Pelagius's martyrdom, so that he could devote "his pious spirit to the

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Construction of the Desiring Subject in Hrotsvit's Pelagius and Agnes," 111. For further analysis see: Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 136.

[65] "Tu decus omne meum, tu gloria magna parentum,/ es quoque subiecti nobis spes sola popelli" (Pelgaius, 167-168). The sentiment is reminiscent of Abraham's sacrificial offering of Isaac, his "only son, whom [he] loved" (Gen. 22:2).

[66] "Sed mulcet dictis mentem cari genitoris/ et cogit blandis, quod suasit, velle loquelis" (Pelagius, 173-174). Stottlemeyer notes the connection between beauty and rhetoric, lumping both together under the notion of "charisma" and "alterity." Stottlemyer, "The Construction of the Desiring Subject in Hrotsvit's Pelagius and Agnes," 111.

[67] "Tunc rex Pelagium iussit perducere secum/ et laetus rediit patriam victorque revisit" (Pelagius, 177-178). As Homeyer notes, Hrotsvit has set these familial negotiations in Galicia, while Raguel's version implies that Ermogrius was transported to Córdoba prior to his exchange for Pelagius (PSP, 22-23). Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 137; Fernández, *La pasión de S. Pelayo*, 39–40.

[68] "Nullus pro meritits credat factum fore regis" (Pelagius, 179). Wailes disagrees with my assessment of this encouraging transition. In his view, Hrotsvit leaves Pelagius and her audience in despair: she offers "not even the slightest verbal fig leaf to cover the naked fact that Islam's flag flew over Córdoba and all the country even as she wrote." Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 71.

[69] "Sed mage iudicio secreti iudicis aequo" (Pelagius, 181).

[70] "Ut populus tanto correptus rite flagello/ fleret totius proprii commissa retaus" (Pelagius, 182-183).

Lord with a good death."[71] In either case, Hrotsvit urges her audience not to be fooled by Abdrahemen's apparent success, just as they should not have been deceived by the "false peace" in Córdoba's early history. God's cosmic plan is always at work, often in a way that is beyond casual human comprehension.[72]

4.4.2 *Incarceration as Illumination*

After explaining the divine purpose behind Pelagius' capture, Hrotsvit moves on to the details of his imprisonment. Pelagius's incarceration highlights his value as a Christian exemplum, juxtaposing his excellence and the depravity of his surroundings. Pelagius, that "extraordinary friend of Christ," allows himself to be enclosed in the "dark shades of prison," deprived of food and comfort.[73] The dark prison amplifies Pelagius's beauty, attracting the attention of several nobles in Abdrahemen's court.[74] The nobles approach Pelagius with desire and admiration, exemplified in their opinion of his speech: they long to taste "the words of his sweet lips, stained with the honey of his rhetorical

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71 "Quo se morti dare posset/ necnon sanguineum pro Christo fundere rivum/ inpendens animam domino bene morte piatam" (Pelagius, 185-187).

72 This point is clarified further in contrast to Raguel's version, which offers a very different justification for Pelagius's imprisonment. According to him, prison is a divine gift, a "test or file for those daily sins, without which human fragility cannot live" (PSP, 25-26). While this sentiment mirrors Hrotsvit's initial interpretation, Raguel continues by suggesting that Pelagius has a specific prior sin that warrants atonement (PSP, 26-28). Although Raguel softens this indictment of Pelagius's youthful errors by suggesting that sin allows all sinners the opportunity for repentance, his emphasis is still firmly on individual human actions, rather than on God guiding events on earth. Fernández, *La pasión de S. Pelayo*, 25.

73 "Ilicet egregium Christi precepit amicum/ carceris in tenebras vinctum submergere nigras/ deliciisque cibo nutritum pascere parvo" (Pelagius, 190-193). Hrotsvit describes a dark, near-sentient prison, a space that has "forgotten the light" and dedicated itself to causing grief for unfortunate prisoners(Pelagius, 193-195). Homeyer identifies similar prison descriptions in other texts, suggesting Eulogius (who eulogized the earlier Córdoban martyrs) described a similar space in his work. Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 138.

74 Raguel's version mirrors Hrotsvit's blend of praise for Pelagius's physical and spiritual gifts, noting his persistent study of the Bible over three years of imprisonment (PSP, 34-45). These three years allow Raguel to present a more fulsome picture of Pelagius's incarceration enriched by the "double crown" of virginity and suffering (PSP, 51). Hrotsvit offers no clear timeframe for Pelagius's imprisonment.

language."[75] By contrast, Raguel's nobles are focused almost entirely on Pelagius's physical beauty, which testifies to a moral quality they could never understand.[76]

The nobles are captivated by Pelagius, so convinced that "such a beauty" should not remain in chains that they approach the caliph to free the youth.[77] Hrotsvit has hinted at Abdrahemen's sexual deviance earlier in the legend, but she does not address it explicitly until the nobles leverage Abdrahemen's "sodomitic vices" for Pelagius's benefit.[78] As Wailes notes, Hrotsvit's initial critique of the caliph was aimed at his *luxus,* "a term of broad reference" that need not "point directly to homosexuality."[79] As a category of sin, *luxuria* is a "system of causes" that includes pride and indulgence.[80] Abdrahemen has exemplified many aspects of *luxuria* throughout Hrotsvit's narrative, but in this section her language becomes more specific. The caliph "desperately loved young men, handsome of appearance, and wanted especially to join them to himself in

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[75] Pelagius, 198-202. There is lacuna in M after line 199. Conrad Celts supplied the following text: "qui cum vidissent vultum capti speciousum." Gonsalva Wiegand, "The Non-Dramatic Works of Hrosvitha; Text, Translation, and Commentary" (Ph.D., St. Louis University, 1936), 141. This would place the nobles' physical desire for Pelagius ahead of their interest in his words. Homeyer notes that such an addition would mirror other physical descriptions of Pelagius (213-214, and 230). Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 138. Still, Hrotsvit's picture is clear: Pelagius's appealing attributes operate concurrently on several levels, all of which reveal the goodness and faithfulness of his character.

[76] "Ac per hoc non immerito pulcher foris intuebatur, quia Domino Jesu Christo intus pulchrior diligebatur" (PSP, 64-65).

[77] "Optabant speciem vinclis absolvere talem/ hec et suaserunt regi iam sceptra tenenti" (Pelagius, 202-203).

[78] "Corruptum viciis cognoscebant Sodomitis" (Pelagius, 205). Raguel does not use this language anywhere in his *passio*. Linda McMillin seems to believe the nobles (*viri primi*) represent Hrotsvit's relatively tolerant view of some Saracens, suggesting they are "well-meaning, rather than evil" in trying to relocate Pelagius out of prison. She even attributes their motives to "goodwill," which rather seems to miss the noblemen's manipulation of the caliph's sexuality. Linda McMillin, "Weighed Down with a Thousand Evils: Images of Muslim's in Hrotsvit's Pelagius," in *Hrotsvit of Gandersheim: Contexts, Identities, Affinities, and Performances*, ed. Phyllis Brown and Katharina Wilson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 46. Frakes likewise critiques McMillin's reading of this passage: Frakes, "Muslims in Hrotsvit's 'Pelagius' and the Ludus de Antichristo," 50–51.

[79] Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 69.

[80] Jordan, *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology*, 17. Jordan later asserts that sodomy is "not the worst of that class [*luxuria*]." Ibid., 145.

amicicia."[81] As Homeyer correctly notes, deviant sexuality is a familiar trope in anti-Saracen literary rhetoric, the product of "exaggeration and misunderstanding" by Christian authors.[82]

In Hrotsvit's account, the caliph's sexual preferences are common enough knowledge that the nobles can use that fact to free Pelagius.[83] They approach Abdrahemen, suggesting that Pelagius will serve as an ornament to the royal court by virtue of his "shining form" and "sweet words."[84] Abdrahemen needs little persuasion, and immediately "plucks" Pelagius from prison, ensuring he is bathed and dressed in the attire of the court.[85] Hrotsvit has conflated the Saracens with ancient Romans, harmonizing Pelagius's story with early martyrdom accounts. Hrotsvit reinforces that conflation by claiming that Abdrahemen, the "Caesar," requests Pelagius be clothed in a *toga regali* like the rest of the "toga-wearing" courtiers (*socii togati*).[86] Thus attired, Pelagius is placed on the royal dais, an object of speculation and desire for the assembled court.[87] Following the establishment of his merit as a saint and believer, Hrotsvit's contemporary martyr must now face the central conflict of his narrative. For Pelagius, the

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[81] "[Cognoscebant coruptum] facie iuvenes ardenter amare/ hos et amicicie proprie coniungere velle" (Pelagius, 206-207).

[82] For example, both Eulogius and Paul Alvar use similar language in defending the original martyrs of Córdoba. Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 138. Raguel's version of this account makes the same claims about the caliph's sexual inclinations: "Atque sic stulti homines et veritatis nescii eius formam gurgitibus vitiorum putabant obrurere" (PSP, 65-66). Christys cautions that such "anti-Muslim polemic" does not always "specify homosexuality"; the story of Pelagius is as much about "pride" and indulgence as it is about sexuality. Christys, *Christians in Al-Andalus (711-1000)*, 94–95.

[83] "Non decet ergo tuum, princeps fortissime, sceptrum,/ duriter ut puerum mandes punire decorum/ obsidis et teneros insontis stringere nervos" (Pelagius, 210-212).

[84] "Eius praenitidam velles si cernere formam/ et tam mellitam saltem gustare loquelam" (Pelagius, 213-214). They also claim that Pelagius could be enrolled in the military page program (Pelagius, 215-217).

[85] Pelagius, 218-226.

[86] Pelagius, 224-228. Homeyer suggests that this Romanized vocabulary mimics Prudentius, which should not negate Hrotsvit's consistent historicizing of this contemporary story. Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 139. Raguel's version of this event makes no reference to Roman attire or titles. He does, however, describe Pelagius as "betrothed" (*desponsaverat*) to Christ (PSP, 69-78).

[87] Stottlemeyer notes the elements of voyeurism in this story, which have parallels to the display of Agnes outside a brothel in the final story of Hrotsvit's hagiographic corpus. Stottlemyer, "The Construction of the Desiring Subject in Hrotsvit's Pelagius and Agnes," 107.

resolution to this conflict occurs in yet another a familiar martyrial context: an interrogation, the course of which will reveal the caliph's deviant sexuality.

4.5 An Innocent on Trial

4.5.1 *A Rhetorical Defense*

In Hrotsvit's version of the Pelagius narrative, the sexual conflict comes to a head in full view of the Romanized Saracen court. Pelagius is radiant, his borrowed clothes highlighting both his physical beauty and his alterity. The courtiers admire Pelagius, "looking him up and down with their eyes" and marveling at his beautiful speech.[88] Abdrahemen cannot control himself in Pelagius's presence. Burning with desire, he approaches the saint.[89] The details of this exchange are difficult to parse, even though Hrotsvit's description more than doubles the length of the corresponding section in Raguel's *passio*. According to Hrotsvit, Abdrahemen brings Pelagius near, so that they might be "joined." Abdrahemen then bends his neck and reaches out, indicating his desire to kiss Pelagius.[90] This approach is clearly sexual, though Wailes does not believe Pelagius understood the "sodomitic" desire of the caliph: "he may simply reject personal affection and physical familiarity with a pagan."[91] Jordan vehemently disagrees, claiming "that Pelagius can immediately interpret that kiss as a sexual overture" because he, like

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[88] "In quem conversis omnes mirantur occellis/ tum faciem iuvenis, tum dulcia verbula fantis" (Pelagius, 229-230).

[89] "Apsectu primo quoque rex supsensus in illo/ ardebat formam regalis stirpis amandum" (Pelagius, 231-232).

[90] "Ignis ut ipsius fieret sibi sedulo iunctus,/ fronteque summisso libaverat oscula caro/ affectus causa complectens utpote colla" (Pelagius, 235-237). For Abdrahemen's initial approach, Raguel merely says: "cum eum joculariter rex tangere vellet" (PSP, 92). Jordan notes the oddity of this adverb, which, according to its most basic translation, would be rendered as "humorously." Jordan prefers a translation which is based on Ovid's use of *joculo* as a metaphor for intercourse, rendering *joculariter* "for fondling" or "sexually." Jordan, *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology*, 12. Significantly, in Raguel's account, this approach happens *after* interrogation, while Hrotsvit reverses the narrative so that Pelagius's speech is given in response to sexual attempt.

[91] Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 72.

Hrotsvit's readers, is "well informed about the sexual customs" of the Saracen court.[92] However one interprets Pelagius's initial comprehension of the act, Abdrahemen intended to be the active participant and identified Pelagius as the passive recipient.[93] This episode follows thus the pattern of female virgin ravishment, with a slight twist in the gender of the victim.

Following in the footsteps of many a virgin saint before him, Pelagius defends his physical and spiritual integrity with rhetorical skill.[94] The "soldier of Christ" does not return the kiss, preferring to use his "laughing mouth" to formulate a statement faith.[95] Pelagius claims "it is not permitted for a man, washed in the baptism of Christ, to bend [his] prudent neck to a barbarous embrace."[96] Using a parallel grammatical structure for emphasis, Pelagius reiterates his statement of faith: "nor should a worshiper of Christ, anointed with sacred oil, desire the kiss of a foul demonic slave."[97] Pelagius contrasts his own sacramental inviolability (baptized and anointed) with the depravity of his captor (barbarous and demonic). This contrast becomes even clearer in Pelagius's devastating rhetorical conclusion: "therefore, it is permitted for you to fully embrace foolish men, who placate stupid earthly gods with you; these men who are servants to images should

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92 Jordan, *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology*, 20–21.

93 As Ruth Mazzo Karras notes, "male homosexual behavior" was "not a single category any more than was sodomy." Furthermore, homosexuality "could be used as an insult, although often only against a man playing the passive role." Ruth Mazo Karras, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe: Doing Unto Others* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 131–32.

94 In addition to the numerous early Christian martyrdom accounts that feature a rhetorically skilled virgin, Hrotsvit's audience has already seen Mary's defense of her virginity (Maria, 391-404) and will see a similar defense presented by Agnes (Agnes, 61-87; 160-176).

95 Pelagius, 238-242. Hrotsvit's use of *ludens* and *ridiculo* provide the same subtext as Raguel's *joculeriter,* although she is describing Pelagius's response rather than Abdrahemen's approach. Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 140.

96 "Non decet ergo virum Christi baptismate lotum/ sobria barbarico complexu subdure colla" (Pelagius, 243-244). Wiegand and Homeyer translate *sobria* as "chaste," reflecting the themes of virginity and piety. Wiegand, "The Non-Dramatic Works of Hrotsvitha," 142; Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 140.

97 "Sed nec Christicolam sacrato crismate tinctum/ demonis oscillum spurci captare famelli" (Pelagius 245-246).

be your companions."[98] This speech summarizes the key difference between Christians and pagans: the Saracens are "foolish" because they worship ineffective, earthly, and false gods (*simulacra*).

Again, this critique of the Saracens mirrors early Christian attacks on Roman polytheism, a connection that continues into Pelagius's interrogation. Following the traditional pattern, Abdrahemen's interrogation vacillates between persuasion and intimidation. In order to diminish the severity of Pelagius's critique, Abdrahemen calls him an "unruly boy" (*lascivus puer*), implying his words are adorably audacious.[99] With feigned kindness, Abdrahemen tells Pelagius that his resistance will only cause his family further pain.[100] Abdrahemen then shifts tactics, claiming that torture and execution are an inevitable result of any and all "blasphemous reasoning."[101] But Abdrahemen is unable to rebut any of Pelagius's arguments, which he also dismisses as "words of wild reasoning."[102] Abdrahemen concludes his speech by suggesting that he only wants to "honor" Pelagius by placing him in a position of power within the Córdoban court.[103]

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[98] "Ergo corde viros licito complectere stultos,/ qui tecum fatuos placantur cespite divos, sintque tibi socii, servi quo sunt simulacri*"* (Pelagius, 247-249). Note the contrast between the *licito* and the previous *non decet* (Pelagius, 243). The PSP adheres much more closely to the traditional judicial interrogation model. In Raguel's account, Abdrahemen offers rewards for conversion, while Pelagius states that he will not deny Christ (PSP, 81-92). Hrotsvit's speech offers a far more nuanced and complicated critique, in comparison to the "dogmatic" speech in Raguel's account. Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 140.

[99] "O lascive puer, iactas te posse licenter/ spernere tam mitem nostri iuris pietatem/ audacterque diis toties illudere nostris" (Pelagius, 252-254). The prefect Semphronius will address Agnes in an identical manner: "Hinc infantili parcedo simplicitati/ prudenter te subporto, lasciva puella*"* (Agnes, 180-181).

[100] "Nec movet aetatis praesens dampnum iuvenilis/ et quod maerentes orbabis forte parentes" (Pelagius, 255-256). Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 140. This is a poor echo of the concern presented in the speech by Pelagius's own father.

[101] "Nostri blasphemos urget cultus cruciandos, subdere mox morti ferro iugulosque forari/ ni cedant et blasphemam resputant rationem" (Pelagius, 257-259). After this thinly veiled threat, Abdrahemen returns to his parental tone: "hortatu moneo quapropter quippe paterno" (Pelagius, 260).

[102] "Talibus ut verbis parcas seve rationis" (Pelagius, 261).

[103] "Te quia corde colo necnon venerarier opto/ tanto prae cunctis aulae splendore ministris,/ alter ut in regno sis me prestante superbo" (Pelagius 265-267). These promises are also reported in Raguel's account, wherein Abdrahemen will provide servants, money, and clothing if Pelagius renounces Christ (PSP, 69-78). As a reminder, this speech occurs before Abdrahemen's single attempted embrace of Pelagius in Raguel's account. Hrotsvit's repetition of the caliph's transgressive touch heightens the drama of her narrative.

This last disingenuous sentiment is belied by Abdrahemen's second attempt to embrace Pelagius: the caliph reaches out and takes hold of Pelagius's face "so that he might plant even one kiss."[104]

4.5.2 *Physical Defense and Punishment*

At this point, Hrotsvit's *Pelagius* diverges dramatically from the traditional female virgin martyr template. The attempted violation is not prevented by a miracle, such as the miraculous growth of Agnes's hair described in Hrotsvit's next legend.[105] Nor does Pelagius continue with his verbal defense, speaking out against the caliph's attempt to render him *effeminatus,* as reported in Raguel's version.[106] Hrotsvit's Pelagius defends himself physically, striking the caliph so hard that blood flows over his beard and clothing.[107] The detail of this description highlights the fact that Pelagius remains inviolate, while the caliph is visibly wounded. According to Hrotsvit, the future martyr (*testis*) has foiled the enemy's "crafty games" (*callida ludicra*) with words and fists.[108]

Despite his initial victory against Abdrahemen's transgressive hand and ineffective rhetoric, this *passio* can only end in Pelagius's death.[109] Enraged by Pelagius's

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[104] "Quo sic oscillum saltem configeret unum" (Pelagius, 270). Mark Jordan suggest that since this "single kiss" represents all homosexual vices, "the project of moral codification that is suggested in Raguel seems already presupposed in Hrotswitha" Jordan, *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology*, 21.
[105] Agnes, 215-219.
[106] "Tolle, canis, inquit sanctus Pelagius; numquid me similem tuis effeminatum existimas?" (PSP, 92-93). Given that Abdrahemen intended to be the active sexual participant, *effiminatus* would (hypothetically) be a fitting description of Pelagius, who would be the passive and thus "womanly" sexual participant. For further discussion of this adjective, see: Fernández, *La pasión de S. Pelayo*, 66; Jordan, *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology*, 13.
[107] "Sanguis ut absque mora stillans de vulnere facto/ barbam fedavit necnon vestes madefecit" (Pelagius, 274-275). Raguel's account makes no reference to Pelagius striking the caliph.
[108] "Callida sed testis confudit ludicra regis,/ osque petit subito pugno regale vibrato/ intulit et tantum pronis obtutibus ictum" (Pelagius, 271-273).
[109] Wailes even goes so far as to suggest that Pelagius's physical defense was necessary for martyrdom: without the blow, Pelagius "might never had been able to pour out his blood for Christ." Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 73. While it is true that the blow

refusals, Abdrahemen orders his soldiers to fling the saint over the city walls with a catapult, a machine more suited to battling armies than abusing adolescents.[110] Abdrahemen wants Pelagius to "be shattered in every limb and, broken, perish."[111] The caliph's executioners agree to carry out Abdrahemen's request, even though this form of torture is "without precedent."[112] Though perhaps "melodramatic," the brutality of this unusual execution method serves two purposes: first, it is a punishment commensurate to the affront of Pelagius's assault on the caliph;[113] second, it visualizes the inviolability of sainthood for Hrotsvit's audience. After being loaded into the catapult, Pelagius's "sweet body" miraculously repels the shattering impact of the "huge opposing cliffs."[114] The *amicus Christi* resisted the caliph's sexual assault and his body remains "inviolate" (*illesus*) even in torture. The caliph becomes enraged, because "the body of the martyr, which he had ordered to be dashed and thrust on to the sharp rocks of the river, was still not able to be cut."[115] Even Abdrahemen can tell he "has been thoroughly conquered."[116]

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precipitates Pelagius's martyrdom, the saint achieves the same end in Raguel's account without striking the caliph.

110 "Crebro bellantes saxis quae perfodit hostes" (Pelagius, 279). Raguel's version of the torture describes a machine of "tongs" (*forcipes*) that lifts and smashes Pelagius, with no specific military imagery (PSP, 101-103). For further discussion of both instruments, see: Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 141; Fernández, *La pasión de S. Pelayo*, 70.

111 "Membratim creperet raptim fractusque periret" (Pealgius, 283).

112 "Mox et inauditam strucxerunt denique poenam" (Pelagius, 284).

113 Christys deems Hrotsvit's account "melodramatic, even for hagiography." Christys, *Christians in Al-Andalus (711-1000)*, 96.

114 "Sed licet ingentes obstantes undique rupes/ artarent testis corpus praedulce cadentis,/ attamen illesus Christi permansit amicus" (Pelagius, 287-289). Homeyer notes several parallels between Hrotsvit's description of this torture and Prudentius's Peristephonon. Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 141.

115 "Certe regales cicius pervenit ad aures/ martiris allisi corpus non posse secari" (Pelagius, 290-291). In Raguel's account, the initial torture is likewise unsuccessful, though there is less explicit reference to the saint's corporeal inviolability: "quod autem beatus Pelagius forti animo pertransiens stabat intrepidus" (PSP, 104).

116 "Hic magis offesnsus, penitus fuerat quia victus" (Pelagius, 293).

Abdrahemen orders decapitation, refusing to allow Pelagius to remain both literally and symbolically whole.[117] The executioners, whom Hrotsvit Romanizes as *lictores*, finally succeed in "cutting down the faithful witness of Christ with a sword," "entrusting" the saint's fragmented remains to a river.[118] Hrotsvit's description of this torture leaves much of the brutality to her audience's imagination,[119] whereas Raguel goes into graphic detail, describing the use of iron tongs, the amputation of several individual limbs, and a "drop by drop" exsanguination.[120] Instead of focusing on physical details, Hrotsvit explains the symbolism of this posthumous dismemberment for her audience, contrasting the descent of Pelagius's body into the river with the ascent of his soul into heaven. Pelagius's spiritual self, ever a victor, "flies through the constellations of the star bearing sky" and receives the palm of victory as reward for his martyrdom.[121] Pelagius's heavenly reward is commensurate with his "well-preserved virginity."[122] This

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117 "Mox caput exacto iussit succidere ferro/ et sententicolam sic exercere supremam" (Pelagius, 294-295). This pattern of tortures that culminate in execution by sword follows classic martyr paradigms, particularly Agnes's.

118 "Denique lictores regalia iussa trementes/ mox Christi testem gladio secuere fidelem/ funus et extinctum limphis credunt retinendum" (Pelagius, 296-298). Raguel's version also culminates in execution and dismemberment by sword (PSP, 105-106).

119 Elizabeth Petroff consistently suggests that Hrotsvit leaves out any further physical pain for Pelagius to highlight the contrast between the bloodied caliph and the unhurt saint. Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff, *Body and Soul: Essays on Medieval Women and Mysticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 88; Petroff, "Eloquence and Heroic Virginity in Hrotsvit's Verse Legends," 232. As Wailes understands it, Pelagius's lack of visible wounds is a crucial element of the "transformation of the perishable human body into the imperishable body of the blessed." Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 73–74.

120 PSP, 107-121. Raguel further compares Pelagius's torturers to the Bacchae. Jordan, *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology*, 13; Fernández, *La pasión de S. Pelayo*, 72.

121 Pelagius, 300-304. The palm of victory features prominently in Hrotsvit's corpus, discovered in the desert wanderings by Christ and then bestowed on both Pelagius and Agnes. Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 142.

122 "Tandem nulla piis potis est depromere verbis/ lingula laureolam caelesti luce coruscam,/ qua bene servata fulget pro virginitate" (Pelagius, 308-310). Wailes somewhat unhelpfully suggests that Hrotsvit's reference to virginity, which is absent from Raguel's account, is a "conciliating gesture" towards Hrotsvit's "sisters at Gandersheim" and their focus on sexual purity. Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 73.

visualization of Pelagius's ultimate inviolability will continue as a monastic community embraces his relics.

4.6 A Monastic Trial by Fire

Hrotsvit has diverged from Raguel's account in several details, but the last fourth of her narrative is wholly original.[123] This section explores the posthumous journey of Pelagius's relics, prominently featuring the activities of the monastic community that receives them.[124] The community provides a set of characters that are immediately relatable to the Gandersheim context, and the section reveals as much about the authenticity of the community as it reveals about the authenticity of Pelagius's relics. God's providential plan is at work in the lived *exemplum* of this monastic community.

4.6.1 *Relic Discovery*

Abdrahemen ordered Pelagius's dismemberment so "the remains of the saint would be without a proper tomb," but Christ does not permit "his own holy ones to lose a single hair from their distinguished heads" (cf. Luke 21:18).[125] Hrotsvit promises her audience that Christ will indeed "provide a worthy place" for Pelagius's "holy limbs."[126] This explanation prepares Hrotsvit's audience to interpret the next steps of the narrative providentially. Following the execution, two fisherman happen to be on the river and

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123 Raguel mentions that the "faithful" seek Pelagius's remains and commit them to a tomb. He offers no details about the community or about the relics (PSP, 122-125).

124 Christys offers a helpful summary of the tenth century translation(s) of Pelagius's relics throughout the Christian kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula, which paralleled the development of his cult. Christys, *Christians in Al-Andalus (711-1000)*, 96–101.

125 "Christus, qui proprios patitur non perdere sanctos/ praeclari modicum capitis vel forte capillum" (Pelagius, 317-318). Homeyer notes that the miraculous discovery of relics is a common trope in hagiographic literature. Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 143.

126 "Illi sed dignum provisit rite locellum,/ qui sancti tumulo servaret membra sacrata" (Pelagius, 320-321).

notice Pelagius's remains being tossed by the waves.[127] Though the headless corpse was bloated beyond recognition, the fishermen are guided by a divine awareness and incontrovertible logic: "they believed with an eager heart that he, whoever he was, had died for the law of Christ, because only those damned to capital punishment, those who had been washed by sacred waters of baptism, did not fear to condemn the sacred rites of the caliph."[128] In addition to explaining their subsequent actions, the fishermen's thought process recalls the complicated religious history recounted in Hrotsvit's introduction.

Once Pelagius's head was located, the fishermen decide to collect his body, moved in equal parts by sympathy and by greed. They believe Pelagius's body will fetch a good price, since no one "could doubt that this [decapitated] corpse is that of a praiseworthy martyr."[129] A nearby Córdoban monastery leaps at the chance to purchase the remains of the martyr, for which the fishermen receive a hefty sum.[130] Despite receiving the relics from a dubious source, this monastic community celebrates Pelagius's remains, interring him in a worthy tomb. The relics soon provide healing miracles, because, as Hrotsvit explains, miracles near saintly remains indicate the glory surrounding the martyr's spiritual body in heaven.[131] In addition to their praiseworthy treatment of the remains, the monks also refuse to charge visitors for visiting the tomb, making Pelagius's wondrous healing powers available to all.

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127 Although earlier scholars (like Stottlemeyer) believed that these fisherman were clearly "Arab," Jerold Frakes rightly claims the mixed ethnicity of a city like Córdoba makes definitive identification impossible. However, he notes that the fishermen's designation of Christians (to whom they wish to sell the body) as *fideles* (rather than *infideles*) complicates the identification further. Frakes, "Muslims in Hrotsvit's 'Pelagius' and the Ludus de Antichristo," 51.

128 Pelagius, 331-335.

129 Pelagius, 336-345.

130 "Largiter et precium nautis tribuit superauctum/ ardescens sancti mercari corpus amandi" (Pelagius, 356-357).

131 "Que mox stelligere regnator maximus aule/ in tumulo signis iussit fulgere coruscis,/ in celis anima satis ut regnante beata/ aequa gloriola regnarent mortua membra" (Pelagius, 362-365).

4.6.2 *Refining Fire*

After a while, however, the abbot of the community begins to voice concern about the legitimacy of the relics, because they came from such an "unknown" and recent martyr.[132] Rather than making a unilateral decision, the abbot chooses a communal path. The abbot and his community pursue what Hrotsvit calls the "best remedies of wise counsel," the very same *medicamina* that was offered to Gongolf's stubbornly *indocilis* wife.[133] In this case wise counsel is provided thorough community-wide discussion, which will serve as a remedy to the doubt surrounding the relics. Hrotsvit explicitly notes that this *medicamina* was "desired by people of both sexes" in the broader local community, making it clear that women were equally desirous of truth.[134] After this discussion, the community decides on the following path: "to seek the Lord, with devout minds, so that he, in his customary goodness might generously allow the secret cause of these things to be laid clear, with doubt removed."[135] To prepare for God's guidance, the community turns their "devoted minds" to fasting, prayer, and worship.[136] Hrotsvit does not question their communal concern about the *secreta causa* of the relic's power, and does not construe "doubt" as a negative quality. Instead, legitimate concern leads the whole community to identify a path that will allow God's will to be known.

Following their period of discussion and prayer, the community resolves to consign the relics to a fire. If the relics emerge unharmed, they will be declared genuine. As the

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132 "Nam rudem meritit sanctum titubat fore tanti,/ illius ut causa fierent miracula tanta" (Pelagius, 370-371). Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 144.
133 "Tandem coenobii princeps rectorque popelli/ optima consilli tractans medicamina sani" (Pelagius, 372-373).
134 "Quod mox persone sexus optant utriusque" (Pelagius, 377).
135 "Sensit celsithronum devota mente precandum/ quo iam dignanter solita pietate patenter/ detegeret dubio cause secreta remoto" (Pelagius, 374-376)
136 "His certe votis devota mente peractis" (Pelagius, 380). Homeyer suggests that the entire community, both lay and monastic, will be involved in these efforts. Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 145.

test commences, the abbot offers a speech explaining the justification for such a "relic trial." This speech again spells out the community's logic for Hrotsvit's audience. They will "allow the worthiness of the saint to be tested by fire;" if Pelagius is a true saint, then healing miracles come "from his merits."[137] After spending an hour in the flames, Pelagius's relics emerge "more radiant that pure gold, completely immune to the intense fire."[138] The miraculous preservation of the relics demonstrates Pelagius's continual inviolability and represents the final step in "transmuting him from perishable flesh into an imperishable substance."[139]

Medieval relic tests are not unusual, but Hrotsvit's inclusion of such a test, particularly in the context of a community's insistence on genuine inquiry into miraculous events, is significant. [140] According to Thomas Head, Hrotsvit's description of a relic test is "dramatic," and likely the result of her relationship to nearby Frankish clergy.[141] However, dismissing this trial as either an entertaining addition or a reference to Gandersheim's connections fails to recognize the precision of Hrotsvit's hagiographic corpus. After all, this is not the first such trial in Hrotsvit's pair of contemporary

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137 "Istius meritum sancti fac igne probari,/ et si sit tante fultus bonitatis honore,/ eius ut ex meritis fierent haec dona salutis" (Pelagius, 391-393).
138 "Quod iam splendidius puro radiaverat auro/ expers ardoris penitus tantique caloris" (Pelagius, 404-405).
139 Stottlemyer, "The Construction of the Desiring Subject in Hrotsvit's Pelagius and Agnes," 117.
140 The most famous relic test would be Archbishop Egbert of Trier's attempt to authenticate the relics of a certain Celsus, which occurred during a mass and after the relics had already been interred in the main altar. Thomas Head, "Saints, Heretics, and Fire: Finding Meaning through the Ordeal," in *Monks & Nuns, Saints & Outcasts: Religion in Medieval Society : Essays in Honor of Lester K. Little*, ed. Lester K. Little, Sharon A. Farmer, and Barbara H. Rosenwein (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 220–38.
141 Head believes that such relic testing rituals maintained their "currency in the circles of Hrotsvit, Egbert, and John of Gorze for some decades" until the practice died out in the twelfth century. Thomas Head, "The Genesis of the Ordeal of Relics by Fire in Ottonian Germany: An Alternative Form of 'Canonization,'" in *Procès de canonisation au Moyen Âge aspects juridiques et religieux*, ed. Gábor Klaniczay (Rome: École française de Rome, 2004), 19–37. Elisheva Baumgarten has shown that such relic tests were also included in Jewish circles, though these were often far later than the earlier Ottonian examples: Elisheva Baumgarten, "Seeking Signs? Jews, Christians, and Proof by Fire in Medieval Germany and Northern France," in *New Perspectives on Jewish-Christian Relations*, ed. Elisheva Carlebach and Jacob. J Schacter (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 205-225.

martyrdoms. Pelagius's relic trial recalls the trial of Gongolf's wife, who was tested and condemned by the "watery flames" of the miraculous spring.[142] Hrotsvit has provided her audience with contrasting exempla, dramatically visualizing the rewards for faith and the punishment for unbelief. This pattern of ordeal can also be found in Hrotsvit's other two martyr narratives: in the attempted burning of Agnes and even the posthumous cephalophoric journey of Dionysius. In each of these four cases, the results of the trial serve to incite conversion and transformation. When Pelagius's relics pass their test, "everyone believed in Pelagius's merit and rejoiced ceaselessly in the patron given to them by heaven."[143] The impact of Pelagius's story, as demonstrated in the community's faithful response to the miracles of Pelagius's relics, mirrors the ideal response of Hrotsvit's audience.

4.7 Conclusion

Pelagius's *passio* provides Hrotsvit's audience with compelling positive and negative *exempla*. First, Hrotsvit casts Abdrahemen as an archetype of *luxuria*. The caliph's transgressive sexuality was a natural result of his pride, indulgence, and misplaced faith in "earthly" gods. Though Abdrahemen is, in some respects, a caricature of the Saracen "other," Hrotsvit's readers should not ignore the lesson he provides. All are susceptible to *luxuria*, and Hrotsvit shapes Abdrahemen's extreme presentation of the vice as a cautionary tale. Second, while Hrotsvit hardly expects her audience to seek physical martyrdom, Pelagius presents an exemplum of the Christian life that is imitable in many

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142 Gongolf, 409-412.

143 Pelagius, 410-413. Peter Brown's groundbreaking work on the cult of saints offers the most enduring discussion of saints as patrons. Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 23–50.

ways. Pelagius displayed steadfast faith despite imprisonment, assault, and torture. He also never failed to articulate his faith, with a rhetorical skill that testified to the validity of his belief. Just as Pelagius served as an individual exemplum, so also the monastery that received his relics models the ideal Christian community. In particular, the abbot's response to doubts about Pelagius's relics exemplifies Christian leadership. The men and women in the abbot's care participate in and support his decisions; as a result, the community is rewarded with clear confirmation that the relics are genuine.

In addition to these individual and communal exempla, Hrotsvit reframes this contemporary narrative within the template of an early Christian *passio*. The rapacious conquest, cruelty, debauchery, and polytheism of Rome have all been transferred to the Saracens of Córdoba. Contemporary Ottonian concerns are certainly an element of Hrotsvit's narrative, but her story should not be reduced to a political treatise.[144] At its core, Hrotsvit's *Pelagius* depicts the timeless conflict between good and evil. Both Hrotsvit's introductory history lesson and her consistent conflation of Saracen *luxuria* and *Romanitas* testify to the fact that God has always provided for the faithful. Given this truth, Hrotsvit's audience can confidently internalize both the communal and individual exempla woven into this contemporary tale.

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[144] John Tolan suggests this "potent ideological cocktail" is designed to justify reactive military action against any "pagan" threats to Ottonian Christianity. John V. Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 107–8. Wailes also understand Hrotsvit's *Pelagius* as a reminder about the "corrupt and savage tyrant to whom Otto had sent an embassy," and a warning that Otto himself must not "avert his eyes" from any future bloodshed. Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 78.

THEOPHILUS AND *BASILIUS*: A LESSON IN SIN AND REDEMPTION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Hrotsvit's fifth and sixth legends, known respectively as the *Theophilus* and the *Basilius*, feature contracts that Christians have made with the devil. These legends engage two classic "deal with the devil" narratives, which are then reframed to continue Hrotsvit's emphasis on pedagogy.[1] As Patricia Silber has noted, these juxtaposed narratives are more than mere "cautionary tales," serving instead as Hrotsvit's "exploration of the Christian response to evil."[2] Given their parallel subject matter, it should come as no surprise that these two narratives are paired in the single extant manuscript of Hrotsvit's hagiographic corpus (M). As will be shown, the overarching narrative of each episode follows a similar pattern, even though the *Theophilus* legend is nearly twice as long as the *Basilius*.[3] The parallel subject necessitates a parallel examination of these stories here, for Hrotsvit has crafted these accounts as dual exempla, demonstrating the power of sin and the boundlessness of divine mercy.

Both stories feature a protagonist attempting to solve an apparently insurmountable problem through a diabolical contract. The first of the two legends details the activities of Theophilus, a powerful ecclesiastical steward[4] in the city of Adana in Cilicia.[5] The death

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[1] For an overview of Faustian narratives see: Ludwig Radermacher, *Griechische quellen zur Faustsage: der zauberer Cyprianus, die erzählung des Helladius, Theophilus,* Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien (Wien: Hölder, 1927); Philip Mason Palmer and Robert Pattison More, *The Sources of The Faust Tradition, from Simon Magus to Lessing* (New York: Haskell House Publishers Ltd., 1965).

[2] Patricia Silber, "Hrotsvit and the Devil," in *Hrotsvit of Gandersheim: Contexts, Identities, Affinities, and Performances*, ed. Phyllis Brown, Linda McMillin, and Katharina Wilson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 183.

[3] The *Theophilus* is 456 lines, while the *Basilius* is only 256 lines.

[4] See fn. 23 for a discussion of the language used by Hrotsvit and Paul for this church office. The Latin term for the church steward is *vicedominus* or *vicedomus*. This term is likely a Latinized form of the Greek *oikonomos,* which comes from the verb *oikonomeō*. In the Greek New Testament, the term is featured in the parable of the "shrewd manager" in Luke 16, and can be found throughout the Pauline epistles. Wilfred Tooley, "Stewards of God: An Examination of the Terms Oikonomos and Oikonomia in the New Testament," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 19, no. 1 (1966): 74–86. The Council of Chalcedon, in 451,

of the local bishop results in a potential promotion for Theophilus, but he declines the offer. The newly appointed bishop then removes Theophilus from his office as vicar.[6] In the face of this slight, Theophilus turns to a *magus* in order to regain the prestige of his former position. The second story involves a far less prestigious figure. Hrotsvit never names the *servus* whose error is at the center of this second narrative.[7] The *servus* seeks to marry the daughter of his master, Proterius, even though the pious nobleman had already promised his daughter to a monastic community. To overcome the obstacles inherently opposed to such a union, the *servus* requires diabolical intervention. With the help of a local *magus,* both Theophilus and the *servus* sign the devil's formal legal contract (*carta*), renouncing Christianity. The devil follows through with his end of these bargains, restoring Theophilus's political position and convincing Proterius's daughter to marry the *servus*. Neither protagonist finds their prize as enticing as they had imagined, and each encounters conflicts caused by their demonic contracts. However, Theophilus and the *servus* cannot nullify their demonic legal obligations: in order to reclaim their status as Christians, the protagonists require the assistance of an exemplary mediator. Theophilus merits the assistance of the ultimate *mediatrix*, the Virgin Mary, while St. Basil of Caesarea intercedes for the *servus* (hence, the legend's title: *Basilius*).

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determined that ecclesiastical finances should be entrusted to a church steward (*oikonomos*) rather than to the bishop himself. Claudia Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013), 219–20.

[5] Cilicia, a Roman province in southeastern Asian minor, is located in modern Turkey. This term should not be confused with the island of Sicily, which would be rendered "Sicilia" in Latin.

[6] The bishop is apparently lead astray by the persuasions of other parishioners: "blandis clam seductus suadelis" (Basilius, 58).

[7] As a point of clarification, it is unclear exactly what Hrotsvit means when she uses the word *servus*. There were slaves in the early medieval period, and they are a legal category in Frankish law. But medieval legal texts mimic their Roman predecessors and Ottonian writers like Hrotsvit often employ classicizing vocabulary: using the word *servus* to refer to unfree peasants, or serfs, as well as domestic servants and true slaves, such as prisoners of war. M. L. Bush, *Serfdom and Slavery: Studies in Legal Bondage* (New York: Routledge, 1996). Hrotsvit is clear, however, that the story is set in Basil's fourth century, where *servus* certainly meant slave in the traditional sense.

Despite their similarities, the two stories have distinct thematic features that reinforce Hrotsvit's didactic plan for the larger hagiographic corpus. In each case, the confluence of human failing and demonic stimulus perverts a positive Christian virtue. Theophilus's humility is twisted into pride and jealousy. The pious devotion of Proterius and his daughter, essentially a love of Christ, is twisted into the lust of a *servus* for his *domina*. Before Mary and Basil will intercede on their charges' behalf, the sinners must undergo a process of remedial Christian education, including catechetical training and penance. It is only after this lengthy re-education is complete that Theophilus and the *servus* are reintegrated both eschatologically and physically into the Christian community. Both legends conclude in a dramatic worship service, where the congregation witnesses the destruction of the demonic documents and the legal obligations that they formalize. A recitation of the protagonists's personal stories of redemption takes the place of the sermon. This use of the "*vita* within a *vita*" fits the pedagogical tone of these narratives.

A short dedication to the Abbess Gerberga, Hrotsvit's own beloved *magistra*, falls between these two legends and reinforces their pedagogical focus. Hrotsvit's awareness of herself as author and educator pervades this dedication. Hrotsvit offers her "new little verses" to Gerberga, stating that these stories explain how the "wicked" are "able to earn beloved forgiveness."[8] The introduction to the *Basilius* continues to commend a pedagogical hermeneutic to Hrotsvit's audience. The devil contract narratives are designed, according to Hrotsvit, as a an "exemplum" for anyone who "wants to understand (*comprendere*) the certain example of sin, or the immense gifts of the wholly

[8] "Spernere quos noli, nimium cum sint vitiosi" (Basilius, 5); "en tibi versiculos, Gerberg, fero, domna, novellos/ iungens praescriptis carmina carminulis/ qualiter et veniam meruiit sclerosus amandum" (Basilius,1-3)

faithful God."[9] Hrotsvit insists that Christ prefers to return the fallen to grace rather than pursue punishment. In order to receive the full impact of this lesson, Hrotsvit urges her audience to study the text, using the verb *perscrutor* to suggest the kind of thorough, careful study that will produce the best results.[10] These stories have the potential to provide a foundational truth (*verum*) that can support her audience's joyful faith.[11] Fundamental tenets of the Christian faith are at the heart of these two narratives: both in the ultimate redemption of the protagonists and in the explanatory theological asides that support the comprehension of Hrotsvit's audience.

5.2 Hrotsvit and Her Sources

As with the rest of her hagiographic corpus, Hrotsvit has adapted these two legends from existing narratives, building on prose sources to craft her metrical vitae. Hrotsvit's sources for *Theophilus* and *Basilius* come from Latin translations of presumed Greek originals that circulated widely in the Carolingian West.

5.2.1 *The Theophilus Tradition*

Hrotsvit's first "deal with the devil" story comes from the ninth-century *Miraculum sanctae Mariae de Theophilo* (hereafter *Miraculum*) written by Neapolitan translator Paul the Deacon.[12] Although secondary scholarship has consistently referred to an "original" Greek version of the Theophilus story, only three later medieval

[9] "Qui velit exemplum veniae comprendere certum necnon larga dei pietatis munera magni" (Basilius, 7-8).
[10] "Quisquis praesentem perscrutatur rationem" (Basilius, 16).
[11] "Gaudens gaudebit quod verum stare probabit" (Basilius, 15).
[12] BHL 8121, AASS IV Feb (Feb. 1:484-487). Gilles Gérard Meersseman, *Kritische glossen op de Griekse Theophilus-legende en haar Latijnse vertaling* (Brussel: Academie, 1963), 17–29. For more on Hrotsvit's use of Paul's source, see: Helene Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera. Mit Einleitungen und Kommentar* (Munchen, Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöingh, 1970), 147–53; Stephen L. Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim* (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 2006), 79.

manuscripts of the Greek legend remain extant.[13] Two of these manuscripts are ascribed to "Eutychianus," who claimed to be employed as a member of Theophilus's household. These manuscripts contain an introductory reference to "Persian invasions," which would hypothetically date this "original" version of the legend to the sixth century.[14] Though earlier secondary scholarship accepted genuine Eutychian authorship,[15] this ascription has been called into question, as has the very existence of any pre-ninth-century Greek Theophilus narrative. Adrienne Boyarin has suggested that Paul the Deacon's Latin text is the only "original" source for the narrative.[16]

Like his famous namesake, this Paul the Deacon was involved with the expansive activities of the Carolingian court. He was a resident of Naples, however, not Monte Cassino; and instead of producing a history of the Lombards, he translated Byzantine works for Charles the Bald.[17] Paul's *Miraculum* serves as the primary source for the

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[13] According to general consensus, the earliest of these three is Coislin 283 (Bibliothéque Nationale), which dates to the eleventh century. Beverly Boyd suggests the other "early" manuscript (Vienna, Nationalbibliothek, Palat. gr. 3.), often identified as eleventh century, is significantly later in date than the Parisian manuscript. Both of these manuscripts contain the Eutychian attribution. Beverly Boyd, *The Middle English Miracles of the Virgin*, Huntington Library Publications (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1964), 127.

[14] A series of Persian invasions occurred in the Byzantine Empire during the Emperor Justinian's reign. Geoffrey Greatrex and Samuel N. C. Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars AD 363-628* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 82–101. A similar chronology is repeated in Jacobus de Vorgraine's thirteenth century *Legenda Aurea*, which dates the events of the Theophilus narrative to 537. Following the sensible lead of Valerie Flint, I make no claims about chronology other than to note that the story is set in the Byzantine Empire, sometime before the Persian invasions of the sixth and seventh century. Valerie Irene Jane Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 345.

[15] For just one example, George Dasent confidently claims that, "the original" is "found in the Greek of Eutychianus." George Webbe Dasent, *Theophilus in Icelandic, Low German and Other Tongues from the M.ss. in the Royal Library, Stockholm* (London: W. Pickering, 1845), 9.

[16] Adrienne Williams Boyarin, *Miracles of the Virgin in Medieval England: Law and Jewishness in Marian Legends* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010), 43. Whether or not he translated a Greek original, Paul employed Hellenized vocabulary. For example, he designated the demonic contract as a *chirographum*. Homeyer suggests that very little of a potential Greek original comes through in Paul's "lifeless" work. Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 147.

[17] Michael McCormick, "Byzantium and the West, 700-900," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History: Volume 2, c.700-c.900*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 377. Only Paul's translations of the Theophilus narrative and the legend of Mary of Egypt (PL 73:671-690) remain extant, though he may have produced many more.

Theophilus narrative in the medieval West. It was read by Anglo-Saxon theologians as well as by such Carolingian elites as Paschasius Radbertus and Fulbert of Chartres.[18] Hrotsvit's metrical *Theophilus* also employed Paul's popular *Miraculum* as source material.[19] The popularity of Theophilus's story grew exponentially alongside the groundswell of interest in Mary in Western Europe. Like the apocryphal *Pseudo-Matthew* and *Transitus Mariae*, the Theophilus story began to appear in Marian liturgy.[20] On the continent, Fulbert of Chartres included details from Theophilus's story in his new liturgy for the feast of Mary's Nativity.[21] Fulbert's sermon *Approbate consuetuetudinis*, one of his two extant sermons for the feast, includes the Theophilus legend in lengthy summary. Similarly, the great Anglo-Saxon homiletician Aelfric of Eynsham included a brief overview of Theophilus in a homily for the Assumption of Mary, which represents the first extant vernacular version of the legend.[22]

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[18] Palmer and More, *The Sources of The Faust Tradition, from Simon Magus to Lessing*, 59; Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 153.

[19] Stephen L. Wailes, "The Sacred Stories in Verse," in *A Companion to Hrotsvit of Gandersheim (Fl. 960): Contextual and Interpretive Approaches*, ed. Phyllis R. Brown and Stephen L. Wailes (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 109.

[20] Clayton identifies an additional two psalters that reference the Theophilus legend. Mary Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 109–20; Meersseman, *Kritische glossen op de Griekse Theophilus-legende en haar Latijnse vertaling*, 1–19.

[21] Fulbert notes the relative novelty of this liturgy ("*superadderet hodiernum*") in his *Sermo IV: De nativitate beatissimae Mariae virginis* (PL 141: 320). Fulbert also oversaw the construction of the new cathedral at Chartes, which was, unsurprisingly, dedicated to Mary. For a good overview of the so-called "School of Chartres" as well as Fulbert's life and work see: Édouard Jeauneau, *L'âge d'or des écoles de Chartres* (Chartres: Editions Houvet, 1995). For a brief introduction to the eleventh century developments in Marian theology see: Hilda Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2009), 205–9.

[22] Like Hrotsvit, Aelfric's sermon includes a short discussion of Mary's intervention for Theophilus as well as Basil of Caesarea's intervention for the unnamed *servus*. Boyarin, *Miracles of the Virgin in Medieval England*, 53; Gabriella Corona, ed., *Aelfric's Life of Saint Basil the Great: Background and Context* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: D.S. Brewer, 2006), 53.

5.2.2 *Basil's Vitae*

Hrotsvit's source for her *Basilius* narrative comes from a Greek collection of hagiographic episodes that circulated as Basil's *vita*, translated into Latin in the ninth century. Mirroring the dearth of early Greek manuscripts in the Theophilus tradition, there is but a single extant Greek life of Basil, purportedly written by Bishop Amphilochius of Iconium. Secondary scholarship concurs that Amphilochius was not the author of this rather haphazard collection, which was likely compiled long after Amphilochius's death.[23] The question of authorship is further confused by certain first-person sections that identify their author as Elladius, the cleric who assumed leadership in Caesarea after Basil's death. Dating such a diverse collection is difficult, and suggestions range from the sixth century to the ninth.[24] Unlike the Theophilus narrative, which is wholly comprised of the demonic encounter, the *servus* and his diabolical contract were originally a single episode of the larger *Vita Basilii*.[25] This hagiographic collection remained distinct from descriptions of Basil's life found in the work of his contemporaries Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Ephrem the Syrian.[26]

Neither these accounts nor Basil's own corpus achieved popularity in the Carolingian West. Instead, the "Pseudo-Amphilochian" *Vita Basilii* gained prominence,

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[23] BHG 247-60, CPG 3253. Corona, *Aelfric's Life of Saint Basil the Great*, 6–14; John Wortley, "The Pseudo-Amphilochian Vita Basilii : An Apocryphal Life of Saint Basil the Great," *Florilegium* 2 (June 6, 1980): 217–39.

[24] R. Barringer, "The Pseudo-Amphilochian Life of St. Basil: Ecclesiastical Penance and Byzantine Hagiography," *Theologia* 51 (1980): 56; Ralph Cleminson, "The miracle De juvene qui Christum negaverat in the pseudo-Amphilochian Vita Basilii and its Slavonic Adaptations," *Parergon* 9, no. 2 (1991): 1.

[25] Basil's intercession for the unnamed *servus* occasionally circulated separately from the rest of the collection. For example, the episode appears on its own in several later elements of the Slavonic liturgical tradition. Cleminson, "The miracle De juvene qui Christum negaverat in the pseudo-Amphilochian Vita Basilii and its Slavonic Adaptations," 4–5.

[26] Wortley, "The Pseudo-Amphilochian Vita Basilii," 217–18.

appearing in three ninth-century Latin translations (BHL 1022, 1023, 1024).[27] The relationship between the translations is murky at best, but BHL 1023 circulated most widely.[28] BHL 1023 is ascribed to an unknown "Euphemius," who may have been the translator mentioned by Aeneas, Bishop of Paris in his *Liber adversus Graecos*.[29] This "Euphemian" translation is extant in several Carolingian manuscripts and served as a source for Paschasius Radbertus and Hincmar of Rheims.[30] As Gabriella Corona explains, "the early transmission history and circulation of this version of the *Vita Basilii* can be limited both geographically and chronologically to the ninth-century Carolingian kingdoms."[31] Hincmar first uses the *servus* and his demonic contract as an example in his opinion on the divorce of Lothar II and his wife Theutberga, and then again two decades later in his *Vita Remigii*.[32] According to Corona, Hincmar's style of quotation indicates he copied directly from the *Vita Basilii* (BHL 1023), which suggests that he owned his own copy or at least had "easy access" to a nearby text.[33] Hrotsvit taps into this same widely available *Vita Basilii* as a source for her *Basilius*.[34]

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[27] For a thorough discussion of this manuscript tradition, see: Corona, *Aelfric's Life of Saint Basil the Great*, 6–14.
[28] BHL 1023 was the likely source for BHL 1022, which was composed by Anastatius during his rule as abbot of Santa Maria in Trastevere between 858 and 867. Ibid., 23–25.
[29] PL 121.739. For a translation of this passage, see: Ibid., 15.
[30] Ibid., 25–28.
[31] Ibid., 16; Paul Jonathan Fedwick, "Translations of the Works of Basil before 1400," in *Basil of Caesarea, Christian, Humanist, Ascetic: A Sixteen-Hundredth Anniversary Symposium* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1981), 441. Paschasius also cites the *Vita Basilii* in his *de corpore et sangine Dei*: B. Paul, ed., *Pascasii Radberti de corpore et sanguine Domini: cum appendice Epistola ad Fredugardum*, Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis 16 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1969), 86–87.
[32] Letha Böhringer, ed., *De divortio Lotharii regis et Theutbergae reginae*, Monumenta Germaniae historica. Concilia IV, suppl. 1 (Hannover: Hahn, 1992), 210–12; B. Krusch, ed., *Hincmari Vita Sancti Remigii*, Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptorum Rerum Merovingicarum 3 (Berlin, 1896), 299. For commentary on this Hincmar's use of the *Vita Basilii* see: Corona, *Aelfric's Life of Saint Basil the Great*, 20; Stuart Airlie, "Private Bodies and the Body Politic in the Divorce Case of Lothar II," *Past & Present*, no. 161 (1998): 3–38.
[33] Corona, *Aelfric's Life of Saint Basil the Great*, 21.
[34] Wailes, who did not have the benefit of Corona's detailed manuscript analysis of the various *Vita Basilii* manuscripts, hesitates to identify BHL 1023 as Hrotsvit's definitive source, stating "comparisons are important but must be made cautiously." Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of*

The Pseudo-Amphilochian *Vita Basilii* circulated in Anglo-Saxon England as well as on the continent. Aelfric paired short references to both stories in his homiletic corpus, particularly emphasizing the value of Basil and Mary as educators as well as intercessors. Boyarin goes so far as to suggest that Aelfric understands Mary as "the pedagogical source of Christianity."[35] Indeed, in his homily on Mary's assumption, Aelfric describes Mary as the source of the apostles's knowledge "of all things touching Christ's humanity, for she had from the beginning accurately learned them through the Holy Ghost and seen them with her own sight."[36] Hrotsvit clarifies the connection between the intercessor's pedagogical and catechetical roles for her audience, using the *Basilius* and *Theophilus* to describe the power of redemptive pedagogy.

5.2.3 *Hrotsvit's "Deal with the Devil" Narratives*

Though Hrotsvit employs Paul the Deacon's *Miraculum* and the Pseudo-Amphilochian *Vita Basilii* as the foundation for her work, she shapes them to support the aims of her larger hagiographic corpus.[37] Hrotsvit uses these two legends to teach her audience about sin, saintly intercession, the value of penance, and the role of the community in reformation. Additionally, both the *Theophilus* and the *Basilius* highlight the crucial role of speech in the Christian life. Direct speech can serve a number of interrelated purposes, such indicating a speaker's spiritual state. As a testament to the

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Gandersheim, 89. I, along with Homeyer and Corona, am comfortable with designating BHL 1023 as the source for Hrotsvit's work: Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 172; Corona, *Aelfric's Life of Saint Basil the Great*, 19.

[35] Boyarin, *Miracles of the Virgin in Medieval England*, 50.

[36] Benjamin Thorpe, trans., *The Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church.: The First Part, Containing the Sermones Catholici, or Homilies of Aelfric.* (New York: Johnson Reprint Corp, 1971), 439–41.

[37] The most obvious evidence of her editorial intervention is her complex metrical presentation, which is a significant departure from the simplistic prose of her source material.

depth of their soul sickness, Theophilus and the *servus* are not permitted to speak until they begin the process of atoning for their sin.

Speech can also provide education and reformation, as proven by the confessional conversations between the intercessors and their charges. The recitation of sins occurs multiple times in both legends. In each case, the speech act represents a step in the process of contrition. First, the sinner enumerates his sins as a means of confession. Second, the intercessor explains the nature of the sin as a means of correction. Finally, the sinner recites his sins as a means of edification for the Christian community. The audience of Hrotsvit's work would surely represent a fourth layer of this subtle educational process. At the conclusion of these two legends, Hrotsvit's audience will understand both the power of sin and the power of divine forgiveness to overcome any human failing.

5.3 Descent into Sin

5.3.1 *The Cast of Characters*

Hrotsvit's introductions to the *Theophilus* and the *Basilius* reinterpret her source material to emphasize the theological and legal implications of her narrative. For example, in her introduction to the *Theophilus*, Hrotsvit covers much of the same biographical ground as Paul's *Miraculum*. Each explains that Theophilus, gifted with both excellence and modesty, served as the *vicedomus* of a church in Cilicia.[38] Rather

[38] Theophilus was responsible for financial management, particularly with regard to the distribution of charity. As discussed earlier, the Latin *vicedomus*, when considered in the context of the church, likely refers to the Greek *oikonomos*. The Latin term can also be used to designate several public offices, including a count or a count's steward in the early medieval period. Warren C. Brown, "On the Gesta Municipalia and the Public Validation of Documents in Frankish Europe," *Speculum* 87, no. 2 (2012): 345–375; Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 155. Both Paul and Hrotsvit designate Theophilus's duties as primarily charitable (and thus financial), which fits with the Greek origins of the office. They also describe the role

than follow Paul in framing the introduction with the Persian invasion, however, Hrotsvit presents her narrative in light of salvation history: "Afterward, the light of faith, increasing throughout the world, loosened Cilicia from the dark shades of error."[39] Theophilus is a vital part of that *lux fidei*, marked from a young age for a future in the church.[40] In order to nurture this gift, his parents not only had him baptized but also ensured that he received a proper education.[41] Paul makes no reference to Theophilus's education.[42] By contrast, Hrotsvit explains that the young Theophilus was entrusted to a bishop for the explicit purpose of theological training.[43] Theophilus showed intellectual promise, which was nurtured by the bishop's oversight of his student's education: "With devoted piety [his parents] entrusted their sweet son to a certain bishop of great knowledge, who nourished him in blossoming eagerness for great study."[44] In Hrotsvit's estimation, the bishop's role was to "water the natural field" of Theophilus's mind from the "seven-fold font" of wisdom.[45]

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within the ecclesiastical hierarchy: although the *vicedomus* is subject to the bishop, he wields a great deal of power in the day-to-day operations of the church.

[39] "Postquam lux fidei rescense per climate mundi/ Siciliam tenebris errorum solvit ab atris" (Theophilus, 1-2). Paul's chronology relies on "current" events: "priusquam incursio fieret in romanam rem publicam execrandorum Persarum" (Miraculum, 1). All citations from the *Miraculum* will come from Meerssemann's critical edition: Meersseman, *Kritische glossen op de Griekse Theophilus-legende en haar Latijnse vertaling*, 17–29. Unless otherwise noted, translations are my own.

[40] "Quem devota partum divinis cura suorum/ obsequiis igitur primis signavit ab annis" (Theophilus, 7-8). Paul includes no mention of Theophilus's intellectual gifts, either as a youth or in his role as *vicedomus*.

[41] "Puri sacrata tinctus baptismatis unda" (Theophilus, 6)

[42] Homeyer reduces Hrotsvit's addition of this introductory material to a mere hagiographic trope. Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 154.

[43] Paul's version praises the vicar's morality and moderation, but does not mention his intellect: "nomine Theophilum, moribus et conuersatione praecipuum, qui quieta ac omnimoda moderatione, pertinentes ecclesiae res et Christi rationabile ovile optime regebat" (Miraculum, 1).

[44] "Atque sui dulcem pie sollicitando nepotem/ cuidam pontifici credidit nimium sapienti,/ quo nutriret eum studio florente docendum" (Theophilus, 9-10).

[45] "Ipsius ingenuum mentisque rigaret agellum/ de sophie rivis septeno fonte manatis" (Theophilus, 12-13). Compare this to Hrotsvit's previous discussion of Córdoba as an intellectual center when ruled by Christian kings: "Inclita deliciis, rebus quoque splendida cunctis,/ maxime septenis sophie repleta fluentis/ necnon perpetuis semper praeclara triumphis" (Pelagius, 16-18).

After Theophilus has "drunk sufficiently" from that spring of knowledge, he is capable of advancing "step by step" through the church hierarchy.[46] Despite his nobility, Theophilus respects his place in that hierarchy and is generous with his congregation.[47] He offered hospitality to the needy and the congregation saw him as a benevolent parent.[48] Hrotsvit understands Theophilus's education as a crucial element of his formation. Indeed, Hrotsvit's introduction not only identifies Theophilus as an eager learner, but also highlights the role of significant mentors who encouraged his educational journey.

In much the same way, Hrotsvit alters her source material in the introduction to the *Basilius*, highlighting the value of the faithful, and particularly monastic, life. The *Vita Basilii* construes its entire narrative, including the *servus* episode, as evidence of Basil's miraculous life.[49] By contrast, Hrotsvit identifies the nobleman Proterius as the initial focus of her narrative, noting the complex financial and legal elements at play in his family situation. Proterius had a single child, a daughter, who stands to inherit his vast fortune.[50] Despite her status as sole heir, Proterius has promised his daughter to a local monastic community. As with Theophilus's parents, Hrotsvit casts Proterius's decision as a desire to nurture his daughter's faith, a combination of "pious affection and paternal

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[46] "Cumque pio satis exausti puero foret ipsi,/ digno confestim provectus honore gradatim/ perveniebat ad officium sibimet satis aptum" (Theophilus, 14-16).
[47] "Pontifici se subiectum cleroque modestum/ prebuit atque pium populo cunctisque benignum" (Theophilus, 19-20).
[48] "Hospiciumque vagis numquam claudebat egenis./ Hinc igitur concors omnis devotio plebis/ affectu tenero cordis pendebat in illo:/ ipsum ceu dulcem venerantur amando parentem" (Theophilus, 25-28).
[49] The *Vita Basilii* includes the spurious attribution to Elladius to further emphasize the work's apparent historicity (Vita Basilii, 11.1-3). This episode is contained in the eleventh chapter of the larger *Vita Basilii*. All citations are taken from the critical edition provided in Corona's Appendix I: Corona, *Aelfric's Life of Saint Basil the Great*, 223–47. Unless otherwise noted, translations are my own.
[50] "Unica feminei sexus proles fuit illi,/ nec alius substantiole mansit sibi magne/ heres" (Basilius, 23-25).

responsibility."[51] Proterius's vision of the monastic life closely resembles Hrotsvit's own, as she has explained it in the *Maria*, and will again in the *Agnes*: the monastic life allows women to be "decorated with the jewels of eternal virginity" rather than the "futile pomp of the world."[52] Women who take the veil are also "protected, together in the narrow enclosures of the abbey."[53] The monastic life thus provides a safe space for Proterius's daughter to cultivate a mindful relationship with Christ. The *Vita Basilii* includes no such explanation of the monastic life. In her expanded introduction, Hrotsvit describes the monastic aspirations of Proterius and his daughter as emblematic of their exemplary faith.

5.3.2 *Presentation of the Problem*

As Hrotsvit indicated in her dedication to Gerberga, the *Theophilus* and the *Basilius* will serve as evidence of two things: both the great power of sin and the boundless forgiveness of a gracious God. Following her introduction to the characters, Hrotsvit ushers her audience into the harsh reality of sinful human existence, a state of being that afflicts both the noble Theophilus and the lowly *servus*.

5.3.2.1 Theophilus's Pride

Theophilus's downfall begins when the local bishop falls ill and the community nominates Theophilus for the position. Like her source, Hrotsvit notes Theophilus's

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[51] "Quam certe tenero dilexit amore;/ affectuque pio necnon pietate patera/ optans…curavit sacris ipsam sociare puellis" (Basilius, 25-27, 30).
[52] "Ornari gemmis perfecte virginitatis,/ quam corpus pompa mundi mortale caduca" (Basilius, 28-29).
[53] Hrotsvit's introduction to the *Basilius* characters more than triples the length of the corresponding section in the *Vita Basilii*. Hrotsvit's effusive praise of the monastic life continues throughout the introduction: "Quae consignate Christo velamine sacro/ cenobii claustris pariter servantur in artis" (Basiliius, 31-32). The *Vita Basilii* includes a single reference to the cloistered life: [Proterius] "ibi filiam suam consecrare ac in uno de beneactionalibus domibus monasteriorum mittere, atque sacrificium Deo offere volens" (Vita Basilii, 11.6-7).

reluctance to become bishop.[54] Hrotsvit's version intensifies Theophilus's refusal: Theophilus "detested such an honor and refused to obey the ecclesiastical authority by coming."[55] When he finally appears before the *pontifex*, Theophilus claims he is too beset by vice to be a "suitable" leader, "pouring forth these mournful words again and again."[56] Because he "disdained the office," another bishop was appointed.[57] Even when the new bishop then relieves Theophilus of his steward duties, his spirit was not quelled: instead, he rejoiced that he was more "free for eager servitude of Christ."[58] Wailes attributes Theophilus's actions to "obstinacy" rather than humility, claiming that the vicar refused to follow God's plans.[59] But false humility would not explain the fact that, according to Hrotsvit, the devil "loathed [Theophilus's] patient mind."[60] Hrotsvit's lengthy introduction to Theophilus's education, ecclesial management, and humility contribute to the presentation of the *vicedomus* as an ideal Christian. In this way, Hrotsvit proves that no one is immune to the power of sin, personified in the activity of the devil: "with the same fraud with which he deceived the first parents, [the devil] beat the spirit of the just man, incessantly reminding his fragile mind of the alluring delights of his former power, and the grievous recent loss."[61]

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[54] The *Vita Basilii* claims the congregation must physically drag Theophilus to speak to church officials about the position, while Hrotsvit reports the congregation writes letters on Theophilus's behalf (Miraculum, 2; Theophilus, 53-56).
[55] "Ille sed execrans talem constanter honorem/ presulis imperio parere negat veniendo" (Theophilus, 45-46). Paul's text only briefly notes Theophilus's reluctance: "adquiescere nollet, sinivit eum, atque alterum promovit dignum ad eiusdem ecclesiae peragendum episcopatus officium" (Miraculum, 3). For more on this narrative's understanding of clerical election, see: Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 155; Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity*, 219.
[56] "Stratus adusque solum voces spargebat in altum/ infectum viciis sese dicens fore multis/ non aptum sancto Christi populo dominari" (Theophilus, 49-51).
[57] "Decus talis qui fastidivit honoris" (Theophilus, 54). The new bishop was "deceived" by certain malcontents, which leads to his decision (Theophilus, 57-61).
[58] "Gaudebatque satis sese iam posse vacare/ tanto liberius studio Christi famulatus" (Theophilus, 64-65).
[59] Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 81–85.
[60] "Cuius mox mentem detestatur pacientem/ tocius humani generis sevissimus hostis" (Theophilus, 67-68).
[61] Theophilus, 69-73.

Theophilus's fall from grace is commensurate to his former success.[62] Paul reports that Theophilus now seeks "human" rather than divine glory.[63] In Hrotsvit's version, the man "famous for his life and merit threw away all virtue, out of his mind, and made no attempt to stand firm against the wicked temptation."[64] Theophilus was conquered by sin and "he wasted away in grief of the soul."[65] This quasi-medical description of sin will continue throughout Hrotsvit's narrative. Neither Theophilus's virtue, nor his excellent education, nor even his history of good works was sufficient protection against the disease of sin: "he who previously refused to rule the people as bishop, now laid claim to the ceremony of an inferior power [of the *vicedomus* position]."[66]

5.3.2.2 The *Servus* and Disordered Love

In the *Basilius*, the devil finds a different entry-point into the world of a prominent and faithful man.[67] Rather than attacking Proterius directly, the devil works through Proterius's vulnerable *servus*. Hrotsvit casts these events in light of salvation history, describing the devil as "the author of evil, who deceived the first man."[68] This timeless evil hates Proterius's virtue just as he hated Theophilus's humility. Because the devil

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[62] In keeping with his assesment of Theophilus's "false" modesty, Wailes explains this downfall is "explained by the spiritual weakness one finds in his earlier life." Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 84.
[63] "Quibus non divinam sed humanam desideraret gloriam" (Miraculum, 4).
[64] "Nec mora, vir fortis, vita meritisque celebris,/ mentis virtutem demens abiecerat omnem/ nec temptamentis studuit restare nefandis" (Theophilus, 76-78).
[65] "Sed victus cessit mentisque dolore tabescit" (Theophilus, 79). Forms of *tabesco* will also be used to describe the *servus* (Basilus, 38) and the hierarch Carpus (Dionysius, 61), who both suffer from a different form of soul sickness.
[66] "Quique prius plebe sprevit princeps dominari,/ affectat iuris pompas nunc inferioris" (Theophilus, 80-81). Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 157.
[67] Silber rather underestimates Hrotsvit's devil when she designates him a "plotter" and then dismisses him as an "abstraction." Patricia Silber, "Hrotsvit and the Devil," 190.
[68] "Auctor sed scelerum, qui decepit protoplastum" (Basilius, 34). Compare to the *Vita Basilii*: "Sed ab initio homicida diabolus invidens divinae voluntati" (Vita Basilii, 11.7-8).

loathes "the praiseworthy vow of the just man," he causes Proterius's servant to "burn with inordinate love of the girl."[69] This soul sickness drives the servant mad: "having been too much pierced by the arrow of love," the more he burned, "the more he wasted away in his heart."[70] Such a description adds the potential impediment of insanity to the already inappropriate slave-mistress attachment, as David Day has noted.[71] According to Hrotsvit, the *servus* is suffering from a different strain of the same disease that inflicted Theophilus. In both cases, Hrotsvit's diagnostic description reports the patient is "wasting away" (*tabseco*) and "out of his mind" (*dementer*).[72]

Hrotsvit's source uses no such language to describe the *servus* or his mental state; *Vita Basilii* suggests that the *servus* has no qualms about his desire for Proterius's daughter.[73] By contrast, Hrotsvit walks the fine line between acknowledging the power of sin while also holding the *servus* accountable for his actions. Though the *servus* is "unlucky," he is fully aware that "he was unworthy for such a marriage (*coniugium*)."[74] The *servus* is indeed unworthy of a *coniugium,* which can only be contracted between free partners of equal class. If the *servus* is successful in achieving any union, at best he can hope for a *contubernium* or a *concubinitas*, neither of which had the legal standing of

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[69] Note that Hrotsvit continues to regard the dedication of Proterius's daughter to the monastic life as emblematic of his piety: "Detestando viri votum laudabile iusti/ ipsius proprium fecit fervescere servum/ in supra dicte dementer amore puelle" (Basilius, 34-36). The *Vita Basilii* simply states the servant "burned with love," offering no qualification of that desire (Vita Basilii, 11.9).

[70] "Qui nimis infelix spiculis perfossus amoris,/ quo magis ardescit, tanto plus corde tabescit" (Basilius, 37-38).

[71] David Day, "The Iudex Aequus: Legality and Equity in Hrotsvit's Basilius," in *Hrotsvit of Gandersheim: Contexts, Identities, Affinities, and Performances*, ed. Phyllis Rugg Brown, Katharina Wilson, and Linda McMillin (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 30–35.

[72] Theophilus, 78-81; Basilius, 35-40. Homeyer describes the affliction as "inner torment." Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 178.

[73] "Is autem cum fuisset huiusmodi inchoationis indigus et non audens appropinquare ad propositum" (Vita Basilii, 11. 9-10).

[74] "Indignum se coniugio meminit quia tanto" (Basilius, 39).

a marriage.[75] As Judith Evans-Grubbs has shown, Constantinian legislation designed to prevent the slave-mistress relationship was valid until the sixth century.[76] Further, Katherine Drew proves that, according to at least one Carolingian capitulary, a noblewoman who married her own slave could be stripped of her property while the slave was tortured; anyone who assisted either party was fined a hefty sum.[77] Hrotsvit's *servus* is painfully aware of this social and legal reality. His fate is not sealed, however, until he commits his inappropriate desire to secrecy, not daring "to reveal this new torture of his heart."[78] Instead of seeking the solace and support of their faith communities, both the *servus* and Theophilus decide to let their soul sickness fester.

5.3.3 *From Magus to Diabolus*

Blinded by their spiritual disease, both Theophilus and the *servus* seek out a local *magus* to solve their problems. In each case, the *magus* will serve as intermediary between the sinner and the demonic realm. The devil will then require the sinner to renounce Christianity in a written document that Hrotsvit designates a *carta*. Charters are a prominent part of Ottonian culture, particularly significant in the distribution of

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[75] Philip Lyndon Reynolds, *Marriage in the Western Church: The Christianization of Marriage During the Patristic and Early Medieval Periods* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 20; Judith Evans Grubbs, *Women and the Law in the Roman Empire: A Sourcebook on Marriage, Divorce and Widowhood* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 150–54. As James Brundage has shown, a free Roman woman who entered concubinage with a slave could be "reduced to slavery herself." James A. Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 24. For more on slave marriage see: Carl I. Hammer, "A Slave Marriage Ceremony from Early Medieval Germany: A Note and a Document in Translation," *Slavery and Abolition* 16, no. 2 (1995): 243–240; M. Sheehan, "Theory and Practice: Marriage of the Unfree and the Poor in Medieval Society," *Medieval Studies* 50 (1988): 457–87.

[76] Judith Evans-Grubbs, "'Marriage More Shameful Than Adultery': Slave-Mistress Relationships, 'Mixed Marriages', and Late Roman Law," *Phoenix* 47, no. 2 (1993): 125–54.

[77] Cap. III. LXLVIII. Katherine Fischer Drew, *The Laws of the Salian Franks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 144.

[78] "Nec audet nudare novum coris criuciatum" (Basilius, 40).

property, both monastic and secular.[79] Though her sources describe a similar diabolical contract, Hrotsvit uses the document to highlight the legal elements at play in her own narratives. Both contracts will be proven legally null, having been predicated on fraudulent claims of the devil. In the following episodes, Hrotsvit allows the *carta* to replace, rather than support, the words of her main characters, emphasizing their helplessness in the face of demonic persuasion.

Both Hrotsvit and Paul identify Theophilus's infernal intermediary as a *magus*, well-versed in the *diabolicae artes*.[80] This man has a reputation for his skills and has "deceived many with magical fraud."[81] Hrotsvit's description of Theophilus's actions is consistent with her earlier assessment of his devolving spiritual state: "having been seduced, a miserable man with a blind heart," Theophilus seeks the *magus* for assistance.[82] Utterly "captivated" by the "sweet words" of the *magus,* Theophilus is "eager to be bound fast to the service of the harsh demon."[83] The *magus* promises

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[79] John W. Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship and Royal Monasteries in Early Medieval Germany, c. 936-1075* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 106–26; Henry Mayr-Harting, *Church and Cosmos in Early Ottonian Germany: The View from Cologne* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 39–43.

[80] "Erat denique in eadem civitate hebraeus quidam nefandissimus et omnino diaboli operator" (Miraculum, 5); "quendum perversum petiit festinus Hebreum,/ qui magica plures decepit fraude fideles" (Theophilus, 83-84). Hrotsvit only designates the *magus* as Jewish once, while Paul repeats the term a dozen times. For a comprehensive exploration of antisemitism as represented in medieval literature and art, see: Mitchell Merback, *Beyond the Yellow Badge: Anti-Judaism and Antisemitism in Medieval and Early Modern Visual Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2008); Debra Higgs Strickland, *Saracens, Demons, & Jews: Making Monsters in Medieval Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); Joshua Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study in Folk Religion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

[81] "Qui magica plures decepit fraude fidelis" (Theophilus, 84). Paul also reports this assesement of his reputation: "Qui iam multos infidelitatis argumentis, in foveae perditionis immerserat baratro" (Miraculum, 5). This may not be an idle fear. As Ulrike Wiethaus notes, a least one Christian, a cleric named Bodo, actually did convert to Judaism in the Carolingian period. Ulrike Wiethaus, "Body and Empire in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 34, no. 1 (2004): 41–63; Jacob Rader Marcus, *The Jew in the Medieval World: A Source Book, 315-1791*, Jewish History Source Books (Cincinnati: The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1938), 353–55.

[82] "Tandem seductus caecato corde misellus/ quondam perversum petiit festinus Hebreum" (Theophilus, 82-83). This is Hrotsvit's only reference to the faith of the *magus*.

[83] "His hic infelix monitis captus male blandis/ demonis obsequio sevi gestitit religari,/ quo sic umbratilis munis meruisset honoris" (Theophilus, 92-94). Paul makes no mention of specific deception or persuasion

Theophilus a "cure" (*medela*) for the shame of his demotion, if the vicar promises to "live after this under the power" of the devil.[84] Hrotsvit continues to identify the devil as deceptive. The "king of death" even persuades his "damned agents with clever fraud" to lay traps for humans.[85]

As evidence of his particular cleverness, the devil requires Theophilus to formally renounce his faith in writing. Hrotsvit's account identifies both Christ and Mary as objects of Theophilus's renunciation: "if he desires to be mine he will deny Christ in writing, and the chaste mother of him, *equally*, through whose birth I endured such grave damnation."[86] Hrotsvit views Theophilus's path of sin and redemption as a reflection of the primordial sin, which could only be reversed through the combined activity of Christ and Mary. Hrotsvit's audience would recall similar language from the introduction to *Maria*: through Eve the devil gained a foothold with humanity and through Mary he lost that claim.[87] Here, Hrotsvit refers to the devil twice as a "snake" (*anguinus*, *draco*) to reinforce this connection.[88]

Hrotsvit reports only a single incident of Theophilus's speech throughout the demonic encounter, and even this is indirect. At the beginning of the episode, Theophilus "begged

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undertaken by the *magus*: he deals in "*infidelitas argumentis*," but only speaks directly to tell Theophilus where to meet him for the diabolical encounter (Miraculum, 5).

[84] "Promittens promptam despectus esse medelam,/ si parendo suis vellet tantum suadelis/ subditione sui post hec habitare magistri" (Theophilus, 89-91). This language continues Hrotsvit's characterization of Theophilus's issue as spiritual disease, while Paul's *magus* simply promises the devil "will help" Theophilus: "ducam te ad patronum meum, et subueniet tibi, in quo volueris" (Miraculum, 5).

[85] "Theophilus, 103-106.

[86] "Si meus esse cupit scriptis Christumque negabit/ illiusque puellarem pariter genitricem,/ per cuius partum patior nimium grave damnum" (Theophilus, 114-116). In Paul's version, Theophilus denies Christ and Mary of his own accord; the devil only asks that he "deny the son of Mary and all those things that are hateful to me" (Miraculum, 8). Homeyer believes that this scene is meant to recall the interrogation of Hrotsvit's other saints, particularly Pelagius (334): Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 158.

[87] "Que parens mundo restaurasti, pia virgo,/ vitam quam virgo perdiderat vetula" (Maria, 15-16).

[88] Theophilus, 122, 124.

for [the magician's] nefarious help with tears."[89] In response to the presentation of the *carta*, Hrotsvit calls attention to Theophilus's lack of direct speech: "the miserable man did not respond … with any words, but went to do what the perverse snake suggested."[90] In stark contrast to Paul's text, Hrotsvit's version includes no direct speech from Theophilus until he addresses Mary, his intercessor.[91] This demonstrates the importance of speech: Theophilus's mouth is polluted and until he is healed of his soul sickness he cannot communicate. In a sense, this silence removes Theophilus's agency, reinforcing his status as a victim. But silence does not remove his culpability, according to Hrotsvit: "as a traitor, he gave his whole self willingly to sin, writing the contract of his own defeat."[92] Though he is silent during his downfall, Theophilus's words will be crucial in the process of penance.

This interplay between speech and pollution is also demonstrated in Hrotsvit's second story, when the *servus* meets with his own *magus*. As with Theophilus, Hrotsvit notes the turbulent mental state of the *servus*, who is suffering from a wasting disease that renders him "blind" (*caecus*) and "mad" (*baccahantus*).[93] Rather than consulting a trusted advisor or cleric, the *servus* instead reveals the "secret of his bitter sadness" to the

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[89] "Prolambensque suas prostrato corpore plantas/ ipsius auxilium flagitat lacrimando nefandum" (Theophilus, 85-86). Like Paul, Hrotsvit reports that Theophilus prostrates himself in front of the *magus*, symbolizing the ironic reversal of his former piety. However, Hrotsvit's Theophilus does not prostrate himself in front of the devil; instead, the *magus* preforms this act of subservience (Theophilus, 109).
[90] "Iste miser verbo non contradixerat ullo,/ sed fieri gestit, que perversus draco suasit" (Theophilus, 123-124). According to Paul, Theophilus further solidified the legality of the document (*chirographum*) by affixing it with his seal: "faciensque chirographum, imposita cera signavit annulo proprio" (Miraculum, 8).
[91] Paul construes the entirety of the demonic encounter as a conversation between Theophilus, the *magus*, and the devil (Miraculum, 5-8).
[92] "Proditor atque sui totum se perditioni/ sponte dedit proprii cartam scribens detrimenti" (Theophilus, 125-126).
[93] "Cecatus bachanti corde misellus" (Basilius, 53). Note the parallels to Theophilus: "caecato corde misellus" (Theophilus, 82).

magus.[94] Hrotsvit continues to emphasize the financial aspects of her *Basilius* narrative: the *servus* offers the *magus* "a not insignificant sum" if he will join the "tender heart of his own master's daughter in servile love."[95] Despite this offer, the *magus* must admit admit that he does not have the power to orchestrate a union (*consortium*) "between a servant and his own mistress."[96] Legally uniting a slave and his mistress will require the considerable strength of the devil himself. The *magus* offers to write the *servus* a letter of introduction, which alludes to the devil's eternal goal: "it is always proper to ask for your [the devil's] assistance if your servants are able to give you anyone cleansed in the baptismal font, having been removed from the flock of Christ."[97] The *magus* appears confident that the *servus* will indeed become a "future disciple" for the devil.[98]

Armed with this letter of introduction, the *servus* approaches the entrance to the demonic realm. For Hrotsvit, this episode is a single moment in the long history of sin and redemption: the devil is "that ancient snake (*vetus draco*) who tries to ruin even his

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[94] "Tandem namque, magum querens invenerat unum,/ secretum cui tristitiae monstravit amarae" (Basilius, 41-42). Neither Hrotsvit nor the *Vita Basilii* designates this *magus* as a Jew, though Hrotsvit's audience may have conflated the two *magi* under this category.

[95] "Promittens illi non parva dona lucelli,/ si teneram prolis mentem proprii senioris,/ eius servili iam conglutinasset amori" (Basilius, 43-45). *The Vita Basilii* does not emphasize the "servile" nature of the love and only obliquely reminds readers of the girl's status as *domina*: "promittens se, si meruerit, dominari ipsius puellae, multam ei retribuere auri quantitatem" (Vita Basilii, 11.11-12). Neither Hrotsvit nor the *Vita Basilii* explain how the *servus* amassed such a bribe.

[96] "Nam fateor tante non me valitudinis esse,/ ut servo proprie iungam consortia domne" (Basilius, 47-48). In contrast to the *Vita Basilii*, Hrotsvit's *magus* consistently describes the desired union as a *consortium,* keeping the question of property at the forefront of the audience's mind. Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 178. The *Vita Basilii* also lacks Hrotsvit's emphasis on the legal and moral impediments the *magus* would have to overcome in order to accomplish the marriage. The *Vita Basilii magus* simply states: "ego in istud non praevaleo" (Vita Basilii, 11.13).

[97] "Condecet ergo tuos semper temptare ministros,/ si possint aliquos fontis baptismate lotos/ assignare tibi subtractos de grege Christi" (Basilius, 57-59). Compare to the *Vita Basilii*: "Oportet festinare me a christianorum religione abstrahere et tuae adducere voluntati" (Vita Basilii, 11.20-21).

[98] "Ipsum disciplum facias tibi rite futurum" (Basilius, 61). This section of the legend (Basilius, 60-70), as recorded in M, has some scribal errors (fol. 58^{r}). The error resulted in an erasure and a reordering of the existing lines; my enumeration reflects the reconstruction provided in Berschin's critical edition. Walter Berschin, ed., *Hrotsvit Opera Omnia*, Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana (Monachii: Saur, 2001), 96–97; Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 178–79.

allies."[99] When the "author of all evil and deceit" appears to the *servus*,[100] he complains that Christians who renounce their faith inevitably return to Christ.[101] Christians are able to return to faith because Christ "wants to hinder forgiveness for no one seeking it … he does not want to return any converted one to [the devil], even after crime."[102] Even if he is willing to overlook the *servus'*s potential return to faith, the devil is still wary of the *servus'*s desire to marry his master's daughter legally (*licito*).[103] Given the magnitude of this request, the devil requires the *servus* to renounce his baptism, agreeing that he will "for all the ages be tormented with the endless punishments of hell."[104] As with Theophilus, the devil insists that this *carta* be signed before he will demonstrate "what his power can do."[105] Hrotsvit's *servus* writes "his own damnation with a joyful heart," never having spoken in support of his request.[106] By contrast, in the *Vita Basilli*, the *servus* participates in two verbal exchanges, first with the *magus* and then with the devil.[107] The silence of Hrotsvit's *servus* speaks volumes in comparison to her

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[99] "Quo se magus ire iubebat/ auxilium veteris supplex orando draconis,/ interitum praebere suis qui temptat amicis" (Basilius, 68-70). The *Vita Basilii* makes no reference to the devil as an ancient or primordial evil.

[100] When he appears, the devil is speaking with his "raven black soldiers," taking stock of recent plots and long-standing plans to incite sin (Basilius, 74-79). The *Vita Basilii* offers a simpler, but similar description (Vita Basilii, 11.30-31).

[101] "Numquam christicole permansistis mihi fidi,/ sed, mox ut vestrum complevi velle iocundum,/ protinus ad vestrum fugistis denique Christum" (Basilius, 83-85).

[102] Hrotsvit allows the devil himself to offer this lesson: "[Christ] talis certe pietatis/ ut veniam nulli vellet tardare petenti/ reddere conversum mihimet nec post scelus ullum" (Basilius, 87-89). The *Vita Basilii* offers a similar sentiment in less effusive language: "Perfidi estis vos christiani … acceditis ad Christum vestrum qui est beningnus ac clementissumus et sucipit vos" (Vita Basilii, 11.34-35).

[103] "Quapropter domini natae complexibus uti si cupias licito" (Basilius, 90-91).

[104] "Scilicet et mecum te velle fatere per evum/ poenis inferni permansuris cruciari" (Basilius, 92-93).

[105] "Hincque tuis manibus scriptam mini porrige cartam:/ ostendamque citus, quantum possit mea virtus" (Basilius, 94-95).

[106] "Scribebat proprium ridenti pectore damnum" (Basilius, 97). Compare with Theophilus: "sponte proprii cartam scribens detrimenti" (Theophilus, 126). The *Vita Basilii* does not use the legal category of *carta*, though it also emphasizes the written nature of the document: "Qui disposuit propria manu scriptum sicut quaesitus fuit" (Vita Basilii, 11.41).

[107] These conversations invert the creedal interrogation that accompanies baptism. The servant twice confirms that he "believes" in the devil, and that he is "ready" to join the forces of damned (Vita Basilii, 11.30-40).

conversation-heavy source. Both Theophilus and the *servus* allow *cartae* to speak for them, reinforcing their voicelessness as victims of demonic persuasion and human proclivity toward sin.

5.3.4 *Consequences of Sin*

5.3.4.1 Demonic Reward

Both Theophilus and the *servus* soon enjoy the results their demonic contracts. The devil's intervention for Theophilus occurs within a day, and his congregation witnesses the new bishop's apology to the vicar: the bishop "submits" to Theophilus's authority "with a cheerful countenance."[108] Theophilus returns to his position as vicedomus, but as a result of his deepening soul sickness, he is unable to reproduce to his former charity. Theophilus "lifted himself up too much with a haughty spirit," "arrogantly" forcing his congregation to submit to his "harsh discipline."[109] According to Hrotsvit, Theophilus gives himself over to "earthly celebrations, with the honor of the heavenly fatherland having been thoroughly scorned."[110] In contrast to the *Miraculum,* Hrotsvit's Theophilus does not require the *magus* to remind him of his diabolical contract: the vicar "never ceased to pay repeated thanks to harsh Satan," who was the source of his newfound prosperity.[111]

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[108] "Ipsius subdens hilari vultu ditioni/ deflevitque piis sese peccasse lamentis,/ abiecisse virum praesumebat quia sanctum" (Theophilus, 135-136). Both Berschin and Homeyer believe there is a line (or lines) missing from this section of M, but have not offered any suggestions for the missing verses. Berschin, *Hrotsvit Opera Omnia*, 82; Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 159.

[109] Theophilus, 138-141.

[110] "Et spreto penitus patrie celestis honore/ terrestris tantum pompe versatur amore" (Theophilus, 142-143).

[111] According to Paul, the Jew is a constant presence in Theophilus's new life, reminding the vicar that all his successes are the result of the devil's influence. Again, following his trend of frequent direct speech, Paul describes Theophilus's response as a direct quote: "Confiteor et omino gratias ago concursioni tuae" (Miraculum, 10). Hrotsvit's version is somewhat different: "numquam cessaret iniquo/ sevo multiplices

The *servus* sees even more expedited results. As soon as the *carta* changes hands, the devil sends forth his minions "to make the heart of the virgin burn with unclean love for her own servant."[112] Demonic agents bombard Proterius's daughter with the "enticements of love," infecting her with the same love-sickness contracted by the *servus*.[113] No longer the meek, dutiful daughter, the girl demands that she be permitted to enter into a marriage (*constortium*) with the *servus*. If her father refuses this request, she will "die, languishing in despair with a grieving heart."[114] According to Wailes, Hrotsvit reports Proterius's response in the tone of a "scandalized aunt."[115] Hrotsvit does contrast the girl's nobility with her current irrationality.[116] But Hrotsvit primarily speaks through Proterius to remind her audience of the legal and moral issues at stake in this union. Alarmed by his daughter's behavior, Proterius muses that someone must have "deceived" her with "false flatteries," the very language used to describe the weapons of the demonic agents.[117] Proterius also enumerates further impediments to the union, beginning with his daughter's *votum* to the monastic community. This *votum* is a spiritual marriage contract between Proterius's daughter and Christ, which should preclude the possibility of any

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Satane persolvere grates,/ ex cuius largis credidit solummodo donis/ accessisse quidem tantam sibi prosperitatem" (Theophilus 145-148).

[112] "Leto tartareos emisit corde ministros,/ virginis ut misere mentem facerent in amore/ incesto proprii cicius fervescere servi" (Basilius, 100-102).

[113] "Ut mens blandiciis fragilis pulsatur amoris" (Basilius, 103). Hrotsvit uses similar lanuguage to describe the devil's words in *Theophilus*: "his nam blandiciis anguinae callidatis" (Theophilus, 122). The *Vita Basilii* does not describe how the demons change the girl's opinion toward the *servus* (Vita Basilii, 11.42).

[114] "Ne moriar tristis languens per tedia cordis" (Basilius, 105-109). The girl uses *iuvenus* rather than *servus* in this speech. Notice the subtle change in vocabulary in the *Vita Basilii*. Instead of "wanting to fulfill a *consortium,*" Proterius's daughter orders her father to "marry" her to the boy that she loves: "coniunge me puero quem amo" (Vita Basilii, 11.44-45).

[115] Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 89–91.

[116] "Exclamat subito magna de stirpe creata" (Basilius, 104).

[117] "Dic, rogo, quis verbis te decepit male blandis,/ vel quis blandiciis circumvenit simulatis" *(*Basilius 112-113). Hrotsvit's Proterius is far more concerned with this possible deception than the *Vita Basilii*, which focuses on the paternal grief: "Quis dulcem lumen oculorum meorum extinxit?" (Vita Basilii, 11.50).

earthly union.[118] In addition to the impediment of her monastic vow, Proterius also reminds his daughter of her noble lineage. She will bring shame to her entire "noble family" if she pursues a relationship with the "unruly servant" (*lascivus famellus*).[119]

The girl's lovesickness has, however, progressed beyond the point of reason. She rejects this paternal advice and upends Greco-Roman familial order by defying her *pater familias*. Turning to her father with a "furious" countenance, she informs him: "if you delay in completing my request, you will discover your dear daughter even more swiftly dead."[120] Proterius reluctantly consents to the union and endows the couple with a "rich gift" commensurate to his daughter's social standing.[121] According to Hrotsvit, Proterius warns his daughter that she now bears the "grief and shame" of an entire family; this relationship will end in "eternal punishment."[122] The girl remains impervious to Proterius's pleas. Instead, she commits herself to a socially, legally, and morally inappropriate union.

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[118] "Nonne tibi patriam reddi cupiendo supernam/ sponso caelesti Christo te denique vovi" (Basilius, 114-115). Hrotsvit takes this opportunity to again laud the earthly monastic community as a means of joining the "communion of virgins beyond the chains of death" (Basilius, 116-118). The *Vita Basilii* truncates this discussion of monasticism, merely noting that Proterius wanted to "wed" his daughter to Christ as a celestial spouse (*desponsare te Deo*). The author never specifically connects the life of the cloister to the life of the heavenly virgins (Vita Basilii, 11.49-57).

[119] "Et tu lascivi fervescis amore famelli/ at nunc submissa, suboles mea, voce rogabo/ finem stulticie pergas ut reddere tante,/ ne genus omme tuum male confundas generosum" (Basilius, 119, 121-122). Note the subserviant language: the first evidence of the inversion of order in Proterius's household.

[120] "Si complere meum tardabis deique votum,/ comperies caram cicius prolem morituram" (Basilius, 127-128). Hrotsvit's audience will recognize this perverted *votum* as the inverse of the girl's monastic *votum*.

[121] "Tradiderat sobolis servo consortia dulcis/ condonans substantiolam pariter preciosam/ ipsis" (Basilius, 130-132). The *Vita Basilii* states that Proterius gave the couple all his wealth (Vita Basilii, 11.62-63). Perhaps this is a dowry, offered as in the case of a free man who frees and dowers his servile mistress. Grubbs, *Women and the Law in the Roman Empire*, 146–50. Neither Hrotsvit nor the *Vita Basilii* explains the mechanics of this union, which must have included manumission. Although Hrotsvit makes no reference to this plot point, the *Vita Basilii* further implies that Proterius's friends convince him to accept the union (Vita Basilii, 11.59-61).

[122] Basilius, 133-137. The *Vita Basilii* suggests that Proterius believes his own salvation is now in question as a result of his daughter's action: "per te saluari sperabam, tu autem in amore lascivietatis insanisti" (Vita Basilii, 11.54).

5.3.4.2 Recognition of Error

Though Theophilus received his promotion and the *servus* married his *domina*, neither is permitted to enjoy their demonic boon. The sinners must face the consequences of their actions and begin the long process of repentance.

Hrotsvit attributes the turning point in Theophilus's downward spiral to divine intervention. Repeating the lesson of the narrative, Hrotsvit reminds her readers that the "heavenly parent" never "desires the ruin and death of sinners," preferring instead to grant them a happy life as a result of conversion.[123] God is "grieved" that the "merit of [Theophilus's] blessed deeds had perished, deeds by which he, most celebrated, shone in the whole world."[124] But God's intervention is not prompted by Theophilus's past good deeds. According to Hrotsvit, it is a "divine custom" that God "strikes the erring soul with worthy fear."[125] Theophilus is just one of many Christians who receive such divine mercy: "pricked" by the greatest "grief," the vicar becomes aware of his sinful state. This transformation requires Theophilus to employ the "eyes of [his] heart" (*oculi cordis*), using these tools of introspection to evaluate his choices and potential punishment.[126]

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[123] "Tandem caelestis pietas inmensa parentis,/ qui numquam cupit interitum mortemque reorum,/ sed mage conversis letam concedere vitam" (Theophilus, 149-151). Paul provides a similar sentiment, but lacks Hrotsvit's parental language: "Creator omnium ac redemptor noster deus, qui mortem non vult peccatorum, sed conversionem et vitam" (Miraculum, 11).

[124] "Condoluit facti meritum periisse benigni,/ quo quondam stabili fulsit celeberrimus orbi" (Theophilus, 152-153).

[125] "Moreque divino pietas eadem veneranda/ concutit errantem digna formidine mentem" (Theophilus, 155-156). Paul's account ties divine intervention directly to Theophilus's prior actions, enumerating his work with the needy and his management of the church (Miraculum, 11).

[126] "Nec mora compunctus sumo merore misellus/ preponit pavitans oculis sepissime cordis/ quanta negando deum meruit tormenta per aevum/ et quibus in poenis iungi debebat Averni" (Theophilus, 157-160). Paul does not describe any particular means of reflection, noting only that Theophilus turned away from his arrogance and denial (Miraculum, 11).

Hrotsvit's audience will recall that the "eyes of the heart" were also employed in a similar instance of divine revelation in the *Maria*.[127]

This same sense of divine provision and human response is present in Hrotsvit's description of the *servus*. First, she reminds her audience that the *coniugium* between the *servus* and his mistress was only enacted "with the fraud of Satan."[128] Notwithstanding the impediments of class, prior monastic *votum,* and potential insanity of both parties, this is Hrotsvit's final estimation of the "marriage": the union is a fraud, both morally unacceptable and legally suspect. Satan crafted this fraudulent marriage, but Christ will redeem the deceived couple. Hrotsvit prefaces the revelation of the *servus*'s error by reminding her audience that Christ grieves for sinners: those "he has saved with the poured out blood" who yet remain "restrained as captives under the power of the enemy."[129]

Despite his grief, Christ still offers "generous help to the fallen," including the *servus*.[130] In contrast to the Theophilus narrative, the *servus* is not compelled to repent by divine revelation. Instead, when rumors reach Proterius's daughter, she serves as the impetus for redemption. According to these rumors, the *servus* avoids going to sacred spaces and does not participate in the sacraments.[131] Hrotsvit interprets these signs for her audience, explaining that the *servus* has "traded himself to the greedy law (*avarus ius*) of

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[127] Mary sees a vision that is invisible to Joseph, who rebukes her for speaking falsely. Hrotsvit explains: "aspexit non corporeis, sed mentis ocellis" (Maria, 549).
[128] "Tali coniugio Satane cum fraude peracto" (Basilius, 138). Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 152.
[129] "Condoluit Christus mundi salvator amandus,/ quos pius effusa salvavit sanguinis unda,/ hostis sub diri vinclis captos retineri" (Basilius, 139-141). The *Vita Basilii* lacks any such theological aside, moving directly from Proterius's speech to reports of the servant's suspicious activity (Miraculum, 11-12).
[130] "Et placet auxilium lapsis praestare beningum" (Basilius, 142).
[131] "Scilicet erranti mox narratur mulieri,/ quod non catholicus fuerit coniux miser eius/ nec limen templi vellet pede tangere sancti" (Basilius, 143-145). The *Vita Basilii* records these reports as direct speech: "Scis quia vir tuus quem elegisti non est christianus sed peregrinus fidei alienus" (Vita Basilii, 11. 69-70).

the serpent."[132] The *servus* is now the property of the devil and he can no longer enter the sacred space of the church, which is the property of Christ. As well as reminding her audience of the *servus'*s new legal status, Hrotsvit will now mobilize Proterius's daughter as a legal advocate. Her intervention speaks both to Hrotsvit's appreciation for female agency and to the perennially inferior status of the *servus*, reduced to a secondary character in his own salvation.

5.4 Path to Repentance

Once aware of their error, Theophilus and the *servus* must reclaim their voices, acknowledging sin and agreeing to a process of penance.

5.4.1 *Step One: Intercession*

Hrotsvit documents Theophilus's grief and penitence in great detail. The majority of this discussion occurs in the form of direct speech from Theophilus, framed as rhetorical questions. These questions represent the first instance of Theophilus's direct speech in Hrotsvit's entire legend.[133] In Hrotsvit's account, Theophilus begins taking responsibility for his actions by agreeing that he was "damned through my own vows on behalf of crime," having denied both Christ and Mary "through writing."[134] Hrotsvit's

[132] "Se quia serpentis iuri tradebat avari/ sacra negans rectate fidei nomen quoque Christi" (Basilius, 146-147). The *Vita Basilii* does not describe the *servus* as legally bound to the devil, while Hrotsvit continues her emphasis on legal categories.
[133] Hrotsvit's account of this moment is significantly shorter than Paul's, lending this internal dialogue more significance in its abbreviated form. Paul's account includes thirty questions in Theophilus's internal dialogue, while Hrotsvit only includes seven (Miraculum, 12-13; Theophilus, 163-178).
[134] "Ve mihi damnando proprii pro crimine voti,/ qui patris summi prolem per scripta negavi/ divineque simul dulcem prolis genetricem" (Theophilus, 164-166). Paul's account also emphasizes the written nature of the denial, again calling it a *chirographum*: "feci me seruum diaboli per nefandae cautionis chirographum" (Miraculum, 12).

Theophilus also laments his decent into "darkness," because he chose "to be subdued with Satan's power."[135]

Given his exemplary theological education, Theophilus understands that the depth of his sin necessitates the intercession of the Virgin Mary. In contrast to Paul, Hrotsvit significantly expands the explanation of Mary's intercessory powers in Theophilus's speech, linking them to Mary's role as *genetrix* and evangelist. Theophilus knows that Mary's power is rooted in her role as virgin mother: because she is "the mother of Christ" she is also "the powerful ruler of the sky, and the temple of the sacred flame, shining without sin."[136] Mary's history of assistance to those in need gives Theophilus hope that she, and she "alone," might be able to provide a cure (*medicamina*) for his wasting soul sickness.[137] Despite his hope for potential intercession, Theophilus recognizes the absurdity of his situation. [138] How dare he "begin to speak to [Mary], she whom [he] recently denied with a frantic heart, with a polluted tongue"?[139] Unlike Paul, Hrotsvit has demonstrated the results of such a "polluted tongue," denying Theophilus direct speech until this moment of grief-stricken clarity. This clarity drives Theophilus to Mary's temple, in the hopes that Mary "might free [his] dying soul with prayers."[140] Hrotsvit

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[135] "Qui miser elegi subdi Satane ditioni/ atque tenebricolis Erebi sub limine iungi" (Theophilus, 169-170). Paul never uses any language of choice in his description of Theophilus's speech, though Theophilus does admit he is the "author" of his downfall: "ego perditionis animae meae auctor sum" (Miraculum, 13).
[136] "Nam Christi genitrix celique potens dominatrix/, flaminis atque sacri templum sine corde coruscum,/ hec eadem virgo partus post gaudia casta" (Theophilus, 179-181).
[137] "Sola mihi venie potis est medicamina ferre" (Theophilus, 184).
[138] "Me vereor flammis celo consumier actis,/ ferre meum facinus quia non patitur grave mundus" (Theophilus, 188-189). Note that Hrotsvit's language here is very similar to Paul's: "ignis de caelo descendens comburet me, quia iam non feret mundus mala" (Miraculum, 13).
[139] "Sed si pollutis illam rogitare labellis/ coepero, bachanti nuper quam corde negavi" (Theophilus, 186-187).
[140] "Attamen instantis causa cogente doloris/ eiusdem celerem supplex quero pietatem,/ quo clemens animam precibus solvat perituram" (Theophilus, 190-192). Paul attributed Theophilus's decision to seek Mary's assistance to divine aid, suggesting that God "surrounded" (*circumdedit*) Theophilus's mind and led him to these conclusions: "solus pius misericors Deus, qui propriam no despicit creaturuam, sed suscipit" (Miraculum, 13).

portrays Theophilus's decision as the natural result of his penitential musing. Theophilus's theological training leads him to one conclusion: the magnitude of his transgression necessitates the assistance of Mary, the ultimate intercessor.

In contrast to Theophilus's internal, individual transformation, Proterius's daughter facilitates her husband's repentance. When she hears the gossip about her husband's avoidance of church, Proterius's daughter finally recognizes that she "has been deceived."[141] Hrotsvit's readers have long understood the legal illegitimacy of the marriage, but the girl was blinded by her demonic love sickness, just like the *servus*. The revelation of her husband's fraud shakes her to the core: "she fell to the ground … she tore her own hair from her head and she beat her chest with blows." [142] When she recovers from the shock, the girl assumes a new identity. In direct contrast to her lovesick impetuousness, she now "carefully" examines the rumors "with intent ears."[143] The *servus* swears that any rumors about him are false, and the *Vita Basilii* reports the girl is initially swayed by her husband's denial.[144] By contrast, Hrotsvit's character employs her restored rationality, suggesting that the *servus* prove his innocence by going to church and participating in the sacraments.[145] The logic behind this "reasonable request" successfully "conquers" the *servus*, prompting him to confess his sins to his wife.[146]

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[141] "Que se deceptam cognoscens esse misellam" (Basilius, 148).
[142] "In terram cecidit membris tremefacta solutis/ eruit et proprios summo de vertice pilos/ necnon verberibus pulsavit sedulo pectus" (Basilius, 150-152). The *Vita Basilii* reports similar grief-stricken flagellation (Vita Basilii, 11.70-72).
[143] "Auribus intentis ut sensit verba loquentis" (Basilius, 149). There is no corresponding description in the *Vita Basilii*.
[144] "Illa autem, consolationem veninente suadibilibus eius verbis" (Vita Basilii, 11.77).
[145] Basilius, 162-165. The *Vita Basilii* reports the test later in the narrative, with far less emphasis on the girl's reasoning.
[146] "Qua mox devictus iusta ratione misellus/ causam commissi narravit namque piacli" (Basilius, 166-167).

Proterius's daughter moves from prosecuting attorney to defense advocate when she identifies a solution to the couple's plight. In keeping with her playful acknowledgment of gender norms, Hrotsvit claims that Proterius's daughter puts aside "womanly weakness" and assumes "manly strength."[147] These statements, reminiscent of Hrotsvit's descriptions of her own writing, add a layer of irony to the powerful reasoning displayed by Proterius's daughter.[148] Indeed, Proterius's "prudent" daughter is responsible for identifying Basil of Caesarea as a potential solution to the crisis. She approaches Basil on her own, begging him to rescue the couple from the "enemy, who boasts that he has destroyed our fragile hearts."[149] For Theophilus as well as the *servus* and his wife, the initial step in repentance involves the sinner's recognition of sin. In contrast to her sources, Hrotsvit is clear that the sinners will play an active role in discovering a penitential path out of sinfulness, assisted by their saintly intermediaries.

5.4.2 *Step Two: Confession*

For Theophilus and the *servus*, the acknowledgement of sin is only a first step in the long process of repentance. Both men must also negotiate the terms of intercession with their saintly mediators. In keeping with the style and length of these narratives, the encounter with Theophilus and Mary more than triples the encounter between Basil and the *servus*. Despite the disparity in length, both stories demonstrate Hrotsvit's central lesson: no sinner is denied redemption if he commits himself to the process of penance.

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[147] "Illaque molliciem iam deponens muliebrem/ et sumens vires prudenti corde viriles" (Basilius, 168-169).

[148] I concur with Wailes, who suggests that Hrotsvit intends her readers to connect her own self-deprecating authorial statements with this description of Proterius's daughter. Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 92–93.

[149] Basilius, 170-175. The *Vita Basilii* ties the girl's error back to her disobedience, giving it greater importance than the devil's machinations (Vita Basilii, 11.85). Wailes believes that Proterius's daughter is actually the "heroine" of this story: Ibid., 93.

5.4.2.1 Theophilus Argues a Case for Forgiveness

Hrotsvit dedicates several hundred lines to the conversation between Theophilus and Mary, which represents the second stage of his penitential process. Theophilus spends several days at Mary's *templum* keeping vigil, praying and "nourishing himself with bitter tears."[150] When Mary appears to Theophilus in a dream, Hrotsvit adds to her ever-expanding list of Marian epithets. Mary is "the ruler of the world, the ready help, the only hope, and the ready solace of those praying for her protection."[151] Because Mary is a *dominatrix mundi* in her own right, her initial appearance inspires more fear than comfort.[152] Mary's speech reinforces her image as a force of divine power.[153] According to Hrotsvit, Mary's indignation is immediately apparent: "Why do you [Theophilus] presume to hope that my swift compassion is even possible for you who denied my son and me as his mother in your perverse heart?"[154] Despite her justifiable anger, Mary prefers forgiveness,[155] just like her son: "With an especially tender love of heart, I love, I

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[150] "Sibi lacrimis saciatus amaris" (Theophilus, 199). In contrast to Paul's simple description of this penance (Miraculum, 17), Hrotsvit offers an explicit clarification of this physical abnegation: "by breaking his body with such work, he purged the stain from his faulty heart with tears" (Theophilus, 203-204).

[151] "Aeterni genetrix, eadem mundi dominatrix/ scilicet auxilium, spes solamenque paratum eius/ praesidium devote mente precantum" (Theophilus, 209-210). Compare this to Paul's version, which lacks Hrotsvit's initial epithets: "apparuit manifeste universale auxilium et parata protectio vigilantium ad eam Christianorum" (Miraculum, 18).

[152] "Talibus et verbis terrebat corda paventis" (Theophilus, 211). Paul's account does not report that Theophilus is afraid.

[153] Although they follow a similar pattern, Hrotsvit's interpretation of Mary's first speech almost doubles the number of words in Paul's version: Paul gives Mary eight-four words, Hrotsvit includes a total of one hundred and forty words in this speech.

[154] "Vel cur posse mei celerem temet pietatem/ presumis sperare, meum qui denique natum/ me matremque sui perverso corde negasti?" (Theophilus, 212-215). Paul's account offers a similar initial query: "Quid sico homo permanes temere fastidiose postulans, ut te adiuvem hominem qui abnegasti filium meum salvatorem mundi et me?" (Miraculum, 19).

[155] "Ast omnes culpas in me fortasse patratas/ affectu mentis tibi mox indulgeo gratis,/ omne genus nimium qui diligo christicolarum" (Theophilus, 220-222).

console, with my very own arms I embrace those whom I see that undertake a vigil in my temple, entreating me with constant hymns."[156]

In response to Mary, Theophilus offers a plausible case for forgiveness, building on the biblical lessons he learned as a youth. The format of this speech mirrors Hrotsvit's own pedagogical plan.[157] Through Theophilus's speech, Hrotsvit will again prove that no one is beyond the possibility of forgiveness. Theophilus's speech makes this goal explicit: he claims that "many [biblical characters] have given an example (*exemplum*) of hope for our salvation, [especially] those who have fallen with many crimes and merited punishment after their fall."[158] Hrotsvit's Theophilus has chosen three exempla that parallel his current situation: the residents of Nineveh, King David, and Peter.

In Hrotsvit's account, Theophilus begins his defense with the Ninevites.[159] Theophilus presents the residents of Nineveh as an example of penitence, because they discovered "gentle faith of Christ, torturing themselves with worthy tears, after a period of three days."[160] Departing from her source, Hrotsvit's Theophilus then devotes nine full lines to the exemplum of King David. Just like Theophilus, David betrayed the honor of his position, pursuing Bathsheba and killing Uriah, despite being the "ruler of the chosen

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[156] Hrotsvit reminds her readers of Mary's rhetorical skill with this *tricolon crescens*: "Illos praecipue tenero sed mentis amore,/ *diligo, consolor*, propriiis *amplector* et ulnis,/ quos exorantes crebris himnisque vacantes/ inviligare meo cerno sepissime templo" (Theophilus, 223-226). Paul's account spreads these first person verbs across several lines, losing their rhetorical impact (Miraculum, 19-20).
[157] Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 163.
[158] "Sed tamen exemplum nobis tribuere salutis/ sperande multi, vario qui crimine lapsi/ post lapsum scelerum veniam meruere suorum" (Theophilus, 242-244). Paul's account offers a similar justification for Theophilus's speech (Miraculum, 21).
[159] Hrotsvit has eliminated Paul's initial examples of Rahab. Although both are well known Old Testament tropes, the pride of the Ninevites is a more appropriate analogy to Theophilus's situation than Rahab's prostitution. Paul's Theophilus explains neither the mechanics of Rahab's *poenitentia* nor her forgiveness: "Nisi poenitentia esset, Raab meretrix non saluaretur" (Miraculum, 22).
[160] "Nonne Ninivite mitem Christi pietatem/ sese condignis cruciantes naque lamentis/ invenere trium post intervalla dierum" (Theophilus, 245-247). In addition to eliminating Paul's Rahab example, Hrotsvit also eliminates a reference to Zacchaeus and the stories of Cyprian and Justina (Miraculum, 23). Palmer and More, *The Sources of The Faust Tradition, from Simon Magus to Lessing*, 68–69; Radermacher, *Griechische quellen zur Faustsage*.

people of the Lord."[161] Hrotsvit also includes a full description of the rehabilitative education provided by the prophet Nathan. This vignette, completely absent from Paul's account, describes a penitential pattern that mirrors Mary's intervention in Theophilus's life. First, David is "frightened by the arrival of the prophet," just as Theophilus was "terrified" by Mary's appearance.[162] Second, David "learned" about his sins as a result of Nathan's "admonition," just as Theophilus will learn from Mary.[163] Finally, David and Theophilus must "wash the stain of sin with tears."[164] This expanded David exemplum provides Hrotsvit's readers with a template for Theophilus's own path to redemption.

Hrotsvit's Theophilus concludes his speech with the example of Peter. Like Theophilus and David, Peter held a prominent position in the Christian community.[165] Peter received his power "rightly," because "his faith was expressed according to proper reason."[166] This description sharpens the comparison to Theophilus, who was also once renowned for proper expression of faith, resulting from his extensive theological training. Perhaps most importantly, both Peter and Theophilus rejected their faith.[167] As Theophilus notes, even Peter received the *medicamina* of divine forgiveness, despite the consistency of his denial.[168] Theophilus believes he might merit "similar" indulgence

[161] Theophilus, 248-252.
[162] "Sed postqum vatis perterritus advenientis" (Theophilus, 254).
[163] "Admonitu culpas didicit deflere gemellas" (Theophilus, 255). Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 163.
[164] "Delevit lacrimis tante maculas cito sordis" (Theophilus, 256).
[165] "Qui postquam ius solvendi pariterque ligandi/ necnon stelligere claves acceperat aule" (Theophillus, 259-260).
[166] "Pro fidei recte satis expressa ratione" (Theophilus, 261).
[167] "He denied that he knew Christ … not one time, or two times, but three times he denied his dear teacher" (Theophilus, 262-265). Paul includes this Petrine exemplum and uses similar language (Miraculum, 22).
[168] "Sed, quia condigne lapsum deflevit ab ore/ peccatum, venie meruit medicamen opime" (Theophilus, 266-267).

"from Christ" through Mary's intercession.[169] By carefully curating Theophilus's exempla, Hrotsvit draws her audience's attention to the process of penitential re-education that is currently unfolding in Theophilus's own story.

5.4.2.2 The *Servus* Offers a Simple Confession

In the case of the *servus* and his wife, the initial contact with the intercessor is remarkably abbreviated. Proterius's daughter approaches the "blessed Basil" and prostrates herself at his feet. She opens the discussion by admitting her own sins and acting as an advocate for the *servus*. After hearing their story, Basil turns to the *servus* and asks whether the *servus* "wanted to turn his thoughts to Christ after the crime."[170] In response to this gentle query, the *servus* speaks directly for the first time in Hrotsvit's narrative, pouring out his despair. The *servus* explains that he does not believe salvation is "possible," because "the things I did with a willing, wicked mind remain."[171] Though led astray by the devil, the *servus* takes responsibility for his actions: "I gave myself to the enemy with written letters, and I denied the name of Christ with a blind heart."[172] In contrast to the truncated statement of the *servus* in the *Vita Basilii*, Hrotsvit's *servus* offers a true confession in the spirit of contrition.[173]

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[169] "Talibus ac tantis aliis multisque figuris/ admonitus similem me sperabam pietatem/ a Christo cicius per te conquirere posse" (Theophilus, 270-272). Note that David was cautioned by Nathan's warnings (*admonitu*) and now Theophilus is warned (*admonitus*) by the example of the three biblical characters.
[170] "Ac coepit verbis illum rogitare beningnis,/ post scelus ad Christum vellet si vertere sensum" (Basilius, 178-179). These "gentle words" are a welcome contrast to the interrogation of the *magus* and the devil.
[171] "Si posset fieri, voluissem mente libenti,/ sed restat menti sceleris res facta volenti" (Basilius, 181-182).
[172] "Me quia per litteras hosti dederam male scriptas/ et nomen Christi caecato corde negavi" (Basilius, 183-184).
[173] The *Vita Basilii* reports that the *servus* does not initially enumerate any of his actions, noting only: "Si ego silvero opera mea clamabunt" (Vita Basilii, 11.88). Later, the *servus* admits, after further questioning: "Scripto abnegavi Christum, et professum diabolo" (Vita Basilii, 11.92).

Basil recognizes the honesty in this confession and encourages him: "Don't invent cares for yourself, as though the hope of forgiveness has been removed from you."[174] Christ, the ultimate judge, can free the *servus* from his demonic legal obligation. As Hrotsvit's Basil explains, "the kindest judge of the world, who never rejects any who have converted to him, is pleased to provide restoration, if you repent your crime."[175] Christ's power supersedes any previous legal claims, demonic or earthly, and he will go to any lengths to redeem a truly contrite sinner. Basil concludes by commanding the *servus* to "leave the deadly depths of sin and to flee to the fixed refuge of faith, [Christ], who accepts all seeking him."[176] Basil's lesson is also an exorcism of sorts, expelling the shame that forced the *servus* to suffer in silence. If the *servus* commits himself to penance, forgiveness can indeed become a reality.

5.4.2.3 Theophilus Confesses

Theophilus's confession occurs over the course of several speeches. As was discussed previously, Mary did agree to a potential intervention on Theophilus's behalf. But before Mary will intercede she requires a confession of sin, just as Basil required an explicit confession from the *servus*. Despite his impressive biblical exempla, Theophilus has yet to acknowledge the full depth of his error.

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[174] "Curam tibi fingere noli,/ ceu tibi sit venie penitus spes dempta petende" (Basilius, 185-186). The *Vita Basilii* offers a far less specific assurance: "benignus est Deus noster et recippiet te paenitentem" (Vita Basilii, 11.93-94).

[175] "Unicus ergo patris, iudex mitissimus orbis,/ ad se conversum qui numquam respuit ullum,/ si defles culpam, gaudet praestare medelam" (Basilius, 187-189). The *Vita Basilii* makes no reference to Christ as judge in Basil's speech, rendering it a brief creedal interrogation rather than a re-education (Vita Basilii, 11. 85-97).

[176] "Hinc iam mortiferum peccati linque profundum/ necnon ad certum pietatis confuge portum,/ ad se tendentes qui salvos sucipit omnes" (Basilius, 190-192).

Mary's response to Theophilus's case for forgiveness is reminiscent of her rhetoric in the *Maria*: she will "renew" Theophilus "with the sweetness of her honeyed tongue."[177] The sweetness of Mary's speech is a result of its effectiveness, not its tone. The *mediatrix* curtly requests Theophilus's confession, suggesting that "if the undertaken evil crime upsets [him], it is fitting that [he] confess in the harmony of [his] heart."[178] Theophilus is afraid to admit his error, wondering "in what way and with what power will [he], unfaithful, presume to touch the great, sacred, and venerable name of the most high with polluted lips."[179] This second instance of Theophilus's speech reminds Hrotsvit's readers that, without confession, the sinner's *polluta labella* have not yet been fully cleansed.[180]

Mary responds by explaining that the salvific power of the incarnation can cure even sinners like Theophilus: "[Christ] was made flesh for us alone, so that he might make available the hope of forgiveness for those who have converted."[181] Encouraged by this brief Marian lesson, Theophilus finally offers a full confession. Hrotsvit's version of this confession emphasizes elements of theological significance.[182] For example, Theophilus includes Mary in a discussion of the Trinitarian nature of the incarnation:

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[177] "Cui vultu blando dicebat sancta Maria/ tristem melliflue refovens dulcedine lingue" (Theophilus, 273-274).

[178] "Si te commissum turbat facinusque nefandum,/ concedet ut cordis consensus confitearis" (Theophilus, 275-276). Lest he has forgotten the severity his own crimes after his speech on biblical forgiveness, Mary reminds Theophilus that he merits a just punishment (Theophilus, 277-280).

[179] "Quo pacto quo iure, quidem contingere tandem/ altithroni nomen sanctum venerabile magnum/ infelix ego pollutis praesumo labellis" (Theophilus, 284-286).

[180] In addition to his verbal denial, Theophilus acknowledges that he has also transgressed in writing. The demonic pact, "badly signed," contained denials of Christ, Mary, the cross, and all the "holy sacraments of salvific heaven" (Theophilus, 287-289).

[181] "Est quia factus homo nostri solummodo causa,/ ut spem conversis venie praeberet habende" (Theophilus, 294-295). Mary's inclusion of herself in the ranks of humanity that require forgiveness (*nostri*) represents a unique element of humility. Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 165.

[182] Much of Hrotsvit's version quotes Paul's account verbatim, though she abbreviates her source. For just one example: Hrotsvit writes "veneror, laudo, complector, adoro" (Theophilus, 298). Paul's text reads "credo, adoro, et glorifico" and "haec confiteor anima, corde, et corpore colo, adoro, et amplector" (Miraculum, 27).

Christ was "sent to our time from the throne of his parent, so that, from you, chaste one, and from the Holy Spirit, he could take on the veil of our fragile flesh."[183] In Hrotsvit's account, Mary works alongside the members of the Trinity to ensure human salvation. Hrotsvit's Theophilus also goes into far greater detail about Christ's resurrection, employing classic *Christus victor* language that testifies to Christ's defeat of the same evil that currently ensnares Theophilus.[184] As a destroyer of death and as eschatological judge, Christ alone is capable of nullifying Theophilus's demonic contract.[185] In light of this, Theophilus begs Mary to intercede on his behalf, trusting that his heart "retains its faith."[186] Mary, "the powerful ruler of the heavens," agrees to intercede for the sake of her son, "with whose price [Theophilus] was bought, with his precious blood, which was poured out for the world."[187]

5.4.3 *Step Three: Penance*

Following this confession to their intercessors, both Theophilus and the *servus* must undergo a period of solitary penance. After the successful conclusion of their individual penitential period, both sinners will be absolved of their sin through the intercession of Mary and Basil. As the process unfolds, Hrotsvit reminds her audience of the moral of

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[183] "Temporibus nostris missum de sede parentis/ ut de te casta necnon de flamine sancto/ indueret fragilis nostrae velamina carnis" (Theophilus, 300-302). This language explicitly recalls Hrotsvit's similar description of Mary in the *Maria*: "Qui post, corporeae tectus velamine formae,/ ascensum graduum cunctis patefecit in aevum" (Maria, 308-309).
[184] Theophilus, 313-317. This expansive discussion is a sharp contrast to Paul's simple creedal formulation: "sepultus est et resurrexit et adscendit in caelum" (Miraculum, 28).
[185] Theophilus, 324-327; Miraculum, 27.
[186] "Credentem corisque fide retinentem" (Theophilus, 328).
[187] "Propter dulcem care mis prolis amorem,/ cuius te precio sacri scio sanguinis amplo/ emptum, pro mundo qui fusus erat perituro" (Theophilus, 336-339). There is no corresponding theological conclusion to Mary's speech in Paul's *Miraculum*.

these stories: sin is a reality of human existence, but with the assistance of a benevolent educator, sinners can respond to the ever-present divine offer of forgiveness.

In keeping with the complexity of the overall *Theophilus* narrative, Hrotsvit describes two periods of penance for the former vicar. First, Theophilus spends three days waiting for Mary to return.[188] Her reappearance indicates that the "gift of forgiveness" has been obtained and her short introductory speech outlines the requirements for Theophilus's acceptance of that forgiveness.[189] Theophilus is a *vir domini* once again, because "the remorse of [his] grieving heart" has "merited the forgiveness of sins."[190] Mary vows that Theophilus will be safe from any future "punishment of Tartarus" if he remains faithful "without deceit."[191] Theophilus responds to Mary's report with a prayer of thanksgiving. Though he has offered four previous speeches, this is the first time that Hrotsvit designates his words as "charming."[192] Mary's intercession has cured his soul sickness and washed the pollutant from his lips.

Theophilus's "charming" response begins with a promise to follow Mary's requirements; he swears to keeps the "documents" of the "sacred faith."[193] After verbally exchanging his *nefanda carta* for the *sacrae fidei documenta*, Theophilus also promises to avoid future transgressions. Theophilus correctly attributes the success of his penance to Mary: "after God, I trust that you alone bring together the sole cure (*medela*)" for his

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[188] "Certe post triduum rursus veniebat ad illum" (Theophilus, 347). Paul also describes a three-day period of waiting: "post triduum amplius vicedominus postulans" (Miraculum, 30).
[189] "In visu venie munus reserans reparate" (Theophilus, 348).
[190] "En tis, vir domini, tristis conpunctio cordis/ est accepta deo patri prolique perenni,/ atque tuae lacrime scelerum veniam meruere" (Theophilus, 350-352). Paul also suggests that Theophilus's tears and contrition have been found acceptable (Miraculum, 30).
[191] "Sed nec tartareis poenis umquam capieris,/ si post haec perstare cupis sine fraude fidelis" (Theophilus, 352-353).
[192] "Ipse quidem contra mox dicebat prece blanda" (Theophilus, 355).
[193] "Certe servabo sacre fidei docmumenta" (Theophilus, 356). Paul makes no reference to "documents" of faith.

sinful disease.[194] As Hrotsvit reminds her audience, Mary already saved the "whole world" by reversing the sins of the "ancient mother," Eve.[195] Now Theophilus joins the ranks of Mary's beneficiaries, having experienced the "endless spring of [her] goodness" despite being "damaged by the greatest sins."[196] Theophilus also asks Mary, the "nurturing Mother of God," to return the demonic contract, lest it be used against him on judgment day. But Theophilus must endure a further three-day penitential period before Mary returns the *carta*.[197] With the *carta* finally in hand, Hrotsvit's Theophilus gives thanks "to Christ, and, equally, to the virgin mother of Christ" as he rejoices in his "innermost heart."[198]

Basil designs a similar period of penance for the *servus*, while Proterius's daughter drops out of the narrative entirely. Basil begins the correction of the *servus* by enclosing him in a "dark cave."[199] Only in solitary contemplation can the *servus* "properly reflect on his immoderate crimes."[200] After leaving the *servus* alone for three days, Basil returns to check on his patient's progress. The *servus* reports that he can barely endure the "punishments of the dark spirits."[201] The demons assault him with

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[194] "Te quia post dominumm solam conferre medelam" (Theophilus, 359). There is no reference to any "cure" for sin in Paul's account.
[195] "Sed non est mirum per te me iam fore salvum,/ per quam de veteris loetali crimine matris/ omnem dante deo mundum patet esse solutum" (Theophilus, 361-363). Paul does not mention Eve in this speech, but such a reference fits with Hrotsvit's consistent claim that Mary reversed primordial sin.
[196] Theophilus, 364-367. Paul's Theophilus also notes Mary's historical consistentcy in intercession (Miraculum, 31).
[197] Paul's version also includes a three-day penance period before Mary's second appearance (Miraculum, 32).
[198] "Et grates Christo cordis reddebat ab imo/ atque puellari partier Christi genetrici" (Theophilus 381-382). There is no corresponding authorial statement in Paul's *Miraculum*.
[199] "His igitur miserum monitis correxit homullum/ necnon sponte suo nigro conclusit in antro" (Basilius, 193-194). By contrast, the *Vita Basilii* reports the *servus* is enclosed in a section of the cloister (Vita Basilii, 11.98).
[200] "Illic ut sordes licito defleret inormes" (Basilius, 195). The *Vita Basilii* does not offer any explanation for Basil's penitential plan.
[201] "Qui lassus nimium verbis responderat istis:/ poenas spiritum pacior vix namque nigrorum" (Basilius, 198-199).

sharp projectiles. They also taunt him, reminding the *servus* that he gave himself "to their authority without compulsion."[202] Though he sympathizes with the *servus*, Basil allows the penitential period to continue. Basil, the "learned doctor of languishing hearts," knows the only cure for the disease of sin lies in the struggle of penance.[203] Basil returns to check on the *servus* after a few more days, and the *servus* is doing well; the "horrible voices are farther off now."[204] After staying away for a symbolic forty days, Basil returns again. During Basil's absence the *servus* occupied himself by grieving for his sin and its impact on those around him. When Basil returns the *servus* is "happy" rather than "grief-stricken."[205] Basil marvels at the transformation, a testament to the "cleansing" of "bountiful tears."[206] The *servus* was also encouraged by a vision he experienced in the cave. In this vision, the *servus* saw Basil "conquer" an "evil serpent on [his] behalf."[207] The *servus* battled his demons on earth, and Basil interceded on his behalf in the spiritual realm.

Throughout the process of penance, Theophilus and the *servus* were supported by intercessors in two interrelated ways. First, Mary and Basil acted on the heavenly plane, advocating for their charges and doing battle with the forces of evil. Second, and more importantly for Hrotsvit's narrative, both intercessors served as spiritual educators, teaching their charges that no one is beyond the power of divine forgiveness.

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[202] "Insuper obprobriis obponunt semper amaris,/ quod non invitus pridem, sed gratis adirem/ illos ipsorum sine vi me dans dicioni" (Basilius, 202-204). The *Vita Basilii* does not spell out these taunts as clearly: "me dicantes tu venisti ad nos, non nos ad te" (Vita Basilii, 11.104).
[203] "Tunc anime medicus languescentis bene doctus/ lassatum refici iussit statimque recessit" (Basilius, 205-206). The *Vita Basilii* lacks any such *cura animarum* languague.
[204] "Certe melius valeo, pater alme,/ longius horribiles tantum quia sencio voces" (Basilius, 209-210).
[205] "Invenit laetum, quem credebat fore mestum" (Basilius, 215).
[206] "Et cum laeticiam miraretur sibi caram,/ peccator lacrimis iam mundatus bene largis" (Basilius, 216-217).
[207] "Basilius, 219-222. The *Vita Basilii* also describes Basil's defeat of a demon on the spiritual plane: "Vidi enim te hodie in visu pugnantem pro me, et vincentem diabolum" (Vita Basilii, 11.111).

5.4.4 *Step Four: Readmisson to the Community of Faith*

The process of redemption is not complete until both sinners are physically and eschatologically reintegrated into the Christian community. As a conclusion to the reformation process, the sinners' stories of redemption are recited in the sacred space of the church, where the demonic *cartae* are destroyed at last.

Theophilus's return to the church community requires his readmittance to liturgical time *and* space. He enters the church and prostrates "himself in the presence of the sacred altar," just after the bishop has "taught from the words of the gospel."[208] Theophilus then offers his own *evangelium*, recounting both his descent into sin and his redemption through the intercession of "the perpetual virgin."[209] In response to this good news, the bishop offers a speech of his own.[210] The bishop begins by repeating Hrotsvit's theological lesson, exhorting his congregation to believe that Christ "is never delighted in the death of sinners but would rather give everlasting life to those who convert."[211] The bishop also admonishes the congregation to "focus" on the lesson provided by Theophilus's story.[212] The bishop concludes his praise of divine faithfulness by acknowledging Mary and Christ's partnership in providing forgiveness to Theophilus:

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[208] "Theophilus, 384-388.
[209] Theophilus, 390-392. In Paul's version, Theophilus then hands over the *carta* to the bishop, demanding that it be read as evidence of his sin (Miraculum, 33). By contrast, for the first time in her narrative, Hrotsvit allows Theophilus's own words to have the final say.
[210] Hrotsvit offers a far a more compelling piece of rhetoric than Paul's repetitive version (Miraculum, 34-36).
[211] "Credite iam dominum propria pietate benignum/ in loeto delectari numquam scelerosi,/ sed plus conversis vitam dare velle futuram" (Theophilus, 398-400).
[212] "Eia, dilecti fratres, intendite cuncti" (Theophilus, 401). Wiegand translates *intendite* as "attend." Gonsalva Wiegand, "The Non-Dramatic Works of Hrosvitha; Text, Translation, and Commentary" (Ph.D., St. Louis University, 1936), 180.

"[Christ] was now pardoning this man from his sins, with his own holy prayers and those of his illustrious parent."[213]

In Paul's *Miraculum*, the bishop continues his speech with further praise for Christ alone.[214] According to Hrotsvit, however, the bishop attributes the "blessedness" of the whole world to Mary, who facilitated the death of "the evil in our nature."[215] Mary has yet again defeated the "ancient serpent," first reversing primordial sin by birthing Christ, and now reversing Theophilus's sin by her intercession. The bishop also asks Mary to intercede for the whole congregation, which will praise Mary "with [their] minds and [their] faith and with prayer and speech."[216] This series represents a progression from internal to external, including both the spiritual and intellectual faculties. Faith (*fides*) produces prayer (*votum*), just as the *mens* controls speech (*os*). As Hrotsvit has shown in the first half of her narrative, Theophilus was able to produce neither prayer nor speech as a result of his corrupted *mens* and *fides*. Now, Theophilus can recount his reformation story to the congregation with confidence. The clarity of Theophilus's recitation demonstrates the effectiveness of Mary's intercession, not the sinner's merits.[217] Mary, "the untouched mother of the everlasting king" and Christ, "the king and lord of Heaven" are the only proper recipients of praise.[218] In conclusion, the bishop again attributes Theophilus's redemption to Mary: "our brother, dying in sin, perished, but after he died,

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[213] "Qui iam criminibus miserans parcebat et huius/ ipsius illustris precibus sancteque parentis" (Theophilus, 407-408).
[214] Miraculum, 36.
[215] "Per quam nature periit maledictio nostre/ et per quam mundo venit benedictio cuncto" (Theophilus, 409-410). Paul suggests only that Mary has "restrained" rather than destroyed the evil of humanity: "quae maledictionem humanae naturae compescuit" (Miraculum, 36).
[216] "Hinc memor esto, dei genitrix sanctissima, nostri,/ qui te mente, fide, voto, laudamus et ore" (Theophilus, 411-412). Paul's version construes the final section of the bishop's speech as a direct address to God: "Certe magnificata sunt opera tua, Domine, et non sufficit lingua ad gloriam mirabilium tuorum" (Miraculum, 36).
[217] "At nos exiles nulla virtute potentes" (Theophilus, 415).
[218] "Te semper, regis mater non tacta perennis,/ ac de te genitum regem dominumque polorum/ efferimus crebris conclamantes simul odis" (Theophilus, 416-418).

through you, sacred virgin, he was reborn."[219] The language recalls the baptismal liturgy, which celebrates the baptisand's death to sin and rebirth into life in Christ. Hrotsvit's version identifies Mary as the crucial element in that *renaissance*. She serves as a simultaneously universal and individual *genetrix*, birthing the source of salvation (Christ) and delivering sinners like Theophilus through intercession.

After his speech, the bishop burns the demonic contract.[220] Hrotsvit integrates the destruction of the *carta* into the liturgical activity of the mass: "With these words, he burned the evil document and soon completed the sacrament of the mass with enthusiasm."[221] Unlike Paul, Hrotsvit claims Theophilus's spiritual transformation also transforms his body: "so the shining splendor of his spirit and the purity of his soul were showing through his glowing face."[222] Hrotsvit also describes the reaction of the congregation, which has witnessed Theophilus's recitation, the bishop's speech, the destruction of the *carta*, and now the radiance of Theophilus's redeemed body. Just like Theophilus in his initial meeting with Mary, the congregation moves from fear to praise: "the people, having been moved by great terror, began to sing praise, thundering to the most high."[223]

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[219] "Peccato noster moriens periit quia frater,/ sed, postquam periit, per te, sacra virgo, revixit" (Theophilus, 419-420). Paul's version has similar imagery but does not attribute this redemption to Mary: "quia frater noster mortuus fuerat et revixit, perierat, et inventus est" (Miraculum, 38).

[220] Paul's version assigns that task to Theophilus (Miraculum, 39).

[221] "His dictis cartam comburebat maledictam/ et mox misterium misse peragit studiose" (Theophilus, 421-422). Compare with Paul's version: "At postquam surrexit vicedominus, rogavit eum episcopus, ut combureret illam nefandissimam chartulam" (Miraculum, 39).

[222] "Quo mentis splendor lucens anime quoque candor/ eius per faciem monstraretur rutilantem" (Theophilus, 425-426). Paul's *Miraculum* says Theophilus's face "shone like the sun" but does not explain the source of the physical transformation (Miraculum, 39). Agnes will demonstrate a similar physical transformation, which indicates her sanctity: "Atque locum turpem miro splendore micantem/ aspexit, tenebris qui sordebat prius atris" (Agnes, 222-223)

[223] "Hic astans poulus nimia formidine tactus/ altithrono grates coepit resonare tonantes" (Theophilus, 427-428). Both Paul's *Miraculum* and Hrotsvit's *Theophilus* suggest that Theophilus is eventually buried in the church that witnessed his redemption (Miraculum, 39; Theophilus, 440-447).

The story of the *servus* and his re-admittance to the community of faith follows a similar pattern, though it is facilitated by Basil, who is both a saintly intercessor and a local cleric. Once the *servus* completed his solitary penance, Basil brings the *servus* out of the cave into his own quarters located next to the church.[224] In this sacred waiting room, the *servus* anticipates his redemption, as Basil collects the community. While the *servus* sleeps in Basil's cell, the community joins together to pray that God, the "good shepherd" would join yet another "wandering sheep" to his flock."[225] As Hrotsvit has proven throughout the narrative, forgiveness is the product of God's "customary goodness"; it is the essence of the divine-human relationship.[226]

While the *Theophilus* narrative erred on the side of theological description, the reintegration of the *servus* into Christian community is a miniature liturgical drama, complete with a clear concluding moral. Basil finally escorts the *servus* into the sacred space of the church, holding the boy's right hand (*dextra*) to guide him.[227] As soon as the *servus* passes the threshold of the church, a demonic presence appears to lay claim to his property. The demon grabs the left (*sinister*) hand of the *servus*, now pulled in two directions: held in tension between his sin and his desire for forgiveness.[228] David Day suggests this image may allude to the Germanic legal principle of "hand-laying" (*Anefang*) whereby an owner "formally lays hands on his property" to reclaim it when

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[224] "Extraxitque loco captivi membra nigello/ et locat in propria noctis sub tempore cella,/ que fuit aecclesie lateri coniuncta sacrate" (Basilius, 225-227).
[225] Basilius, 227-231. The *Vita Basilii*'s reference to this parable is far shorter, and could refer to Basil's role as earthly *pastor* rather than Christ's role as universal *pastor*: "Ecce enim ovem perditam debet pastor bonus in humeris reportare" (Vita Basilii, 11.116).
[226] "Per consuetam pietatem" (Basilius, 230).
[227] "Dextra paedicti comprensa pesul homulli/ intrat in ecclesiam secum quoque duxerat ipsum" (Basilius, 233-234).
[228] "Ut limen sacris tetigit venerabile plantis,/ affudit insidiis latitans clam demon amaris/ attraixque virum magna vi denique rursu,/ illius arrepta secreta fraude sinistra" (Basilius, 235-238). The *Vita Basilii* does note that Basil leads the servant by his right hand, but then says that the devil tried to "snatch" the servant, with no mention of a left hand. (Vita Basilii, 11. 120-124).

that property was found in another's possession.[229] In Frankish law, just as in Roman law, owners had the right to reclaim stolen slaves, but in Hrotsvit's story the demonic claim can only be contested when the *servus* is physically in the domain of the church.[230]

Before the *servus* is rent in two, Basil takes charge of the situation, explaining that Christ has a prior claim on the *servus*, which negates the demonic contract: "Wicked thief! Return the creation of the everlasting king, and conquered, let down the prize, stolen with deception."[231] Hrotsvit's version of this command relies heavily on her presentation of both the *carta* and its resulting *coniugium* as fraudulent. As Basil explains, the *servus* has always been the property of Christ and any demonic claim is mere "deception." The demon refuses this logic, reiterating his perceived legal right to "his own" *servus*, who did "freely submit his neck to [demonic] chains."[232] The demon even produces the *carta* as proof of the contract, noting he plans on presenting the document on judgment day as further proof of his claim.[233] In response, Basil simply states the ultimate truth: the power of Christ, the "just judge" nullifies the demonic

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[229] Day, "The Iudex Aequus: Legality and Equity in Hrotsvit's Basilius," 33. "Anefang" is also called the "third-hand procedure" in some legal texts, and it is the "process for reclaiming property found in another's possesion." Alexander C. Murray, *From Roman to Merovingian Gaul: A Reader* (Orchard Park, NY: Broadview Press, 2000), 544.

[230] Murray cites the *Lex Salica* to show that slaves, along with other property, could be reclaimed when it is found in the property of another. The owner's claim to his property can be demonstrated by a physical gesture: "let him put a hand upon it," while the other claiminant also lays his hand on the contested person or object. The "third hand" refers to the person who sold the stolen object to its second "owner." Murray, *From Roman to Merovingian Gaul*, 546. For further discussion of this legal procedure, see: Drew, *The Laws of the Salian Franks*, 218–19.

[231] "Inprobe fur, regis facturam redde perennis/ et furto raptam victus cito desere praedam" (Basilius, 240-241). The *Vita Basilii* does not mention fraud in Basil's first confrontation, focusing instead on naming the devil as "*corruptor animarum*" (Vita Basilii, 11.128).

[232] "Cur satagis proprium mihimet vi tollere servum,/ qui sua sponte meis submisit colla catenis?" (Basilius, 244-245).

[233] "Cartam percerte, mihimet quam reddidit ipse,/ tempore iudicii Christo monstrabo futuri" (Basilius, 246-247). The *Vita Basilii* includes a similar line, but still calls the document a *manuscripta* (Vita Basilii, 11.135).

contract and all its chains. Given this truth, Basil suggests that the demon return the fraudulent document, those "little letters" (*litterulae*) that have no legal standing.[234]

The community joins Basil in praying for Christ's intervention in this legal tug-of-war, drowning out the demonic "barking" and filling the sacred space with prayers.[235] Soon, the document falls to the ground at Basil's feet: no longer a *carta* but a *scriptura dolosa*.[236] The community embraces the *servus*, reclaimed for Christ and confident in his own forgiveness. It is a time of celebration, with enthusiastic songs of praise rising up to the "pole of the heavens."[237] In her conclusion to the tale of the *servus*, Hrotsvit again reminds her readers of the story's moral. Christ, "who snatched the captive from the mouth of the ancient lion," will continue his intervention on behalf of anyone who seeks him.[238]

5.5 Conclusion

Hrotsvit's *Theophilus* and *Basilius* operate together to present a multi-layered exemplum for her audience. As she stated in her introduction to the *Basilius*, Hrotsvit designed these stories to explain the power of sin and the even greater power of divine mercy. This message was repeated throughout the legends, delivered by an array of characters, including Hrotsvit as narrator. With the assistance of Christian leaders, both

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[234] "Ipsius Christi precepto, iudicis aequi,/ reddere litterulas sepero te protinus ipsas" (Basilius, 249-250).
[235] "His igitur dictis oravit turba fidelis/ altithronum preculis devoto pectore fusis" (Basilius, 251-252). These prayers will help strengthen Basil, the "loyal shepherd," in his fight against the enemy (Basilius, 253). The *Vita Basilii* does not reference the space of the church or use any auditory imagery.
[236] "Nec mora, de summo cecidit scriptura dolosa/ ante pedes sancti necnon pastoris amandi" (Basilius, 254-255).
[237] "Tunc plebs corde pio gaudens cum praesule digno,/ sparsit adusque polum voces cum carmine laudum" (Basilius, 256-257).
[238] "Conlaudans Christum solita pietate beningnum,/ qui captum veteris retraxit ab ore leonis" (Basilius, 258-259). The *Vita Basilii* suggests that the *servus* then returns to his wife, but Hrotsvit eliminates that portion of the narrative.

Theophilus and the *servus* present their stories of redemption to the Christian communities as a means of edification. Hrotsvit's audience would be another beneficiary of these unfolding hagiographic exempla. After all, her audience watched the insidious machinations of the devil, capable of corrupting both a well-educated cleric and a humble *servus*. They saw both sinners allow this corruption to turn their minds and hearts inward, permitting the disease of sin to fester. Instead of seeking the assistance of their Christian community, the sinners compound their error by seeking to ally with devil, the very entity that incited their sin. Hrotsvit keeps Theophilus and the *servus* silent throughout these ordeals in order to demonstrate pervasiveness of sin's polluting effect. Hrotsvit's audience then follows Theophilus and the *servus* through the steps of the penitential process, noting the responsibility of the sinner to understand and repent of his sins before receiving forgiveness. If her audience has studied these two texts as Hrotsvit requested in her introduction (*perscrutor*), they will be be able to offer their own witness to divine mercy, joining her in sending their voices heavenward: "praising the Lord Christ with a joyful heart, he who mercifully grants hope to us all."[239]

[239] "Laudantes dominum ridenti pectore Christum,/ qui nobis clemens talem venie tribuit spem" (Basilius, 261-262).

Dionysius: A Lesson in Scholarship and Evangelism

6.1 Introduction

In the penultimate legend of her hagiographic corpus, Hrotsvit examines the life of the scholar and martyr Dionysius. Hrotsvit's *Dionysius* represents a complicated conflation of literary traditions, but it has the following basic pattern. While studying astronomy in Egypt, Dionysius witnesses an eclipse that cannot be explained by scientific means. Upon his return to Athens, Dionysius dedicates an altar to the "unknown god" he believes was the source of the eclipse. As a result of a conversation with the Apostle Paul at the altar (cf. Acts 17:16-34), Dionysius converts to Christianity. Dionysius then embarks on an evangelical mission that includes his ministering to Carpus, a frustrated Cretan hierarch. Dionysius is unable to rescue Carpus from his "soul sickness." Christ himself must facilitate and then interpret a vision that rekindles the hierarch's faith. Following his encounter on Crete, Dionysius returns to Rome. Pope Clement commissions Dionysius as a missionary to Gaul, identifying the saint's intellectual gifts as the basis for his evangelism. Dionysius's Gallic mission is so successful that it attracts the attention of a pagan local governor, who imprisons the saint. Dionysius continues his missionary efforts while in prison. These efforts are supported by Christ's appearance in another vision. After Dionysius's martyrdom, his corpse carries his still-preaching head to a designated burial place, which becomes the site of many future miracles.

This narrative exemplifies many of the pedagogical themes that Hrotsvit has presented throughout her hagiographic corpus. Dionysius's conversion results from a concentrated intellectual effort, supported by conversation with other believers. Dionysius then shares the fruit of that knowledge as a missionary, although Carpus's

soul-sickness necessitates the intervention of Christ, the ultimate pedagogue. Neither prison nor death prevents Dionysius from sharing the good news. The miracles that occur at Dionysius's grave testify to the saint's continuing evangelism, concluding Hrotsvit's presentation of Dionysius's life as an exemplum of redemptive pedagogy.

6.2 Hrotsvit's Sources

6.2.1 *Dionysius and Denis*

Hrotsvit draws her *Dionysius* from a recent Carolingian hagiographic tradition, which conflates Dionysius the Areopagite of Acts with Denis of Paris, a third century martyr, and with the sixth-century author now known as Pseudo-Dionysius. The resulting narrative ranges geographically from Athens to Gaul, describing missionary activities that culminate in a cephalophoric, post-martyrdom march through Paris. This blended narrative begins with material gleaned from the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus, purportedly written by Dionysius, the Athenian who converts after Paul's sermon on the "unknown god" in Acts 17:34.[1] The corpus includes four treatises and ten letters, whose unique presentation of apophatic theology left a lasting impact on medieval and modern theology.[2] Although the date of the corpus remains uncertain, scholars believe it was written at some time between the late fifth and early sixth century.[3] Paul Rorem and John

[1] For late antique and medieval writers, the author of the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus was Dionysius the Areopagite. The discovery of the author's far less ancient origin was not made until the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Paul Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius: A Commentary on the Texts and an Introduction to Their Influence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 17.
[2] Countless medieval and early-modern scholars engage the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus, including John of Scythopolis, Maximus the Confessor, Robert Grosseteste, Albertus Magnus, and Thomas Aquinas. For an overview of the complexities in this reception history see: Sarah Coakley and Charles M. Stang, *Re-Thinking Dionysius the Areopagite* (Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2011).
[3] Charles M. Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity in Dionysius the Areopagite: "No Longer I"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 11–12; Andrew Louth, *Denys the Areopagite* (New York: Continuum, 2001), 1–16.

Lamoreaux have proposed Zeno's *Henoticon* as the *terminus post quem*, pointing to similarities in Christological language.[4] Severus of Antioch's references to the corpus represent the *terminus ante quem*, but his works are also "notoriously difficult to date."[5] Similarly, no consensus has been reached regarding the identity of the corpus's author. To this Pseudo-Dionysian foundation, the tradition adds details from the life of martyr-evangelist Denis of Paris. According to legend, Denis was one of several bishops commissioned by Pope Clement to evangelize Gaul before being martyred in response to Roman anti-Christian legislation.[6]

6.2.2 *Hilduin's Dionysian Corpus*

Hrotsvit's source for this blended narrative can be found in the work of a ninth-century prelate, Hilduin of Saint-Denis. Hilduin composed two Dionysian *passiones*, one metrical and one in prose. Until recently, only the popular prose version of Hilduin's *Passio S. Dionysii* (hereafter PDP) was thought to be extant.[7] Though referenced in several works, the metrical *passio* (hereafter, PDM) was presumed no longer extant until Michael Lapidge's discovery of the text in a previously unpublished manuscript MS

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[4] Paul Rorem and John C. Lamoreaux, *John of Scythopolis and the Dionysian Corpus: Annotating the Areopagite* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 9–10.

[5] Stang, *Apophasis and Pseudonymity in Dionysius the Areopagite*, 14. Severus twice quotes the *Divine Names* directly, and makes a general reference to Dionysian "theandric energy" in a third instance.

[6] Denis of Paris was briefly mentioned by Gregory of Tours in his catalogue of missionaries (Decem Libri Historiarum, 1.30). Denis's story is also intertwined with that of Genovefa, another Parisian saint; some limited information about Denis can be found in Genovefa's eighth-century *vitae*: Lisa M. Bitel, *Landscape with Two Saints: How Genovefa of Paris and Brigit of Kildare Built Christianity in Barbarian Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 58–61; Joseph-Claude Poulin, "Les cinq premieres Vitae de Sainte Geneviève, Analyse formelle, comparaison, essai de datation," *Journal des savants*, 1983, 134–37.

[7] Hilduin's prose account (BHL 2175) is also known by its incipit *Post beatam ac salutiferam*. This *passio* is frequently prefaced by Louis the Pious's letter requesting further "works on Dionysius" (BHL 2172). Hilduin's response to Louis (BHL 2173) and his address to other church members (BHL 2174) are also included in several manuscripts. Anna Lisa Taylor has catalogued more than one hundred versions of this manuscript, which range chronologically from the ninth to the fifteenth century. Anna Lisa Taylor, *Epic Lives and Monasticism in the Middle Ages, 800-1050* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 65.

Bodly 535 (S.C. 2254).[8] Hilduin composed these passions at a crucial moment in his career, which began with his appointment as abbot of Saint-Denis in 814. From the powerful seat of Saint-Denis, Hilduin's influence spread to other monastic houses.[9] By 819, Hilduin had become archchaplain to Louis the Pious, influencing the emperor's policies as well as Carolingian theological scholarship.[10] When Byzantine Emperor Michael II sent Louis a codex of the writings ascribed to Dionysius the Areopagite in 827, Hilduin was the natural choice to produce the first Latin translation of the corpus.[11] Hilduin did not compose his Dionysian *passiones* until after his return from the monastery of Corvey in 832, where he was exiled because of his support for the rebellion of Louis's son Lothar.[12] Although Hilduin was not reappointed archchaplain, he enthusiastically reclaimed his role as Abbot of Saint-Denis, composing a martyrium for Dionysius as well as his two Dionysian passions.[13]

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[8] MS Bodly 535 (S.C. 2254). The nature of this discovery is detailed in Michael Lapidge, "The Lost 'Passio Metrica S. Dionysii' by Hilduin of Saint-Denis," *Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch* 23 (1987): 56–79.

[9] Hilduin was also appointed abbot at Saint-Germain-de-Prés, Saint-Médard, Saint-Ouen, and Salonnes. Rosamond McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians, 751-987* (New York: Longman, 1983), 125.

[10] Although P.G Théry confidently identifies Hilduin as a "disciple d'Alcuin," recent scholarship reflects more skepticism about his education. Gabriel Théry, *Études Dionysiennes: Hilduin, traducteur de Denys*, vol. 1 (Paris: Vrin, 1932), 11. As evidence to the contrary, Lapidge notes that when Rabanus Maurus writes to Hilduin describing an academic technique he learned from Alcuin, he describes his teacher as "magister meus beatae memoriae Albinus" (PL 109.10). This phrasing seems to imply the two men were not fellow students. Lapidge, "The Lost 'Passio Metrica S. Dionysii' by Hilduin of Saint-Denis," 57, fn. 9. Regardless of his particular academic pedigree, Hilduin was an educator in his own right, counting scholars like Walifrid Strabo and Hincmar of Reims among his students.

[11] Hilduin's translation is notoriously error-prone. John Scotus Eriugena's version, produced for Charles the Bald, was far superior. Both translators, according to Théry, worked from the same manuscript, Bibliothèque Nationale Cod. Gr. 437, which had been gifted to Louis the Pious. Théry, *Études Dionysiennes: Hilduin, traducteur de Denys*, 1:69–70. For an extensive examination of these two authors as translators of the Dionysian corpus, see: Paul Rorem, *Eriugena's Commentary on the Dionysian Celestial Hierarchy* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2005), 21–46.

[12] For a roughly contemporaneous description of Hilduin's exile, see: Flodoard of Rheims, *Historia Remensis Ecclesiae*, ed. Martina Stratmann, vol. 36, Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptores (Hannover, 1998), 190–91. Lapidge points to Hilduin's accompaniment of Lothar to Rome in 824 as the origin of their close relationship. Lapidge, "The Lost 'Passio Metrica S. Dionysii' by Hilduin of Saint-Denis," 59.

[13] Details of the original structure are difficult to ascertain, due to Eugene Viollet-le-Duc's reconstruction of the space. The martyrium, consecrated by Hilduin in 832, would "have allowed pilgrims to glimpse the

Hilduin was not the first author to work with the Dionysian narrative. At least two other Dionysian *passiones* remain extant. The fifth-century so-called "*Gloriosae"* (BHL 2171) focused on Denis of Paris without reference to the Greek Dionysius of Acts 17. The *Post beatam et gloriosam* (BHL 2178), of uncertain date, does conflate the Parisian martyr and the Areopagite.[14] It is unclear whether Hilduin was indebted to either prior account. Anna Lisa Taylor concludes that whether or not he had access to the *Post beatam et gloriosam*, Hilduin created a "spectacular" and unique version of the conflated Dionysius narrative.[15] Lapidge suggests Hilduin's unique position as translator of the Dionysian corpus and abbot of St. Denis allowed him to reimagine "this already composite [Dionysius] figure."[16] Marianne Delaporte agrees that Hilduin was invested in the promulgation of the combined Dionysian narrative, but she is likewise reluctant to assign the original conflation to Hilduin.[17]

6.2.3 *Hrotsvit's Dionysius*

Hrotsvit's use of Hilduin's work is creative rather than slavish. Hrotsvit's *Dionysius* dramatically reduced the length of Hilduin's Dionysian *passiones*: it stands at a mere 267

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most sacred spot in the church — the presumed resting place of the patron saint." Sumner Crosby, *The Royal Abbey of Saint-Denis from Its Beginnings to the Death of Suger, 475-1151* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987), 61.

[14] For a for a discussion of whether BHL 2171 is indeed the source for Hilduin's work see: Lapidge, Michael, "The 'Ancient Passio' of St. Dionysius (BHL 2171)," *Analecta Bollandiana* 132 (2014): 241–85. For more on the integration of *Gloriosae* material into liturgy: Elizabeth A.R. Brown, "Gloriosae, Hilduin and the Early Liturgical Celebration of St. Denis," in *Medieval Paradigms: Essays in Honor of Jeremy duQuesnay Adams*, ed. Jeremy duQuesnay Adams and Stephanie A. Hayes-Healy (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 39–82. For the Latin text of the *Post beatam*, and a discussion of its origins, see: Michael Lapidge, "The 'Anonymous Passio S. Dionysii' (BHL 2178)," *Analecta Bollandiana* 134 (2016): 20–65.

[15] Taylor, *Epic Lives and Monasticism in the Middle Ages, 800-1050*, 65.

[16] Lapidge, "The Lost 'Passio Metrica S. Dionysii' by Hilduin of Saint-Denis," 67.

[17] Pointing to the ambiguity in the letter to Louis that Hilduin appended to his original *passio*, Delaporte suggests that Hilduin was merely reporting what "was discovered by the Athenians during their research in support for reestablishing archepiscopal status." Marianne M. Delaporte, "Saint Denis, Hilduin's Headless Holy Man" (Ph.D., Princeton Theological Seminary, 2004), 30–33.

lines, the second shortest of her legends. By contrast, Hilduin's metrical work spans 2100 lines and his prose narrative covers thirty-seven chapters. Although Hrotsvit displays no explicit knowledge of the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus, Dionysius was still a strategic addition to Hrotsvit's work. Just as Hilduin's Dionysian works reflected trends in Carolingian monastic and political life, Hrotsvit's *Dionysius* reflects the saint's increasing prominence in the Ottonian world. Otto visited Saint-Denis during his siege of Paris in 946. Widikund of Corvey's history of the Saxons reports that Otto "marched to Paris and besieged Hugh [Duke of the Franks and Count of Paris]. He also venerated the memory of St. Denis in every possible manner."[18] According to Karl Krüger, Dionysius was venerated along with Mauritius, Laruentius, and Vitus as the patron saints of the dynasty during Otto I's reign.[19] Quedlinburg, the monastic house founded by Ottonian matriarch Mathilda, treasured a relic of the saint's arm, given by Charles III to Henry Fowler in 923.[20] For the Ottonians, Dionysius was an exotic saint, whose fantastic posthumous activity mirrored his cosmopolitan life.

As well as reflecting an increased interest in this unusual saint, Hrotsvit's *Dionysius* may also have influenced fellow Ottonian scholars. David Cohen suggests that the Uta Codex, produced at Saint Emmeram in the eleventh century, reflects a familiarity with Hrotsvit's work. In addition to their knowledge of Hilduin's PDP, the monks of Saint

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[18] Rerum gestarum Saxonarum, III.3. Widikund of Corvey, *Rerum gestarum Saxonicarum libri III*, ed. H.E Lohman and Paul Hirsch, vol. 60, Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptores (Hanover, 1935), 107. Translation from: Widukind of Corvey, *Deeds of the Saxons*, trans. Bernard Bachrach and David Bachrach (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014), 102.

[19] Karl Heinrich Krüger, "Dionysius und Vitus als frühottonische Köningsheilige. Zu Widukind 1, 33," *Frümittelalterliche Studien* 8 (1974): 131–54.

[20] Cynthia Hahn suggests this gift symbolized the ascendancy of the Saxons over the Franks. Cynthia Jean Hahn, *Strange Beauty: Issues in the Making and Meaning of Reliquaries, 400-circa 1204* (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 2012), 188. The *Quendlinburg Annales* report that, as part of her initiation, Adhelheid of Quedlinburg ceremonially dedicated herself to Saints Dionysius and Servatius. David A. Warner, *Ottonian Germany: The Chronicon of Thietmar of Merseburg* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 165.

Emmeram also housed the only extant manuscript of Hrotsvit's corpus. Cohen finds evidence of Hrotsvit in the Uta Codex's iconic crucifixion scene, "which juxtaposes the crucifixion and the darkening heavens with the image of an altar in a picture replete with Dionysian themes."[21] Hrotsvit's *Dionysius* is the only narrative to attribute the founding of the "unknown god" altar to the saint. Her *Dionysius* offered the monks of St. Emmeram, as well as her wider Ottonian audience, a distinctive alternative to Hilduin's Dionysian *passiones*.

6.3 The Path to Conversion

6.3.1 *Observation and Inquiry*

Hrotsvit's story of Dionysius, the "exceptional martyr," does not begin with a formal introduction. Instead, Hrotsvit begins with five lines establishing the historical and theological context. Dionysius's story opens at the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, "the punishment of a bitter death on the cross."[22] Like the gospels, both Hrotsvit and Hilduin include a solar eclipse in their description of this crucifixion.[23] Hrotsvit's version presents her audience with a theological interpretation of the eclipse. For Hrotsvit, it is not merely the incarnate Christ who suffers on the cross: the divine creator of the "plan (*ratio*) of the highest, middle, and deepest regions" endures crucifixion.[24] The Trinity

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[21] Adam S. Cohen, *The Uta Codex: Art, Philosophy, and Reform in Eleventh-Century Germany* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 173.

[22] "In cruce supplicium mortis pateretur amarum" (Dionysius, 2). All Latin citations from Hrotsvit's Dionysius taken from Walter Berschin's critical edition: Walter Berschin, ed., *Hrotsvit Opera Omnia*, Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana (Monachii: Saur, 2001), 104–13. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

[23] The eclipse is referenced in all three of the synoptic gospels: Mark (15:33), Matthew (27:45), and Luke (23:44-45).

[24] "Dum factor summe, medie rationis et ime/ in cruce supplicium mortis pateretur amarum" (Dionysius, 1-2). In his *Apotheosis*, Prudentius uses an identical structure to describe the triune nature of the world: "sed regem summae et mediae rationis et imae" (Apotheosis. 226). Unlike Hrotsvit, Prudentius does not claim

oversees the triune *ratio* of the universe, a perfect order that is distorted by the crucifixion. The physical world must reflect this distortion of divine *ratio*. Consequently, "the night shadows encircled the earth," inverting day and night. The sun likewise "put aside" its rays, "honoring the death of the Lord with sorrowful service."[25] This brief introduction is one of the most concise in Hrotsvit's hagiographic corpus.[26] By contrast, the introductions to Hilduin's prose and metrical lives of Dionysius span hundreds of lines, describing the spread of Christianity throughout the Mediterranean.[27] Despite its brevity, Hrotsvit's introduction prepares her audience to consider cosmological events in light of theological reflection. This pattern of scientific and theological inquiry will be a central theme of her narrative of Dionysius's life.

Following this brief introduction, Hrotsvit turns to the *almus astrologus* Dionysius, who experiences the eclipse as a student in Egypt.[28] Dionysius reviews his own knowledge of celestial patterns and investigates many "appropriate books" in an

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that the "creative" element of the trinity explicitly suffered on the cross. For more on this comparison, see: Helene Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera. Mit Einleitungen und Kommentar* (Munchen, Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöingh, 1970), 193; Gonsalva Wiegand, "The Non-Dramatic Works of Hrosvitha; Text, Translation, and Commentary" (Ph.D., St. Louis University, 1936), 230.

[25] "Orbem nocturnę circumduxere tenebre/ et sol, deposito radii splendore sereni,/ exequias domini celebrat famulamine tristi" (Dionysius, 3-5). The term *famulamen* is relatively unusual, but Homeyer notes the same term appears twice in the *Rhuodleib* (Frg. 4, v. 136; Frg. 5, v. 190). Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 193.

[26] It parallels the similarly brief introduction to *Theophilus.* The other six legends average fifteen to twenty line introductions, which are often explicitly demarcated in M as separate text units.

[27] Hilduin's prose *passio* includes four chapters of introductory material before introducing the eclipse and Dionysius. Similarly, the metrical *passio* runs almost three hundred lines before introducing Dionysius and identifying the crucifixion as the source of his scientific contemplation. All citations from Hilduin's prose account (BHL 2175) come from PL 106, 13B-50C, designated by column location. Citations from Hilduin's metrical *passio* are from Michael Lapidge's as yet unpublished transcription of MS Bodly 535 (S.C. 2254), which is broken up into four "books." Citations will thus be rendered with book and verse number. Both of these Latin texts, along with translations, will be represented in Lapidge's forthcoming volume: *Hilduin of Saint-Denis: the "Passio S. Dionysii" in Prose and Verse*, Mittellateinische Studien und Texte (Leiden: Brill). Unless otherwise noted, translations of Hilduin's prose and poetic narratives are my own.

[28] Hrotsvit identifies the specific city as Memphis: "qui tunc Memphitidis artem discebat in oris" (Dionysius, 7). By contrast, Hilduin's prose and poetic vitae identify the city as Heliopolis: "Aegypti Heliopolim transmigravit" (PDP, 27A); "Heliopoleos migrat" (PDM, I. 298). In all three cases, Dionysius has traveled to Egypt for the express purpose of studying astronomy.

attempt to explain the eclipse.[29] Although he is certain that the "darkness was not normal," he cannot find a scientific explanation for the cosmic anomaly.[30] After noting the date and time of the *mysterium tenebrarum*, Dionysius concludes that the eclipse is evidence of something miraculous.[31] Both his observation and his research lead Dionysius to a single hypothesis: the eclipse could be evidence of an otherwise "unknown god" revealing himself in the world.[32] Hrotsvit's description of this process demonstrates that Dionysius's scientific inquiry leads to theological contemplation.[33] As Stephen Wailes puts it, Dionysius's "intellectual gifts" guide his first steps "towards faith."[34]

6.3.2 *Conversation with Paul*

Hrotsvit has provided her audience with two pieces of crucial information about Dionysius: first, that he uses all intellectual resources at his disposal to explain unusual phenomena, and second, that he is open to theological inquiry if scientific research fails

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[29] "Que docet astrorum motus solis quoque cursum,/ obstupuit libris coepitque requirere lectis,/ si tunc eclypsis posset consistere solis" (Dionysius, 8-10).
[30] "Ast ubi non solitas sensit magus esse tenebras" (Dionysius, 11). Note the exceedingly positive connotation of *magus* in this narrative, paralleling the flattering connotation of the *magi* ("wise men") in the *Maria* (636) and contrasting with the pejorative application of the term to the Jewish "sorcerers" in the *Theophilius* (96, 106, etc.) and the *Basilius* (55, 68).
[31] "Descripsisse diem dignum ducebat et annum/ non dubitans designari quod forte stupendi,/ quod post mysterium declarasset tenebrarum" (Dionysius, 12-14). Wiegand notes the alliterative force of line twelve, which adds to the methodical description of Dionysius's inquiry. Wiegand, "The Non-Dramatic Works of Hrotsvitha," 213.
[32] "Coniectatque deum signis testantibus almis/ actenus ignotum mundo mox esse probandum" (Dionysius, 15-16). Both of Hilduin's *passiones* offer a slightly different interpretation of Dionysius's conclusions and use declarative language to claim divinity as the source of the eclipse (PDP, 27B; PDM, I. 310-313). By contrast, Hrotsvit avoids direct speech. She also uses the verb *coniecto*, rendering Dionysius's interpretation of the eclipse a hypothesis: merely the first of many steps in his theological inquiry.
[33] Themes of light and dark play a particularly prominent role in the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus: representing knowledge and ignorance as well as visibility and invisibility. Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius*, 54–57. The same imagery has been used as a trope throughout Hrotsvit's hagiographic corpus, particularly in scenes of saintly imprisonment (e.g. Pelagius, 190-193).
[34] Stephen L. Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim* (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 2006), 100.

to produce a satisfactory answer. Dionysius returns home to Athens after the eclipse, having exhausted the educational opportunities in Egypt.[35] The impact of the eclipse and his theory about its divine origin stay with Dionysius; in time, the astronomer constructs an altar to honor the "unknown god" behind the eclipse.[36] Hrotsvit alerts her readers to the authenticity of Dionysius's construction by contrasting it with the other Areopagus altars, those "profane images of foolish gods."[37] The altar's inscription to the unknown god acts as a sort of beacon, drawing the attention of the apostle Paul, a Christian *opimus doctor* in his own right. Hrotsvit's narrative rearranges the order of events presented in both of Hilduin's *passiones*, which describe Dionysius and Paul meeting at an altar already dedicated by others to the "unknown god."[38] Only Hrotsvit's account identifies Dionysius's theological inquiry as the impetus for the altar's construction and, thus, for the subsequent conversation with Paul. By designating Paul as a "teacher" (*doctor*), Hrotsvit calls attention to the ways in which evangelism and pedagogy are complementary. Hrotsvit's version of the Areopagus conversation demonstrates the potential of such redemptive pedagogy.[39]

Just as Dionysius was captivated by the eclipse, Paul is captivated by Dionysius's freshly constructed altar. The apostle approaches Dionysius to inquire "with kind words"

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[35] "Ast ubi de rivis prefate debrius artis/ Athenas petiit sedem patriamque revisit" (Dionysius, 17-18). Though it is a common metaphor for knowledge, it is pertinent to note that Hrotsvit similarly symbolizes knowledge as water in the *Theophilus* (10-13) and in the *Pelagius* (16-18).

[36] "Culte constructam poni praeceperat aram/ hanc ipsam titulis decerens congrue pictis/ ignoti sub honore dei debere sacrari" (Dionysius, 20-22).

[37] "Inter stultorum simulachra profana deorum" (Dionysius, 19). Hrotsvit often describes pagan deities and their artistic representation as "stupid" or "empty": Maria, 843-845; Pelagius, 247-249.

[38] Hilduin's *passiones* suggest that the two men merely happen upon the altar during their conversation (PDP, 27D; PDM, I.356-361).

[39] Homeyer suggests that *doctor* is the "typisches Beiwort für den Apostel." Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 194. However, neither of Hilduin's Dionysian *passiones* identify Paul as a *doctor*, though he is described as *sagax* (PDM, I. 339) and clearly stands out among the crowd of "philosophers" who have collected on the Aeropagus (PDP, 27C).

about the nature of this "unknown god."[40] Dionysius responds to Paul's queries by "explaining" his reason (*causa*) for creating the altar.[41] Though Hrotsvit does not offer her audience a transcript of this conversation, she suggests that it was an animated debate.[42] This rigorous discussion results in Dionysius's spiritual transformation. Indeed, "he who was once an unbeliever [*incredulus*]" now conceded, "having been rightly conquered for faith."[43] In Hrotsvit's version of this conversation, therefore, Paul and Dionysius model the reciprocity of pedagogy, each seeking to teach and to be taught. As Wailes notes, "the allegiance of Dionysius to paganism has been broken strictly by the use of reason, his own and Paul's."[44] Dionysius's conversion results from this exercise in reason, which Hrotsvit would designate a proper "hammering" of the intellect.

6.3.3 *Faith and Sight*

For further emphasis on the value of the intellectual process, Hrotsvit juxtaposes this triumph of reason with Paul's miraculous restoration of a blind man's sight.[45] The concision of Hrotsvit's narrative explicitly connects this miracle to Dionysius's

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[40] "Quam doctor Paulus cum conspexisset opimus,/ quis sit hic ignotus, verbis rogitabat amicis" (Dionysius, 23-24).

[41] "Urbis cui primus Dyonisius ipse beatus/ exposuit causum, pro qua construxerat aram" (Dionysius, 25-26). Here, Hrotsvit designates Dionysius as the "first of the city" (*primus urbis*), a reference to his political importance or to his wealth. Five lines later, Hrotsvit reiterates this point by identifying Dionysius as the "praedictus princeps" (Dionysius, 31).

[42] "Et sic alternis certantibus loquelis" (Dionysius, 27). Hilduin's version of this event is more than double the length of Hrotsvit's. Hilduin describes this conversation in minute detail, relaying information in a distinctly creedal style. This example from the prose *passio* is repeated almost verbatim in the metrical version: "Natus enim ex Maria virgine, passus sub Pontio Pilato pro salute humana mortuus, resurrexit, coelosque ascendens" (PDP, 28A). Hrotsvit's text suggests the two men engage in an intellectual debate rather than creedal recitation.

[43] "Qui fuit incredulous, fidei cessit bene victus" (Dionysius, 28).

[44] Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 100.

[45] "Post haec egressus, caeco dat lumnia Paulus,/ quem properare quidem cicius precepit in urbem" (Dionysius, 29-30).

conversation on the Areopagus, while Hilduin's *passiones* separate these events.[46] Hrotsvit's juxtaposition of these events helps her audience understand the miracle as a physical representation of Dionysius's revelation. Just as the blind man sees by light of day for the first time, so Dionysius now sees by the light of faith.[47] The analogy between faith and sight recalls Mary's vision of the weeping and laughing men, which the incredulous Joseph was unable to understand.[48] Because Dionysius is now able to "see," the blind man's cure serves as a concrete affirmation of the astronomer's faith, placed alongside the eclipse as evidence of "divine power."[49] Dionysius, his wife Damaris, and a large group of companions come to *beatus Paulus* to confirm their faith in baptism.[50] The group is baptized together, all "completely cleansed from the blemish of that old sin."[51] Dionysius and his cohort emerge from the baptismal waters as new persons, individually redeemed from the universal chains of human sin.

As Wailes has noted, the baptism "ritually completes [Dionysius's] conversion, which was itself brought about by Paul's eloquent teaching."[52] But the conversion was also brought about by Dionysius's own dogged intellectual pursuit of the truth, a character

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[46] In Hilduin's metrical *passio*, for example, the first discussion between Paul and Dionysius appears almost forty lines removed from the miraculous healing of the blind man (PDM, I. 412-451). The prose *passio* separates the events with a full chapter (PDP, 28A-28D).
[47] This revelation of faith was, of course, prompted by the sun's intentional cloaking of its own light in the eclipse.
[48] Maria, 550-563.
[49] "Hunc functum cernens praedictus lumine princeps/ et credens signo divino numine facto" (Dionysius, 31-32). Both of Hilduin's *passiones* suggest that Paul instructed the cured man to seek Dionysius specifically for the purpose of continued conversion. As reported by the prose account: "vade, inquiens ad Dionysium, et dic ei quia Paulus servus Jesu Christi ad te me misit" (PDP, 28C).
[50] "Festinat subito Damari cum coniuge cara/ pergere, quo Paulum congnoverat esse beatum/ ipsius multa iuris comitante caterva" (Dionysius, 33-35). Acts 17 includes "a woman, Damaris" among those baptized on the Areopagus, but does not specifically designate her as Dionysius's wife. Hilduin and Hrotsvit both describe Damaris as Dionysius's wife.
[51] "Qui pariter sacro baptismate tincti/ prosus delicti mundantur sorde veterni" (Dionysius, 36-37).
[52] Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 100-01.

trait that is further displayed in Hrotsvit's description of his episcopacy.[53] Hrotsvit points to Dionysius's intellectual gifts as the source of his successful leadership: "he attentively satisfied the office presented to him, leading those not present with writings and those present with words, toward pursuing the cultivation of true faith."[54] This *scriptus* and *dictus* model of pedagogical evangelism is grounded in Dionysius's path to conversion, which included seeking knowledge both in texts and in conversation.

6.4 Dionysius as Evangelist and Pedagogue

As a result of his conversion conversation, Dionysius is able to forge his own path of pedagogical evangelism. In her initial description of Dionysius's missionary work, Hrotsvit uses a familiar agricultural metaphor: "setting out, he was spreading the seed of the Word."[55] One recipient of such a *semen verbi* is a troubled hierarch of Crete, known as Carpus.[56] The Carpus episode is included as a cautionary tale in the eighth letter of the Dionysian corpus, ostensibly written to the monk Demophilus. Dionysius writes in

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[53] "Et, qui dux plebis fuerat simulachra colentis,/ presul catholico praeponitur ergo popello" (Dionysius, 38-39). Note the repeated use of *simulachra* to connect this transformation with Dionysius's altar amongst those dedicated to "profane images of stupid gods" (Dionysius, 19).

[54] "Hic praesul factus mira bonitate decorus/ sedulus officium bene complevit sibi iunctum/ absentes scriptis, presentes denique dictis/ ad vere cultum fidei ducendo sequendum" (Dionysius, 40-43). These brief lines are Hrotsvit's only acknowledgment of Dionysius's activities prior to the Carpus episode. Hilduin goes into far greater detail about this period of Dionysius's life, which spans seven chapters of Hilduin's PDP (29B-34C) and hundreds of lines in the PDM (I. 538- II. 300). In these sections, Hilduin translates or summarizes the rest of the letters in the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus.

[55] "Nam quondam pergens semen verbi quoque spargens" (Dionysius, 44). As Homeyer has noted, Hilduin used an almost identical phrase in the prose version of his work, though it falls later in the narrative: "et per contiguas parochias verbi spargens semina" (PDP, 38B). Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 194.

[56] Carpus's identity, like so much about the Dionysian corpus, remains uncertain. A "Carpus" is referenced in 2 Timothy 4:13, included in a list of Paul's contacts. J. Stiglmayr suggests that Carpus is modeled on Nilus, a fifth century monk, while Hathaway suggests the Carpus episode represents an amalgamation of early Christian and Platonic sources. J. Stiglmayr, "Die Eschatologie des Pseudo-Dionysius," *Zeitschrift für katholischen Theologie* 23 (1889): 18; Ronald Hathaway, *Hierarchy and the Definition of Order in the Letters of Pseudo-Dionysius* (The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1969), 92–98. Louth prefers to read the Carpus episode in light of Paul's previous reference to the untrustworthiness of Cretans (1 Timothy 1:12). Louth, *Denys the Areopagite*, 278, n. 90. Taylor also provides examples of the "lying Cretan" trope in Greek and Latin sources, some of which might have influenced Hilduin's recreation of this scene. Taylor, *Epic Lives and Monasticism in the Middle Ages, 800-1050*, 92–93.

response to the monk's chastisement of local church leaders, which subverted the order of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.[57] He uses the Carpus episode to remind Demophilus of the value of forgiveness and to remind him that Christ alone may offer such clemency. Both of Hilduin's *passiones* include extensive descriptions of the other Dionysian letters, reducing the Carpus event to one episode among many.[58] By contrast, Hrotsvit's inclusion of the Carpus episode is her only explicit use of the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus.[59] Hrotsvit's isolation of the Carpus narrative allows it to stand, by metonymy, as emblematic of Dionysius's missionary work. For Hilduin, the vision serves primarily as a cautionary tale, more exemplum than presentation of fact. In the prose *passio* Hilduin even suggests, "I would not say it is a fable, but a spiritual matter, which happened spiritually."[60] But Hrotsvit offers no such commentary, instead integrating it seamlessly into her overall narrative. There is no need to explain the purpose of this visionary episode, since all her legends are designed as exempla, claiming pedagogical veracity rather than strict historicity.

According to Hrotsvit, this Cretan hierarch suffers from a form of soul sickness. The malady is familiar to the audience of Hrotsvit's hagiographic corpus, since the

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[57] Paul Rorem argues that the letters should serve as a primer for the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus, which lends the eighth letter particular significance. The addressees of Letters 1-7 represent increasingly powerful offices: Gaius, a monk (Letters 1-4), Dorotheus, a deacon (Letter 5), Sosipater, a priest (Letter 6), and Polycarp, a hierarch (Letter 7). By addressing Letter 8 to a monk, Pseudo-Dionysius "reinforces the argument of the epistle itself," which discusses proper respect for ecclesiastical authority. Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius*, 17–24; Hathaway, *Hierarchy and the Definition of Order in the Letters of Pseudo-Dionysius*, 85–104.

[58] The Carpus episode is one of several in Hilduin's report of Letter 8, and one of dozens in the broader epistolary narrative. The entirety of the Liber Secundus in the PDM reports these letters, as do chapters 9-16 of the PDP.

[59] Hrotsvit's initial discussion of Dionysius as an *astrologus* who witnesses the eclipse and converts through discussion with Paul is certainly part of the Pseudo-Dionysian author's self-presentation. Still, the Carpus episode is the first occasion where Hrotsvit references any part of the corpus itself.

[60] "Cui hanc quoque, non dicam fabulam, sed rem spiritalem spiritaliter gestam subiungit" (PDP, 34D). Translation from Taylor, *Epic Lives and Monasticism in the Middle Ages, 800-1050*, 93.

disease also afflicted Theophilus and the *servus* (in the *Basilius*).[61] Here, Hrotsvit describes the ailment as a "bitter sadness" (*tristitia amara*) that blossoms into burning anger.[62] Hrotsvit offers similar descriptions of *tristicia amara* in her plays, likely building on the Pauline *tristitia* that "John Cassian and Gregory the Great included in their schemes of capital sins."[63] The seed of Carpus's *tristicia amara* was sowed when a "certain pagan" convinced a "certain Christian" to renounce his faith, using "vile persuasions."[64] Carpus becomes incensed at this apostasy, allowing his anger to eat away at his own faith. In Hrotsvit's account, Dionysius addresses the problem by engaging Carpus in conversation: the same pedagogical corrective used by Paul in his own conversion and by the saintly intercessors in the "deal with the devil" narratives. Dionysius begins by questioning Carpus "with friendly words," helping the hierarch to identify the cause of his soul sickness.[65] Once the source of the illness has been

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[61] The same ailment will also afflict the youth pursuing Agnes in the final legend of Hrotsvit's hagiographic corpus. Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 101–2.

[62] "Qui male tristicia conturbabatur amara/ necnon plus licito succensa ferbuit ira" (Dionysius, 47-48). Hilduin describes this affliction as a *tristis perfidia* (PDM, II.311) and Carpus himself as *contristatus* (PDP, 35C).

[63] In particular, see *Drusiana* and *Gallicanus*: Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 101–2. Carpus's *tristitia* presents as anger, rather than grief or pride, as was seen in Theophilus and the *servus*. Hilduin's *passiones* describe Carpus as much more grieved than angry. For more on Carpus's illness, see: Marianne Schütze-Pflugk, *Herrscher- und Märtyrerauffassung bei Hrotsvit von Gandersheim*, Frankfurter historische Abhandlungen (Wiesbaden: Steiner Verlag, 1972), 34–38; Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 195. In addition to Cassian and Gregory, Wailes also notes that Alcuin, building on Gregory, includes *tristitia saeculi* as a capital sin in his *De vertutibus et vitiis* (PL 101: 635). Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 103; Richard Newhauser, *In the Garden of Evil: The Vices and Culture in the Middle Ages* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2005), 35–58.

[64] "Quidam gentilis quia perversis suadelis,/ fecit christicolam fidei sacra spernere quondam" (Dionysius, 49-50). Hilduin's prose account describes this pagan as merely *infidelis* (PDP, 15. 35C), while his metrical account adds *perfidus* (PDM, II.315).

[65] "Hunc ut presbiterum praesul sensit fore mestum,/ causam tristicia querebat amicis" (Dionysius, 51-52). Neither of Hilduin's versions explicitly constructs this fact-finding mission as a conversation between Dionysius and Carpus. Instead they present the situation as a direct report, following the Pseudo-Dionysian corpus precisely: "He described how he had been grieved once by the infidelities of someone. The reason for this sadness was that this man had turned someone toward godlessness and away from the church." Colm Luibhéid and Paul Rorem, trans., *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 278. Both of Hilduin's accounts mimic this style and neither includes a conversation (PDP, 35C; PDM, II. 305-215).

identified, Dionysius continues by soothing Carpus "with kind admonitions." Dionysius's goal is explicit: he wants Carpus "to put down the excessive anger in his heart."[66] This pastoral approach does not merely console Carpus, but also presents him with much-needed perspective. Dionysius asks the hierarch to pray that sinners might learn about the "gift of benevolent faith," which has already blessed Carpus so generously.[67] As Hrotsvit describes it, Dionysius structures this conversation to "remind [Carpus] that the hope of forgiveness ought to be denied to no one" who is properly contrite.[68] This argument for redemption reiterates the central theological message of Hrotsvit's hagiographic corpus.

Despite the clarity and cogency of his message, Dionysius remains unable to cure Carpus's soul sickness. Carpus actively resists the correction offered by Dionysius, and "eager for sadness, with mercy scorned, [Carpus] wasted away with the fury of his heart."[69] Carpus's rage, while uncompromising, is not difficult to understand. Even the most faithful Christians succumb to frustration, perhaps privately thinking what Carpus dares to verbalize, that "those who dare to live without the true God are not worthy of any life at all."[70] Yet, Carpus's fury at Christian apostasy is the essence of his "sad

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[66] "Et tristem monitis blande mulcendo benignis/ suaserat, ut nimiam cordis deponeret iram" (Dionysius, 53-54).

[67] "Et pro dampnandis exoraret scelerosis,/ qui cito conversi Christoque reconciliati/ eius perciperent mitis munus pietatis" (Dionysius, 55-57).

[68] "Admonuitque crebro nulli debere negari/ spem venie, proprium vellet si flere reatum" (Dionysius, 58-59). Hilduin's prose version offers a similar sentiment, though again, it follows the Pseudo-Dionysian account and presents the narrative as a report rather than as a pedagogically pastoral conversation (PDP, 35D).

[69] "Set, qui tristicie studuit spreta pietate,/ econtra frendens cordisque furore tabescens" (Dionysius, 60-61). Both of Hilduin's accounts also use *tabescens* to describe the impact of the disease on Carpus (PDP, 35D; PDM, II. 329).

[70] "Apposuit miseris duris maledicere verbis/ protestans illos neutra dignos fore vita,/ qui vixisse deo presumpsissent sine vero" (Dionysius, 62-64). Hilduin records a similar impression of Carpus's descent but does not suggest, as Hrotsvit does, that Carpus's soul-sickness has devolved into *spoken* blasphemy. By contrast, at this point in Hilduin's narratives, he chooses to focus on the internal rather than external (PDP, 35D; PMP, II. 328-329). Both accounts follow the Pseudo-Dionysian description of this episode, which concludes that, despite his past excellence, Carpus has devolved into "a great hostility and bitterness." Luibhéid and Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, 279. Hilduin does include a section wherein

reckoning" (*tristifica ratio*): a false *ratio* that reveals Carpus's own willful resistance to the essence of the Christian faith.[71]

After rejecting Dionysius, Carpus resigns himself to restless sleep. Plagued by his "sad mind" and "listless body," Carpus tosses and turns in his bed until a vision appears.[72] Hrotsvit alerts her audience to the role of this episode, noting that *visio* "quenched the turbulence of his spirit."[73] Indeed, this miraculous pedagogical vision will at last be the antidote to Carpus's soul sickness.[74] As Hrotsvit describes it, the vision begins by forcing Carpus to experience the perspective he lacks: he must view the world on a cosmic scale, seeing "the most high, gleaming with awesome splendor, seated and surrounded by angelic host."[75] Carpus barely has time to take in this overwhelming sight before fire bursts forth from heaven, descending from on high as "the avenger [*vindex*] of

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Carpus suggests unbelievers do not deserve to live, but he places it later in the narrative, during the vision scene. Carpus's speech here is cast as a solitary, rhetorical rant, rather than as a conversation (PDP, 35D).

[71] Hrotsvit uses this ablative absolute (*tristifica ratione peracta*) to transition from a discussion of Carpus's ailment into his visionary experience. Hrotsvit's use of *ratio* seems to encompass several aspects of the term's semantic range, including reason and order as well as discussion or conversation. Both Weigand and Homeyer translate *ratio* as "discussion," which makes sense given Hrotsvit's use of *peracta.* Wiegand, "The Non-Dramatic Works of Hrotsvitha," 218; Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 195. My own translation blends the two poles of *ratio*'s range, including both the idea of conversation as well as reasoning or logic. This reflects both the literal ending of the conversation between Carpus and Dionysius as well as the false reasoning that undergirded Carpus's participation in that discussion. There is no corresponding sentiment in Hilduin's *passiones* or the Dionysian corpus, which frames the meeting between Paul and Dionysius as a second hand report rather than a discussion. Hrotsvit's choice of *tristifica ratio* also recalls the *simulata iusticia* of Salome, a similar distortion of proper religious knowledge (Maria, 612-613).

[72] Hrotsvit, Hilduin, and Pseudo-Dionysius all describe this vision occurring during the night, but Hrotsvit's version offers the least clarity about the mechanics of the event. She claims that the vision occurs immediately after Carpus settles to sleep, without characterizing the *visio* as a dream or waking vision: "Mente satis tristi componit membra quieti,/ nec mora, monstratur caelis illi patefactis/ visio" (Dionysius, 66-67). Following Pseudo-Dionysius, Hilduin identifies Carpus as fully awake during his vision, which occurs during the presbyter's solitary midnight rant against sinners. Both of Hilduin's versions use the word *raptus* to describe Carpus's experience of the vision (PDP, 36A; PDM, II.331-343).

[73] "Visio, quae fluctus animi compescuit eius" (Dionysius, 68).

[74] Hrotsvit often employs visions to facilitate the redemption of her characters *and* their audience. The Carpus *visio* could be compared to Mary's vision of the laughing and crying men (Maria, 550-551), or to Mary's miraculous appearance to Theophilus (Theophilus, 199-272). Even the *servus* received the encouragement of vision, in which Basil fought demons on his behalf (Basilius, 219-222).

[75] "Scilicet altithronum miro splendore coruscum/ viderat angelicis septum residere ministris" (Dionysius 69-70).

certain sins."[76] The path of the fire forces a further expansion of Carpus's perspective, this time into the "dreadful cavern below, filled with snakes and with various tortures."[77] Hrotsvit paints an evocative picture of those trapped between the competing realms: they cling desperately to the earth, weeping as the snakes approach to drag them into the "boundless hell."[78] But Carpus's initial reaction to this vision confirms the depth of his sickness; rather than pitying the suffering, he demands more stringent punishments, enraged that "the miserable ones were not being cast down."[79] Carpus's anger has distorted his perception to such an extent that he identifies himself as an authoritative arbiter of cosmic justice. He has the audacity to pray that "divine vengeance soon destroy the guilty."[80] To answer the absurdity of such presumption, Christ himself appears in the vision, serving as judge and pedagogue. Hrotsvit juxtaposes Carpus, whose indignation is a perversion of righteous anger, with Christ, the "gentle one," who descends "with customary faithfulness" in order "to be merciful."[81]

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[76] "De celoque rogum raptim descendere magnum,/ ceu foret emissus scelerum vindex aliquorum" (Dionysius, 71-72). Hrotsvit uses a single word, *vindex*, to express the expanded logic of Hilduin's version of this *visio*. Hilduin describes Carpus as calling for a thunderbolt to end the life of unbelievers just prior to the vision, where a heavenly bolt flies past the presbyter (PDP, 36B; PDM; II. 335-339).

[77] Dionysius, 73-75. Note that Hrotsvit emphasizes the forced expansion of Carpus's physical and metaphorical sight by explicitly noting the movement of his eyes (*reflexis oculis*). Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 195.

[78] Dionysius, 76-79. Hrotsvit has universalized the identity of suffering in the pit, while Hilduin (following Pseudo-Dionysius) identifies the poor souls as the same men Carpus previously wished were struck by righteous fire (PDP, 36B; PDM, II. 361-362). Hilduin's much expanded accounts of this vision also describe humanoid demons helping the snakes ensnare the hapless sinners. Hrotsvit's concision and generality allows her audience to imagine themselves either as a type of Carpus or as one of the sinners.

[79] "Quo viso Carpus maiore furore repletus/ deflet, quod miser inn essent precipitati" (Dionysius, 80-81).

[80] "Voceque confusa rursum reptens maledicta,/ ut divinia reos orat mox ultio perdat" (Dionysius, 82-83).

[81] "Dixerat et Iesum solita pietate benignum/ de summo caeli solio promptum misereri" (Dionysius, 84-85). Berschin suggests two or more lines are missing after line 85 in M. Berschin, *Hrotsvit Opera Omnia*, 197. Homeyer clarifies that the missing lines likely describe Christ's descent to help those suffering in the pit: "Die ausgefallenen Verse schilderten, wie Christus zur Hölle abstieg, die beiden Sünder rettete und sich darauf an Karpos wandte." Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 196. Both of Hilduin's accounts, following Pseudo-Dionysius, include such a description of Christ's reaching out to save the sinners in the vision (PDP, 36C; PDM, II. 394-401).

Hrotsvit immediately alerts her readers to Christ's pedagogical role in this vision, explaining that his speech would confront the "not gentle grief of Carpus."[82] Christ criticizes the "rebellious" Carpus for his desire to witness "the destruction of the wicked ones."[83] Christ's role as intercessor necessitates this acknowledgement of Carpus's error, but even in his lawful seat of judgment, Christ prefers mercy. Hrotsvit reminds her audience that Christ is "faithfully ready to suffer again for the human race" if necessary.[84] This sacrificial perspective prioritizes compassion over Carpus's flawed understanding of "justice." But Christ's mercy is only available to those who have "learned to weep for their sin" (*discunt deflere reatum*), a skill Carpus himself has yet to master.[85] This language recalls both Dionysius's earlier suggestions to Carpus and Hrotsvit's discussion of forgiveness throughout the hagiographic corpus.[86] Indeed, Hrotsvit's Christ reminds Carpus that all human life should be valued, especially by the simultaneously creative and redemptive Trinity: "I do not consider it a light thing when the creation of my right hand dies, that which I made beautiful, which, having been corrupted, I revived."[87] Hrotsvit's Christ's thus identifies the crucial moments of divine

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[82] "Infit non mitem Carpi causando dolorem" (Dionysius, 86). Hilduin does not explicitly connect Christ's subsequent speech with Carpus's spiritual affliction, simply rendering it a conversation: "et conversus ad Carpum Jesus dixit ei" (PDP, 36D); "et conversus ait ad Carpum mitis Iesus" (PDM, II. 408).

[83] "Percute, si possis, contra me, Carpe, rebellis/ qui cupis interitum sicienter adesse reorum" (Dionysius, 87-88). This introductory imperative suggests that the missing lines might also have included Carpus's attempts to further hinder the escape attempts of the sinners in the pit. Hilduin's prose account makes that connection explicit: "Carpe, manu in istos constituta, et non per misericordiam retracta, percute adversum me" (PDP, 36D).

[84] "En ego sum, celi rector mortisque peremptor,/ humana rursus pro gente pati pie promptus,/ si non salvari possunt aliter scelerosi" (Dionysius, 89-91). Hilduin's prose account offers a similar sentiment: "nam paratus sum pro hominibus resalvandis iterum pati, et complaceo super his, quam super aliis hominibus qui non peccaverunt"(PDP, 36D).

[85] "Qui post commissum discunt deflere reatum" (Dionysius, 92).

[86] "Admonuitque crebro nulli debere negari/ spem venie proprium vellet si flere reatum" (Dionysius, 58-59).

[87] "Nec leve duco mee dextre iam plasma perire,/ quod pulchrum feci, quod corruptum reparavi" (Dionysius, 93-94). Homeyer notes the parallels to the concluding lines of Hrotsvit's *Theophilus*: "humani

intervention into human life: for God offers the physical breath of life and the spiritual breath of salvific rebirth. Neither of Hilduin's accounts includes this intimate and instructive picture of Christ's affection for his creation.[88]

To confirm this point, Hrotsvit's Christ concludes his speech with a demonstration of the mercy offered to all of humanity, allowing Carpus a choice (*elige*).[89] Carpus may either "practice sweet piety" and join Christ in heaven, or he may continue in "harsh rage" and endure the same "boundless hell" he wished upon other sinners.[90] The moral of this *visio* is clear enough, but Hrotsvit reminds her audience of their responsibility to internalize the lesson by reflecting on Carpus's response to correction. Carpus's soul sickness, which was manifest in a false sense of justice, is at last "tamed" by the lesson offered in the vision of Christ.[91] Because Christ has "tamed" this *tristitia amara*, Carpus can serve as a "model [*exemplum*] of piety that ought to be imitated by all."[92] As

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veterem generis qui straverat hostem/ plasma sue dextre rapiens serpentis ab ore" (Theophilus, 444-445). Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 196.

[88] Both of Hilduin's accounts follow Pseudo-Dionysius, moving directly from Christ's willingness to suffer for humanity to Christ's offer to Carpus: "I would very gladly endure [suffering] if in this way I could keep men from sin. Look to yourself. Maybe you should be living with the serpents in the pit rather than with God." Luibhéid and Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, 280.

[89] Compare Hrotsvit's choice of *elige* here to Hilduin's "verumtamen vide" (PDP, 36D) and "tamen ipse vide" (PDM, II. 417).

[90] "Elige nunc dulcem vel sectando pietatem/ in caelo mecum semper regnare per aevum/ vel per sevitiam dire mentis male duram/ supplicio baratri trade sine fine profundi" (Dionysius, 95-98).

[91] "His nimium iustus monitis vir mansuefactus" (Dionysius, 99). Wailes translates *nimium iustus* as "an obsession with one's own virtue," which may "exemplify a spiritual sickness that [Hrotsvit] observed at Gandersheim." Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 103. Homeyer translates the same phrase as "selbstgerecht," while Wiegand opts for "unduly rigid." Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 196; Wiegand, "The Non-Dramatic Works of Hrotsvitha," 220. This perversion of righteousness is merely a symptom of Carpus's *tristitia amara*, which renders him blind to Christ's mercy until the illness can be "tamed." This "taming" language recalls the snakes and desert creatures who were similarly tamed by the Christ child in Hrotsvit's *Maria* (Maria, 714-715; Maria, 727-728).

[92] "His nimium iustus monitis vir mansuefactus/ exemplum cunctis imitanda fit pietatis" (Dionysius, 99-100). Hrotsvit makes no reference to the Dionysian corpus or to the fact that the Carpus episode was contained in a letter to Demophilus. Hilduin's accounts conclude by asserting the validity of the Carpus account, as told to Demophilus, the ostensible recipient of the letter: "haec ad Demophilum dicta sunt" (PDP, 36D); "talia Dimofilo constant documenta relata" (PDM, II.425).

secondary recipients of this vision, Hrotsvit's audience must also allow themselves to be "tamed" by Christ's everlasting mercy.[93]

6.5 A Light Shines in Prison

Although Dionysius's life of faith began with his baptism by his "teacher" Paul, his missionary work lacks official dispensation until he meets with Pope Clement in Rome.[94] Clement, like Dionysius, stands in the line of apostolic authority. According to Hrotsvit, Clement was a "venerable disciple of Peter," worthy to lead the church universal.[95] Hrotsvit's description of the meeting between these two men paints an evocative picture of their combined faith: "the venerable servants of the Lord were together constantly, since the most gracious piety of the celestial king had wanted, with an abundant beam of eternal light, to tear apart the ancient black shades of error."[96] In particular, Clement is aware of the shades of disbelief forming in a "region of the West," which necessitates the commissioning of a preacher to "spread the seed of the divine word throughout the people."[97]

According to Hrotsvit, Clement was guided by divine inspiration to choose Dionysius for this mission, which requires *miles Christi* capable of articulating his faith

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[93] Hrotsvit's readers might recall the Christ child's similar "taming" of the animals in the desert as an analogue to this scene (Maria, 712-715).
[94] Dionysius, 103-106. Hrotsvit categorized Peter and Paul's deaths as a martyrdoms. For more on interpreting these accounts as martyrdoms, see: David L. Eastman, *The Ancient Martyrdom Accounts of Peter and Paul* (Atlanta, GA: SBL Press, 2015). Hrotsvit's two-line transition from Crete to Rome stands in stark contrast to Hilduin's inclusion of further Pseudo-Dionysian letters, as well as descriptions of Dionysius's missionary activity in Greece and Asia Minor (PDP, 37A-38C; PDM, II.425 - III. 68). In Hilduin's accounts, Dionysius only returns to Rome after hearing reports of the persecutions lead by Nero.
[95] "Discipulusque Petri Clemens venerabilis orbi/ sedis apostolice culmen rexit satis apte" (Dionysius, 107-108). For more on the liturgical vocabulary present in these lines, see: Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 197.
[96] Dionysius, 112-115. Hilduin also suggests that Clement and Dionysius serve as "lights" shining into widespread darkness (PDP, 38D; PDM, III. 84-86).
[97] "Dionysius, 116-119. Recall Hrotsvit's description of Dionysius's work as providing a *semen verbi* (Dionysius, 44). This agricultural metaphor for evangelism will continue in Clement's speech.

for a pagan audience.[98] Although there is a "great crop" of potential conversions prepared for the Lord around the world, Clement laments that the "ones eager for harvesting it are very few."[99] In recording Clement's commissioning speech, Hrotsvit draws a clear parallel between Dionysius's intellectual pursuits and his potential as a missionary: "You, having drunk from the spring of sacred books, are a great scholar of divine *cultus*; secure in the example of Paul, your teacher, go forth and subject many peoples to the authority of Christ."[100] Dionysius's education, acquired both through personal research and through conversation, equips the saint for his mission of redemptive pedagogy. Mindful of Dionysius's pedagogical skills, Clement makes Dionysius a bishop, granting him the authority to "[forgive] those converted by faith and [to bind] the guilty," which had been passed down the apostolic line from Christ himself.[101]

According to Clement, Dionysius will be sent to Gaul, a region that may one day be a distinguished *alumna* of the scholar-pastor's evangelism.[102] Gaul is far from civilized, at least by Roman standards, and Dionysius should expect a "rebellious people"

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[98] Clement was "warned previously by the holy spirit" ("monitus divino flamine"; Dionysius, 117). This language recalls the "warnings" so recently received and internalized by Carpus: "his nimium iustus monitis vir mansuefactus" (Dionysius, 99). According to Hrotsvit, Clement's speech begins by identifying Dionysius as a *miles Christi* (Dionysius, 120), while Hilduin relegates that appellation to the center of Clement's address (PDP, 39B; PDM, III. 107). This is the only instance in Hrotsvit's hagiographic corpus where a pope speaks; Wailes notes that a pope also speaks in the *Primordia ceonobii Gandershemensis*. Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 104.

[99] "Magna seges domini crescit per clymata mundi/ praebens innumeras mature messis aristas;/ instantes messi sed constant oppido pauci" (Dionysius, 121-123).

[100] "Hinc tu, sacrorum bibulus qui fonte librorum/ constas divini sciolus quam maxime cultus,/ exemplo Pauli securus perge magistri/ imperio populos Christi subiungere multos" (Dionysius, 124-128). Hrotsvit blends Dionysius's pedagogical gifts with the martial nature of this evangelical mission: he must "subdue" peoples for the "empire of Christ." Hilduin emphasizes the moral and practical results of Dionysius's education, rather than the education itself (PDP, 39B; PDP, III. 105-106).

[101] Dionysius, 130-131. Hilduin's accounts offer a near-identical accounting of this authority as passed down from Christ through the apostolic tradition (PDP, 39B-39C; PDM, III.107-115). Both of Hilduin's accounts specifically include the powers of "saving and binding" noted by Hrotsvit (PDP, 39C; PDM, III.113). Schütze-Pflugk, *Herrscher- und Märtyrerauffassung bei Hrotsvit von Gandersheim*, 35–36.

[102] "Accipe nunc Gallos tibi me tradente docendos/ doctrineque tui signetur Gallia sorti,/ quo vir apostolicus digna celebreris alumna**"** (Dionysius, 132-134). Hilduin does not use any form of *doceo* in his descriptions of Gaul, using a military metaphor instead (PDM, III. 117).

prone to "gnashing their teeth like beasts."[103] Lest her audience forget Dionysius's impending martyrdom, Hrotsvit's Clement concludes his speech by assuring Dionysius he will receive an "everlasting reward" commensurate to his "suffering of pain for Christ."[104] Undeterred, Dionysius makes his way to Gaul, and specifically to Paris, where "all the nobles of Gaul assembled often."[105] Dionysius begins his mission in this burgeoning metropolis, "spreading the sacred seed of the holy word," which soon began to bear fruit.[106] Hrotsvit notes that Christ "thought it fitting to exercise a power of great signs through" Dionysius, "taming" the hearts of many a "rebellious" Gaul in preparation for conversion.[107]

Dionysius's success as a missionary draws the attention of the "ancient dragon," now deprived of "so many souls" that had previously been snared by sin.[108] Hrotsvit's audience would recognize this description of demonic activity, found throughout the corpus.[109] In Dionysius's case, the devil incites the Emperor Domitian to impose his anti-Christian legislation.[110] For Hrotsvit, the edict that "damned all the believers of Christ to

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[103] "Nec vereare quidem gentes intrare rebelles,/ quae restant vero frendentes more ferino" (Dionysius, 135-136). Hilduin has a similarly low opinion of Gaul, describing its residents as "barbarian peoples" (PDP, 36C; PDM, III. 129).

[104] "Sed tibi mercedis tantum confide perennis/ in patris astrigera summi servarier aula,/ quantum pro Christo tuleris patiendo doloris" (Dionysius, 137-139). Hilduin's Clement offers no such reminder.

[105] Dionysius, 142-144. Hilduin's prose description of Gaul is far more involved, waxing poetic about the region's "well-wooded forests" and "abundant wines" (PDP, 40A).

[106] "Hic ubi divini coepit sacra semina verbi/ spargere" (Dionysius, 145-146).

[107] Dionysius, 146-149. Hrotsvit again describes the conversion process as a "taming," particularly appropriate given Clement's earlier description of the Gauls as beasts (Dionysius, 136). As Homeyer notes, although Hilduin describes several of Dionysius's activities in Gaul (PDP, 41A; PDM, III. 249-305), Hrotsvit includes only a vague reference to these "signs." Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 198.

[108] Dionysius, 150-154. Hrotsvit identifies Christ as the ultimate source of the change, while Dionysius is merely the conduit through which Christ's powers are mediated. Hilduin's accounts also note that the devil's fraudulent claims on humanity have taken particular hold in Gaul and Rome (PDP, 241D; PDM, III. 305-365).

[109] For just two examples, see: "auctor sed scelerum, qui decepit protoplastum" (Basilius, 33); "auctor quod sceleris populator perfidus urbis sanxit" (Pelagius, 78-79).

[110] "Hinc pater ipse doli sceleris doctorque maligni/ provocat iniustum regem mox Domitianum/ Christicolis edita necis dictare ferocis" (Dionysius, 155-157).

death" was a direct result of Dionysius's successful evangelism.[111] Sisinnius, the governor of Gaul, uses the edict as justification to imprison Dionysius, "the teacher of the Gauls."[112] Dionysius enters prison as *magister,* accompanied by two of his *condiscipuli*, a scene that replicates the biblical report of Paul's imprisonment.[113] Like Paul, Dionysius continues to carry out his mission of redemptive pedagogy while in prison, never ceasing "to pay worthy homage to the Lord in the dark cave."[114] Hrotsvit continues to categorize this evangelical activity as teaching, suggesting that Dionysius "eagerly taught [*studiose docuit*] the collected people" before preforming the sacraments.[115] In the middle of this makeshift mass, a vision of Christ appears, "a new light" that enhances the light of Dionysius's didactic activity.[116] Hrotsvit describes the "splendid king of the starry

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[111] "Qui decreta per omne suum mittens mala regnum/ Christi cultores morti dampnaverat omnes" (Dionysius, 158-159). Hilduin offers similar logic in the prose *passio*: "ut Domitiano, qui post Neronem, perditionis filium, secundam persecutionem in Christianos exercuit" (PDP, 41D). The discussion of early Christian persecution at Roman hands tends toward exaggeration. For an analysis of Domitian's place in this period of religious change, see: Paul Middleton, *Radical Martyrdom and Cosmic Conflict in Early Christianity* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2006), 43–45; Robert Louis Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), 25. T.D. Barnes famously argued there is no evidence of "any legal ordinance against the Christians" during Domitian's rule. T.D. Barnes, "Legislation against the Christians," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 58 (1968): 36.

[112] Dionysius, 160-163. Hilduin also identifies reports of Dionysius's successful evangelism as the impetus for Sisinnius's travel to Rome (PDP, 42C-43D; PDM, IV. 1-75).

[113] "Carceris intenbras iussit concludier atras,/ ipsius condiscipulos pariter quoque bios,/ quos numquam caro sors cogit abesse magistro" (Dionysius, 166-168). Following the tradition of the *Gloriosae* (BHL 2717), Hilduin identifies these co-prisoners as Rusticus and Eleutherius (PDP, 42 D; PDM, IV. 60-65). Taylor suggests that Hilduin's addition of clerical offices for these men (as archpresbyter and archdeacon respectively) represents his attempt to visualize the triad represented in the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. Taylor, *Epic Lives and Monasticism in the Middle Ages, 800-1050*, 73. Both John of Scythopolis and Eriugena also report the names of Dionysius's co-prisoners. Rorem, *Eriugena's Commentary on the Dionysian Celestial Hierarchy*, 8.

[114] "Sed nec carceris presul praeclarus in antris/ destitit obsequium domino persolvere dignum" (Dionysius, 169-170). In addition to the Pauline parallels, Hrotsvit's language also recalls Pelagius's time in prison. The contrast between the "illustrious" Dionysius and his "dark" surroundings, as well as Dionysius's continued evangelism, are represented in the Pelagius narrative.

[115] "Sed docuit plebem studiose convenientem/ ac celebrat sacre solicito sollempnia misse" (Dionysius, 171-172). In Hilduin's accounts, this mass and subsequent vision only occur after a lengthy interrogation and torture of all three prisoners (PDP, 43B-44D; PDM, IV. 130-330).

[116] "Ast ubi caelestem debebat frangere panem,/ lux nova tristifico subito fulgebat in antro" (Dionysius, 173-174). Hilduin places the vision at the same point in the service: "hora, qua frangebatur panis sanctus" (PDP, 45C).

courts" speaking directly to Dionysius, offering his faithful *alumnus* the sacrament of his own body and blood.[117]

This rhetorical moment collapses salvation history into a single moment in Dionysius's prison cell. Christ addresses Dionysius using liturgical language, urging the saint to "accept my holy body, whose hidden mystery [*secretum misterium*] I will soon complete for you, for your best reward remains everlasting with me."[118] The divinely incarnate body, broken on the cross, is now offered as sacrament to a future martyr: both a promise and a reminder of the ultimate reward of salvation. Again casting Christ as divine pedagogue, Hrotsvit explains that this salvation is available to all "who faithfully try to be in agreement" with the tenets of faith, presented by Dionysius and other evangelists.[119] How should Christians demonstrate their commitment to faith? Hrotsvit's Christ explains that Christians in general and Dionysius in particular should "contend constantly and preserve faith patiently."[120] Although following these guidelines will produce earthly praise, this is a comparatively insignificant reward in light of Christ's ultimate "gift of grace."[121]

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[117] "In qua sideree regnator splendidus aule,/ scilicet angelica partier comitante caterva/ apparens carum consolabatur alumnum/ sanctaque dans illilli muclebat famine tali" (Dionysius, 175-178). As a member of the apostolic succession, Dionysius is indeed an *alumnus* of Christ, having received both the teachings and sacramental authority initiated by Christ himself.

[118] "Accipe, care meus, mis iam venerabile corpus,/ cuius misterium tibi mox conplebo secretum;/ namque tui merces mecum manet optima perpes (Dionysius, 179-181). By contrast, although Christ offers the elements in Hilduin's account, he refers to them with a generic pronoun *hoc* (PDP, 49C; PDM, IV. 364).

[119] "Hisque salus summa patris prestatur in aula,/ consentire tuis qui dant operam pie iussis" (Dionysius, 182-183). Hrotsvit claims believers must try to be in "agreement" (*consentire*) with the faith, as explained by Dionysius, while Hilduin implies they must only "want to hear the words of outstretched" salvation: "inque meo regno cunctis donabo salutem/ quos audire iuvat pandis que verba salutis" (PDM, IV. 366-367). Hilduin's prose *passio* abbreviates the logic even further: "quoniam mecum est maxima merces tua, et his qui audierint te, salus in regno meo" (PDP, 45C).

[120] "Certa constanter servaque fidem patienter" (Dionysius, 184).

[121] "Quo crescant celebris tibi iam praeconia laudis;/ et, quodcumque sacris a me precibus rogitabis,/ impetrare mei poteris dono pietatis" (Dionysius, 185-187).

After this divine intervention, which served as Christ's own "powerful testimony," Dionysius and his two fellow witnesses to faith (*testes*) await their fate without fear.[122] It is no coincidence that this visionary *evangelium* occurred in the middle of the prison mass; Hrotsvit's audience would recall that accounts of visionary intercession took the place of sermons in the concluding scenes of both *Theophilus* and *Basilius*. Christ's speech not only offers consolation but also provides Hrotsvit's audience with a succinct exposition of the Eucharist. The elements of the sacrament foreshadow Dionysius's imminent death and resurrection, which are made possible through Christ's salvific death and resurrection. Throughout this prison scene, Hrotsvit plays with the multivalent imagery of light and darkness: Dionysius's evangelical light, which alone illumines hope for his fellow prisoners, is combined with the ultimate light of Christ's sacrificial love. This combined light will be enough to illumine the entire region, demonstrating the pedagogical power of the martyrial narrative.

6.6 Dionysius as Cephalophore

Immediately after the miraculous appearance of Christ in his prison cell, both Dionysius and his two *discipuli* are summoned to be interrogated by the "haughty" (*superbus*) governor Sisinnius.[123] All three stand firm in their commitment to the faith, as evidenced by Hrotsvit's creedal report: they stated with clear voices that the "Father, together with the Son and with the Holy Spirit, are the one true God, alone

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[122] "Tali laetatus fortis solamine testis/ nulla timet tormenta pati pro nomine Christi./ Post haec abstracti testes de carecere terni" (Dionysius, 188-190).

[123] As Wailes notes, the increasingly "pejorative" language describing Sisinnius recalls Hrotsvit's consistent critiques of non-Christian political authority throughout her hagiographic corpus. Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 104.

everlasting."[124] The group further "testifies" they are willing to die and be tortured for the name of Christ.[125] By refusing to validate the "false gods" of the Romans, Dionysius and his *discipuli* subject themselves to the animalistic rage of Sisinnius.[126] Sisinnius orders that all three Christians, designated as *athleta Christi*, should be put to death along with all those that had been converted through their missionary activity.[127]

All three Christians are eager to endure martyrdom, but Dionysius alone offers a final speech, which serves as benediction and final lesson. Dionysius begins by thanking God, his "most gracious guide" who allowed the bishop to "enjoy the breath of life."[128] Life, for Dionysius, finds its fullest expression in the "light of profound intellect, by which [he] studied [God's] mercies."[129] God granted Dionysius the gifts of the mind, but Dionysius then used those gifts to further his own faith and the faith of others. The same could also be said for Hrotsvit, who has credited the divine for her intellectual gifts and for her ability to share those gifts in writing. Dionysius acknowledges the magnitude of his skills, offering thanks for all the "gracious gifts conferred on [him]."[130] According to Hrotsvit, Dionysius prays that one such gift, the "eternal crown," will be granted both to

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[124] "Qui bene concordes, clara quoque voce fatenes/ patrem cum nato necnon cum flamine sacro/ esse deum verum solum perenniter unum" (Dionysius, 193-195). These few lines sum up Hilduin's far longer interrogation scene (PDP, 46A; PDM, IV. 375-419).

[125] "Testantur mox malle mori pro nomine Christi/ membratim quoque suppliciis scindi redivivis" (Dionysius, 196-197). Following the traditional language of martyrdom accounts, Hrotsvit plays on the multivalent legal and theological elements in martyrdom vocabulary.

[126] "Quam sua colla diis umquam submittere falsis./ Hac magis offensus praeses ratione profanes/ ceu leo non modica rugiens praeceperat ira" (Dionysius, 199-200). Hrotsvit offered a similar description of the devil in the *Basilius*: "utitur his verbis frendens velut ira leonis" (Basilius, 81). Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 200.

[127] "[praeceperat] athletis Christi cervices mox resecari/ et gladiis cunctos primi baptismate lotos." (Dionysius, 201-202). Hrotsvit describes the results of this decision as "countless murders" (Dionysius, 203).

[128] "Mi dee, mi factor, mi clementissime rector,/ qui me vitali prestans aura pie vesci*"* (Dionysius, 210-22).

[129] "Scilicet ingenii donasti luce profundi,/ quo tis secretu scrutarer mysteriorum" (Dionysius, 212-213). Hilduin includes this praise of knowledge, but identifies Dionysius as a far more passive recipient: "qui aeterna sapientia tua docuisti me, et consilia secretorum tuorum non abscondisti a me" (PDP, 46B).

[130] "Et tibi devotas cunctis grates ago membris/ pro cunctis donis mihi collate pietatis" (Dionysius, 215-216). This statement explicitly fulfills the final request of Christ's prison oration: "quodcumque sacris a me precibus rogatibus,/ impetrare mei poteris dono pietatis" (Dionysius, 186-187).

him and to his companions, who die in Christ's name.[131] Dionysius concludes his final speech by asking Christ to oversee future missionary work in Gaul: "Protect your people with paternal faithfulness, the people whom I nourished, feeding them for you with a lesson (*sermone*) of faith."[132] This metaphor of words as vital spiritual nourishment appears in several of Hrotsvit's legends.[133] It seems especially apt for Dionysius's narrative, suggesting that the seeds (*semina*) of redemptive pedagogy had indeed flourished into nourishment for the spiritually starved Gallic masses. Even after the three men have been beheaded, Hrotsvit's narrative testifies to the transformative power of words. Though their bodies are "silent," the martyrs' *confessio* endures, as the "speaking tongues" of their decapitated heads continue to "chant praise to the Lord."[134]

It is impressive that Dionysius's *discipuli* can still testify after their execution, but the light of Dionysius's faith reanimates his entire corpse: "the truncated body of the dead bishop suddenly got up, shining with a bright light."[135] Dionysius carries his head away from the execution hill "with steady arms," covering two miles of "hard road."[136] Hrotsvit suggests that this cephalophoric migration, complete with a company of singing

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[131] Dionysius 217-219. In Hilduin's prose account, Dionysius also includes a request for the *corona martyris* (PDP, 46C).

[132] "Tuque tuum populum serva pietate paterna,/ quem pascens fidei tibimet sermone nutrivi" (Dionysius, 220-221). Hilduin's accounts lack both Hrotsvit's food metaphor and her focus on words as agents of evangelical change. Instead, Hilduin focuses on the salvific work of Christ's blood (PDP, 46C; PDM, IV. 446-448).

[133] Hrotsvit also characterized her own work as a *sermone* in the *Maria*: "Sermonem vobis tantum faciemus ab illis,/ rarius in templo que creduntur fore dicta" (Maria, 541-542).

[134] "Quorum permansit celebris confessio talis,/ ut, dum praecisis silverunt corpora collis,/ palpantes lingue laudes domino cecinere" (Dionysius, 226-228). Hrotsvit drew on Hilduin's language to describe this scene, but Hilduin's account lacks Hrotsvit's contrast between the "silent" bodies and "speaking" tongues (PDP, 46D; PDM, IV. 459-464). As Homeyer notes, this episode is also present in the *Gloriosae* (v. 189). Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 201.

[135] "Truncatum quoque pontificis corpus morientis/ erigitur subito nitidum spledore sereno" (Dionysius, 229-230). Again, Hrotsvit has subtlety altered Hilduin's account: "ac lux ineffabilis cunctis resplenduit; et beatissimi Dionysii se cadaver erexit" (PDP, 47A).

[136] Dionysius, 231-234.

angels, reflects Dionysius's need to find a "place worthy for preserving his body."[137] The miracle astounds the crowd, which has gathered at the "place which Dionysius himself had designated" in order to inter the martyr.[138] As with Pelagius and Gongolf, Hrotsvit explains that Dionysius's grave becomes the site of healing miracles. In addition to demonstrating the continued posthumous testimony of Dionysius, Hrotsvit uses these "signs" as a means to offer her own interpretation of martyrdom and miracles. This discussion of miracles at Dionysius's grave is not present in either of Hilduin's accounts.[139] Hrotsvit's description of these miracles offers her audience a visual representation of Christ's power: for visits to the grave site restored sight to the blind, speech to the mute, hearing to the deaf, and motion to the lame.[140] These miraculous healings are also a manifestation of the redemptive pedagogy Dionysius provided as an evangelist.[141] Both Dionysius's words and the miracles at his tomb mediate the "gift of grace" that was "born for sinners from on high."[142]

6.7 Conclusion

Dionysius taught Hrotsvit's audience to value inquiry and conversation, demonstrating how to use both as tools to further faith. Hrotsvit also described another strain of soul sickness, a debilitating *tristitia amara* that was able to corrupt a hierarch and foil Dionysius's attempts at a cure. Only Christ's merciful appearance as divine pedagogue was able to cure Carpus, just as his presence sustained Dionysius's

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[137] "Venit adusque locum servando corpore dignum" (Dionysius, 235).
[138] "His signis factis convenit turba fidelis/ martyris atque loco venerabile corpus in ipso/ quem sibi signavit" (Dionysius, 239-241).
[139] Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 202.
[140] Dionysius, 245-247.
[141] "Teste precante sacro donantur crebrius illo,/ et variis egri morbis qui debilitati/ adveniunt, laeti membris redeunt renovatis" (Dionysius, 248-250).
[142] Dionysius, 251-254.

companions in prison. The conclusion of Hrotsvit's narrative invites her audience to embrace the lessons offered by Dionysius's story. Following the model presented by Dionysius's final speech, Hrotsvit asks for the saint's intercession, commending both herself and her audience to Christ. Despite Dionysius's power, Christ alone can "provide forgiveness of sins … and pardon our errors and supply a portion of eternal life for us."[143] Hrotsvit's use of first person plural here personalizes this recapitulation of the narrative's main theological points for her audience. The sacrifice and resurrection of the martyrs is a potent *signum*, a reminder that in Christ's mercy, all the faithful can join the "holy spirits" who rejoice together above the heavens."[144]

[143] Dionysius, 255-257.
[144] "Dum congaudent animae super aethera sanctae" (Dionysius, 262).

AGNES: A LESSON IN MARTYRDOM AND MIRACLES

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The martyrdom of saint Agnes is one of the most enduring Christian *passio* traditions. The narrative instructs readers in the value of virginity, the power of miracles, and the cosmic rewards of martyrdom. The historical details of Agnes's biography are somewhat muddled, although the earliest extant account of her martyrdom reports she was executed in 304/5.[1] There are a number of competing accounts of her passion, but Hrotsvit's version of the story unfolds as follows.

Agnes, a young and beautiful noblewoman, rejects the attentions of a local prefect's son, claiming she has been promised as a spouse to Christ. The prefect's son becomes distraught at this rejection and his father uses his political power to punish Agnes. The prefect offers Agnes two choices: she must either be enrolled as a priestess of the goddess Vesta or be sent to serve a local brothel. Agnes refuses to deny her faith and the prefect orders that she be stripped naked; miraculously, Agnes's hair grows to conceal her nakedness. When Agnes reaches the brothel she finds an angel within, and a second miracle cleanses the repugnant brothel with a heavenly light. The prefect's son is still consumed with desire for Agnes and he attempts to take advantage of her vulnerable situation. Before he can touch the saint, however, he is struck dead. With the assistance of the aforementioned angel, Agnes brings the youth back to life. Local priests, threatened by this event, attempt to immolate Agnes, but the fire burns the pagan bystanders rather than the saint. Eventually, Agnes is executed by sword, which releases

[1] Agnes is often identified as one of only a handful of so-called "child-martyr" stories from the fourth and fifth centuries, a category that would also include Eulalia, Faith, and the fourteen-year-old Pancras. Patricia Healy Wasyliw, *Martyrdom, Murder, and Magic: Child Saints and Their Cults in Medieval Europe* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 17–20.

her spirit to join the cohort of heavenly virgins. In Hrotsvit's conclusion, Agnes appears posthumously to her parents, exhorting them to rejoice that she has been united with Christ, her eternal bridegroom.

Hrotsvit's inclusion of this story highlights a number of overarching didactic themes in her hagiographic corpus. In particular, Agnes serves as a fitting recapitulation of the archetype presented by Mary in the first half of Hrotsvit's *Maria*. Mary and Agnes share a predisposition toward faith, as well as a dedication to exploring the nuances of theology. Just as the young Mary was forced to defend her virginity in an impressive display of rhetoric, so too does Agnes offer precise and profound speeches in praise of her own virginity. Mary and Agnes are each proto-monastics: models for Hrotsvit's own life and, more particularly, for her expression of faith embodied in this hagiographic corpus. Through Agnes, Hrotsvit presents a compelling case for the combined physical and mental attention needed to pursue a life of faith, especially a life of faithful virginity. Furthermore, as in the "deal with the devil narratives," Hrotsvit's *Agnes* narrative presents her audience with a repeated pattern of confession, conversion, and forgiveness, proving that no sinner is beyond the saving power of Christ.

7.2 Hrotsvit's Sources

7.2.1 *Origin*

The development of Agnes's hagiographic tradition begins with literary, artistic, and architectural products of late antiquity. Agnes is listed in the fourth-century *Depositio martyrum* among martyrs venerated at the Via Nomentana.[2] As Hannah Jones

[2] Agnes is also included in the sixth century *Martyrologium Hieronymanium* and the later Gelasian and Gregorian Sacramentaries, with a feast day of January 21st. According to Michelle Salzman, the Calendar

has shown, the development of this early Agnes cult was heavily influenced by the interest of imperial women, especially Constantina, who purportedly dedicated the Via Nomentana complex to this "victorious virgin."[3] Agnes was also prominently featured in fourth century gold glass vessels, rivaling Peter and Paul in frequency.[4] Lucy Grig suggests that these indications of Agnes's popularity imply the existence of an oral Agnes tradition, a theory perhaps supported by Pope Damasus's subsequent written tribute to Agnes.[5] As part of his promotion of the cult of the martyrs, Damasus wrote a number of epigrams dedicated to various saints, including Agnes.[6] Damasus seems to refer to an existing oral tradition (*fama refert*) in his Agnes epigram, which was displayed in the Via Nomentana complex.[7] Damasus's brief poem entrenched two features of the Agnes narrative that would remain in the tradition: first, that she was tortured by fire and, second, that she used her hair to cover her nakedness and protect her virtue.

Bishop Ambrose of Milan also saw the potential in Agnes's example, identifying her as an ideal virginal archetype in his *De virginibus*. This treatise was dedicated to

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of 354 (produced as early as 330 and only published in 354) reports the celebration of Agnes's feast day occurring at the Via Nomentana along with 23 other martyrs. Michele Renee Salzman, *On Roman Time: The Codex-Calendar of 354 and the Rhythms of Urban Life in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991), 42–50.

[3] Hannah Jones, "Agnes and Constantina: Domesticity and Cult Patronage in the Passion of Agnes," in *Religion, Dynasty and Patronage in Early Christian Rome, 300-900*, ed. Kate Cooper and Julia Hillner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 115–39. For the text of the inscription, see: John Curran, *Pagan City and Christian Capital: Rome in the Fourth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 128.

[4] Lucy Grig, "Portraits, Pontiffs and the Christianization of Fourth-Century Rome," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 72 (2004): 203–230.

[5] Lucy Grig, *Making Martyrs in Late Antiquity* (London: Duckworth, 2004), 81.

[6] Marianne Sághy, "Scinditur in partes populus: Pope Damasus and the Martyrs of Rome," *Early Medieval Europe* 9, no. 3 (2000): 273–87.

[7] It is also possible that this phrase references Vergil's personification of *fama*, since Damasus was intentionally imitating the Vergilian style. The poem is found on a paving stone that was discovered in 1728, miraculously preserved by being used "lettered side turned down" in Honorius's seventh century basilica. Dennis Trout, *Damasus of Rome: The Epigraphic Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 150–51.

Ambrose's sister, Marcellina, who was herself a consecrated virgin.[8] Agnes features prominently in this work, celebrated as virgin martyr worthy of imitation.[9] Ambrose expands on Damasus's brief epigram, emphasizing Agnes's youth and her commitment to Christ as her bridegroom. Ambrose claims that Agnes met her death by sword, however, rather than by fire. Ambrose is also the first extant author to praise Agnes's dual victory as a martyr and a virgin: "virgo permansit et martyrium obtinuit."[10]

7.2.2 *Expansion*

The most elaborate version of Agnes's *passio* can be found in the final section of Prudentius's magisterial fifth-century *Peristephanon*.[11] Prudentius expands the minimal details offered by Damasus and Ambrose, adding such narrative elements as Agnes's exposure in a brothel and her posthumous ascent to heaven. Alongside Prudentius's metrical account, a prose *Passio s. Agnetis* (hereafter PSA), composed in the fifth or sixth century, reflects similar narrative additions.[12] Although ascribed to Ambrose, this *passio*

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[8] Though the material in this treatise appears to be adapted from Ambrose's homilies, Duval was the first to theorize that the work also reflected Ambrose's reception of treatises written by Cyprian and Athanasius. Yves Marie Duval, "L'originalité du De uirginibus dans le mouvement ascétique occidental: Ambroise, Cyprien, Athanase," in *Ambroise de Milan: XVIe centenaire de son élection épiscopale* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1974), 9–66.

[9] Burrus suggests that Ambrose's vision for Agnes must be read in light of his treatment of Mary, Thecla, and the unnamed virgin of Antioch. Virginia Burrus, "Reading Agnes: The Rhetoric of Gender in Ambrose and Prudentius," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3, no. 1 (1995): 25–46.

[10] *De virginibus*, 1.2.9. Latin from: Peter Dückers, ed., *De virginibus, Über die Jungfrauen*, Fontes Christiani 81 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009). Agnes also appears in Ambroses' *De officiis* 1.41, as well as in the potentially Ambrosian hymn *Agnes beatae virginis*. For more on this hymn, see: Carolinne White, *Early Christian Latin Poets* (Routledge, 2002), 46–50; Peter G. Walsh, trans., *One Hundred Latin Hymns: Ambrose to Aquinas* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 22–25.

[11] Anne-Marie Palmer, *Prudentius on the Martyrs* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1989), 250–55; Michael Roberts, *Poetry and the Cult of the Martyrs: The Liber Peristephanon of Prudentius* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 101–2.

[12] Denomy suggests the passio's alternate title *Gesta sanctae Agnetis* is a more appropriate title, given the *passio*'s final line: "Ad honorem igitur tantae Martyris, sicut *gesta eius agnovi*, conscrips et ad aedificationem." Alexander Joseph Denomy, *The Old French Lives of Saint Agnes and Other Vernacular Versions of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938), 24–27.

certainly postdates Ambrose's authentic *de Virginibus*, and it is likely a product of the expansive, post-fifth-century interest in Agnes.[13] P. Allard has shown that the PSA includes strands of the prior Agnes tradition, including allusions to Ambrose, Damasus, and Prudentius.[14] Still, both Allard and Jones agree that the third portion of the PSA is likely original, because it includes events not present in any previous account: specifically, the narration of events that occur at Agnes's tomb.[15] The PSA remains extant in a number of manuscripts and was popular throughout the late antique and medieval periods. Versions of the PSA narrative appear in the work of Bede and Aldhelm, as well as in the *Legenda Aurea* and in creative vernacular translations.[16]

7.2.3 *Hrotsvit's Agnes*

Given her popularity, it makes sense that Agnes's cult existed in Francia as early as the fifth century, supported by the newly converted King Clovis I.[17] Just as the early

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[13] Felice Lifshitz even suggests that a female monastic might have composed the PSA. Felice Lifshitz, *Religious Women in Early Carolingian Francia: A Study of Manuscript Transmission and Monastic Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 114. For more on the relationship between the PSA and its sources, as well as a discussion of Agnes as a *senex puella* see: Paolo Tomea, "Corpore quidem iuvencula sed animo cana. La Passio Agnetis BHL 156 e il topos della puella senex nell'agiografia mediolatina," *Analecta Bollandiana* 128, no. 1 (2010): 18–55.

[14] P. Allard, "Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie," ed. Fernand Cabrol and Henri Leclercq (Paris: Letouzey, 1920), 911.

[15] These events include an appearance to her grieving parents as well as a visionary appearance that heals the ailing Constantina. Jones, "Agnes and Constantina," 124, 133–35; Allard, "Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie," 111.

[16] The PSA (BHL 156) can be found in several different editions, chiefly PL 17.813-21, AASS Ian. III, 351-4, and Mombritius I, 17-19. As Hannah Jones notes, all of these are "virtually identical." Jones, "Agnes and Constantina," 115. Agnes features prominently in Bede's *Illuxit alma saeculis* and Aldhelm's *Carmen de virginitate*: Christine Williamson, "Bede's Hymn to St. Agnes of Rome: The Virgin Martyr as a Male Monastic Exemplum," *Viator* 43, no. 1 (2012): 39–66; Michael Lapidge, trans., *Aldhelm, the Poetic Works* (Dover, NH: D. S. Brewer, 1985), 145–46. Alexander Denomy translates several French versions of the Agnes story: Denomy, *The Old French Lives of Saint Agnes and Other Vernacular Versions of the Middle Ages*. Jane Chance suggests Hrotsvit is also indebted to Aelfric's Old English *Lives of the Saints*, but there is no concrete evidence to support this theory. Jane Chance, *The Literary Subversions of Medieval Women* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 23–39.

[17] Helene Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera. Mit Einleitungen und Kommentar* (Munchen, Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöingh, 1970), 158.

spread of the cult in Rome was reflected in architecture, so altars dedicated to Agnes appeared throughout the Carolingian empire, including one at St. Gall.[18] Balderich of Utrecht, *magister* to Otto I's brother Bruno, also "rediscovered" the relics of Agnes in Ottonian lands.[19] Hrotsvit's familiarity with the Agnes narrative thus reflects the saint's popularity and, perhaps more importantly, her particular suitability for the female monastic context. Like many other authors, Hrotsvit employed the PSA as her primary source.[20] As Homeyer has noted, though Hrotsvit has rendered her work in meter, she does follow the "template" of the PSA closely, "only rarely" moving away from her source's overall format.[21] Wailes agrees but notes that Hrotsvit makes "characteristic revisions" to that source.[22] In addition to her reliance on the PSA for her narrative arc, it is also clear that Hrotsvit has been influenced by Prudentius. In particular, she imitates his imagery in her description of Agnes's ascent to heaven. Both Wiegand and Homeyer point to dozens of places where Hrotsvit's language indicates a Prudentian influence, reflective of the Carolingian and Ottonian reverence for the Spanish author.[23] As with all the legends in her hagiographic corpus, Hrotsvit builds on her Agnes source material to create a unique work of her own. Hrotsvit's version of Agnes's story provides an

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[18] Lynda Coon, "Somatic Styles of the Early Middle Ages," in *Gender and Change: Agency, Chronology and Periodisation*, ed. Alexandra Shepard and Garthine Walker (Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 29.
[19] Henk Van Os, *Way to Heaven: Relic Veneration in the Middle Ages* (Baarn: Museum Catharijneconvent, 2001), 194.
[20] Elizabeth Petroff confuses this complicated Agnes tradition, and as a result, misidentifies Hrotsvit's sources. Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff, *Body and Soul: Essays on Medieval Women and Mysticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 83–96.
[21] Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 158.
[22] Stephen L. Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim* (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 2006), 256, n. 2.
[23] Sinéad O'Sullivan, *Early Medieval Glosses On Prudentius' Psychomachia: The Weitz Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 3–21.

exemplum of theological education interpreted through the lens of virgin martyrdom: a miraculous story that prepares its audience to imitate Agnes, however imperfectly.

7.3 Agnes as Virgin Archetype

In contrast to her abbreviated introduction to *Dionysius*, Hrotsvit's *Agnes* offers an expansive interpretive guide for her audience. The title identifies virginity and martyrdom as the two crucial and interrelated elements of the Agnes narrative.[24] With these categories established, Hrotsvit continues by describing their significance in a precise series of increasingly specific definitions.[25]

Hrotsvit first defines the characteristics of true virginity, which begins with human activity and concludes with eschatological reward. The true virgin "desires to condemn the empty rituals of the perishable world and the luxury of fragile flesh," and, as a result, she deserves "to be called the spouse of the everlasting king."[26] As further clarification, Hrotsvit explains the conditionality of the virgin's eschatological reward.[27] A true virgin *may* be added "to the gleaming celestial cohort" and *may* shine "in the starry courts of the celestial spouse himself."[28] But these rewards are the direct result of earthly practices, which Hrotsvit again enumerates precisely: "let her keep intact, in the pure clean love of her heart, the sign of the praiseworthy virginity that she carried; and if

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[24] "Passio sancte Agnetis virginis et martiris" (Agnes, title). All Latin text will be taken from Walter Berschin's critical edition: *Hrotsvit Opera Omnia*, Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana (Monachii: Saur, 2001), 114–30. Unless otherwise noted, translations are my own. As Wailes suggests, it is a mistake to assume that the legend will focus only on physical virginity, though many interpreters have done so. Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 110.
[25] No other extant Agnes narrative includes such an introduction. Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 206.
[26] "Virgo, que vanas mundi pompas ruituri/ et luxus fragilis cupiens contempnere carnis/ promeruit regis vocitari sponsa perennis" (Agnes, 1-3).
[27] Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 114.
[28] "Si velit anglice pro virginitatis honore/ ipsius astrigera sponsi caelestis in aula/ addita caelicolis nitida fulgere corona" (Agnes, 4-6).

she dedicates her head to Christ with the sacred veil, let her cling resolutely with her tender affection to him, and let her place him before all her other loves."[29] The path of virginity requires dedication, persistence, and sometimes even martyrdom, which Hrotsvit renders here as a subcategory of virginity.[30] This classification allows Hrotsvit to offer increasingly specific representations of virginity, beginning with the historical virgin martyrs. Hrotsvit suggests that "countless sacred women, burning with fitting love of [Christ] in steadfast hearts, decided to die and to be put to death with savage punishments, rather than damage the dignity of [their] outstanding virginity."[31]

Agnes stands at the head of this cohort of virgin martyrs, a group that valued their vow of virginity (*pignus virginitatis*) more than their earthly lives. Agnes's position as a representative of this movement is confirmed by Hrotsvit's rhetorical choices at the conclusion of the introduction. Hrotsvit suggests that it is Agnes, rather than Hrotsvit herself, who "commends the pledge of [Christ's] love to the sacred virgins." Agnes makes this commendation both by her actions and, more importantly, by her words, "reciting with proper praises the unique grace of her spouse, Christ."[32] Hrotsvit further glosses Agnes's "recommendation" by making the theological mechanics of this potential celestial relationship clear to her audience: "Christ, the only one born from the sacred

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[29] "Conservet pure sincero cordis amore/ signum laudabilis, quod portat, virginitatis;/ que caput Christo signat velamine sacro,/ hereat affectu tenero constanter in illo/ ac cunctis aliis ipsum praeponat amicis" (Agnes, 8-12).

[30] There is ample evidence these were not static categorizations for Hrotsvit. She designates Gongolf as a "martyr," even though he was also married. Pelagius was another unusual case, where, as Wailes suggests, "Hrotsvit thought Pelagius's martyrdom far more significant than the fact that he died a virgin." Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 113.

[31] "Cuius amore quidem ferventes congue pridem/ perplures sacre constant corde puelle/ elegere mori seveis poenisque necari,/ quam decus insignis corrumpere virginitatis" (Agnes, 15-18).

[32] "Iure sui sponsi condigna laude decori/ Christi dissimilem cunctis recitando decorem/ virginibus sacris eius commendat amoris pignus" (Agnes, 19-22).

virgin, is also the [only] worthy spouse of chaste souls."[33] In Hrotsvit's version of the story, an unbroken connection extends from Mary, through Agnes, to all the virgins in Hrotsvit's own time, including Hrotsvit herself.

Hrotsvit continues by offering her audience a brief biography that includes details of Agnes's family background. This biography deals primarily in hagiographic tropes, mentioning Agnes's "illustrious" Roman family as well as her "beautiful face" and correspondingly "brilliant faith."[34] Hrotsvit weaves theological lessons into these generalities, reminding her audience that once Agnes was "washed in the pure water of sacred baptism" she was also "cleansed of the stain of the ancient sin."[35] By virtue of this rite, Agnes is then able to "devote herself fully to Christ," a devotion that requires a simultaneous mental and physical effort.[36] Agnes must apply a *benigna mens* to the task of maintaining her physical virginity, striving "to deny all physical affection and to enter into the harsh struggle of the celibate life."[37] It is only with a steadfast commitment to this mental and physical task that Agnes, along with all the dedicated Christian virgins

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[33] "Qui genitus sacra de virgine solus/ sponsus castarum necnon decus est animarum" (Agnes, 22-23). In M, *castarum* is a correction from the original scribe's *castorum*, which Homeyer suggests references a prayer of the virgin's consecration: "deus castorum corporum beningnus habitator." Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 211. This prayer, also included in the Leonine Sacramentary, bears a striking resemblance to Ambrose's *De institutione virginis*. Both use bridal chamber language to describe initiation. Nathalie Henry, "A New Insight into the Growth of Ascetic Society in the Fourth Century AD: The Public Consecration of Virgins as a Means of Integration and Promotion of the Female Ascetic Movement," in *Ascetica, Gnostica, Liturgica, Orientalia*, ed. Maurice F. Wiles and Edward Yarnold, Studia Patristica 35 (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2001), 106.

[34] Agnes, 28-32. Hrotsvit's description is very similar to the introduction of the PSA: "Infantia computabatur in annis, sed erat senectus mentis immensa corpore quidem iuuencula, sed animo cana; pulchra facie, sed pulchrior fide" (PSA, 1.1). All citations taken from AASS Ian. III, 351-4. Unless otherwise noted, translations are my own.

[35] "Que nam tincta sacri pura baptismatis unda/ et de delicti maculis mundata veterni" (Agnes, 33-35). This recalls Hrotsvit's description of Dionysius's baptism: "Qui pariter sacro baptismate tincti/ prosus delicti mundantur sorde veterni" (Dionysius, 36-37).

[36] "Se totam Christo devovit mente benigna" (Agnes, 35). Compare to Mary: "Et discerns animo mandavi sedulo fixo" (Maria, 402).

[37] "Nitens servata bene virginitate beata/ spernere carnales affectus fortiter omnes/ celibis et vite durum luctamen inire" (Agnes, 36-38).

across the centuries, can emerge as a *victrix*, conquering the "corruption of the persuasive enemy" that plagues the faithful.[38]

7.4 Agnes as Orator

Following the PSA's template, Hrotsvit identifies the unwelcome desire of a local youth as the central crisis in Agnes's narrative. The introduction established Agnes as a beautiful, noble, and desirable young woman. As a result, the son of the *praefectus* Semphronius is struck with "intense affection" for Agnes. Hrotsvit's description of this young man recalls many of Agnes's traits: he is young, "just in blossom," and from a noble family.[39] According to Hrotsvit, his intentions towards Agnes are pure: "he selected her for his one beloved, above all others, believing himself fortunate and suitable in honors, if he merited to have the sweet partnership of the beautiful girl for the rest of his life."[40] Hrotsvit uses the social suitability of such a match to demonstrate the ultimate transcendence of Agnes's relationship with Christ.

The young man follows every proper protocol in his initial approach: he brings costly gifts and a group of his friends to her, indicating his respect and admiration for Agnes.[41] Hrotsvit emphasizes the purity of his intentions by noting that his approach

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[38] "Quo victrix hostis corruptelam suadentis/ iungi caelicolis meruisset in aethere sanctis" (Agnes, 39-40). Wailes, unlike Homeyer, appreciates the complexity of this introduction, noting that most of her virginal requirements work on a physical and spiritual and mental level: "the luxury of the frail flesh can refer (in the corporeal area) to diet, toilet garments … but also (in the inner life) to self-satisfaction and self-love, false humility, arrogance." Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 114.

[39] "Simphronii comitis, praefecti scilicet urbis,/ filius insignis iuvenilis stemmate floris,/ illius forme decus ut vidit speciosae,/ affectu nimio cordis suspensus in illa" (Agnes, 43-46). Homeyer notes the parallel descriptions of the noble Theophilus (v. 27) and Pelagius (v. 231). Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 211. Though the PSA begins with the same conflict, it describes that conflict in far more concise terms: "a praefecti urbis filio adamatur" (PSA, 1.1).

[40] "Hanc sibi prae cunctis unam delegit amandam/ se fortunatum credens et honoribus aptum,/ si tam praepulchre meruisset habere puelle,/ dulcia per propriae tempus consortia vite" (Agnes, 47-50).

[41] Agnes, 51-54. These gifts may be a form of the "indirect" dowry, which was given by the husband to his future bride on the occasion of their engagement (*dos ex marito*). Philip Lyndon Reynolds, *Marriage in the*

resulted from his desire to "marry" (*desponsere*) Agnes. Yet, in almost the same breath, Hrotsvit reminds her audience of the foolhardiness of the young man's endeavor. He is "stupid" because he hopes for "that which could never be accomplished," and because he thinks he can sway the "resolute mind of the virgin" with gifts.[42] Instead of the *dulcia consortia* that the youth envisioned, Hrotsvit tells her audience that such a pairing would ensnare Agnes in a "shameful love" (*turpis amor*). Viewed in light of Agnes's status as a "virgin of Christ," the youth's ostentatious but worldly gifts are worthless at best, and deeply insulting at worst.[43]

Although she has only spoken indirectly through Hrotsvit up to this point in the narrative, Agnes now begins to establish herself as an orator in her own right. As she defends her virginity, "pleading her case" to the youth and his friends, Hrotsvit draws connections to the virgin Mary's speech in defense of her own chastity.[44] Agnes's speech offers an eloquent explanation of her faith and its expression in her commitment to chastity. Agnes begins by denouncing the youth's actions, associating him with the physical world she has rejected. She condemns the youth as a "son of perpetual death, deservedly damned, the spark of crime, and a despiser of the almighty [God]."[45] She

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Western Church: The Christianization of Marriage During the Patristic and Early Medieval Periods (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 118–23; Philip Reynolds, *How Marriage Became One of the Sacraments: The Sacramental Theology of Marriage from Its Medieval Origins to the Council of Trent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 185. The PSA also reports that the youth offered Agnes "pretiossissima ornamenta" (PSA, 1.2). Aldhelm's prose *de Virginitate* includes a list of gifts that mirror Hrotsvit's (De virginitate, 45): Michael Lapidge and Michael W. Herren, *Aldhelm: The Prose Works* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2009), 112.

[42] "Stultus speravit, quod perpetrare nequivit,/ virginis ut stabilem donis corrumpere mentem/ illius et turpi coniungere posset amori" (Agnes, 54-56).

[43] "Sed Christi virgo spernens ceu stercora dona/ pondus et oblati dedignans protinus auri/ splendorem quoque gemmarum rutilum variarum" (Agnes, 57-59). Hrotsvit's reliance on the PSA seems particularly clear in this instance: "quae a beata Agne veluti quaedam sunt stercora recusata" (PSA, 1.2).

[44] "His verbis iuvenem causari fertur amentem" (Agnes, 60). Note that Hrotsvit has already characterized the youth as *amens*, setting the stage for his descent into soul sickness as the narrative continues.

[45] "O fili mortis merito dampnande perennis,/ o fomes sceleris, contemptor et omnipotentis" (Agnes, 61-62). Marianne Schütze-Pflugk, *Herrscher- und Märtyrerauffassung bei Hrotsvit von Gandersheim*,

orders him to leave her presence and to abandon the hope that anything will "pervert" her heart.[46] Indeed, Agnes awaits a "nobler lover" whose sign marks her externally and internally: "on my forehead and in my entire body."[47] The PSA, by contrast, identifies the veil as the sign of Christ's love, which advertises Agnes's unavailability to others but has no necessary bearing on her internal devotion.[48] For Hrotsvit, Agnes's connection to Christ is grounded in the activity of the mind; she has learned (*disceret*) to embrace Christ alone, "lest my mind dare to seek another lover."[49] Her veil merely reflects her interior spiritual condition.

Agnes follows this testament to the power of the mind by offering her interpretation of Christ's Trinitarian role. While the PSA dedicates a mere eight words to this concept,[50] Hrotsvit's version merits reproduction in its entirety: "He [Christ] whom the all-powerful father begot, equal in deity and not less in majesty, without a mother, before the time of the ancient world, he through whom God begat the world for himself; a mother bore this same one without a father, giving milk to her own creator, born in time."[51] This statement illuminates the mystery of the incarnation with the repeated language of birth. Hrotsvit draws parallels between Christ's eternal and temporal births, which paved the way for the creation and salvation of the world, respectively. The image

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Frankfurter historische Abhandlungen (Wiesbaden: Steiner Verlag, 1972), 18. The PSA also uses similar language, particularly the use of "*fomes peccati*," a phrase that is later adopted as a technical term by Peter Lombard and Thomas Aquinas: "discede a me fomes peccati, nutrimentum facinoris, pabulum mortis" (PSA, 1.3). For more on the scholastic use of this term, see: Nicholas E. Lombardo, *The Logic of Desire: Aquinas on Emotion* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 211–12.

[46] "Nec credas te posse meum pervertere purum/ cor, quod amatoris praevenit nobilioris/ dulcis amor" (Agnes, 64-66).

[47] "Pulchrum cuius fidei fero signum/ in facie summa necnon in corpore toto" (Agnes, 66-67). Maud Burnnett McInerney, "From the Sublime to the Ridiculous in the Works of Hrotsvitha," in *Eloquent Virgins: The Rhetoric of Virginity from Thecla to Joan of Arc* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 95.

[48] "Posuit signum suum super faciem meam, ut nullum praeter ipsum amatorem admitta" (PSA, 1.3).

[49] "[Signum] quo me sinavit strictimque sibi religavit,/ ne mea mens alium iam praesumpsisset amicum/ quaerere, sed solum complecti disceret illum" (Agnes, 68-70).

[50] "Cuius mater virgo est, cuius pater feminam nescit" (PSA, 1.3).

[51] Agnes, 72-77.

conjured by Mary's miraculous suckling of her own creator playfully contrasts with the next thirteen lines of Agnes's speech, which are devoted to describing the majesty of Christ's characteristics on a cosmic scale. According to Agnes, the sun and moon marvel at Christ's splendor, the stars move at his command, and the angels never cease in praising him.[52]

Despite the complexity of this theological digression, Agnes never loses sight of her overarching rhetorical goal: demonstrating the absurdity of the youth's desire to marry a dedicated virgin. Just as Christ's majesty far outshines the youth, his betrothal gifts spectacularly overshadow the youth's paltry baubles. Christ encircled Agnes's neck "with precious gems," hung resplendent earrings from her ears, and offered her beautiful gowns.[53] Still, the real betrothal gift lies neither in these transcendent items nor even in the celestial bedchamber. The true gift is the spiritual nourishment that Christ provides: from Christ's lips "a sweetness flows, which nourishes and feeds [Agnes] with sweet food, as the nectar of sweet honey or the abundance of milk."[54] This language explicitly recalls Mary's description of her inspiration and Dionysius's description of his ministry, both couched in terms of physical nourishment.[55] Strengthened by this spiritual

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[52] Agnes, 78-87. The PSA offers similar discussions of Christ's attributes (PSA, 1.3.).
[53] Agnes, 90-94. The use of *dotando* reinforces Agnes's understanding of these gifts as a type of dowry. Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 213. The PSA places this list of Christ's offerings prior to a brief discussion of Christ's divinity (PSA, 1.3).
[54] "Ipsius certe dulcendo fluxit ab ore,/ que me lactavit dulci pastuque cibavit/ ceu nectar mellis suavis vel copia lactis" (Agnes, 95-97). Ronald Stottlemyer, "The Construction of the Desiring Subject in Hrotsvit's Pelagius and Agnes," in *Hrotsvit of Gandersheim: Contexts, Identities, Affinities, and Performances*, ed. Phyllis Brown, Linda McMillin, and Katharina Wilson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 117–18. Though the PSA describes a similar sentiment, it is construed as the first in a series of sensual gifts provided by Christ (PSA, 1.3).
[55] "Quae nempe suo profluxit ab ore loquela,/ nectare gratiolae fuerat condita supernae" (Maria, 341-342); "tuque tuum populum serva pietate paterna,/ quem pascens fidei tibimet sermone nutrivi" (Dionysius, 220-221). In the *Agnes,* Christ's words are supplemented by heavenly music that constantly "persuades" the saint of her celestial spouse's "chaste affection" (Agnes, 99-103). Hrotsvit uses the term *organa* to describe the musical instrument in the bridal chamber, which seems to parallel the PSA: "thalamus collocatus est, cuius mihi organa modulatis vocibus resonant" (PSA, 1.3). Although it is unclear whether Hrotsvit is

sustenance, Agnes assures the youth that she will "endure no defeat" of her chastity; she has dedicated her life to "earning" entrance to the celestial bridal chamber.[56] Agnes fully embraces the responsibility of "preserving perennial faith for [Christ] alone" and, as such, will "entrust [herself] with the whole enterprise of [her] heart to him alone."[57]

This speech's erudite explanation of faith supports Hrotsvit's initial description of Agnes's character. The youth's response to the speech undermines Hrotsvit's initially positive assessment of his character. The youth leaves the speech reeling, "having been pierced with the javelin of love." His "blind heart" grieves for a woman he does not deserve.[58] The "very foolish" youth's *languor* recalls the "soul sickness" that afflicts other characters in the hagiographic corpus: particularly the love-struck *servus* cured of his "blind heart" by Basil, but also the grief of Dionysius's erstwhile hierarch Carpus.[59] In each case, disease turns the sinner inward, distorting faith and common sense. Semphronius attempts to cure his son's ailment with the assistance of numerous doctors, who comically descend on the prefect's house like an army battalion.[60] Over time, the doctors realize that the illness is mental rather than physical; the boy continues to

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referencing a specific musical instrument or a collection of human voices, organs were owned by Carolingian rulers, including Louis the Pious. Peter Williams, *The Organ in Western Culture, 750-1250* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 137–49.

[56] "Nulla puellaris pacior detrimenta pudoris;/ ast ubi forte sui merear complexibus uti/ eius et in thalamum sponsarum more coruscum/ duci, permaneo virgo sine sorde pudica" (Agnes, 105-108).

[57] "Cui debebo fidem soli servare perennem:/ ipsi me toto cordis conamine credo" (Agnes, 109-110).

[58] "His miser auditis spiculis perfossus amoris/ ingemuit crebro ducens suspiria longa,/ hoc quia non meruit, ceco quod corde petivit" (Agnes, 111-113).

[59] Hrotsvit reports that the youth intentionally concealed his love sickness, which was the true cause of his grief: "Et super hoc maerens nimioque dolore tabescens/ decidit in lectum stultissiumus ille virorum/ et simulans male languorem celavit amorem" (Agnes, 114-117). Hrotsvit uses similar language for the *servus* in his initial encounter with the Jewish *magus*: "Male caecatus bachanti corde misellus" (Basilius, 53). Hrotsvit also described Carpus as *tabescens*, though the hierarch was not suffering from a different strain of soul sickness (Dionysius, 60-61). Note that the PSA uses a slightly different phrase that emphasizes the passivity of the youth and the power of the illness: "amore carpitur caeco" (PSA, 1.4).

[60] "Conveniunt subito medici velut agmine facto" (Agnes, 120).

languish, "out of his mind" (*amens*).[61] According to Hrotsvit, this revelation leads to a breakdown of Semphronius's own mental state, spreading the contagion further. The prefect gnashes his teeth like a lion and even barks with rage.[62] The madness distorts his perception, rendering him completely unable to understand how this "haughty virgin" could reject his noble son.[63] When Semphronius realizes that Agnes has claimed Christ as her spouse, he is "glad" because his political authority affords him the opportunity to break the virgin's vow.[64] Agnes remains the sole character immune to the disease that infects Semphronius and his son. Because she grounded her faith in her heart and mind, her actions demonstrate her solid spiritual foundation.

7.5 Agnes as Purifying Light

Following Semphronius's discovery of Agnes as the source of his son's lovesickness, the prefect forces Agnes to appear in court so that he can adjudicate her fate. Agnes never shows any indication of fear or anxiety in the prefect's presence. Her calmness further enrages Semphronius, but Agnes refuses to marry the youth or to deny Christ, keeping precisely to the standard Roman martyr script.[65] At this point in the PSA narrative,

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[61] "Apponunt variis aptas morbis medicinas/ harum sed iuveni nil proficiebat amenti" (Agnes, 121-122). The youth's love sickness represents an inversion of Agnes's desire for Christ, which allows her to turn away from her earthly life.

[62] "Ut leo frendescens rapidam conversus in iram" (Agnes, 127); "haec ubi disseruit nimioque furore latravit" (Agnes, 134). Hrotsvit uses similar language to describe the prefect in charge of interrogating Dionysius and his companions ("ceu leo non modica rugiens praeceperat ira," Dionysius, 200), as well as the devil in his discussion with the *servus* ("frendens velut ira leonis," Basilius, 81). She also characterizes negative speech as "barking" in numerous instances, perhaps most memorably in the case of Gongolf's blasphemous wife: "latrat rostro talia pestifero" (Gongolfus, 566).

[63] Agnes, 128-132. The PSA describes Semphronius's response to his son's illness as a direct interrogation of Agnes (a sort of pre-trial discussion) and uses none of the animalistic language found in Hrotsvit's version of these events (PSA, 1.4).

[64] "Quo nam comperto laetatur corde maligno" (Agnes, 139).

[65] As Wailes notes, Hrotsvit focuses more clearly on Semphronius's petulance and rage. This rage overwhelms his other goals, which at least initially include Agnes's marriage to his son: "Ut se sponte sui

Semphronius calls on Agnes's parents to persuade their daughter to renounce Christianity.[66] Hrotsvit eliminates this element, instead describing Agnes as the positive foil to some of the characters seen in her "deal with the devil" legends. Unlike Theophilus and the *servus*, Agnes does not deny her faith, "neither able to be overcome with supplication nor to be subdued by any blandishments."[67] Instead of signing a contract that repudiates faith, Agnes maintains the contract (*pactum*) she has already written "for another lover, without fraud, a pact made firm with the sign of faith."[68] Agnes demonstrates the inviolability of this *pactum virginitatis*, a transcendent marriage contract that grounds her faith.

Semphronius then tries a different tactic, testing Agnes's commitment to virginity by offering her a position as a virgin acolyte of the pagan goddess Vesta.[69] Yet again, Agnes uses precise rhetoric to defend herself. As in her initial response to the youth, this speech offers an extended comparison between bodily and spiritual perception. Agnes begins by explaining why Semphronius's son merited her scorn. He possesses both reason and "all

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nati copularet amori/ et simulachra deum coleret Christumque negaret" (Agnes, 148-149). Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 115–16.

[66] PSA, 1.5.

[67] "Sed virgo Christi nec suppliciis superari/ nec blandimentis potuit devincier ullis" (Agnes, 150-151). The PSA uses very similar language: "Sed virgo Christi nec blandimentis seducitur" (PSA, 1.5).

[68] "Quin servaret amatori sine fraude priori,/ quod pepigit, pactum signo fidei stabilitum" (Agnes, 152-153). McIerney notes the legal weight of a *pactum*, suggesting Agnes was the "author of the contract" between herself and Christ. McInerney, "From the Sublime to the Ridiculous in the Works of Hrotsvitha," 97. Compare this narrative moment in the *Agnes* with Proterius's daughter in the *Basilius*. Like Agnes, she was dedicated to a monastic community, decorated with the "jewels of virginity," and marked by the veil (Basilius, 26-32). Further, she also undertook a *votum*, which should have precluded any earthly marriage contract (Basilus, 114-115).

[69] While both Hrotsvit and the PSA identify this goddess as Vesta, in his *Peristephanon*, Prudentius uses the goddess Minerva instead (Peristephanon, 14.24-26). Either goddess would be a historically appropriate choice in this situation. Ambrose often discussed the superiority of Christian virgins over the virgin priestess of Vesta and Minerva. Ariel Bybee Laughton, "Virginity Discourse and Ascetic Politics in the Writings of Ambrose of Milan" (Ph.D., Duke University, 2010), 186–229; Rita Lizzi Testa, "Christian Emperor, Vestal Virgins and Priestly Colleges: Reconsidering the End of Roman Paganism," *Antiquité Tardive* 15 (2007): 251–62; Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 215.

human senses," yet he cannot recognize that he is "ruled by a spirit that will never die."[70] Although the youth, absent God's gratuitous forgiveness, merits eternal punishment for his sins, salvation is still a possibility. To achieve salvation, the youth must "wisely" use his God-given sense and seek baptism.[71] Agnes thus argues for the possibility that the human mind and spirit can conquer the body: God-given reasoning *should* allow individuals to recognize their spiritual potential.[72] This comparison is extended when Agnes contrasts the vibrant, eternal Christ with dead, earthly gods. The "cult of idols" worships nothing but metal shapes that have nothing "in common with living beings."[73] Agnes expresses incredulity that anyone would find hope in such "irrational and profane monsters," which have no power to protect their adherents.[74]

In response to Agnes's precise critique of pagan deities, Semphronius changes his tactics with a new threat. Agnes may maintain her virginity and become an acolyte in the temple of Vesta, as was offered previously. However, if she refuses to join the temple, Agnes must sacrifice her virginity by working as a prostitute in the local brothel. Hrotsvit alerts her readers to the absurdity of this proposition with pointed language. Semphronius

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[70] "Si mihi iure tuum placuit contempnere natum,/ qui ratione vigens cunctis quoque sensibus utens/ corporeis anima regitur numquam moritura" (Agnes, 160-163). According to the PSA, Agnes lists reasoning capacity as one of the many elements of human personhood, which she then contrasts to Christ's divinity: "hominem utique qui est rationis capax, qui et audire, et videre, et palpare, et ambulare potest" (PSA, 1.6).

[71] "Ni sanum sapiens et quandoquidem resipiscens/ se tingui faciat pura baptismatis unda" (Agnes, 165-166).

[72] Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 116, 121–23.

[73] Agnes, 168-171; Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 216. Hrotsvit's characters often dismiss Roman religion in similar terms: "pro cuius sancta facie decet omnia nempe/ Egypti subito conquassari simulacra" (Maria, 838-839); "ultra blasphemare diis auro fabricatis" (Pelagius, 57); "inter stultorum simulachra profana deorum" (Dionysius, 19). The PSA offers a similar sentiment in this part of Agnes's speech, but with slightly altered vocabulary: "idola muta et surda, et sine sensu et sine anima colere" (PSA, 1.6).

[74] "Et quod ab his insensatis monstrisque profanis/ solamen vite mihimet sperare gerende/ possum, que vita sensuque carentia cuncto/ nec sibi proficiunt mihi nec succurrere possunt" (Agnes, 173-176). The PSA does not include this second step in Agnes's logic, which follows naturally from her prior assessment of the lifelessness of the idols. Schütze-Pflugk, *Herrscher- und Märtyrerauffassung bei Hrotsvit von Gandersheim*, 17; Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 257.

refers to Agnes as a stupid "unruly girl" (*lasciva puella*), though Agnes has demonstrated her calm competence; Semphronius is the only "unruly" person in this courtroom.[75]

Indeed, Agnes turns the prefect's own language against him, mocking his ignorance of the one true God. Agnes lauds the power of Christ, who, unlike the powerless idols, "always conscientiously" comforts the faithful.[76] Semphronius is trying to wage a battle in a war that has long been won: Christ already destroyed "the fraud of the ancient enemy." Semphronius's threats hold no power in light of that cosmic victory.[77] Agnes weaves a succinct summation of faith into her speech's conclusion, claiming that "by pursuing the better faith in Christ" she "knows him" and is "known by him."[78] This mutual knowing serves as the foundation for Agnes's faith. Building on this cognitive and spiritual foundation, Agnes can confidently refute Semphronius. She will "never be violated by sinful stain" but will instead "conquer all filthiness of the fragile flesh."[79]

Furious at Agnes's intractability, Semphronius orders her to be stripped naked and dragged to the local brothel.[80] Hrotsvit's description of this event artfully contrasts the

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[75] "Hinc infantili parcedo simplicitati/ prudenter te subporto, lasciva puella" (Agnes, 180-181). The PSA describes Semphronius using less dramatic language, reducing the irony: "Cupio consultum esse infantiae tuae" (PSA, 1.6). Semphronius also appeals to Agnes's nobility, assuming her family would be ashamed at her enclosure in a brothel.

[76] "Si tu namque deum scires hunc, quem colo, verum/ illiusque potestatem sine fine vigentem,/ qua semper proprios pie confortando ministros" (Agnes, 195-197). The PSA begins this speech in a similar fashion: "si scires quis est Deus meus, non ista ex tuo ore proferres" (PSA, 2.7).

[77] "Antiqui fraudes hostis confringeret omnes/ talia verba tuo nolles profundere rostro/ nec mihi terrores tocies praeponere tristes" (Agnes, 198-200). The PSA, however, renders this speech as further discussion of Christ's power in the immediate situation (as superior to idols and to the prefect), with no specific mention of his triumph over ancient sin (PSA, 2.7).

[78] "Hinc ego, quae sectando fidem Christi meliorem/ illum cognosco necnon cognoscor ab illo" (Agnes, 201-202). The PSA does not include a corresponding statement.

[79] "Ipsius dextra me defendente superna,/ spero delicti numquam maculis violari/ carnis spurcitias fragilis sed vincere cunctas" (Agnes, 203-205). Prudentius concludes his *Agnes* with a similar sentiment, though it is framed as a defense of chastity rather than an attack on corporeality (Peristephanon, 14.31-35).

[80] Hrotsvit describes Semphronius as descending further into anger: "his dictis seva praeses commocior ira" (Agnes, 206). Prudentius takes a different approach, describing the punishment as occurring in a "corner of a public street" (Peristephanon, 14.38-39). The PSA suggests that Agnes will be accompanied by a herald (PSA, 2.8), while Hrotsvit claims the saint is accompanied by a large crowd (Agnes, 209). For more on the brothel's potential location, see: Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 217.

steady faith of Agnes, "the venerable spouse of the celestial king," with the "frenzy" of Semphronius and of the brothel's patrons: those "lustful young men, lacking reason, rejoicing in the companionship of wicked women."[81] Though these men are intent on exposing Agnes, her naked body is never visible to the voyeurs. Instead, her hair miraculously multiplies into a covering, "as if beautiful clothes."[82] This miracle serves as the first piece of evidence that Christ "will not permit" ridicule of his bride.[83] Still, Agnes proceeds into the brothel, now covered by a shining cloak of her hair. Just as Pelagius and Dionysius reclaimed the darkness of prison with the light of their sanctity, so the brothel is rendered "sparkling with miraculous splendor," even though it had been "soiled [*sordebat*] by black shades" of depravity.[84] An angel even appears in the "dirty cave" of the brothel, serving as a "guard" for Agnes's body and providing clothes that also gleam

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[81] Agnes, 207-212.

[82] Agnes, 215-219. The PSA explicitly names *divina gratia* as the source for this miracle (PSA, 2.8). Prudentius does not include this hirsute miracle, although Damasus's inscription does mention that Agnes "covered her body with her hair," without ascribing anything miraculous to that modest action: "Nudaque perfusos crines, et membra dedisse" (ICUR 8.20754); for more see: Trout, *Damasus of Rome*, 150; Jones, "Agnes and Constantina," 130. As Barbara Baert has shown, "hair appeals to an archetype ambivalence between sexuality and ascesis, between magic and the gifts of God." Barbara H. Baert, "More than an Image, Agnes of Rome: Virginity and Visual Memory," in *More Than a Memory: The Discourse of Martyrdom and the Construction of Christian Identity in the History of Christianity*, ed. Johan Leemans (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2005), 157. Hair features prominently in several saints lives, including the *vitae* of the so-called "transvestite" saints like Mary of Egypt: Ilse Friesen, "Saints as Helpers in Dying: The Hairy Holy Women," in *Death and Dying in the Middle Ages*, ed. Edelgard E. DuBruck and Barbara I. Gusick (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1999), 239–57.

[83] "Sed Christus proprie praebens solamina sponse/ illam convitiis tangi non sustinet ullis" (Agnes, 213-214). For more on the voyeurism of this scene in the Agnes tradition see: Burrus, "Reading Agnes"; Jones, "Agnes and Constantina," 130–31; Lucy Grig, "The Paradoxical Body of Saint Agnes," in *Roman Bodies: Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Andrew Hopkins and Maria Wyke (London: British School at Rome, 2005), 116–17; Stottlemyer, "The Construction of the Desiring Subject in Hrotsvit's Pelagius and Agnes."

[84] "Atque locum turpem miro splendore micantem/ aspexit, tenebris qui sordebat prius atris" (Agnes, 222-223). Hrotsvit reports that Agnes also smelled "sweet odors" (*dulcamen odoris*) in the disgusting place, another common hagiographic trope perhaps best understood in contrast to the gastrointestinal sounds and smells emanating from Gongolf's wife. Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 217. While the PSA includes this episode, it only addresses the angel's production of light, and does not discuss the brothel's transformation. (2.8).

in the darkness.[85] Hrotsvit's consistent, even repetitive language throughout this scene forces her audience to acknowledge that light and darkness parallel purity and corporeality.[86] Despite the dire nature of her situation, Agnes gives thanks for the events that have occurred, understanding that God will not allow her "to be overcome by the corruption of the ancient enemy."[87]

Outside of the brothel, tension mounts; patrons collect in a crowd, "raging" with the "blind heart" that has characterized sinners throughout the corpus.[88] Hrotsvit uses the very insanity of this crowd to continue her argument about the divinely bestowed reason possessed by all humanity.[89] Everyone, even this boorish crowd, "knows and cannot contradict" the greatness of the divinity at work in yet another miraculous event.[90] Hrotsvit uses the degenerate crowd to demonstrate that no one will "be ruined for all eternity" as long as they believe in God.[91] The crowd's approach toward the brothel is thus universalized as the human proclivity toward sin, while their subsequent conversion demonstrates the possibility of redemption for all who believe. One member of the crowd acts out this cycle in its entirety: he approaches the brothel "compelled by pride," but after beholding Agnes surrounded by angelic light, he is struck by terror and prostrates himself at her feet.[92] This man then begins to pray, begging that "the chains of his errors"

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[85] Agnes, 225-227. Hrotsvit consistently uses the terms *lupanar* and *antrum* to describe the brothel, while the PSA uses *lupanar* and *theatrum.*
[86] William Charles Korfmacher, "'Light Images' in Hrotsvitha," *The Classical Weekly* 37, no. 13 (1944): 151–52; Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 114–15.
[87] "Ne posset veteris corrupi fraudibius hostis" (Agnes, 233).
[88] "Interea iuvenes cecato corde furentes,/ undique collectis cursim venere catervis" (Agnes, 234-235).
[89] The PSA does not include this vignette, summarizing the transformation of the brothel space in a generalized description (PSA, 2.9).
[90] "Nec mora, cognoscunt, nec contrdictere possunt" (Agnes, 241).
[91] "Quod numquam longum quis confundetur in aevum,/ qui credens domino firma spe pendet in illo" (Agnes, 242-243). Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 218.
[92] Agnes, 244-253.

be removed and testifying that "the true God must be worshiped rightly."[93] Once confronted with the reality of faith, the man responds by recognizing and proclaiming Christian truth. Summing up this miniature conversion cycle, Hrotsvit explains that "the place of wickedness was turned into a house of prayer," something that could be said of both the brothel and the converted sinner.[94]

This visual representation of human redemption seems to be an apt conclusion to the narrative, but the story would not be a *passio* if it ended here. Hrotsvit follows the path of the PSA and appends yet another miraculous event to the already impressive description of Agnes's sainthood. Hrotsvit uses Semphronius's son as a foil to the conversion from the previous vignette. As the young man approaches Agnes, Hrotsvit alerts her readers to the persistence of the youth's soul sickness, noting he was "not in his right mind."[95] It is no surprise, then, that he remains unfazed by the miraculous light surrounding Agnes: "he spoke neither praise to the Lord nor returned honor to him whose grace was radiating in the ominous cave."[96] While the youth once sought marriage, he now seeks to exploit Agnes's current circumstance by enjoying her body, which is now "lawfully" available for use in the brothel.[97] Christ does not abandon Agnes in this moment of assault, "protecting his own daughter from corruption" by striking the youth dead as he

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[93] "Postulat errorum laxari vincla suorum/ testaturque deum verum fore iure colendum" (Agnes, 250-251).
[94] "Sicque locus scelerum domus efficitur precularum" (Agnes, 253). The PSA includes a similar line: "mundior egrederentur foras, quam fuerant intus ingressus" (PSA, 2.9).
[95] "Tandem praefecti natus venit male sanus" (Agnes, 254). Homeyer notes that Hrotsvit often uses the adverb *tandem* to indicate a shift in plot, pointing to similar instances in the *Maria* (85), *Theophilus* (149) and *Basilius* (41). Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 219. In a slightly different narrative move, the PSA describes youth arriving with a crowd of his friends in order to mock the crowd (*irridens eos*) that has begun to believe in the power of Agnes's God (PSA, 2.9).
[96] "Nec dixit laudem domino nec reddit honorem,/ gratia tristifico cuius radiabat in antro" (Agnes, 257-258). Oddly, M renders *radiabat* as *rediabat*. Homeyer and Berschin prefer the more logical *radiabat*, given the preceding discussion that relied so heavily on light imagery. Berschin, *Hrotsvit Opera Omnia*, 123; Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 219.
[97] "Amplexu dulci sperans se virginis uti/ iam licito sacrae, cuius languebat amore" (Agnes, 260-261).

approaches the saint.[98] When Semphronius hears about the death of his son, he again verbally attacks Agnes, accusing her of "destroying [his] son, who was worthy and the hope of [his] family."[99] Semphronius believes that his son's death is evidence of Agnes's corruption; she must have "drunk from the false streams of magic" to ensure his death.[100] In response to this accusation, Agnes again speaks "eloquently and with well-composed reason."[101] Semphronius's son died because he failed to recognize the divine power so clearly displayed in the "glory gleaming even in the ominous cave."[102] Still, in the spirit of mercy and redemptive pedagogy, Agnes agrees to pray for the youth's resurrection. [103] After the crowd has departed, Agnes prays and the youth miraculously rises from the ground, "with strength having been restored in all his limbs."[104]

Thus, the redemption cycle continues with Semphronius's son taking on the role of converted sinner declaring his newfound faith. He speaks with words that are both

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[98] Agnes, 262-265. This version of events is far less dramatic than Prudentius's account, which reports that a youth was specifically struck by a lighting bolt to the eye: a punishment tailored for the crime of a transgressive gaze (Peristephanon, 14.46-49). The PSA, by contrast, attributes the youth's death to the work of the devil: "Cecidit in faciem suam, et praefocatus a diabolo exspiravit" (PSA, 2.9).

[99] Agnes, 274-279. The PSA suggests the youth's friends are responsible for accusing Agnes of magic, which fits with the initial suggestion that the devil was the source of the youth's death: "magicis artibus ista meretrix praefecti filium interfecit" (PSA, 2.9). Upon his arrival, Semphronius repeats this accusation in a speech that Hrotsvit followed closely: "crudelissima omnium feminarum, in filium meum voluisti apodixin tuae artis magicae demonstrare" (PSA, 2.10).

[100] "[Patet] de rivulis magicae fraudis bibulam stais esse" (Agnes, 282). This is an ironic distortion of Hrotsvit's metaphor for knowledge gained by the saints in her corpus, like Theophilus: "de sophiae rivis septeno fonte manantis" (Theophilus, 13). Kathryn Gravdal, *Ravishing Maidens: Writing Rape in Medieval French Literature and Law* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 28–30.

[101] "Dixit facunde bene composite racione" (Agnes, 288).

[102] "Sed magis ipse sibi fuit incensor moriendi,/ glorificare deum stultus quia sperverat illum,/ gloria tristifico cuius praefulget in antro" (Agnes, 290-292). In the PSA, Agnes clarifies that the youth's death was the work of an angel of God, rather than the devil (PSA, 2.10).

[103] She does this "so that [God's] majesty and exceptional power might be evident in the whole world" (Agnes, 293-294). According to the PSA, Semphronius asks Agnes to pray to the angel to renew his son's life and Agnes agrees to do so, noting that this would be one way for God's power to be revealed (PSA, 2.11). For more on the collaboration between the angel and Agnes, see: Homeyer, *Hrotsvithae Opera*, 221; Stottlemyer, "The Construction of the Desiring Subject in Hrotsvit's Pelagius and Agnes," 121.

[104] Agnes, 304-307. The angel that guarded Agnes acts as a support for her prayers. The PSA also describes Agnes and the angel praying together in order to revive the youth (PSA, 2.11). Prudentius reports that Agnes restores sight to the offending youth in his narrative, without any angelic assistance (Peristephanon, 14.57-60).

"eager and persuasive," begging "everyone" in Rome to "believe that Christ is ever and always the one and true God, with the Father on high and with the Holy Spirit."[105] Hrotsvit renders this speech as a creedal affirmation of faith, which also exhorts the community.[106] First, the youth repeats the narrative of his personal salvation, noting that Christ was willing to offer an end to his "stupidity."[107] Then, he universalizes that narrative, noting that Christ is "always eager to show mercy to sinners," as shown by his simultaneous physical and spiritual rebirth.[108] The spirit of conversion that began with the actions of the first brothel patron continues to spread outward, impacting the youth's father Semphronius. Despite his terror, Semphronius is now able to testify, truly "knowing" and believing "that Christ was true God."[109] The crowd is also caught up in this conversion experience, "praising the holy name of the good God."[110] The PSA records neither Semphronius's conversion nor the crowd's response, moving directly from the youth's confession of faith to the next phase of the narrative. Hrotsvit, however, chooses to align Agnes's miraculous resurrection of the youth with the spiritual rebirth of the converted crowd, a cycle that has now occurred three times in her version of the Agnes narrative.[111] The martyr's blood is only one aspect of their redemptive potential.

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[105] "Credite Romani cives rogo credite cuncti,/ esse deum Christum verumque perenniter unum,/ cum patre celsithrono necnon cum flamine sacro" (Agnes, 317-319).
[106] Hrotsvit emphasizes the natural liturgical response to faithful understanding by using a tricolon of passive periphrastics: "hic est orandus solusque colendus amandus" (Agnes, 323). Although the PSA also reports the youth's confession of faith, it does not include a similar call for the crowd to be converted (PSA, 2.11).
[107] "Qui prius errantem necnon perversa volentem/ morte repentina citius me praeveniendo/ finem stultitie dignabatur dare tante" (Agnes, 324-326).
[108] "Erranti promptus solito misereri" (Agnes, 327).
[109] "Atque deum verum clamans dixit fore Christum,/ cuius tam celerem cognoscebat pietatem" (Agnes, 337-338).
[110] "Scilicet astantes animis mirantibus omnes/ tollunt in caelum laeti praeconia laudum/ laudantes sanctum domini nomen benedicti" (Agnes, 341-343). As Maud McInerey puts it, Semphronius has been converted by the amazing *signum*, "which is simultaneously Agnes herself and the miracle she has performed. McInerney, "From the Sublime to the Ridiculous in the Works of Hrotsvitha," 98.
[111] The initial brothel patron, Semphronius's son, and Semphronius himself all convert.

Hrotsvit suggests that, by means of didactic repetition, the martyr's narrative can be transformative, both for the witnesses to Agnes's life and for the readers of Hrotsvit's story.

7.6 Agnes Joins the Virgin Cohort

Although Semphronius and his son have made genuine professions of faith, they are unable protect Agnes from future assault.[112] Agnes's miraculous activities at the brothel attracted the attention of pagan priests, who demand that she be punished for her disdain of their cult.[113] According to Hrotsvit, Semphronius "did not want to destroy [Agnes], but he was not able to defend her" from this new attack.[114] A new official, Aspasius, takes control of Agnes's second trial and punishment.[115] At this point, Hrotsvit's *Agnes* narrative mimics but then transcends the pattern of many typical martyrdom accounts. Aspasius first orders that Agnes be burned, but the fire cannot touch her, for her body needs "no cleansing from sin, since she had not given in to bodily love."[116] Unlike Pelagius, Agnes does not merely repel the means of torture: she bends the fire to her own purposes, using it to ignite the crowd of unbelievers. Eventually, "the faithful girl stood

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[112] Petroff describes this final section as Hrotsvit's way of "giving more freedom and authority to Agnes" and "realizing the dramatic possibilities" in the PSA. Elizabeth Alvilda Petroff, "Eloquence and Heroic Virginity in Hrotsvit's Verse Legends," in *Hrotsvit of Gandersheim: Rara Avis in Saxonia?*, ed. Katharina M. Wilson (Ann Arbor, MI: Marc Publishing, 1987), 234.

[113] Although Hrotsvit characterizes these priests as "cruel," they are perceptive enough to recognize that Agnes's actions will result in the "contempt" of their livelihood (Agnes, 344-349). The PSA describes the priests as verbally denouncing Agnes prior to Aspasius's judgment on her (PSA, 2.12).

[114] "Perdere non placuit, sed nec defendere quivit" (Agnes, 354). The PSA also suggests Semphronius is unable to defend Agnes, despite his gratefulness for her part in reviving his son (PSA, 2.12).

[115] It is not clear at this point exactly how Aspasius takes control of Agnes's case. Hrotsvit designates Semphronius as both a *praefectus* and a *praeses*, while Aspasius "preforms the office of judge." Hrotsvit suggests that Semphronius "leaves" Rome and also "leaves behind" Aspasius in his place: "tandem discessit maerens aliumque reliquid,/ iudicis officio functum feritate lupina" (Agnes, 355-356). This language does not clarify whether Semphronius willingly gave up any power he might have had to protect Agnes.

[116] Agnes, 358-361. Hrotsvit's use of *ardor* playfully points to the appropriateness of fire as a punishment for sexual deviance. The PSA does not connect Agnes's safety in the fire explicitly to her chastity.

alone unmarked by the heat."[117] As the fire dances around her, Agnes offers her final speech, a rhetorical feat commensurate with the magnitude of this last miracle.

Here again, Hrotsvit (through Agnes) lyrically details the main tenets of the Christian faith, beginning with the Trinity: she addresses God as the "Creator of all, begetter of the Word, creator of the world, who rules eternally with your beloved son, and also with the Holy Spirit, coeternal with both."[118] This invocation illumines Agnes's understanding of both the ontological and the economic Trinity, which operate in perfect unity. Agnes's speech also suggests that the proper human response to the Christian faith is a fourfold process of praise, worship, veneration and love.[119] Agnes has lived out that process in her own life: she "pays endless thanks" to God because she was able to maintain chastity, avoiding the ever-present "deception of the ancient serpent," and overcoming the punishments of the earthly "tyrant."[120] She "rejoices" in divine faithfulness and hastens to heaven with a "joyful spirit."[121] She embraces martyrdom, "desiring to endure the sentence of death and to be swiftly released" to eternal life.[122] However, Agnes will only be able to "contemplate" Christ "truly and without end" in heaven, consummating the love that is not fully realized until Agnes is released from her body.[123] Hrotsvit has painted a dazzling picture of Agnes, surrounded by flames,

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[117] "Sola sed immunis stabat pia virgo caloris/ inter flammarum crines ludens crepitantes" (Agnes, 369-370). Again, perceptive members of Hrotsvit's audience will note her choice of *crines* to describe the flames, a reminder of the miraculous growth of Agnes's hair.
[118] "Omniparens verbi genitor mundique creator,/ qui cum dilecto regnans retro tempora nato,/ amborumque coaeterno cum flamine sacro" (Agnes, 373-375). The PSA does not mention the creative powers of the Trinity, focusing instead on the redemptive aspects of Christ's activity (PSA, 2.13).
[119] "Digne laudaris coleris veneraris amaris" (Agnes, 375). The PSA addresses this issue as well, but does not emphasize the ancient nature of the devil's activity (PSA, 2.13).
[120] Agnes, 373-384.
[121] "Hinc gaudens in te nimium super hac pietate/ ad te nunc animis festino venire iocundis" (Agnes, 384-385).
[122] "Optans iura pati mortis ciciusque resolvi*"* (Agnes, 386).
[123] Agnes, 387-390.

speaking prophetically. But Agnes attributes all the preceding events, including her persistence in chastity, to the Trinity, "who rules all with the scepter of the highest godhead."[124]

As Agnes concludes her speech, the fire is extinguished entirely, an image that places a visual exclamation point after the miraculous event.[125] Hrotsvit again reminds her audience of the evangelical power inherent in these miracles, suggesting that through these signs the "power of Christ greatly revealed itself on the earth."[126] Aspasius, however, remains unmoved, a necessary plot point for this *passio* to reach its conclusion. With gleeful, sexually tinged abandon, the judge thrusts a sword through Agnes' body, killing her.[127] But, as Hrotsvit points out, this execution actually grants Agnes the ultimate gift in freeing her soul from her body.[128] Hrotsvit describes the splendid company of angels that escort Agnes to heaven, drawing heavily on the imagery found in Prudentius's *Peristephanon* since this scene is absent from the PSA.[129] Agnes's ascent culminates in her entrance to "the starry courts of her heavenly spouse," where she receives the double crown of virginity and martyrdom.[130] Hrotsvit's description of Agnes

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[124] "Istaec cuncta regis sceptro summe dietatis" (Agnes, 393).

[125] "Suddenly the pyre died, with all the flames having been extinguished; and with the cinders growing cold in their own embers, it was made completely free from all warmth—so that it did not even preserve any spark for itself" (Agnes, 394-398). The PSA offers a far less descriptive account: "ita omnis ignis exstinctus est, ut nec tepor quidem incendii remansisset" (PSA, 2.14).

[126] "Hoc igitur signo iam clarescente stupendo,/ quanto se virtus Christi plus detegit orbi" (Agnes, 399-400).

[127] "Ense sed inmisso tenerum guttur penetrando/ martiris egregiae iugulum perfodit avare" (Agnes, 405-406). This scene forms the centerpiece of Prudentius's account. Hrotsvit's mild sexual innuendo pales in comparison to the Spaniard's version, which describes Agnes welcoming the executioner as a lover (Peristephanon, 14.70-76). Even the PSA offers a more salacious version, noting the gush of blood from Agnes's neck (PSA, 2.14).

[128] "Et vice conversa, quod non speravit, agendo/ illi profecit, cui gratis obesse cupivit,/ transmittens celo, quam subtraxit male mundo" (Agnes, 407-409).

[129] Agnes, 410-417. Prudentius's account also describes Agnes's ascent into the heavens, looking down on the physical world that she had long ago abandoned (Peristephanon, 14.91-111).

[130] "Indeque transvectam celeres super etheris ignes/ ducunt astrigeram sponsi caelestis in aulum" (Agnes, 418-419). Prudentius also notes that Agnes was granted the double crown (Peristephanon, 14.120). For a

as eternal *victrix* grounds her victory in the "dual contest, always of the body and of the mind," which must operate together to maintain Agnes's faith.[131] This double victory marks Agnes as a unique flower, a lily among the red roses of heavenly virgins.[132]

7.7 Conclusion

Hrotsvit concludes her Agnes narrative by describing the miracles that occur at the saint's grave. Following the model of her three previous martyr narratives, these posthumous miracles reinforce the didactic themes of Hrotsvit's *Agnes*. Agnes's parents laid their daughter to rest with "all honor," and they continued to maintain a vigil at her tomb, "according to their custom."[133] During one such vigil, they behold a vision in which the entire cohort of heavenly virgins surrounds Agnes's tomb. From among this crowd, their daughter Agnes emerges, "shining in splendor, martyred for Christ."[134] Agnes recognizes the faith displayed by her parents and wishes to put an end to their grief, urging them to rejoice instead: "rejoice with me, rejoicing for the ages, because I am in the glorious courts of the king of heaven."[135] For Agnes and for all Christians, death is the ultimate freedom, the moment when the faithful are "joined in the sweet embrace of love with [Christ] and heaven."[136] Furthermore, Agnes had "always

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discussion of these double crowns and their use in Hrotsvit's hagiographic corpus, see: Wailes, *Spirituality and Politics in the Works of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*, 111–13.

[131] "Martir felix, duplici certamine victrix,/ corporis et mentis carni semper renitentis" (Agnes, 424-425). Prudentius identifies Agnes as a *victrix*, though he does so at the beginning of his account (14. 7). Ambrose also consistently used victor language in his description of Agnes (De virginibus, 1.29)

[132] Agnes, 426-429. Schütze-Pflugk, *Herrscher- und Märtyrerauffassung bei Hrotsvit von Gandersheim*, 19.

[133] "At dum pervigiles consueto more parentes/ excubias proli celebrabant mente fideli" (Agnes, 437-438).

[134] "Inter quas Agnen simili splendore nitentem/ conspexere suam pro Christo martirizatam" (Agnes, 443-444). Note the similar language in the PSA: "inter quas etiam vident beatissimam Agnetem similiter fulgentem" (PSA, 2.16).

[135] "Gaudete mecum gratulando per aevum,/ sum quia luciflua regis celestis in aula/ virginibus sacris sociata perenniter istis" (Agnes, 448-450).

[136] "Et nunc in celis illi coniungor amoris/ amplexu dulci" (Agnes, 451-452).

cherished" Christ on earth, a devotion that Hrotsvit locates chiefly in the saint's mind and heart, rather than in the chastity of her body.[137] Because of this focused faith, Agnes can now "contemplate" Christ eternally, without the encumbrance of her physical body. Agnes's parents are overjoyed at this vision, "drying their tears" and rendering praise to God: recognizing the reward "of eternal life" granted to martyrs and the faithful alike.[138] Hrotsvit's recitation of this narrative offers her audience the chance to imitate Agnes's exemplum, understanding that the mind and body are both active elements in the life of faith. They can participate in Agnes's history of redemptive pedagogy by internalizing and sharing the central Christian truth: that forgiveness awaits all those who recognize and repent for their sins.

[137] "[Christus] quem semper mente fideli/ in terris colui cupiens sine fine tueri" (Agnes, 452-453). The PSA is less specific in its description: "illi sum iuncta in caelis, quem in terris posita" (PSA, 2.16).
[138] Agnes, 455-459.

CONCLUSION

Hrotsvit intended her hagiographic corpus, I have argued, to foster both intellectual and spiritual growth in her audience. These legends embody a redemptive pedagogy, assisting her readers and hearers to exercise their "mind's eye" in service of a more faithful understanding and practice of Christianity. The legends enhance and deepen Christian virtue. As the preceding chapters have shown, Hrotsvit provides her audience with lessons of diverse kinds. Some are very specific: such as the etymological analysis of Mary's name (2.4.1), or the discussion of the atonement contained in Christ's celebration of the Eucharist with the incarcerated Dionysius (6.5). But there are also general lessons that run throughout the eight legends. In conclusion, therefore, I mention four of these general didactic themes.

First, Hrotsvit regards sin as akin to a pervasive disease, to which no one is immune. Its symptoms are cynicism and self-serving dishonesty. Several infidels in the legends are examples of sinful corruption, most memorably the Saracen caliph Abdrahemen (in *Pelagius*), the Jewish midwife Salome (in *Maria*) and the unnamed *magus* (in *Theophilus* and *Basilius*). The Roman governors Semphronius (in *Agnes*) and Sisinnius (in *Dionysius*) are not immune to the disease. Nor are lesser figures, such as the servants who taunted Mary (2.4.2) or the soldiers that mocked Gongolf's purchase of the spring (3.4.2). Even Christian leaders such as the adulterous cleric (in *Gongolf*), the vicar Theophilus, and the hierarch Carpus (in *Dionysius*) were infected by sin. To help her audience understand how pervasive and subversive this disease is, Hrotsvit often depicts sin as the work of the devil, "that ancient serpent" who attempts to foil God's salvific plan by seducing his people. The legends show this battle between good and evil playing

out both in the grand arc of human history and in the lives of individuals.

Second, Hrotsvit's legends also remind her audience that God's provision for humanity more than overcomes the "fraud" of the devil and the contagion of sin. No sin is beyond forgiveness if the sinner understands his error and repents. Hrotsvit explores this lesson in several different legends, by means of both narrative scenes and evocative imagery.

Third, Hrotsvit consistently identifies the spoken word as a means to address the problem of sin and to atone for it. The ways in which her characters use speech as the remedy to sin parallel her own use of speech as a narrator. Speech is redemptive only if it flows from sincere belief and piety. Indeed, only true believers can utter speech that is redemptive and stimulates contrition and penance, for words express the speaker's internal spiritual state. Thus, Hrotsvit does not allow either Theophilus or the *servus* to speak until they have benefitted from the corrective lessons of their intercessors (5.4.2). Mary and Basil educate their demonically bound charges about both the practice and the meaning of confession, at the same time guiding Hrotsvit's audience to reflect on the process of redemption. In this way, the saintly intercessors imitate Christ, who intercedes to educate Carpus on the role of forgiveness in the Christian life (6.4). Hrotsvit's saints are the spiritual heirs of Christ's disciples, who received a commission to teach faith in both word and deed (2.8.1). Dionysius's exchange with Paul on the Areopagus shows that conversation has the power to transform (6.3.2). Even an ordinary conversation among believers can provide the space for God's influence to work, as we see in the monastic community's discussion about the validity of Pelagius's relics (4.6.2).

Fourth, Hrotsvit's narratives and the characters in them show her readers the

results of faith and unbelief by means of images and exempla, as well as instructing them through persuasive speech. In several of her exempla, sight is a metaphor for understanding. Consider, for example, Mary's vision of the laughing and crying men, which is juxtaposed with the story of Mary's two midwives (2.6). Joseph could not see Mary's vision, because he did not believe. Similarly, Salome was unable to see the holiness of the newly incarnate Christ, and as a result she refused to believe Zelemi's prophetic explanation of the virgin birth. In these juxtaposed exempla, Hrotsvit's readers are educated by an angelic presence. Like the characters within the legends, her readers are cured of their spiritual "blindness" and can now use their "mind's eye" to interpret the lesson. Similarly, the exemplum of the paradisal spring, which is invisible to the soldiers, shows Hrotsvit's audience that truth often lies under the surface, accessible only with concentrated effort (*devota mens*). The spring later provides both punishment and healing, withering the hand of Gongolf's corrupted wife but curing the ailments of believers (3.5). These exempla demonstrate the potential for both faith and unbelief in the journey of life. During the holy family's journey in the desert, Christ's taming of the wild animals prefigures a future when all the faithful have put aside their own "animal" natures, returning to a perfect, prelapsarian relationship with God (2.7.1).

In all these lessons, Hrotsvit's overarching goal is to show that even though fallen human nature is inclined toward sin, believers can and must respond to correction and education. Mary enthusiastically ingests the spiritual food (*esca*) provided by the angels, "devoting her mind" to the learning the lessons of the law and then to defending her virginity (2.4.3). Salome, despite her initial unbelief, learns her lesson and confesses a newfound faith in Christ (2.6.2). Theophilus and the *servus* willingly undergo the long

process of reversing their demonic contracts: learning from their intercessors, confessing their sin, undergoing penance, and finally testifying to the wonder of divine forgiveness (5.4). Semphronius's son, after being brought back from the dead, repents of his transgressions towards Agnes and testifies to the glory of the one true God (7.5). Thus, the individual's reception of redemptive pedagogy can have a communal impact. Both Theophilus and the *servus* offer the "gospel" of their redemption during a worship service (5.4.4): a performance that reflects the increasing use of hagiographic material in early-medieval sermons. Hrotsvit's hagiographic corpus is a *sermo*[1] in that word's widest semantic sense: it is not only a homily on divine grace, but also a lesson on the consequences of failing to respond to God's gifts, and a conversation between Hrotsvit and her community.

Although these lessons in virtue would have edified any Christian reader, I propose that Hrotsvit's hagiographic corpus was ideally suited to the Gandersheim nuns, who were surely her first intended audience. As was noted in the introduction, Gandersheim possessed a flourishing library and scriptorium, and this is evidence of a high level of literary cultivation. These women were surely capable of digesting the spiritual food (*esca*) provided by Hrotsvit's learned narratives of saints and sinners, whether they received them by hearing them at mealtimes or by reading them in individual study. Hrotsvit's metrical stories are more than summaries of existing vitae: they are engaging, cleverly constructed narratives designed to show her readers how to interpret them and how to perceive their didactic purpose. They are elegantly crafted but are also accessible, presenting thought-provoking story lines in understandable language.

[1] "Sermonem vobis tantum faciemus ab illis,/ rarius in templo que creduntur fore dicta" (Maria, 541-542).

Hrotsvit assumes that her readers and hearers will think deeply, applying their minds to the task of perceiving and internalizing the lessons of the legends, with their vivid exempla and surprising and sometimes novel plot twists. Just as she commends a pedagogical hermeneutic to her readers in the preface to the corpus, so Hrotsvit adds a similar exhortation in a later letter (*epistola*) to her "learned supporters."[2] Despite her ironic or perhaps merely conventional claims to "rusticity" and "womanly intellect" (*muliebre ingenium*), Hrotsvit "knows" that God has granted her a "keen mind" (*perspicax ingenium*).[3] She confesses that her mind became "overgrown" (*incultum*) and unkempt after she completed her formal education, but Hrotsvit refuses to allow the divine gift (*donum*) of her mind to be "utterly destroyed" by this neglect.[4] Instead, she writes in order to "glorify the generous Giver of my intellect" (*largitor ingenii*).[5] She also writes to support both "learned patrons" and less skilled readers in glorifying God, who has endowed each human person with his or her own *ingenium*. As Hrotsvit explains in the *Maria,* God does not require everyone produce a corpus of writings like her own, but God does require each individual to use the intellectual resources that they have been

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[2] This letter, addressed "*ad sapientes huius libri fautores*" appears in M after the introduction to Hrotsvit's *Liber secundus*, which contains the plays.

[3] "Perspicax quoaque ingenium divinitus mihi collatum esse agnosco" (Epistola, 8).

[4] Epistola, 8-9. Note the comparison to the preface of the legends: "ne crediti talentum ingenioli sub obscure torpens pectoris rubigine neglegentie exterminaretur" (Praefatio, Liber Primus, 8).

[5] "Et largitor ingenii tanto amplius in me iure laudaretur quanto muliebris sensus tardier esse creditur" (Epistola, 9). Katharina M. Wilson, *Hrotsvit of Gandersheim: A Florilegium of Her Works* (Rochester, NY: D. S. Brewer, 1998), 43–44; Phyllis R. Brown, "Hrotsvit's Apostolic Mission: Prefaces, Dedications, and Other Addresses to Readers," in *A Companion to Hrotsvit of Gandersheim (fl. 960): Contextual and Interpretive Approaches*, ed. Phyllis R. Brown and Stephen L. Wailes (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 248–50.

given, exercising their mind's eye as much as they are able, in their own way (*pro modulo*).[6]

Hrotsvit's *perspicax ingenium* enabled her to compose this series of legends, which praise God's generosity and encourage her audience to follow suit. If her audience does not respond to the lessons offered, they are no better than Gongolf's wife, whose flatulence betrayed her perpetually "unteachable mind" (*indocile ingenium)*. Hrotsvit is writing for a learned, cultivated, and intellectually adept audience, but she wants her readers not to enjoy these gifts for their own sake or for mere entertainment, but to use them for their own moral and spiritual development.

[6] "Ne comes ingratis condampner iure pigellis,/ quos piget altithrono psallere pro modulo" (Maria, 41-42).

Abbreviations

AASS	Acta Sanctorum, edito novissima
BHL	Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina
M	Clm 14485, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek. The most complete extant manuscript of Hrotsvit's corpus.
Miraculum	Paul the Deacon's *Miraculum sanctae Mariae de Theophilo*
PDM	Hilduin's *Passio s. Dionysii* (metric)
PDP	Hilduin's *Passio s. Dionysii* (prose)
PG	Patrologia cursus completus, series Graeca, ed. J.P. Migne
PL	Patrologia cursus completus, series Latina, ed. J.P. Migne
Protoevangelium	The *Protoevangelium of James*
Pseudo-Matthew	The *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*
PSA	*Passio S. Agnetis*
PSP	*Passio S. Pelagii*
Vita Basilii	The Pseudo-Amphilochian *Vita Basilii*

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AASS Ian. II, 351.

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