

**Materials for the Study of the Cult of Saint Agnes of Rome in Anglo-Saxon England:  
Texts and Interpretations**

**Christine Phillips**

**Centre for Medieval Studies**

**PhD**

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## ABSTRACT

Throughout the Middle Ages, the late antique legends of the early Roman virgin martyrs were frequently retold, translated and adapted by numerous authors for a diverse range of audiences. This thesis seeks to offer some thoughts on the changing symbolism and functions of the figure of the virgin martyr during this period. My dissertation presents a case study of the reception of the legend of St Agnes of Rome into Anglo-Saxon England and its subsequent transformation in the works of Insular authors. The methodology employed in this discussion draws on one current trend in hagiographical studies, which explores the deployment of Biblical themes and images in such works. Many scholars have drawn attention to the use of these allusions which breakdown the narrative boundaries between the hagiographical text and the Bible in order to portray the saint as fulfilling the ultimate goal of all Christians: the perfection of faith and union with Christ. This study takes that approach one step further.

In the first part of the work I focus on one late antique work: the *Passio Sanctae Agnetis* (BHL 156). Through an analysis not only of the more apparent Biblical parallels in this text, but also numerous brief textual allusions, I explore how such echoes can refract the martyrdom of one virgin martyr into a wide range of meanings. I argue that due to the centrality of the Bible in the Christian faith, both author and audience shared a common Scriptural vocabulary. The author could therefore deploy Biblical allusions as part of a complex textual strategy to direct an audience to perceive the relationship between the Bible and his or her text. In turn, these associations then allow the hagiographical work to be interpreted on many different exegetical levels. The level of knowledge and the culture milieu of each person who engaged with the text would of course determine the signals that he or she perceived and lead to a diverse range of possible interpretations for one *passio*. It is this phenomenon that I explore in the second part of the study. Here I examine five Insular adaptations of the late antique passion: the prose and verse narratives of Agnes' martyrdom incorporated into Aldhelm's *De uirginitate*, Bede's hymn *Illuxit alma saeculis*, the entry for Agnes' feast-day in *The Old English Martyrology* and the account of Agnes' legend in Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*. My analysis reveals how each author responded to a different set of Biblical resonances present in the *Passio Sanctae Agnetis* and thus how the tale of one virgin martyr could be retold in many different ways and for many different purposes.

## Abbreviations

<i>AB</i>	<i>Analecta Bollandiana</i>
Add.	Additional
<i>Acta SS.</i>	<i>Acta Sanctorum</i> , ed. J. Bolland <i>et al.</i> (Brussels, 1643– )
<i>ASE</i>	<i>Anglo-Saxon England</i>
ASPR	Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records, ed. G.P. Krapp and E. Van Kirk Dobbie, 6 vols. (New York, 1931–53)
Assmann	B. Assmann, <i>Angelsächsische Homilien und Heiligenleben</i> , Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Prosa 3 (Kassel, 1889; repr. with a supplementary introduction by P. Clemoes, Darmstadt, 1964)
<i>BAR</i>	<i>British Archaeological Reports: British Series</i>
<i>BHG</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca</i> , ed. F. Halkin, 3 <sup>rd</sup> ed., 3 vols. (Brussels, 1957)
<i>BHL</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina</i> , 2 vols. (Brussels, 1899–1901), with <i>Nouum Supplementum</i> by H. Fros (Brussels, 1986)
BL	British Library
Bm	Bibliothèque municipale
BnF	Bibliothèque nationale de France
<i>BSS</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sanctorum</i> , ed. F. Caraffa (Vatican City, 1961–70)
<i>CBP</i>	<i>Corpus benedictionum pontificalium</i> , ed. E. Moeller, CCSL 162 (Turnhout, 1971–79)
CCCC	Cambridge, Corpus Christi College
CCCM	Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis (Turnhout)
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (Turnhout)
<i>Cdu</i>	Aldhelm, <i>Carmen de uirginitate</i> , ed. R. Ehwald, MGH Auct. Antiq. 15 (Berlin, 1914–19), pp. 350–471
<i>CH</i>	Ælfric, <i>Catholic Homilies</i>
<i>CHI</i>	<i>Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series</i> , ed. P. Clemoes, EETS ss 17 (Oxford, 1997)
<i>CH II</i>	<i>Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The Second Series</i> , ed. M. Godden, EETS ss 5 (London, 1979)
<i>CH III</i>	<i>Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: Introduction, Commentary and Glossary</i> , ed. M. Godden, EETS ss 18 (Oxford, 2000)
<i>CPL</i>	<i>Clavis Patrum Latinorum</i> , ed. E. Dekkers and A. Gaar, 2 <sup>nd</sup> ed. (Steenbrugge, 1961)
CSASE	Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum (Vienna)
<i>DACL</i>	<i>Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie</i> , ed. F. Cabrol and H. Leclercq, 15 vols. in 30 (Paris, 1907–53)
<i>Dlu</i>	Aldhelm, <i>De laude uirginitatis</i> , ed. R. Ehwald, MGH Auct. Antiq. 15 (Berlin, 1914–19), pp. 226–323
EETS	Early English Text Society
os	Original Series
ss	Supplementary Series
<i>Epist.</i>	<i>epistula</i>
<i>Enarrationes</i>	Augustine, <i>Enarrationes in Psalmos</i> , ed. E. Dekkers and J. Fraipont, CCSL 38–40 (Turnhout, 1956)
GCS	Die griechischen-christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte (Leipzig, 1897–1941; Berlin, 1954– )

- Gneuss H. Gneuss, *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: A List of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England up to 1100* (Tempe, AZ, 2001)
- HBS Henry Bradshaw Society (London)
- HE Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum*, ed. B. Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, 1969)
- JRS *Journal of Roman Studies*
- Ker N. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford, 1957)
- L&S C.T. Lewis and C. Short, *A Latin Dictionary: Founded on Andrew's Edition of Freund's Latin Dictionary* (Oxford, 1879)
- LS Ælfric, *Lives of Saints*, ed. W. Skeat, EETS os 76, 82, 94 and 114 (London, 1881–1900; repr. in 2 vols., Oxford, 1966)
- LP *Liber pontificalis*, ed. L. Duchesne, 2 vols. (Paris, 1886–92, with vol. III, containing bibliography and indexes by C. Vogel, Paris, 1955–57)
- MCH *The Metrical Calendar of Hampson*, ed. P. McGurk, AB 104 (1986), 79–125
- MCR *The Metrical Calendar of Ramsey*, ed. M. Lapidge, RB 94 (1984), 326–69
- MCY *The Metrical Calendar of York*, ed. A. Wilmart, RB 46 (1934), 41–69
- MGH Monumenta Germaniae Historica  
Auct. Antiq. Auctores Antiquissimi
- MH *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*, ed. I. De Rossi and L. Duchesne, Acta SS. Nov II.I (Brussels, 1894), pp. 1–195
- NH *New Hymnal*
- NM *The New Minster Missal*, ed. D.H. Turner, HBS 93 (Leighton Buzzard, 1962)
- n.s. New Series
- NT the New Testament
- OCD *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth, 3<sup>rd</sup> rev. ed. (Oxford, 2003)
- OEM *The Old English Martyrology*, ed. G. Kotzor, 2 vols. (Munich, 1981)
- OH *Old Hymnal*
- OMT Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford)
- OT the Old Testament
- PSA Pseudo-Ambrose, *Passio Sanctae Agnetis*
- Pe. Prudentius' *Peristephanon*, ed. M.P. Cunningham, CCSL 126 (Turnhout, 1966), pp. 251–389
- PG Patrologia Graeca, ed. J.P. Migne, 162 vols. (Paris, 1857–66)
- PL Patrologia Latina, ed. J.P. Migne, 221 vols. (Paris, 1844–64)
- RB *Revue Bénédictine*
- RG Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae*, ed. W. Seyfarth, 2 vols., Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana: Scriptores Romani (Leipzig, 1978)
- SASLC *Sources of Anglo-Saxon Literary Culture vol. 1: Abbo of Fleury, Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, and Acta Sanctorum*, ed. F.M. Biggs et al. (Kalamazoo, MI, 2001)
- UL University Library

## NOTE ON BIBLICAL REFERENCES, TRANSLATIONS AND NAMES

The Biblical quotations used throughout this dissertation are taken from the Stuttgart Vulgate: *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, ed. R. Weber *et al.*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Stuttgart, 1994). All named individual books of the Bible are referred to by abbreviated titles only and these references likewise follow Weber's edition. Scriptural translations are from the Douay-Rheims Bible.

All non-Biblical translations of Latin and Old English texts are my own unless otherwise stated.

Historical individuals are referred to by the modern form of their names, for example, Aldhelm rather than Aldhelmus.

## INTRODUCTION

For 21 January, the martyrology of the modern day Roman Catholic Church contains this entry on the feast-day of the (?) third-century virgin martyr St Agnes of Rome:<sup>1</sup>

*Romae passio sanctae Agnetis, Virginis et Martyris; quae, sub Praefecto Urbis Symphronio, ignibus iniecta, sed iis per orationem eius extinctis, gladio percussa est...*<sup>2</sup>

This quotation encapsulates the two major themes of the thesis presented below. First, it represents an extremely condensed version of a much longer Latin account of Agnes' martyrdom: the *Passio Sanctae Agnetis* (BHL 156–7 and 2527–7a).<sup>3</sup> This late antique Latin passion, which was once attributed to the pen of Ambrose of Milan, forms the focus of this dissertation.<sup>4</sup> Second, the specific wording used by the *Martyrologium romanum* replicates the entry for Agnes' feast from the eighth-century *Martyrologium* of Bede.<sup>5</sup> In this thesis, I shall offer a literary case study of how Anglo-Saxon authors received, adapted, transformed and incorporated the passion of St Agnes into their own theological works.

I have always been struck by the popularity of the *passiones* of the early Roman virgin martyrs and how countless medieval authors were inspired to adapt and retell the legends of such saints for a variety of different purposes. In order to shed some light on the changing symbolism of the figure of the virgin martyr over time and between

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<sup>1</sup> The question of Agnes' historicity remains open. It is widely accepted that the *Passio Sanctae Agnetis* is probably a fictional account of the events surrounding Agnes' martyrdom; nevertheless, a virgin martyr of that name has been venerated in Rome since the fourth century (perhaps even the third century). Consequently, the possibility should not be ruled out that this cult does indeed honour an authentic female martyr, whose death is likely to have occurred during the persecutions of the third century. Whether or not she was a consecrated virgin or even called Agnes is, of course, a very different question. (On the fictitious nature of the *Passio Sanctae Agnetis*, most scholars follow the views of P. Franchi de' Cavalieri, whose 1899 study of this work concluded that it did not record any reliable historical details about Agnes' death: 'S. Agnese nella tradizione e nella leggenda', *Römische Quartalschrift*, Supplementheft 10 (Rome, 1899); repr. in his *Scritti agiografici vol. I*, Studi e Testi 221 (Vatican City, 1962), pp. 293–381. For the early history of Agnes' cult on the via Nomentana, see pp. 251–4).

<sup>2</sup> 'At Rome, the passion of St Agnes, virgin and martyr; who, under Simpronius the Prefect of the City, after she had been consigned to the pyre, but the flames were extinguished through her prayers, was slain with a sword.' *The Roman Martyrology, Published by Order of Gregory XIII, Revised by Authority of Urban VIII and Clement X, Augmented and Corrected in 1749 by Benedict XII*, <http://www.breviary.net/martyrology/mart.htm>, accessed 31/03/08.

<sup>3</sup> The *Passio Sanctae Agnetis* is hereafter abbreviated to *PSA*. Throughout this thesis, all references to the *PSA* refer to the lines numbers of the working edition presented in Appendix One. The *BHL* reference to the *PSA* is hereafter abbreviated to 156 for convenience. *CPL* 2159.

<sup>4</sup> For further discussion of the *PSA*'s date and authorship see pp. 16–27.

<sup>5</sup> Bede's text reads: 'Romae, Sanctae Agnetis quae, sub praefecto urbis Symphronio, ignibus iniecta, sed his per orationem eius extinctis, gladio percussa est.' The Latin is taken from H. Quentin, *Les martyrologues historiques du moyen âge: Etude sur la formation du martyrologe romain* (Paris, 1908), pp. 57–8.

cultures, my dissertation provides a case study into how Anglo-Saxon authors received, adapted and transformed the passion of one specific Roman virgin martyr. Consequently this thesis comprises two principal parts. The first section explores the depiction of Agnes' death in the *PSA* and the concerns and issues that the *PSA*'s author sought to address through his account. This preliminary investigation provides the basis for the second and more comprehensive element of the dissertation, which focuses on Insular texts that contain a reworking of the *PSA*. These later chapters examine how the Anglo-Saxon authors approached and modified this late antique passion in order to redeploy the figure of the virgin martyr in a number of new and diverse forms.

In total, five comprehensive Insular accounts of Agnes' martyrdom have survived. These texts include compositions in both of the major languages used in Anglo-Saxon England: three were written in Latin and two in Old English. In addition, the chronological spread of these five Insular works allows the development and use of Agnes' legend to be traced throughout the Anglo-Saxon period. All of these texts are based principally on the *PSA* and rarely, if ever, draw on any of the four earlier versions of Agnes' legend.<sup>6</sup> The earliest known Anglo-Latin versions of Agnes' martyrdom are the prose and verse narratives found in Aldhelm's (d. 709 or 710) *opus geminatum De uirginitate*.<sup>7</sup> Aldhelm's younger contemporary Bede (c. 673–735) composed the third Anglo-Latin work that recounts Agnes' death: the hymn *Illuxit alma saeculis*.<sup>8</sup> A fourth reworking of the *PSA* is found in *The Old English Martyrology*, which is dated on the basis of the manuscript evidence to the ninth century, but may well draw on a much earlier Latin source.<sup>9</sup> The fifth and final Insular account of Agnes' legend is Ælfric of Eynsham's (c. 950 – c. 1010) Old English translation of the *PSA*, which formed part of his tenth-century compendium of vernacular hagiographical narratives now known as *Lives of Saints*.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> There are four (possibly five) earlier accounts of Agnes' martyrdom: a) an epigram by Pope Damasus (c. 305–84). A. Ferrua (ed.), *Epigrammata Damasiana*, Sussidi allo studio delle antichità cristiane 2 (Rome, 1942), pp. 175–9. b + c) Two accounts by Ambrose of Milan (c. 330–97): *De uirginibus* I.ii.7–9 and the hymn *Agnes beatae uirginis*. E. Cazzaniga (ed.), *S. Ambrosii Mediolanensis Episcopi, De uirginibus libri tres*, Corpus Scriptorum Latinorum Paravianum (Turin, 1956), pp. 4–6. J. Fontaine (ed.), *Ambroise de Milan: Hymnes* (Paris, 1992), pp. 376–403. d) Poem xiv of the *Peristephanon* by the Spanish poet Prudentius (c. 348–c. 405). M.P. Cunningham (ed.), *Aurelii Prudentii Clementis Carmina*, CCSL 126 (Turnhout, 1966), pp. 251–389. e) A Greek passion (*BHG* 45), whose date remains uncertain. Franchi de' Cavalieri, 'S. Agnese nella tradizione', pp. 355–60.

<sup>7</sup> R. Ehwald (ed.), *Aldhelmi Opera*, MGH, Auct. Antiq. 15 (Berlin, 1919), pp. 298–99 and 432–34.

<sup>8</sup> J. Fraipont (ed.), *Bedae Venerabilis Opera pars iii, opera homiletica, pars iv, opera rhythmica*, CCSL 122 (Turnhout, 1955), pp. 414–15.

<sup>9</sup> G. Kotzor (ed.), *Das altenglische Martyrologium*, 2 vols. (Munich, 1981), II, 22–5. See also M. Lapidge, 'Acca of Hexham and the Origin of *The Old English Martyrology*', *AB* 123 (2005): 29–78.

<sup>10</sup> W. Skeat (ed.), *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, EETS os 76, 82, 94 and 114 (London, 1881–1900; repr. in 2 vols., London, 1966), I, 170–87. *Lives of Saints* is an editorial title and the main manuscript witness for this collection (London, BL, Cotton Julius E.vii) now contains several non-Ælfrician items.

The *PSA* is one of around a hundred and fifty anonymous hagiographical novels that celebrate the early martyrs venerated in Rome. These works are collectively known as the *Gesta martyrum* and the majority are thought to date from the fifth and sixth centuries, although the action of their narratives tends to be set before the reign of Constantine the Great (306–37).<sup>11</sup> The title *Gesta martyrum* originates from claims made in the *Liber pontificalis* that the early popes from Fabian I (236–50) onwards maintained an official collection of the deeds of Rome’s early martyrs.<sup>12</sup> No trace of this compendium, however, has ever been discovered and those *passiones* that have been preserved each possess an ‘independent manuscript tradition...(and) there seems to have been no convention whatsoever of treating them as a fixed corpus.’<sup>13</sup> The precise origins of the *Gesta*, therefore, remain obscure, as does their early transmission history since the earliest manuscript witnesses of these texts date to the eighth- and ninth-centuries.<sup>14</sup>

During the Middle Ages the *Gesta* circulated widely around Europe and were frequently translated and adapted by later medieval writers; however, little research has been carried out on these texts themselves in modern times.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, the vast majority of the *passiones* in the *Gesta* still lack a secure date, context for composition and a modern critical edition. Over the years scholarship on the *Gesta* has focused chiefly on ascertaining whether the *passiones* preserve any remnants of earlier ‘authentic’ historical records, or whether they should be regarded solely as late antique fictions. The question of dating has dominated both of these debates. In recent years there has been a shift in focus and scholars have approached these texts in order to extract information about specific political and social tensions in fifth- and sixth-century Rome.<sup>16</sup> To this day, however, little work has been done on the literary aspects of these

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<sup>11</sup> C. Pilsworth, ‘Dating the *Gesta martyrum*: a Manuscript-Based Approach’, *Early Medieval Europe* 9 (2000): 309–24, at pp. 310 and 313.

<sup>12</sup> K. Cooper, ‘The Martyr, the *Matrona* and the Bishop: the Matron Lucina and the Politics of Martyr Cult in Fifth- and Sixth-Century Rome’, *Early Medieval Europe* 8 (1999): 297–317, at p. 305 where she refers to the entry for Fabian I in the *Liber pontificalis*. L. Duchesne (ed.), *Le Liber pontificalis: Texte, introduction et commentaire*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1886–92; repr. with vol. III, containing bibliography and indexes by C. Vogel, Paris, 1955–7), I, 148–9.

<sup>13</sup> Cooper, ‘The Martyr, the *Matrona*’, p. 306.

<sup>14</sup> Pilsworth, ‘Dating the *Gesta martyrum*’, p. 317.

<sup>15</sup> Only one full-scale study of the *Gesta martyrum* exists: A. Dufourcq, *Etude sur les gesta martyrum romains*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1900–10; repr. with a posthumous vol. V, Paris, 1988). In recent years, an online database of the narrative, prosopographical and topographical themes and aspects of the *Gesta martyrum* has been compiled by The Roman Martyr Project headed by Dr Kate Cooper at the University of Manchester: <http://www.arts.manchester.ac.uk/cla/projects/romanmartyrsproject/>.

<sup>16</sup> See for example, P.A.B. Llewellyn, ‘The Roman Church During the Laurentian Schism: Priests and Senators’, *Church History* 45 (1976): 417–27. Cooper, ‘The Martyr, the *Matrona*’, pp. 297–317. See also K. Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA, 1996), pp. 116–143 (on the *Gesta* as a response to earlier Classical and Christian literature). K. Cooper,

late antique texts. Accordingly in Chapter One, I offer a study of the thematic aspects of the *PSA*; I attempt to demonstrate that this work functions as a dramatic, moral and learned tract that can illuminate many aspects of the cultural and religious milieu in which it was produced.

Only three major studies of the *PSA* currently exist. Two of these works, namely those of Pio Franchi de' Cavalieri and Florian Jubaru, were written around the turn of the twentieth century when the focus amongst scholars of the *Gesta martyrum* centred on the historical value of these documents.<sup>17</sup> Both authors sought to establish whether or not the *PSA* preserved any authentic details about Agnes, as well as to ascertain the specific sources used by the author of the *PSA* and the date of this text. Through analysing the six early accounts of Agnes' martyrdom, each study concluded that the *PSA* represented one author's attempt to amalgamate a number of earlier, disparate and unreliable traditions surrounding Agnes into one coherent narrative.<sup>18</sup> Franchi de' Cavalieri and Jubaru also agreed on the date of the *PSA*, which they assigned to the early to mid-fifth century. The principal piece of evidence on which both men based their arguments was the discovery of a sermon (*BHL* 158/158a) composed by Maximus of Turin (c. 380– c. 465), which incorporated a number of quotations from the *PSA*.<sup>19</sup>

A third, more recent study of the *PSA* by Cecile Lanéry, however, has reopened the debate on the date of this text. Lanéry's work offers a new approach through a comprehensive study of the surviving manuscript evidence for the *PSA*; she also employs recent scholarship on the political history of early medieval Rome in order to establish a possible context for this text's composition.<sup>20</sup> One of Lanéry's most

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'Ventriloquism and the Miraculous: Conversion, Preaching and the Martyr Exemplum in Late Antiquity', *Studies in Church History* 41 (2005): 22–45 (on the themes of preaching and the performance of miracles in the *Passio Sancti Sebastiani*).

<sup>17</sup> Franchi de' Cavalieri, 'S. Agnese nella tradizione', pp. 322–54. F. Jubaru *Sainte Agnès: Vierge et martyre de la Voie Nomentane d'après de nouvelles recherches* (Paris, 1907), pp. 121–267.

<sup>18</sup> Franchi de' Cavalieri, 'S. Agnese nella tradizione', pp. 320–32. Jubaru, *Sainte Agnès*, p. 132. References to the five texts thought to predate the *PSA* can be found in fn. 6.

<sup>19</sup> Franchi de' Cavalieri, 'S. Agnese nella tradizione', pp. 341–3. (See also pp. 342–3, where he expressed some doubts over the authenticity of *BHL* 158 and pp. 343–52, where he argued that the *PSA* was actually composed in two parts: the main narrative of Agnes' martyrdom in the fifth century (*PSA* 1–167) and the last three episodes – the martyrdom of Emerentiana (167–84), Agnes' post mortem appearance (184–93) and the healing of Constantia (193–15) – between the late fifth and seventh centuries). Jubaru, *Sainte Agnès*, pp. 121–36 (who dated the entirety of the *PSA* to the early fifth century).

<sup>20</sup> C. Lanéry, 'Ambroise hagiographe: Les dossiers hagiographique ambrosiens et pseudo-ambrosiens' (unpubl. PhD dissertation, Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Paris, 2006), in particular pp. 315–44. Two surveys also exist on the early literary material for the veneration of St Agnes and include brief discussions of the *PSA*: A.J. Denomy, *The Old French Lives of Saint Agnes and Other Vernacular Versions of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA, 1938), pp. 3–37. M.C. Solana Villamor, 'El culto a Santa Ines y su difusion en occidente', *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 94 (1980): 411–30. See also D. Bartolini, *Gli*

important arguments is her rejection of *BHL* 158/158a as an authentic composition by Maximus of Turin; indeed, she assigns this text to the mid-seventh century.<sup>21</sup> Consequently, the dating of the *PSA* to the early fifth century is brought into question and Lanéry acknowledges that only a broad date range for the composition of the *PSA* can be securely determined: from the fifth century to the late seventh century.<sup>22</sup> Based on her study of the text, however, as well as archaeological evidence from Agnes' main shrine in Rome, Lanéry hypothesises that the *PSA* may possibly date to *c.* 500.<sup>23</sup> My own analysis of the *PSA* takes Lanéry's discussion as a starting point. In this thesis I will attempt to elucidate how the *PSA*'s presentation of Agnes conveys a particular meaning and how the figure of the virgin martyr was presented as a didactic role model for a specific audience. Untangling the author's message will be accomplished by drawing on one current trend in hagiographical studies, which seeks to understand precisely how these works incorporate and exploit Biblical language and imagery as part of their textual strategies.

There is a vast bibliography not only on the subject of hagiography, but also on the two major subclasses that fall under this heading: the deeds of the martyrs (*passiones*) and saints' lives (*uitae*). In addition, scholars have employed many different approaches in their discussions of both categories of hagiographical works: some have explored the social or cultural contexts of one specific account or group of texts, while others have worked within more theological parameters.<sup>24</sup> One specific branch of this particular field of hagiographical studies has focused on the use of *imitatio Christi* in such works.<sup>25</sup> The basic principle underlying this concept stems from several passages of the NT, which teach that the true Christian must model his or her life on that of Christ.<sup>26</sup> The early Christians clearly understood this command not only

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*atti del martirio della nobilissima vergine Romana S. Agnese* (Rome, 1858), which is a catalogue of literary material relating to Agnes' cult.

<sup>21</sup> Lanéry, 'Ambroise hagiographe', pp. 325 and 406–9. Lanéry notes that *BHL* 158a appears to represent the earliest form of this sermon, since the version known as *BHL* 158 first appears in the manuscript record around the turn of the twelfth century (p. 406).

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 326. It is probable that the *PSA* post-dates Prudentius (d. *c.* 405); however, the first securely dated text to use the *PSA* as a source is Aldhelm's *De uirginitate*, which was composed *c.* 680. See further, pp. 16–28.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 321–5.

<sup>24</sup> For an overview of the scholarship on Late Antique female saints' lives see K. Cooper, 'The Virgin as Social Icon: Perspectives from Late Antiquity', in M. van Dijk and R. Nip (eds.), *Saints, Scholars and Politicians: Gender as a Tool in Medieval Studies*, *Medieval Church Studies* 15 (Turnhout, 2005), pp. 9–24.

<sup>25</sup> Two influential studies amongst many on the use of *imitatio Christi* in hagiography are T. Heffernan, *Sacred Biography: Saints and Their Biographers in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1988) and A. Goddard Elliott, *Roads to Paradise: Reading the Lives of the Early Saints* (Hanover, NH, 1987).

<sup>26</sup> See for example, *Mt* 9.9–13, *Lc* 5.27–32, *I Cor* 11.1, *Gal* 2.19–21 and 6.14, *Eph* 5.1–2, and *I Pt* 2.21.

to involve following Jesus' way of life as laid down in the Gospels, but also the manner of his death.<sup>27</sup>

This belief is clearly outlined in the original hagiographical text: the account of Stephen's martyrdom in *Act* 7.1–59, where the saint's final words deliberately allude to those of Christ (*Act* 7.58–9).<sup>28</sup> Through martyrdom in imitation of the Lord's death, the individual Christian was thought to achieve spiritual unification with Jesus. The figure of *imitatio Christi* endorses this view by drawing parallels between a saint's life and that of the Lord, with the result that the narrative breaks down the chronological boundaries between the two figures. Every hagiographical work that followed *Act* has employed Biblical language and imagery in order to promote the concept of *imitatio Christi* and, as Lynda Coons has demonstrated, the lives of the early female saints were also structured around this idea.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, the use of such Biblical allusions in a hagiographical work opens up these texts to a wide range of interpretations.

The fundamental role of the Bible as the central text of the Christian faith allows us to suppose that both the author and the audience of a hagiographical work would possess knowledge of this text. Indeed in some cases, where an educated author wrote for a learned audience (and I will argue that the *PSA* is one such example), both parties would share not only familiarity with the Bible, but also an acquaintance with exegetical interpretations of the Bible according to the four senses of Scripture. The specific cultural milieu and period in which a text was written would of course determine which commentaries were likely to be known to the author and his or her primary audience. Consequently, by establishing a date and origin for a saint's life or passion and recognising the Biblical references incorporated into this work, it is possible to partially reconstruct how the initial audience might have engaged with a text and perceived it to function in a typological manner. Such hagiographical tracts were designed not only to offer the reader a dramatic moral narrative, but also a means by which he or she could contemplate the Christian faith.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>27</sup> See in particular *Gal* 2.19–21 and *I Pt* 2.21.

<sup>28</sup> Compare *Act* 7.58–9 with *Lc* 23.34 and 46. Heffernan, *Sacred Biography*, pp. 80–1. See also L. Coons, *Sacred Fictions: Holy Women and Hagiography in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia, PA, 1997), pp. 13–15.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1–152. The methodology employed in this thesis is greatly indebted to Coon's study, which examines how the lives of several late antique and early medieval female saints were constructed to reflect Biblical events.

<sup>30</sup> Many of the concepts expressed in this paragraph are based on proposed approaches for interpreting intertextuality in Classical Latin Poetry found in the works of G. Biagio Conte, *The Rhetoric of Imitation: Genre and Poetic Memory in Virgil and Other Latin Poets*, trans. C. Segal (Ithaca, NY, 1986) and S. Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry* (Cambridge, 1998).

At this point it may be useful to give a brief and general outline of the four senses of Scripture.<sup>31</sup> The first category is that of *historia* (history), which refers to the literal meaning of the text. *Allegoria* (allegory) comprises the second level of Scripture and expounds the mystical sense of the Bible; its purpose was succinctly summarised by Ambrose of Milan:

*allegoria est, cum aliud geritur, aliud figuratur (De Abraham I.iv.28)*<sup>32</sup>

In addition, patristic and medieval exegetes taught that the Bible had been created so that every element in it prefigured Christ and the Church.<sup>33</sup> The third sense of Scripture, *tropologia* (tropology), is closely related to allegory; nevertheless, it does not focus on how one part of the Bible foreshadows another, but rather expounds the moral reading of the text.<sup>34</sup> At its most basic level, therefore, a tropological explanation of the Scriptures provides the individual Christian soul with guidance on the pursuit and maintenance of true faith.<sup>35</sup> The fourth and final sense is that of *anagogia* (anagogy), which reveals how Biblical events relate to those that are to come at the end of time.<sup>36</sup>

An example of how these various levels of reading function in a hagiographical work can be illustrated by a brief consideration of the brothel scene from the *PSA*, where Agnes receives a white garment from heaven (98–103). On a literal level, the narrative relates the occurrence of a divine miracle; however, this passage can also be read according to the mystical senses of the Scriptures. At lines 102–3, the text makes a specific comment on the extraordinary whiteness of the garment Agnes receives, which resonates with the description of Christ's robes at the Transfiguration (*Mc* 9.2) and thus allegorically casts Agnes as a figure of the Lord.<sup>37</sup> In addition, the decision to refer to Agnes' white garment as a *stola* (99) recalls *Apc* and the white *stolae* bestowed on those saints who had died for Christ (6.11). This image can be interpreted tropologically for it directs a reader to recall various passages of *Apc*, which can be understood as an outline the trials that a soul must undergo to achieve a place in heaven (6.9–11 and

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<sup>31</sup> The following definitions are all based upon H. De Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1959–62; trans. M. Sebanc and E.M. Macierowski and repr. as 2 vols. Edinburgh, 1998–2000). It is difficult to pinpoint a precise meaning for these four terms based on patristic and medieval conceptions, since definitions tended to subtly vary from author to author. For a more definitive discussion of the senses of Scripture, therefore, the reader is referred to De Lubac's magisterial work.

<sup>32</sup> 'It is allegory when one thing is done and another is figured.' C. Schenkl (ed.), *Sancti Ambrosii Opera pars I*, CSEL 32.1 (Vienna, 1896), pp. 499–638, at p. 523. This phrase is quoted in De Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, II, 90.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 93.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 127–77, in particular p. 129.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 179–226, in particular pp. 179–81.

<sup>37</sup> See the *apparatus fontium* note 29 in Appendix One, p. 241.

7.13–17). It can also be read anagogically as an image of the saints in triumph on Judgement Day.

The second part of the thesis employs a similar approach to that outlined above. In Chapters Two to Four, I evaluate the five Anglo-Saxon accounts of Agnes' martyrdom. My analysis will demonstrate that each author responded to, and transmitted, a different set of Biblical echoes from the *PSA*. Every one of the five Insular adaptations depicts Agnes in a unique and innovative light and the subtle differences between these accounts reveal how one tale could be retold many times to serve numerous different ends. It is my hope that this approach will reveal new ways of analysing Anglo-Saxon hagiography and, in particular, draw attention to the work that remains to be done in terms of the Insular accounts of the Roman virgin martyrs.

The field of Anglo-Saxon hagiographical studies has flourished over the last few decades with the publication of new editions of saints' lives and studies on numerous cults.<sup>38</sup> Most of this work, however, has focused on the lives of male saints, since these texts far outnumber those that honour members of the opposite sex.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, within the corpus of work that has been produced on the Insular accounts of female saints, the Roman virgin martyrs have often been overlooked. A number of modern editions have appeared of both Anglo-Latin accounts of native saints and vernacular translations of legends about foreign holy women; nevertheless, only one of these texts relates to a virgin martyr (Margaret of Antioch).<sup>40</sup> It should be noted, however, that few such vernacular accounts survive and no editions have yet been produced of the Insular legendaries which contain the majority of the Latin lives of foreign virgin martyrs known to have circulated in Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>41</sup> Several full-length studies on the

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<sup>38</sup> One general work on Anglo-Saxon hagiography that should be mentioned here is F.M. Biggs, T.D. Hill, P.E. Szarmach and E.G. Whatley (eds.), *Sources of Anglo-Saxon Literary Culture Volume One: Abbo of Fleury, Abbo of Saint-Germain-des-Prés and Acta Sanctorum* (Kalamazoo, MI, 2001).

<sup>39</sup> A few examples of the editions and studies of Anglo-Saxon male saints' lives that have appeared in recent years include: M. Lapidge (ed.), *The Cult of St Swithun*, Winchester Studies 4 (Oxford, 2003); M. Lapidge and M. Winterbottom (eds.), *The Life of St Æthelwold*, OMT (Oxford, 1991); G. Corona (ed.), *Ælfric's Life of Saint Basil the Great: Background and Context*, Anglo-Saxon Texts 5 (Cambridge, 2006) and S.E. Wilson, *The Life and After-Life of St John of Beverley: The Evolution of the Cult of an Anglo-Saxon Saint* (Aldershot, 2006).

<sup>40</sup> Two important editions of Anglo-Latin female *uitae* are those of D. Rollason (ed.), *The Mildrith Legend: A Study in Early Medieval Hagiography in England* (Leicester, 1982) and R. Love (ed.), *Goscelin of Saint-Bertin: The Hagiography of the Female Saints of Ely*, OMT (Oxford, 2004). Editions of vernacular lives include: M. Clayton and H. Magennis (eds.), *The Old English Lives of St Margaret*, CSASE 9 (Cambridge, 1994); M. Clayton (ed.), *The Apocryphal Gospels of Mary in Anglo-Saxon England*, CSASE 26 (Cambridge, 1998) and H. Magennis (ed.), *The Old English Life of Mary of Egypt* (Exeter, 2002).

<sup>41</sup> For details of these manuscripts see pp. 205–10. One notable exception to this statement is Michael Lapidge's edition of the *Passio Sanctae Iulianae* from Paris, BnF, lat. 10861 (Gneuss 898, s.ix<sup>1/4</sup> or ix<sup>1</sup>, S. England (Canterbury, Christ Church?), which served as the source text for Cynewulf's Old English poem *Iuliana*. See M. Lapidge, 'Cynewulf and the *Passio S. Iulianae*', in M.C. Amodio and K. O'Brien

Insular cults of female saints, including those the Virgin Mary and St Æthelthryth, have also been published and hopefully more will follow.<sup>42</sup> Scholars have likewise focused on works that contain various accounts of the virgin martyrs, such as Aldhelm's *De uirginitate* and Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*, although much more remains to be said.<sup>43</sup> It is my hope that the analysis of Agnes' legend and cult presented in this thesis will reveal how the study of the virgin martyr legends can greatly enrich our understanding of the Anglo-Saxons' approach to hagiography and the cult of saints in general. Certainly, the huge amount of work that has been carried out on the adaptations of these passions from high and late medieval England has demonstrated the benefit of exploring these texts.<sup>44</sup>

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O'Keeffe (eds.), *Unlocking the Wordhoard: Anglo-Saxon Studies in Memory of Edward B. Irving Jr.* (Toronto, 2003), pp. 147–71. A huge bibliography of work has, of course, been produced on Cynewulf's two poems in honour of female saints: *Juliana* and *Elene*, but since these poems tend to be studied in the context of Old English poetry they are omitted from the current discussion.

<sup>42</sup> See for example, M. Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England*, CSASE 2 (Cambridge, 1990); A. Harbus, *Helena of Britain in Medieval Legend* (Woodbridge, 2002) and V. Blanton, *Signs of Devotion: The Cult of St Æthelthryth in Medieval England, 695–1615* (Philadelphia, PA, 2007).

<sup>43</sup> Surprisingly few people, however, have focused on the catalogues of saints in Aldhelm's *De uirginitate*. For example, themes which have been addressed include: Aldhelm's use of patristic sources (S. O'Sullivan, 'Aldhelm's *De uirginitate* – Patristic Pastiche or Innovative Exposition?', *Peritia* 12 (1998): 271–95) and Aldhelm's conception of virginity (G.T. Dempsey 'Aldhelm of Malmesbury's Social Theology: The Barbaric Heroic Ideal Christianised', *Peritia* 15 (2001): 58–80). One study which has looked at the catalogues is E. Pettit, 'Aldhelm's *Opus Geminatum De uirginitate* in its Early Anglo-Saxon Context' (unpub. PhD dissertation, University of York, 2004). A number of studies have also been published on the female saints honoured in Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*. See for example, G. Roy, 'A Virgin Acts Manfully: Ælfric's *Life of St Eugenia* and the Latin Versions', *Leeds Studies in English* n.s. 23 (1992): 1–27. R. Upchurch, 'The Legend of Chrysanthus and Daria in Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*', *Studies in Philology* 101 (2004): 250–69. Two previous studies that have looked at Ælfric's 'Life of Agnes' are: i) D. Anderson-Bankert, 'Reconciling Family and Faith: Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* and Domestic Dramas of Conversion', in T. Hall (ed.), *Via Crucis: Essays on Early Medieval Sources and Ideas in Memory of J.E. Cross* (Morgantown, WV, 2002), pp. 138–57, and ii) P. Thompson, 'Contamination and Consent: The Illustration of an Augustinian Principle in Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* Agnes and Lucy', in J. Goering (ed.), *Limina, Thresholds and Borders* (Ottawa, ON, 2005), pp. 107–16. A number of studies also exist on the depiction of Agnes in other works not considered in this thesis: V. Burrus, 'Reading Agnes: The Rhetoric of Gender in Ambrose and Prudentius', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3 (1995): 25–46. L. Gosserez, 'Imago Agnetis', *Revue des études latine* 80 (2002): 189–205 (Prudentius). M. Malamud, *A Poetics of Transformation: Prudentius and Classical Mythology* (Ithaca, NY, 1989) – chapter 6 'St Agnes and the Chaste Tree', pp. 149–80. R. Mills, 'Can the Virgin Martyr Speak?', in A. Bernau, R. Evans and S. Salih (eds.), *Medieval Virginites* (Cardiff, 2003), pp. 187–213 (variety of late medieval literary and artistic sources). A.B. Thompson, 'The Legend of St Agnes: Improvisation and the Practice of Hagiography', *Exemplaria* 13 (2001): 355–97 (Jean de Mailly's *Abbreuiatio in gestis et miraculis sanctorum*, Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda aurea*, the Old French *Vie de sainte Agnes* and the *South English Legendary*). For recent articles on Agnes' cult in general see C. Diskant Muir, 'St Agnes of Rome as a Bride of Christ: A Northern European Phenomenon, c. 1450–1520', *Simiolus* 31 (2005): 134–155. This article explores the emergence of depictions of St Agnes as the bride of Christ in artwork from the Netherlands and northwest Germany in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

<sup>44</sup> To mention just three important studies see: S. Salih, *Versions of Virginity in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge, 2001). K. Winstead, *Virgin Martyrs: Legends of Sainthood in Late Medieval England* (Ithaca, NY, 1997). J. Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture c.1150–1300: Virginity and its Authorizations* (Oxford, 2001), in particular chapter 3 'Virgin Passions: Romance, Raptus, Ritual', pp. 91–122.

### *An Outline of the Thesis*

Chapter One opens with an overview of the early literature pertaining to Agnes' cult and the ongoing scholarly debate over precisely when the *PSA* was composed and why. After establishing the most likely date and circumstances for the composition of this work, the chapter then moves onto an analysis of the *PSA* which focuses on the scriptural references contained in it. My approach to this text follows a similar path to Lynda Coons' work; however, I wish to take her methodology one step further.<sup>45</sup> I am interested not only in analysing the more evident parallels between certain narrative events or speeches in a saint's life and the Bible, but also the smaller brief flashes of Biblical phrases woven into a text's prose. Appendix One presents a new working edition of the *PSA*, accompanied by a preliminary *apparatus fontium* that illustrates how the author incorporated a vast array of scriptural references into this work. Some of these echoes are complete phrases, while others are merely a couple of words. Many of these Biblical borrowings have never been noted before. It is possible, of course, that a number of these resonances were included through the author subconsciously reproducing familiar vocabulary from the Bible. However, the precise positioning of the majority of these allusions at critical points in the text suggests that they were deliberately included; indeed they appear to act as signals to direct a reader towards a specific theological understanding of this work.

In the main section of Chapter One, I examine several distinct exegetical textual strategies through which anyone who was familiar with the Scriptures and patristic Biblical commentaries could engage with the *PSA*. It is my belief that this work was never intended to be merely a historical account of a maiden's execution, but was rather a complex religious tract designed to allow a knowledgeable reader to use the figure of a virgin martyr as a contemplative aid. Through analysing the Biblical references found in the *PSA*, while bearing in mind the cultural context in which it was produced, I hope to demonstrate that it is possible to gain at least a partial understanding of the author of the *PSA*'s distinctive and unique portrayal of Agnes' legend. I am aware that such an approach to hagiography may raise many an eyebrow and invite the question as to whether it is actually possible to establish the intention of any particular author, or indeed what his or her role might be in the creation of a narrative. The idea that a text contains a single authorial message has been questioned by some modern theorists.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, the strategic positioning of the Biblical resonances present in the *PSA*

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<sup>45</sup> Coons, *Sacred Fictions*, pp. 1–152.

<sup>46</sup> See for example, R. Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in his *Image, Music, Text: Essays Selected and Translated by S. Heath* (London, 1977), pp. 142–48, at p. 146.

makes it hard to accept that they merely passive reminiscences. I believe, therefore, that it remains a viable possibility to discuss authorial agency in this text; however, I would certainly never claim to have identified the definitive message that the author sought to convey through his or her account. Instead, I hope to show how one writer could incorporate numerous scriptural signposts into a text in order to direct readers towards a general understanding of that work. Each person who interacted with this narrative would of course take away a slightly different interpretation depending on which signals they engaged with.<sup>47</sup>

The establishment of a possible purpose for the *PSA* functions as the foundation on which the second part of this thesis (i.e. Chapters Two to Four) is constructed: the reception of the *PSA* into Anglo-Saxon England. All five surviving Insular retellings of Agnes' martyrdom employ the *PSA* as their principal source, yet not one of these texts is a straightforward reproduction or translation of the late antique passion. In order to demonstrate the subtle but important transformations wrought to the story of Agnes' martyrdom by each Anglo-Saxon author, one of the functions of Chapter One is to illustrate the broad range of ideas available in the source text from which these writers could pick and choose. Chapters Two to Four then examine how the Insular authors reacted to the *PSA* and how changes in audience and culture led these writers to manipulate a well-known legend in order to create a vehicle through which they could explore their own concepts of martyrdom and virginity. The three more extensive Insular adaptations of the *PSA*, namely those found in the works of Aldhelm and Ælfric, are discussed in Chapters Two and Three, while the two shorter accounts of Bede and *The Old English Martyrology* are discussed in Chapter Four.

Chapter Two explores the prose and verse accounts of Agnes' martyrdom contained in Aldhelm's *opus geminatum De uirginitate*. Composed c. 680, Aldhelm's work presents an opportunity to investigate a depiction of the saint aimed at promoting chastity amongst early Insular monastic communities. In addition, Aldhelm's treatise offers a chance not only to study the reception of the *PSA* into another culture, but also to investigate how he adapted this tale to the very particular circumstances of his target audience. For unlike the *PSA*, which may well have been composed primarily for an

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<sup>47</sup> Here I follow Umberto Eco (*The Limits of Interpretation* (Bloomington, IN, 1990), in particular pp. 1–6, 20–21 and 41–2), who argues that the context of a work and the textual strategies used within it narrow the range of interpretations open to a reader, even when a text is capable of supporting multiple readings.

ascetic female community in Rome, *De uirginitate* was written for the edification of the male and female religious of England's double monastic houses.<sup>48</sup>

The main component of this chapter comprises a parallel text comparison of Aldhelm's two accounts of Agnes' martyrdom. Many scholars have studied Aldhelm's *opus geminatum*, yet the trend has been to focus on either the prose or verse account, even though the author asks his readers to study the two works in conjunction with each other (*Cdu* 2867–70). The reward for following Aldhelm's advice, however, is immediately apparent in the distinctive and divergent patterns revealed by his two accounts of the martyr's death. Despite the fact that Aldhelm employs the basic narrative found in the *PSA* in each account, his two depictions of Agnes are strikingly different. The concluding section of the chapter then explores how the imagery used in these two adaptations of the *PSA* derives from several much larger themes that run throughout *De uirginitate*. Through an analysis of these trends, I offer not only a new insight into Aldhelm's personal conception of the virtue of virginity itself, but also hope to contribute to the debate on how Insular authors adapted Patristic teaching on this subject for their own culture.

Chapter Three moves from Latin to Old English accounts of Agnes' martyrdom and explores the second of the two more extensive Insular versions of her death: Ælfric of Eynsham's *Lives of Saints*. This tenth-century work was written in the vernacular at the request of two laymen and provides an opportunity to investigate how the *PSA* was used to address the concerns of English Christian congregations both within and beyond the monastery walls. In addition, this work also allows us to gain an insight into how an author closely connected with the Benedictine Reform appropriated and employed the figure of the Roman virgin martyr.

Ælfric's 'Life of Agnes' presents a challenge very different to that of the condensed adaptations of the *PSA* found in Aldhelm's *De uirginitate*, because at first glance Ælfric's work appears to be almost a word for word translation of the *PSA* into Old English. A close comparison of these texts, however, reveals a number of subtle and important differences between the two accounts. In the opening section of the chapter, I explore Ælfric's views on faith and salvation, since the three principal themes

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<sup>48</sup> Technically speaking, the opening of Aldhelm's *De laude uirginitatis* (which is the prose section of the treatise *De uirginitate*) states that the work is dedicated to one Abbess Hildelith and a number of named consecrated women. Hildelith was the abbess of the double monastic house at Barking in Essex and the other women mentioned by Aldhelm were probably nuns under her charge, or, as several recent scholars have argued, the abbesses of double houses elsewhere. (See for example, Pettit, 'Aldhelm's *Opus Geminatum*', pp. 72–85). It seems likely, however, that Aldhelm composed both the prose and verse components of *De uirginitate* in order to profit a wider audience, rather than just the nuns at Barking.

of the *PSA* – martyrdom, idolatry and chastity – play a fundamental role in his teaching. Indeed, it would appear that Ælfric also perceived the similarity between the *PSA* and his own homilies, since an analysis of the alterations that he made to the depiction of Agnes' opponents reveals that they act to bring this work into closer alignment with his views. The second part of the chapter examines Ælfric's allegorical interpretation of Agnes and the manner in which he deliberately reduced the number of Biblical images that his audience could associate with the martyr. This section also looks at a number of contemporary literary and artistic works that may have influenced Ælfric's editorial decisions. Recent work by Mechthild Gretsch has revealed how such items, in particular the *Benedictional of St Æthelwold*, influenced not only Ælfric's selection criteria for *Lives of Saints*, but also the way in which he portrayed individual saints.<sup>49</sup> Gretsch's work looks at a select group of saints from this text and does not discuss any of the virgin martyrs; however, I hope to be able to show that her methodology can be profitably extended to a wider range of holy figures.

Chapter Four concludes the discussion of the Anglo-Saxon adaptations of the *PSA* with a consideration of the two shorter accounts of Agnes' martyrdom found in Bede's eighth-century hymn *Illuxit alma saeculis* and the (?) ninth-century *Old English Martyrology*. As in previous chapters, these discussions explore how particular aspects of the *PSA* could be adapted and modified according to the needs of the intended primary audience. However, alongside my central interest in how Insular authors engaged with the legend of this virgin martyr, I am also intrigued by the ancillary question of Agnes' place and status in the English Church. The majority of this chapter, therefore, comprises a survey of Anglo-Saxon liturgical material that references either Agnes' name or her feast-day.

Four broad questions are addressed during the exploration of the Insular liturgical texts in Chapter Four. First, whether it is possible to establish a likely timeframe for the importation of Agnes' cult into the country and to ascertain how quickly such knowledge was diffused throughout the island. The second line of my inquiry investigates the dissemination of Agnes' cult amongst both lay folk and ecclesiastics. The third avenue explores Agnes' status amongst the myriad saints honoured by the English Church. In the fourth aspect of the discussion I focus on the reception of the *PSA* in liturgical works composed by Insular authors. Chapter Four concludes with a consideration of whether an author's familiarity with the Mass prayers

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<sup>49</sup> M. Gretsch, *Ælfric and the Cult of Saints in Late Anglo-Saxon England*, CSASE 34 (Cambridge, 2006).

and Biblical readings known to have been used on Agnes' feast-day could have influenced any of the Anglo-Saxon adaptations of the *PSA* studied in this thesis.

Finally, Appendix One presents a new working edition of the three surviving and previously unedited Anglo-Saxon manuscripts of the *PSA*, accompanied by a preliminary *apparatus fontium* and commentary. To my knowledge none of the earlier editions of the *PSA* have drawn on the manuscript tradition known in Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>50</sup> Consequently, a new edition was required in order to consult a version of the text most like to that which would have been available to the Insular authors whose works are studied in this thesis. Furthermore, I hope that by relying on this new edition, I will have avoided (as far as possible) a situation whereby my detailed textual arguments might have focused on an aspect of the *PSA* unknown in Anglo-Saxon England.

### ***The Passio Sanctae Agnetis: a précis***

Since this thesis comprises an analysis of several different adaptations of one principal story, a brief synopsis of the *PSA* is offered below:

In the opening scene of the *PSA*, the son of the Prefect of Rome catches sight of a beautiful young Roman virgin of noble birth as she returns home from school one day. Enraptured by her beauty, the youth petitions the maiden for her hand in marriage and promises all the wealth of the world should she accept him. As a consecrated virgin, however, Agnes has already pledged herself to Christ and consequently spurns her mortal suitor. Devastated by this rejection, the young man falls into despair and becomes desperately ill. When the cause of his son's affliction becomes known, the Prefect himself appeals to the virgin, but to no avail. Meanwhile, the Prefect's servants learn of Agnes' faith and the Prefect seizes the opportunity to arrest the maiden, but not even the terrors of the courtroom can persuade her to accept his son. In retaliation for this affront, the Prefect offers Agnes two choices: she must either sacrifice to the goddess Vesta or be sent to a public brothel. Agnes vehemently scorns his threats and is duly condemned to become a prostitute; nevertheless, due to her steadfast faith no harm befalls her.

At first when the court officials attempt to strip the maiden in order to lead her naked through the streets of Rome, Agnes' hair miraculously grows to preserve her modesty. Later on, as she arrives at the brothel, an angel of the Lord surrounds Agnes

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<sup>50</sup> See further pp. 210–11.

with a wall of light and the virgin is then miraculously clothed in a heavenly white garment. Due to these miracles, the brothel becomes a place of prayer and all who enter later emerge honouring the Lord. At length, the suitor himself arrives determined to revenge himself on Agnes; however, on entering the building he is slain by the virgin's guardian angel. Shortly afterwards, the Prefect hears of his son's death and hastens to the brothel. There he demands that Agnes prove her innocence by praying to the angel to resurrect the youth. This miracle is duly performed and the suitor rushes from the building praising God. The Roman mob, however, attributes Agnes' actions to witchcraft rather than to piety and demands her execution. A pyre is therefore raised nearby, but when Agnes is cast into the fire, the flames divide and reach out to destroy the pagan crowd leaving the maiden unharmed in the centre. As a result, Agnes finally earns her martyrdom by an executioner's sword.

Afterwards, the virgin's parents bury her body on their estates on the Via Nomentana and Agnes' tomb soon becomes a popular shrine where many miracles occur. Indeed a short time after the martyr's death, a number of Christians gather at the tomb where they are ambushed by a band of pagans. All the Christians flee in terror apart from Agnes' foster-sister, Emerentiana, who boldly denounces the ambushers for their actions. Angered by her defiance, the pagans stone the young virgin, but at the moment of her death a great earthquake and storm occurs and a large part of the heathen mob are slain. Agnes' parents bury Emerentiana close to their daughter's tomb and one night while they are holding a vigil there they receive a vision of Agnes, who appears before them clothed in gold amid a band of virgins and comforts them in their grief. An account of this event soon spreads and eventually the emperor Constantine's daughter, Constantia, hears of the tale. Desperate to find a cure for the disease that afflicts her, the pagan princess decides to visit the martyr's tomb. While she prays at the shrine, sleep takes her and in a dream she receives a vision of the saint, who counsels her to put her trust in Christ. On waking Constantia discovers that she has been healed and returns home in joy. Later on she requests that her father raise a church to Agnes at the site of her tomb, while she herself dedicates her virginity to Christ in thanks and thus causes many other Roman noblewomen to emulate her actions.

## CHAPTER ONE

### A Literary Analysis of the *Passio Sanctae Agnetis*

The story of Agnes' dual triumph over the temptations of the flesh and paganism clearly presents a dramatic, entertaining and moral tale; however, in this chapter I will argue that there is far more to the *Passio Sanctae Agnetis* than at first meets the eye. Through an exploration of the numerous Biblical allusions woven into the prose of the *PSA*, I demonstrate how these echoes allow the text to be read as both the literal tale of a martyr's death, and as a symbolic religious tract open to exegetical interpretation. In the first section of the chapter, I outline the current status of the debate on the authorship and date of the *PSA*. The later stages of the discussion then examine how the image of the virgin martyr relates to a number of important themes and motifs that run throughout the Bible. I then turn to an analysis of the specific Biblical passages deployed in the *PSA*. Due to the time and space constraints of this thesis, it is not possible to discuss every Scriptural reference present in the *PSA*; indeed, I am sure that many allusions still await identification. My intention is to provide a preliminary survey of those occurrences discovered so far and to offer some thoughts on why they might have been included. In addition, I hope to reveal how the detailed study of Biblical echoes could be applied to many other such tales in order to investigate the different ways in which the figure of a virgin martyr could be used to address an audience.

#### 1.1 *Authorship and the date of the Passio Sanctae Agnetis*

The earliest surviving evidence for the veneration of St Agnes dates back to the late third to early fourth centuries A.D. when the catacombs in Rome, which house the martyr's original tomb, were constructed.<sup>1</sup> Roughly half a century later the *Liber pontificalis* records that Pope Liberius (353–66) renovated the virgin's subterranean shrine.<sup>2</sup> Part of the altar commissioned by Liberius, which bears the earliest known depiction of Agnes, still survives to verify the *LP*'s claims and these events reinforce the hypothesis that Christian

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<sup>1</sup> M. Webb, *The Churches and Catacombs of Early Christian Rome: A Comprehensive Guide* (Brighton, 2001), p. 246. See also, pp. 251–4.

<sup>2</sup> c.37. L. Duchesne (ed.), *Le Liber pontificalis: Texte, introduction et commentaire*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1886–92; repr. with vol. III, containing bibliography and indexes by C. Vogel, Paris, 1955–7), I, 207–10 at p. 207. Hereafter *LP*. Liberius was exiled during his pontificate by the emperor Constantius II (337–61) and, on his recall to Rome, he is said to have dwelt at Agnes' church on the Via Nomentana before his full reinstatement.

worship had taken place at this site for some time previously.<sup>3</sup> In addition, a number of fourth-century paintings from catacombs across the city attest to the flourishing nature of Agnes' cult during this period.<sup>4</sup>

Literary references to the virgin martyr and her shrine on the Via Nomentana similarly appear from the fourth century onwards. The earliest occurrence of Agnes' name is found in the *Depositio martyrum* of Furius Dionysius Philocalus (composed 354), where her name appears amongst a list of saints whose feast-days were honoured in fourth-century Rome.<sup>5</sup> Exactly when the first written account of Agnes' martyrdom appeared, however, remains unclear and it is possible that her tale originally circulated in oral form.<sup>6</sup> A number of works by the early Church Fathers mention Agnes, indicating that knowledge of her cult was swiftly diffused far beyond her shrine at Rome. Both Augustine (354–430) and Jerome (c. 340–420) praised Agnes as a model of chastity, yet neither provided any details about her martyrdom beyond stating that she had died at a tender age.<sup>7</sup> The saint's name is also invoked in *De lapsu uirginis consecratae*, which is thought to date to the fourth century and is often erroneously assigned to either Ambrose of Milan (c. 330–97) or Nicetas of Remesiana (d. c. 414).<sup>8</sup> Sulpicius Severus' (c. 360–c. 425) account of St Martin of Tours' vision of Agnes also reinforces the impression that her fame was known throughout the Western Church by an early date.<sup>9</sup>

The fourth century likewise witnessed the appearance of the earliest surviving full-length narratives of Agnes' martyrdom. Ambrose of Milan incorporated an account of the virgin's death into his treatise *De uirginibus*, which was designed to promote female

<sup>3</sup> A.P. Frutaz, *Il complesso monumentale di Sant'Agnese*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Rome, 2001), p. 24.

<sup>4</sup> P. Allard 'Agnès (Sainte)', *DACL*, I, 905–18, at col. 914. Allard comments that 'après les deux saints fondateurs de l'Eglise romaine, elle est le personnage le plus souvent représenté sur ces fragiles monuments.'

<sup>5</sup> *Depositio martyrum*: T.E. Mommsen (ed.), *Chronica Minora saec. iv., v., vi., vii.*, 3 vols., MGH Auct. Antiq. 9, 11 and 13 (Berlin, 1892–8), I, 71–2.

<sup>6</sup> P. Franchi de' Cavalieri, 'S. Agnese nella tradizione e nella leggenda', *Römische Quartalschrift*, Supplementheft 10 (Rome, 1899); repr. in his *Scritti agiografici vol. I*, Studi e Testi 221 (Vatican City, 1962), pp. 293–381, at pp. 302 and 317.

<sup>7</sup> Augustine: *Sermones* cclxxiii.6 and cccliv.5 (PL 38, 1247–52 and PL 39, 1563–68). Jerome, *Epist.* cxxx.5: I. Hilberg (ed.), *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulae*, 3 vols., CSEL 54–6 (Vienna, 1910–18; repr. with indexes and additional notes by M. Kamptner, Vienna, 1996), III, 175–201, at p. 179. Gregory the Great also celebrated the virgin martyr in one of his homilies (no. 11, which is based on *Mt* 13.44–52), which was delivered in Agnes' church on the occasion of her feast-day (21 January). This homily, however, was preached on the feast-days of both SS Prisca (18 January) and Agnes. Consequently, Agnes is not specifically named in this work and Gregory's vague reference to the female saint whose feast is celebrated that day could apply to virtually any such figure. (Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Evangelia*, I.11: PL 76, 1075–1314 at col. 1114–1118).

<sup>8</sup> BSS I, 387. *De lapsu consecratae uirginis*: PL 16, 379–406.

<sup>9</sup> Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogi*, II.13: PL 20, 183–224, at col. 211–12.

asceticism.<sup>10</sup> Several years later Ambrose then composed a metrical version of Agnes' martyrdom: the hymn *Agnes beatae uirginis*.<sup>11</sup> At roughly the same time in Rome, Pope Damasus (366–84) created a series of epitaphs for the martyrs honoured in his city. These verses were engraved onto marble slabs and set up outside the relevant churches to act as information points for pilgrims.<sup>12</sup> Fifty-nine of these poems have been preserved, including the one dedicated to Agnes, which provides a brief description of her execution.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, the original fourth-century marble plaque is still preserved to this day in the stairwell to Agnes' church on the Via Nomentana. Around the turn of the fifth century, a fourth account of Agnes' martyrdom was composed by the Spanish poet Prudentius (c. 348–c. 405), as part of his *Peristephanon*, a collection of fourteen hymns in honour of a number of early Christian martyrs.<sup>14</sup>

Surprisingly, despite the fact that the earliest accounts of Agnes' death were written by three eminent late antique Christian authors, none of them went on to become the authoritative version of her legend. This honour went to the fifth and most comprehensive of the late antique Latin accounts of the virgin's martyrdom, namely the *Passio Sanctae Agnetis* (BHL 156).<sup>15</sup> Widely known across Medieval Europe, the *PSA* was employed as the main source for numerous later accounts of Agnes' martyrdom, including all of the Anglo-Saxon adaptations considered in this thesis.

One possible reason for the overwhelming success of this work may derive from its attribution to Ambrose of Milan, which is announced in the opening line of the passion:

*Seruus Christi Ambrosius uirginibus sacris* (PSA 1)<sup>16</sup>

<sup>10</sup> B. Ramsey, *Ambrose, The Early Church Fathers* (London, 1997), p. 71. Ambrose, *De uirginibus* I.ii.7–9: E. Cazzaniga (ed.), *S. Ambrosii Mediolanensis Episcopi, De uirginibus libri tres*, Corpus Scriptorum Latinorum Paravianum (Turin, 1956), pp. 4–6.

<sup>11</sup> Ambrose, *Agnes beatae uirginis*: J. Fontaine (ed.), *Ambroise de Milan: Hymnes* (Paris, 1992), pp. 376–403. Ambrose also recorded one further brief reference to Agnes: *De officiis ministrorum* I.xli.204: I.J. Davidson (ed.), *Ambrose De Officiis*, 2 vols., Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford, 2001), I, 236.

<sup>12</sup> Damasus, *Carmina*: A. Ferrua (ed.), *Epigrammata Damasiana*, Sussidi allo studio delle antichità cristiane 2 (Rome, 1942), pp. 175–9.

<sup>13</sup> C. White, *Early Christian Latin Poets*, The Early Church Fathers (London, 2000), p. 43.

<sup>14</sup> Prudentius, *Peristephanon*: M.P. Cunningham (ed.), *Aurelii Prudentii Clementis Carmina*, CCSL 126 (Turnhout, 1966), pp. 251–389. For Agnes (poem xiv), see pp. 386–9.

<sup>15</sup> Two further versions of BHL 156 also exist: a) BHL 157, which is a Latin abridgement of the *PSA* (C.F. Arnold, *Caesarius von Arelate und die gallische Kirche seiner Zeit* (Leipzig, 1894), p. 461), and b) BHG 46, which is a Greek translation (Franchi de' Cavalieri, 'S. Agnese nella tradizione', pp. 361–79).

<sup>16</sup> 'Ambrose, servant of Christ, to the holy virgins.' A number of the manuscript witnesses for BHL 156 make the connection to Ambrose even more explicit by recording the letter salutation as 'Ambrosius episcopus seruus Christi uirginibus sacris' (see for example, PL 17, 735–42, at col. 735).

Most readers who encountered this line therefore assumed that Ambrose of Milan was the author of this work, since he was already known for his devotion to Agnes.<sup>17</sup> The commonly held misconception that Ambrose penned the *PSA* of course established this text's orthodoxy and guaranteed that medieval churchmen held it in high regard. It was not until the early sixteenth century that doubts about the Ambrosian authorship of *BHL* 156 were first raised by Erasmus (c. 1466–1536).<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, it was only after Cesare Baronius (1538–1607) also declared the text to be a pseudograph that the majority of scholars followed suit.<sup>19</sup> Accordingly, the *PSA* is now attributed to one Pseudo-Ambrose and the exact dating and origin of this work remain two of the most frequently debated issues surrounding the development of Agnes' cult.<sup>20</sup>

Most of the research that has explored the development of Agnes' early veneration and legend dates to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and has focused on one central question: Agnes' historicity. Consequently, one of the first issues many scholars addressed was the question of whether the surviving records would allow them to determine the date of the virgin's martyrdom. A number of possible periods of persecution were postulated, but it soon became apparent that there was simply not enough evidence to say for certain when Agnes had been killed.<sup>21</sup> Part of the problem encountered by scholars was that the five earliest accounts of Agnes' death often seem to present irreconcilable versions of the events surrounding her execution. It was therefore hard to establish exactly which elements should be considered as parts of the original version, if indeed one ever existed at all.<sup>22</sup> This issue was then further exacerbated in the late nineteenth century when

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<sup>17</sup> A.J. Denomy, *The Old French Lives of Saint Agnes and Other Vernacular Versions* (Cambridge, MA, 1938), p. 24.

<sup>18</sup> C. Lanéry, 'Ambroise hagiographe: Les dossiers hagiographique ambrosiens et pseudo-ambrosiens', (unpubl. PhD dissertation, Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, 2006), p. 320.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> There are a number of hagiographical works attributed to a Pseudo-Ambrose, although more than one author was probably responsible for their composition. These texts include: *BHL* 3514 (SS Gervasius and Protasius, the text of which is also laid out as an epistle and opens 'Ambrosius seruus Christi'), *BHL* 7543 (St Sebastian), *BHL* 1547 (SS Cantius, Cantianus and Cantianilla), *BHL* 8690–1 (SS Vital and Agricola). For the most recent study of these works see: Lanéry, 'Ambroise hagiographe', pp. 275–494.

<sup>21</sup> Postulated dates for Agnes' martyrdom include the persecutions of: a) Diocletian in 305: F. Jubaru, *Sainte Agnès: Vierge et martyr de la Voie Nomentane d'après de nouvelles recherches* (Paris, 1907), pp. 58–9; b) Valerian in 258: D. Bartolini, *Gli atti del martirio della nobilissima vergine Romana S. Agnese* (Rome, 1858), p. 57. Bartolini argued that the *PSA*'s vicar Aspasius should be identified with the Proconsul of Africa Aspasius Paternus, who ordered the execution of St Cyprian during the persecutions in 257–9; and c) Decius in 250–1: A. Monachi, 'Per la data del martirio di S. Agnese', *Nuovo bullettino di archeologia cristiana* 28 (1922): 33–42.

<sup>22</sup> Franchi de' Cavalieri, 'S. Agnese nella tradizione', p. 317, who also believed that no 'official' tradition concerning Agnes existed before Ambrose's and Damaus' accounts, merely local legends.

Pio Franchi de' Cavalieri published a Greek rendition of Agnes' death (*BHG* 45), which contains yet another account of the saint's martyrdom.<sup>23</sup>

All six narratives concur that Agnes, a consecrated virgin, was arrested and executed by the authorities following her refusal to renounce either her faith or her vow of chastity. Beyond these facts, a number of different scenarios are played out in each text as the following table of the principal narrative elements demonstrates:

*Table 1.1: The Six Accounts of Agnes' Martyrdom*

A Breakdown of the Narrative Elements Used in the Six Accounts of Agnes' Martyrdom <sup>24</sup>						
	<i>Damasus</i>	<i>Amb – du</i>	<i>Amb – ab</i>	<i>Prudentius</i>	<i>BHG 45</i>	<i>BHL 156</i>
<i>Agnes' Age</i>	child	12	child	adolescent	adult	13
<i>Flees her Parent's home</i>	x	x	-	-	-	-
<i>Rejection of marriage proposal</i>	-	-	-	-	-	x
<i>Agnes as a teacher of women</i>	-	-	-	-	x	-
<i>Trial before the authorities</i>	x	x	x	x	x	x
<i>Virgin's refusal to sacrifice</i>	x	x	x	x	x	x
<i>Agnes is stripped of her clothes</i>	x	-	-	-	x	x
<i>She is condemned to a brothel</i>	-	-	-	x	x	x
<i>Protected by a wall of light</i>	-	-	-	-	-	x
<i>Receives an Angelic guardian</i>	-	-	-	-	x	x
<i>Presented with a celestial robe</i>	-	-	-	-	-	x
<i>A lustful youth/suitor is slain</i>	-	-	-	x	x	x
<i>Youth is miraculously revived</i>	-	-	-	x	x	x
<i>Agnes' judge is converted</i>	-	-	-	-	x	x
<i>Crowd accuse her of witchcraft</i>	-	-	-	-	x	x
<i>Agnes is saved from the pyre</i>	-	-	-	-	-	x
<i>Manner of final execution</i>	pyre	sword <sup>25</sup>	sword	sword	pyre	sword

The table presented above lists the six accounts of Agnes' legend in rough chronological order, starting with the earliest versions on the left hand side. The evidence reveals that

<sup>23</sup> The text of *BHG* 45 is printed in *Ibid.*, pp. 355–60.

<sup>24</sup> *Amb – du* refers to Ambrose's treatise *De uirginibus*. *Amb – ab* refers to Ambrose's hymn *Agnes beatae uirginis*.

<sup>25</sup> Ambrose implies that Agnes is decapitated, a form of execution also depicted in Prudentius' account, although he never states precisely how she is killed. See *De uirginibus* I.ii.9: 'stetit, orauit, ceruicem inflexit' – ('She stood, she prayed, she bent her neck').

over the course of time, authors borrowed or adapted aspects of previous accounts and added new elements of their own, which resulted in a progressively fuller and more complex narrative.

Any scholar who sought to establish the precise development of Agnes' legend was thus faced with the challenge of disentangling exactly who had influenced whom. The earliest surviving accounts by Ambrose and Damasus clearly date to the late fourth century and it was generally agreed that these two works had drawn upon a single, possibly oral, tradition.<sup>26</sup> Despite minor differences such as the manner of Agnes' death, both authors present a tale of a young girl, who for the love of Christ voluntarily gave herself up to the authorities against her parent's wishes and bravely endured martyrdom. Prudentius' depiction of the virgin as a young girl resolute in the face of torture and death also appears to have been partially inspired by this same ur-version of her tale. The *Peristephanon's* reference to Agnes' condemnation to a brothel where the Lord protects her chastity through a series of miracles (xiv.21–51), however, presents a new and intriguing development. It is possible that Prudentius created the incident himself, although he may have borrowed it from another source. Scholarly attention, therefore, focused upon the composition dates of *BHG* 45 and *BHL* 156, since both contain a brothel scene.

The Greek version (*BHG* 45), however, proved to be an extremely problematic text to date. This passion is preserved in two manuscripts: Rome, Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ottobonianus greek 54 (s. x), and Jerusalem, Library of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, codex 17 (s. xvi).<sup>27</sup> Despite the relatively late date of the manuscripts, a much earlier *terminus ante quem* can be established for this work because it had been translated into Syriac during the late fifth century.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, *BHG* 45 appears to be an amplification of the account of Agnes' martyrdom found in the Greek *Menology*, suggesting that this form of her passion was well known throughout the early medieval period, at least in the East.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> For example, see Franchi de' Cavalieri, 'S. Agnese nella tradizione', pp. 295, 302 and 317 (NB Franchi de' Cavalieri believed that the hymn *Agnes beatae uirginis* was a forgery, pp. 296–9). Jubaru, *Sainte Agnès*, pp. 60–1. Denomy, *The Old French Lives of Saint Agnes*, p. 14.

<sup>27</sup> Franchi de' Cavalieri, 'S. Agnese nella tradizione', p. 321.

<sup>28</sup> Lanéry, 'Ambroise hagiographe', p. 325. The Syriac passion was first printed by E. Assemani (ed.), *Acta ss martyrum orientalium et occidentalium*, 2 vols. (Rome, 1748), II, 159–64. This text was reprinted with a translation by Bartolini, *Gli atti del martyrio*, pp. 38–47.

<sup>29</sup> Jubaru, *Sainte Agnès*, pp. 62–3.

Two comprehensive studies of the early literature relating to Agnes' cult were published around the turn of the twentieth century: those of Pio Franchi de' Cavalieri and Florian Jubaru. Both men agreed that *BHG* 45's simple and straightforward account of events at the brothel, coupled with its early translation into Syriac, suggest that it predated *BHL* 156, which they believed to be an elaboration of the Greek passion.<sup>30</sup> Jubaru then went one step further and proposed a radical new theory concerning the relationship between the two texts. Because Agnes is honoured twice in the Greek *Menology* (21 January and 5 July), Jubaru proposed that two different Roman saints named Agnes had once existed.<sup>31</sup> In his view, the tradition found in the works of Ambrose and Damasus related to an Agnes of the Via Nomentana, whose feast was celebrated on the 21 January.<sup>32</sup> In addition, he argued that the cult of this young virgin had eclipsed that of a more ancient cult centred around a second Agnes, whose tomb lay on the Via Salaria and the details of whose martyrdom were preserved in *BHG* 45.<sup>33</sup> For Jubaru, *BHL* 156 was one author's attempt to consolidate the two traditions, which had resulted in the final nail in the coffin for the cult of Agnes on the Via Salaria.<sup>34</sup>

Not everyone, however, agreed with the views of either Franchi de' Cavalieri or Jubaru. In a review of Franchi de' Cavalieri's work, Hippolyte Delehaye proposed that the Greek text actually represented an abridged translation of *BHL* 156.<sup>35</sup> From his studies of a number of abbreviated passions found in the Greek martyrologies, Delehaye argued that *BHG* 45's lack of specific details, such as the omission of the prefect's name, reflected a common pattern whereby redactors often ignored such information.<sup>36</sup> Having challenged the view of Franchi de' Cavalieri, Delehaye then went on to launch a scathing attack on Jubaru's work. One of the central planks of Jubaru's theory that there had been two Roman martyrs named Agnes was the fact that, in his eyes, the most ancient text of the Greek

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<sup>30</sup> Franchi de' Cavalieri, 'S. Agnese nella tradizione', pp. 322–3. (But see also P. Franchi de' Cavalieri, 'Intorno ad alcune reminiscenze classiche nelle leggende agiografiche del secolo iv', in his *Hagiographica*, Studi e Testi 19 (Rome, 1908), pp. 123–64, at p. 155, where he later reversed his opinion and stated that *BHG* 45 was an adaptation of the *BHL* 156). Jubaru, *Sainte Agnès*, pp. 71–93.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 71–5.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 75–84.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 130–3.

<sup>35</sup> H. Delehaye, 'Pio Franchi de' Cavalieri. S. Agnese nella tradizione e nella leggenda (*Römische Quartalschrift*, Zehntes Supplementheft). Roma, 1899', *AB* 19 (1900): 226–9, at 227–8.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228.

*Menology* makes no reference to Agnes' feast on 21 January, only that of 5 July.<sup>37</sup> Thus *BHG* 45 must refer to the Agnes celebrated on 5 July, whom he believed to be Agnes of the Via Salaria.<sup>38</sup> As the cult of Agnes on the Via Nomentana became more prominent, Jubaru believed that the Greek Church had incorporated her feast into their calendar, but since they lacked a relevant passion, *BHG* 45 had been pressed into service to provide accounts of both saints.<sup>39</sup> Delehaye outlined a number of objections to Jubaru's theory, the most prominent of which concerned the fact that the oldest surviving Greek *synaxaria*, namely the earliest manuscript witnesses of the *Synaxarium* of Constantinople, do in fact contain entries for Agnes on both 21 January and 5 July.<sup>40</sup> Jubaru's claim to the contrary had been based on his mistaken belief that the *Menology of Basil* represented the most ancient manuscript witness of this genre. Overall, while few people agreed with Jubaru, the animosity raised by the debate over *BHG* 45, combined with the complex issues surrounding the dating of this text, appears to have led the majority of scholars to subscribe to Allard's view that uncertainty must prevail.<sup>41</sup>

Despite the problems presented by *BHG* 45, a number of studies also advanced opinions regarding the composition of *BHL* 156, which since its dismissal as a Ambrosian pseudograph in the sixteenth century had lost the one piece of evidence previously used to date it. As we have seen, for many years the *PSA*'s romance narrative with its focus on the miraculous has led scholars to classify this work as one of the *Gesta martyrum*, a collection of mainly fifth- and sixth-century Roman hagiographical fictions.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, while all scholars agree that the *PSA* is an amalgamation of at least the various traditions about Agnes known to Damasus, Ambrose and Prudentius (and therefore probably post dates *c.* 405), a more specific and secure date remains elusive.<sup>43</sup> In the early twentieth century a number of possible solutions to this issue were advanced. Albert Dufourcq dated eleven of

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<sup>37</sup> Jubaru, *Sainte Agnès*, p. 75.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 75–8.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 78–84.

<sup>40</sup> H. Delehaye, 'Florian Jubaru, S.I. Sainte Agnès, vierge et martyre de la voie Nomentane, d'après de nouvelles recherches. Paris, Dumoulin, 1907', *AB* 27 (1908): 220–23, at pp. 222–3. For Jubaru's response see F. Jubaru, 'La Sainte Agnès des actes grecs', *Revue des questions historiques* 85 (1909): 169–76. See also P. Allard, 'Un nouveau livre sur Sainte Agnès', *Revue des questions historiques* 84 (1908): 205–9, who also rejected Jubaru's arguments.

<sup>41</sup> Allard, 'Agnès', col. 912.

<sup>42</sup> For the classification of the *PSA* as one of the *Gesta*, see The Roman Martyr Project, Working Handlist of Roman Martyrs a–o, <http://www.arts.manchester.ac.uk/cia/projects/romanmartyrsproject/handlista-o>, accessed 06/12/07. For further details on the *Gesta* see above, pp. 3–4.

<sup>43</sup> See for example, Allard, 'Agnès', col. 911.

the *Gesta martyrum*, including the *PSA*, to the reign of Pope Hormisdas (514–23), since all of these works contained a specific doxology: *qui uiuit et regnat in unitate Spiritus Sancti*.<sup>44</sup> Dufourcq believed that this particular wording with its insistence on a unified Trinity reflected the Roman reaction to the Monophysite controversy during Hormisdas' papacy (514–23).<sup>45</sup>

Very few other scholars, however, have put forward such a late date for the *PSA* and the majority have assigned the *PSA* to the fifth century. Paul Allard argued that the *PSA*'s mention of the Vestal Virgins (59, 75 and 78) only made sense if the author knew that his audience would understand the significance of the reference.<sup>46</sup> Vesta's cult was disbanded in 394; therefore, according to Allard the *PSA* must have been composed within living memory of the Vestals' existence.<sup>47</sup> Jubaru and Franchi de' Cavalieri, as explained earlier, likewise proposed an early to mid-fifth-century date. Their arguments, however, were based on the occurrence of a number of quotations from the *PSA* in *BHL* 158a, a sermon for Agnes' feast sometimes ascribed to Maximus of Turin (d. c. 465).<sup>48</sup> In addition, Franchi de' Cavalieri argued that the *PSA* actually consisted of at least two amalgamated texts: an early fifth-century passion relating solely to the events leading up to Agnes' martyrdom (lines 1–167) and several later supplements (167–221).<sup>49</sup> He believed that the final three episodes of the *PSA* had been composed somewhere between the late fifth and late seventh centuries in response to local developments at Agnes' church and cult centre on the Via Nomentana, although recent scholarship has cast doubt on this idea.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> A. Dufourcq, *Etudes sur les gesta martyrum romains*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1900–10; repr. with a posthumous vol. V, Paris, 1988), I, 313–18. In the *PSA* this doxology can be found in the closing lines of Agnes' final prayer; however, the Anglo-Saxon manuscripts possess a different doxology: 'qui, cum Domino Nostro Iesu Christo Filio Tuo et Sancto Spiritu, uiuis et regnas modo et semper...' (161–2). The manuscript of the *PSA* consulted by Dufourcq was Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 3810, ff. 12–16 (s. x).

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Allard, 'Agnès', col. 911.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> Jubaru, *Sainte Agnès*, p. 135. Franchi de' Cavalieri, 'S. Agnese nella tradizione', pp. 341–3 and 351–52, although he remained sceptical about the authenticity of *BHL* 158 as a work by Maximus of Turin. He also pointed out that there are in fact two persons known as St Maximus of Turin, one of whom died in 423 and the other c. 465. It is not clear which person the attribution of the sermon refers to.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 343–52.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 351–2. These three episodes comprise: Emerentiana's martyrdom (*PSA* 167–84), Agnes' post mortem appearance at her tomb (184–93) and the healing of Constantia (193–215). But see now, Lanéry, 'Ambroise hagiographe', pp. 316–7, whose study of the surviving manuscript witnesses of *BHL* 156 has shown that the work always travelled as one whole text until the tenth century, when changes in liturgical practises appear to have caused the text to be broken down into smaller fragments.

One of the fundamental problems encountered by any attempt to establish a precise date of composition for *BHL* 156 is that there is very little reliable evidence. The earliest known manuscripts of *BHL* 156 date to the late eighth century.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, despite the fact that echoes of the *PSA* can be found in three (possibly) late antique works: *BHL* 158a (the sermon on Agnes sometimes attributed to Maximus of Turin), the entry for Pope Silvester (314–35) in the *Liber pontificalis* and the *Passio Sancti Gallicani* (*BHL* 3236–42), no secure date exists for any of these texts either.<sup>52</sup> To this day, Franchi de' Cavalieri's suspicions over the attribution of *BHL* 158a to Maximus of Turin are shared by many scholars.<sup>53</sup> The early entries of the *Liber pontificalis* too, are notoriously unreliable and may have been composed as late as 530–40.<sup>54</sup> Finally, the *Passio Sancti Gallicani* is also classified as one of the *Gesta martyrum* and like so many of these texts can only be roughly dated to the fifth or sixth century.<sup>55</sup> On the basis of the foregoing evidence, *BHL* 156 can only be safely assigned a broad date range from *c.* 405–*c.* 680. The termini are established by the fact that it appears to postdate the *Peristephanon* (*c.* 405), but the first securely dated text to draw on the *PSA* is Aldhelm's *De uirginitate* (*c.* 680).<sup>56</sup>

Another route by which the question of the *PSA*'s date has been approached concerns the putative context in which this text was written. Various elements of the *PSA* clearly demonstrate that its author's familiarity with the topography and liturgical rites of Agnes' main shrine on the Via Nomentana in Rome; consequently, scholars have assumed

<sup>51</sup> These manuscripts comprise: Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 4554 (s.viii ex.) and Turin, Bibliotheca Nazionale, D V 3 (s.viii ex.). There are also three other manuscripts that date from either the end of the eighth century or from the early ninth century: Paris, BnF, lat. 12598, Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, lat. 1556 and Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek, MP.Th.q.28b. Lanéry, 'Ambroise hagiographe', p. 315.

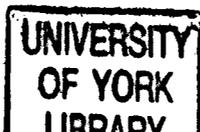
<sup>52</sup> *BHL* 158a: PL 17, 701–5. Silvester: *LP* c.34. *BHL* 3236–42: *Acta SS.* Jun VII, pp. 31–5.

<sup>53</sup> Indeed, doubts over the authorship of this work are clearly expressed in the PL, where *BHL* 158 is actually printed twice: once under Ambrose's name, although doubts over its authenticity are raised (17, 701–5) and again under Maximus of Turin's name (PL 57, 643–8). See also SASLC, p. 58. The most recent opinion on this subject is Lanéry, 'Ambroise hagiographe', pp. 325–6 and 406–11, who also argues that this text is a forgery. Lanéry points out that the first secure date that can be assigned to this text relates to its inclusion in the homiliary of Paul the Deacon (*c.* 720–*c.* 799) and proposes that *BHL* 158a was actually written in northern Italy during the mid seventh century.

<sup>54</sup> R. Davis, trans., *The Book of the Pontiffs (Liber pontificalis): the Ancient Biographies of the First Ninety Roman Bishops to AD 715*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. rev. (Liverpool, 2000), pp. xiii and xlvi–xlvi.

<sup>55</sup> The Roman Martyr Project, Working Handlist of Roman Martyrs a–o, <http://www.arts.manchester.ac.uk/cia/projects/romanmartyrsproject/handlista-o>, accessed 15/04/08.

<sup>56</sup> Franchi de' Cavalieri, 'S. Agnese nella tradizione', p. 351. See also M. Lapidge, 'The Career of Aldhelm', *ASE* 36 (2007): 15–69, at pp. 66–69 on the difficulties surrounding the precise date of Aldhelm's *opus geminatum*. Lapidge dates *De laude uirginitatis* to *c.* 682–86, but notes that while the *Carmen de uirginitate* must post date this work, it is not possible to assign it a more precise date of composition.



that it was written at or for S. Agnese fuori le mura.<sup>57</sup> Two questions, however, remain: precisely who was the text written for and why? It is always possible that the shrine's inclusion on Rome's pilgrim trail initiated the need for a full-length account of Agnes' martyrdom, but this line of inquiry is hampered by the fact that several accounts predate the *PSA*: those of Damasus, Ambrose and Prudentius.<sup>58</sup> A second hypothesis can be found in the opening salutation of *PSA*: *Seruus Christi Ambrosius uirginibus sacris* (line 1).<sup>59</sup> The classification of the *PSA* as an Ambrosian pseudograph has perhaps led many people to overlook this line. Ambrose wrote a number of tracts on virginity, which he addressed to ascetic women; therefore, the author's words may have been interpreted solely as a device through which he or she sought to authenticate the *PSA* as one of the bishop's genuine works.<sup>60</sup> On the other hand, it is also possible that this line is a displaced rubric from an earlier composition. A number of further passages from Agnes' passion, however, suggest that there may be an element of truth in the salutation.

In both the opening and concluding lines of the *PSA* (4–5 and 217–20) the author states once again that this work was intended for the instruction of virgins. It could be argued that these two comments merely serve to reinforce the claims made in the salutation that Ambrose himself had composed this work, but another solution is also possible. The final scenes of the *PSA* narrate how the emperor Constantine's daughter, Constantia, was miraculously healed at Agnes' shrine and later founded a church in honour of Agnes at the site of her shrine (193–208). Constantia is also said to have dedicated her virginity to Christ in imitation of the saint and dwelt as a consecrated virgin at Agnes' tomb, a gesture that caused many other Roman women to follow suit (208–12). The text then concludes:

... usque in hodiernum diem, multae uirgines Romae Agnem beatissimam quasi in corpore manentem aspiciunt, et eius exemplum agentes uiriliter integrae perseuerant... (212–15)<sup>61</sup>

When analysed as a group, these references strongly imply that the *PSA* was written for a group of ascetic women, who dwelt at Agnes' tomb.

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<sup>57</sup> Franchi de' Cavalieri, 'S. Agnese nella tradizione', p. 352. Lanéry, 'Ambroise hagiographe', pp. 322–4. For example, the author of the *PSA* was not only familiar with the existence of three churches on the site of Agnes' shrine, but his or her inclusion of the martyrdom of Emerentiana means that this text celebrates both saints who was honoured at S. Agnese fuori le mura. See further, pp. 251–7.

<sup>58</sup> See pp. 17–21.

<sup>59</sup> 'Ambrose, servant of Christ, to the holy virgins.'

<sup>60</sup> See pp. 33–4 for further discussion of Ambrose's writings.

<sup>61</sup> '...unto this day, many virgins of Rome behold the most blessed Agnes as if she were remaining in her body, and, courageously imitating her example, they abide as untouched (women)...'

Archaeological evidence can help to corroborate this hypothesis. During excavations in the grounds of S. Agnese fuori le mura, archaeologists unearthed a tomb cover that records the death of one abbess Serena in 514, which suggests that a convent may have been active on this site for some years before this date.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, the most recent scholar to consider the question of the *PSA*'s composition, Cécile Lanéry, strongly argues that it should be read as the foundation history of female community at Agnes' tomb. Lanéry has identified a number of affinities between *BHL* 156 and another Pseudo-Ambrosian hagiographic epistle, *BHL* 3514, which likewise opens *Ambrosius seruus Christi*.<sup>63</sup> *BHL* 3514 narrates the passion of SS Gervasius and Protastius and Lanéry argues that this text was composed in the early fifth century by a priest of the *titulus Vestinae* in Rome, a church dedicated to these two Milanese saints.<sup>64</sup> Interestingly, it was also the clergymen of this particular institution who had been commanded by Pope Innocent I (401–17) to serve the nearby basilica of S. Agnese.<sup>65</sup> In addition, Lanéry notes that the *LP* records a renewal of papal interest in Agnes' shrine dateable to shortly before abbess Serena's death in 514, which included the restoration of her basilica by Pope Symmachus I (498–514).<sup>66</sup> Lanéry thus proposes that Symmachus' renovations involved either the foundation or renewal of an existing convent on the site.<sup>67</sup> These events would have provided appropriate circumstances for a community to invest in creating an illustrious foundation history to increase their prestige or maybe just to guarantee their connection to the martyr.<sup>68</sup>

The suggestion that the *PSA* was written around the turn of the sixth century for a community of consecrated virgins forms one hypothesis that is explored in the remainder of this chapter, which now turns to investigate the *PSA*'s use of Biblical allusions. In the

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<sup>62</sup> Frutaz, *Il complesso monumentale*, p. 93. The full text of the inscription is printed in Jubaru, *Sainte Agnès*, p. 263, fn. 3. The *LP* (c.98) also refers to Leo III's (795–816) donation to a 'monasterium Sanctae Agnetis', and Duchesne's notes state that this monastery was a female establishment. Jubaru likewise argued for the existence of an early convent and suggested that it followed the Rule of St Basil, which was introduced into the West by Rufinus in 398 (*Sainte Agnès*, p. 310). Other scholars, however, remain sceptical about the existence of an early convent full stop, let alone one that adhered to Greek practises (G. Ferrari, *Early Roman Monasteries: Notes for the Histories of the Monasteries and Convents at Rome from the V through the X Century*, Studi di antichità cristiana 23 (Rome, 1957), pp. 29–31).

<sup>63</sup> Lanéry, 'Ambroise hagiographe', p. 322. *BHL* 3514: PL 17, 821–5.

<sup>64</sup> Lanéry, 'Ambroise hagiographe', pp. 322–5.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 322. *LP* c.42.

<sup>66</sup> Lanéry, 'Ambroise hagiographe', p. 326. *LP* c.53.

<sup>67</sup> Lanéry, 'Ambroise hagiographe', p. 326.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 322 and 326.

following section, I offer a very brief and simplified overview of how the two principal aspects of Agnes' *passio*, namely martyrdom and virginity, relate to broad themes found throughout the Bible. The reader might immediately respond that the parallels between the two texts are remarkably apparent: Christ was both the first martyr and the first virgin to name but one. However, I believe that it is worthwhile at this point to revisit and review the links between the Bible and the *passiones* of the early female martyrs in order to appreciate the true potency of these texts to function as didactic tools.

## 1.2 *Virgin Martyrs and the Bible*

It seems obvious to point out that the essential subject matter at the heart of the *PSA* is martyrdom; however, in order to understand why Agnes proved to be such useful didactic figure, it is necessary to start at this basic level. In Greek, the noun *μάρτυς* means 'a witness' and from the late second century onwards this word referred to Christians who died for their religion.<sup>69</sup> A number of different interpretations can be put forward as to why these individuals gave their lives for the Christian faith; nevertheless, one fundamental concept lies at the heart of each act of martyrdom.<sup>70</sup> Martyrdom allowed an individual to achieve the perfection of his or her faith and thus achieve salvation.

The perfection of faith through which an individual attains union with the Divine (*Io* 17.20–1) and admission to heaven (*Mt* 4.17) is, of course, the ultimate goal of every Christian (*Mt* 5.48).<sup>71</sup> In order to achieve this aim, the NT counsels believers that the road to salvation can only be trod by those who live in the image of Christ:

*iterum ergo locutus est eis Iesus dicens ego sum lux mundi qui sequitur me non ambulabit in tenebris sed habebit lucem uitae (Io 8.12)*<sup>72</sup>

On one level this *imitatio Christi* involves following Jesus' teaching, manner of life and even His death:

*in hoc enim uocati estis quia et Christus passus est pro uobis uobis relinquens exemplum ut sequamini uestigia eius (I Pt 2.21)*<sup>73</sup>

<sup>69</sup> T. Heffernan, *Sacred Biography: Saints and their Biographers in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1988), p. 126.

<sup>70</sup> For example, one could say that the early Christians who underwent martyrdom did so in order to make a statement of their beliefs, or to reject contemporary society.

<sup>71</sup> F.P. Harton, *The Elements of the Spiritual Life: A Study in Ascetical Theology* (London, 1932), p. 5.

<sup>72</sup> 'Again, therefore, Jesus spoke to them saying: I am the light of the world. He that followeth me, walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life' (*Io* 8.12). See also *Io* 13.15, 14.6, *Gal* 2.20 and 4.19.

However, the full sense of to 'live in Christ' requires further explanation. A Christian can only seek God because God already dwells within each believer: this is the grace bestowed on each individual by the sacrament of Baptism, through which the soul becomes a receptacle for the Holy Spirit (*Rm* 5.5).<sup>74</sup> In the Bible, Baptism is conceived of as form of adoption whereby each Christian becomes a son of God (*Rm* 8.14–17). Through the gift of Baptism, Christ allows each recipient to share in His status as God's Son and thus opens up the path to heaven:<sup>75</sup>

*omnes enim filii Dei estis per fidem in Christo Iesu quicumque enim in Christo baptizati estis Christum induistis (Gal 3.26–7)*<sup>76</sup>

Baptism, however, is only the first step towards Christian perfection: it grants the ability to achieve spiritual union with God, but cannot guarantee success. It is the grace bestowed by Baptism that steers a willing soul on its course to God through a life of virtue and, in particular, through the perfection of the greatest virtue of all: *caritas* (*I Cor* 13.13).<sup>77</sup> Indeed, to love God is the first commandment:

*ait illi Iesus diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo et in tota anima tua et in tota mente tua hoc est maximum et primum mandatum (Mt 22.37–8)*<sup>78</sup>

The Bible teaches that it is only through love of God that a soul can become one with Him: God is love and therefore to truly love God is to be in union with Him:<sup>79</sup>

*et nos cognouimus et credidimus caritati quam habet Deus in nobis Deus caritas est et qui manet in caritate in Deo manet et Deus in eo (I Io 4.16)*<sup>80</sup>

<sup>73</sup> 'For unto this are you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow his steps.' Other verses on this theme include: *I Cor* 11.1, *Gal* 2.19–21 and 6.14, *Eph* 5.1–2 and *Col* 1.24. This concept, of course, is where the hagiographical figure of *imitatio Christi* principally stems from.

<sup>74</sup> See also *I Cor* 3.17 and 6.19, and *II Cor* 6.16 for the concept of the body as the temple of the Holy Spirit. Harton, *Elements of the Spiritual Life*, pp. 15–17.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10–12 and 15–17.

<sup>76</sup> 'For you are all children of God by faith, in Jesus Christ. For as many of you have been baptised in Christ, have put on Christ' (*Gal* 3.26–7).

<sup>77</sup> Harton, *Elements of the Spiritual Life*, p. 55. 'Caritas' means 'love' (pure and selfless love), although it is more often translated as 'charity' due to the many different forms of emotion designated by the term 'love' in English. I hope that the reader will excuse and appreciate my decision to use the translation 'love' in this chapter.

<sup>78</sup> 'Jesus said to him: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and first commandment' (*Mt* 22.37–8, which quotes *Dt* 6.5). See also *Io* 15.17.

<sup>79</sup> Harton, *Elements of the Spiritual Life*, p. 53.

<sup>80</sup> 'And we have known, and have believed the charity which God hath to us. God is charity: and he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him' (*I Io* 4.16). See also *Col* 3.14 where 'caritas' is said to be the 'vinculum perfectionis' ('the bond of perfection').

*Caritas*, however, is a very different form of love to *amor* or earthly love, which even in its most exalted forms 'is essentially possessive and self-centred.'<sup>81</sup> The fundamental difference is that '*caritas*... is founded on the concept of sacrifice.'<sup>82</sup> God charges each soul to love only Him and to abandon all else to follow Him:

*sic ergo omnis ex uobis qui non renuntiat omnibus quae possidet non potest meus esse discipulus (Lc 14.33)*<sup>83</sup>

A soul, therefore, must fight against all temptations and emotions of the flesh that might distract it from its quest for the Divine, hence the notion that the perfection of faith and true love of God can only be achieved through mortification.<sup>84</sup> Christ selflessly sacrificed His life because of His love for mankind (*Eph 5.2*); therefore, each Christian must sacrifice all for the love of God:

*dicebat autem ad omnes si quis uult post me uenire abneget se ipsum et tollat crucem suam cotidie et sequatur me (Lc 9.23)*<sup>85</sup>

Consequently, it can be seen that the concepts of suffering (in imitation of the Lord's martyrdom) and *caritas* are two closely interwoven strands in an individual soul's quest for perfect faith: to love God is to suffer and to suffer for God is to love Him.

Thus the tale of a virgin martyr whose martyrdom is brought about by the strength of her love for Christ, which overcomes any fear of pain and death, is not only a dramatic moral tale, but resonates beautifully with some of the most fundamental elements of the Christian faith. This idea can be developed further. As noted above, each Christian requires the sacrament of Baptism in order to partake of God's grace; therefore, no believer can attain perfection without first participating in the life of the Church, the institution through which Baptism is administered.<sup>86</sup> Like the soul, the Church, which is often thought of as the collective living body of her believers (*II Cor 6.16*), also seeks union with God. Furthermore, the Church's devotion to God is often characterized through the use of images associated with her OT counterpart, Israel, whose relationship with God was often expressed metaphorically in the Bible as a marriage between two loving partners:

<sup>81</sup> Harton, *Elements of the Spiritual Life*, p. 56.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> 'So likewise everyone of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, cannot be my disciple' (*Lc 14.33*). See also *Lc 14.26*.

<sup>84</sup> Harton, *Elements of the Spiritual Life*, pp. 165–6 and 168–71.

<sup>85</sup> 'And he said to all: If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me' (*Lc 9.23*).

<sup>86</sup> Harton, *Elements of the Spiritual Life*, p. 15.

... *quia conplacuit Domino in te et terra tua inhabitabitur... et gaudebit sponsus super sponsam et gaudebit super te Deus tuus (Is 62.4–5)*<sup>87</sup>

By extension, the OT thus portrays the ideal Jewish society as a harmonious and faithful union between God and His chosen people, who express their love for Him through their obedience to His laws.<sup>88</sup> NT authors appropriated and adapted these notions so that the marriage of Christ and the Church became the central theme of their ideal heavenly community.<sup>89</sup>

*et ciuitatem sanctam Hierusalem nouam uidi descendentem de caelo a Deo paratam sicut sponsam ornatam uiro suo (Apc 21.2)*<sup>90</sup>

To conclude, the tale of Agnes' martyrdom for the love of Christ, which is concurrently portrayed as the virgin's achievement of marriage with the Lord, not only draws on Biblical ideas of how the soul seeks union with Christ, but also the Church. She is a figure that can simultaneously evoke either the image of the soul or the Church, or both. Furthermore, her tale draws out the message that no matter how Christ / God is sought, it is only through the exercise of *caritas* (or suffering for love) that He can be found. The virgin martyr is fundamentally the intersection at which many ideas come together and where the boundaries between such concepts begin to blur and to collapse into one another.

This aspect of the virgin martyr makes her an ideal tool in the hands of an author who sought a figure that all Christians could identify with: because she evokes so many different ideas, everyone can see something of themselves in her. There are, however, at least three principal ways that a virgin martyr would appeal especially to an ascetic audience, which reinforces the suggestion made in the previous section that the *PSA* was written for one such community. First, the desire to imitate Christ in both life and death remained so strong in the late antique Church, that even after historical persecution had ceased the notion of martyrdom was kept alive by its transference to asceticism. The

<sup>87</sup> 'Because the Lord hath been well pleased with thee: and thy land shall be inhabited... And the bridegroom shall rejoice over the bride, and thy God shall rejoice over thee' (*Is 62.4–5*).

<sup>88</sup> For the equation of Israel (or an individual Jewish city) to the bride of God in the OT, see for example, *Dt 33.12*, *Ps 18.6* and *44.10*, *Ct* in general, *Is 49.18* and *61.10*, *Jer 2.32*, *7.34*, *16.9*, *25.10* and *33.11*, *Bar 2.23*.

<sup>89</sup> See for example, *Mt 25.1*, *Jo 3.29* and *Apc 18.23*, *21.2*, *21.9* and *22.17*.

<sup>90</sup> 'And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband' (*Apc 21.2*).

lifelong vow of chastity and the fight against fleshly desires, often alongside more physical deprivations, became characterised as a form of bloodless martyrdom.<sup>91</sup>

*Non enim ideo laudabilis uirginitas, quia et in martyribus repperitur, sed quia ipsa martyres faciat.* (Ambrose, *De uirginibus* I.iii.10)<sup>92</sup>

However, Christ, as noted above, was not only the first martyr, but also the first virgin:

*Quid autem est castitas uirginalis, nisi expers contagionis integritas? Atque eius auctorem quem possumus aestimare, nisi immaculatum Dei Filium, cuius caro non uidit corruptionem, diuinitas non est experta contagionem?*  
(Ambrose, *De uirginibus* I.v.21)<sup>93</sup>

Physical and spiritual martyrdom provided two distinct and separate paths to heaven, yet both were recognised as imitating the sacrifice made by Christ. The virgin martyrs, however, went one step further and travelled both of these routes. Accordingly, these individuals can be viewed as the definitive imitators of Jesus.

Finally, a number of ascetic writers had also used the image of spiritual marriage to describe the union between Christ and the individual chaste soul, although this concept was homologous to the idea of the union of Jesus and the Church, whom the soul could also symbolically represent:

*Nostra uirum non habet, sed habet sponsum, eo quod siue Ecclesia in populis, siue anima in singulis Dei uerbo...quasi sponso innubit aeterno...*  
(Ambrose, *De uirginibus* I.vi.31)<sup>94</sup>

The notion of the soul's marriage to Christ was used to describe ascetics of both sexes; however, during late antiquity this image was more frequently applied to female virgins. Events surrounding the growth of the Church from around 300 A.D. onwards offer some possible reasons as to why this might be. The fourth century in particular witnessed a huge influx of the senatorial class into the Western Church and it has been argued that 'Christianity was aristocratised' in this era.<sup>95</sup> The Church, which for centuries had viewed

<sup>91</sup> C. Stancliffe, 'Red, White and Blue Martyrdom', in D. Whitelock, R. McKitterick and D. Dumville (eds.), *Ireland in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 21–46, at pp. 29–31.

<sup>92</sup> 'Indeed, virginity is not laudable for the reason that it is found in martyrs, but because virginity itself creates martyrs.'

<sup>93</sup> 'But what is virginal chastity, if not purity (which) has no share of infection? And whom could we consider its author if not the unstained Son of God whose flesh saw no corruption (and whose) divinity has not experienced infection?'

<sup>94</sup> 'Ours has no husband, but she has a bridegroom, since whether as the Church among the people or the soul in the individual, to the word of God... she is married as if to an eternal bridegroom...'

<sup>95</sup> M.R. Salzman, *The Making of a Christian Aristocracy: Social and Religious Change in the Western Roman Empire* (Cambridge, MA, 2002), p. 219.

the imperial authorities as her opponents, now had to adapt to embrace those who had previously been her persecutors.<sup>96</sup> But while the Church modified many traditions in order to accommodate these new believers, some of her new converts likewise cast aside their class values to embrace Christian concepts. In this period there was a growing fashion amongst the Roman nobility for abandoning their wealth and status in order to lead an ascetic lifestyle, a trend characterised by figures such as Paulinus of Nola.<sup>97</sup> It was not only noble men, however, who sought such an existence, but their female counterparts as well.

Many high status Romans (both pagan and Christians), however, viewed female asceticism in a negative light. The main reason for this opinion was that asceticism broke with their traditional outlook on life, which saw marriage as one of the central institutions of society.<sup>98</sup> The strength of feeling expressed by both the pro- and anti-asceticism parties led many of the leading Churchmen of the day to write on the subject of virginity.<sup>99</sup> One of the most prominent authors to argue in favour of female virginity was Ambrose of Milan, who, as we have seen, was the composer of at least two genuine accounts of Agnes' martyrdom.<sup>100</sup> In total, he wrote four treatises to encourage women to take up a life of asceticism: *De uirginibus*, *De uirginitate*, *De institutione uirginis* and *Exhortatio uirginitatis*.<sup>101</sup> Today he is often viewed as the man who laid the foundations of Western thought on virginity.<sup>102</sup> It was Ambrose who first introduced to the West on a significant scale the idea that the individual Christian virgin was to be perceived as the bride of Christ, an idea largely based on one interpretation of the Biblical book of *Ct*.<sup>103</sup> Indeed, frequent quotation of *Ct* has been seen as a hallmark of Ambrose's exegesis.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>96</sup> R. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 24 and 27–43.

<sup>97</sup> Ramsey, *Ambrose*, p. 9.

<sup>98</sup> K. Cooper, *The Virgin and the Bride: Idealised Womanhood in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA, 1996), pp. 82–3. See also Ambrose *De uirginibus* I.x.58–I.xi.66, where he complains bitterly about families refusing to allow their daughters to choose a life of chastity because they wished to use them to further family connections. Even worse are the families who allow their daughters to become Christian virgins and then marry them off at a later date when a better opportunity comes along.

<sup>99</sup> For a selected list of these treatises see p. 69, fn. 4.

<sup>100</sup> See pp. 17–18.

<sup>101</sup> Ambrose, *De uirginitate*, *De institutione uirginis* and *Exhortatio uirginitatis*: E. Cazzaniga and F. Gori (eds.), *Virginità e vedovanza vol. 2*, Sancti Ambrosii Episcopi Mediolanensis Opera 14.2 (Milan and Rome, 1989).

<sup>102</sup> Ramsey, *Ambrose*, p. 50.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> D. Hunter, 'The Virgin, the Bride and the Church: Reading Psalm 45 in Ambrose, Jerome and Augustine', *Church History* 69 (2000): 281–303, at p. 285. For example, Augustine's works contain around 45,000 Biblical references of which 164 are from *Ct*. Ambrose's four works on virginity alone contain over fifty quotations from *Ct*. F.B.A. Asiedu, 'The Song of Songs and the Ascent of the Soul: Ambrose, Augustine and the Language of Mysticism', *Vigiliae Christianae* 55 (2001): 299–317, at p. 306.

Ambrose's works seem to have been destined for the late antique Roman senatorial class, hence his focus on the idea of spiritual marriage. The crucial importance of marriage as one of the central institutions of elite (and indeed all) Roman society meant that if Ambrose wished successfully to persuade his fellow citizens to accept an alternative lifestyle, he had to promote chastity in terms that would appeal. The rewards of spiritual marriage outlined by Ambrose targeted traditional marital considerations amongst noble families, for he emphasised that their womenfolk could find no man of greater family, wealth, beauty or power than Christ himself.<sup>105</sup>

Only a hundred years or so separate the likely composition date of the *PSA* from Ambrose's own lifetime. Roman senatorial society, nevertheless, remained a dynamic force in Italy until Justinian's re-conquest in the mid sixth century and it is more than likely that the problems posed by female asceticism in the late fourth century troubled the late fifth and early sixth centuries as well.<sup>106</sup> The *PSA*'s depiction of Agnes' martyrdom as a spiritual marriage, as will be demonstrated below, is strongly couched in terms reminiscent of late antique nuptial traditions.<sup>107</sup> Thus it seems probable that this work, like those of Ambrose, sought to address the senatorial class.

The discussion above reveals the potential significance of the image of a virgin martyr for an author who wished to contemplate the concept of Christian perfection (and especially for a writer who sought to explore Christian perfection with an ascetic audience). Any passion that simultaneously depicts a maiden's approaching death as both an act of martyrdom as well as her marriage to Christ offers a narrative into which many layers of interpretation can be woven. In a literal sense, the martyr re-enacts both the virginal lifestyle as well as the physical death of the Lord and thus fulfils the most basic notion of *imitatio Christi*. However, the romance framework provided in such tales opens up the narrative to more symbolic readings. As a *sponsa Christi*, the martyr can be seen as an allegorical figure of the Church and at the same time she can also be understood to symbolise the soul. Thus her trials and suffering can be perceived tropologically as a guide for the soul to follow on its quest for perfection in Christ. Furthermore, the use of secular romance motifs to characterise Christian *caritas* reveals how this text may well have been

<sup>105</sup> See for example, *De uirginibus* I.vii.36–7.

<sup>106</sup> Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity*, pp. 216–19.

<sup>107</sup> See pp. 50–1.

envisaged as a way to encourage late antique Roman noblewomen to perceive asceticism as a more rewarding alternative to traditional marriage. In section 1.3 below, I analyse the Biblical resonances present in the *PSA* to show exactly how this text can be understood on so many different levels. On a number of occasions in the following section, I refer to late antique exegetical tracts. Due to Ambrose's status as one of the leading patristic writers on virginity and the possible primary female ascetic audience of the *PSA*, I have chosen to draw mainly on his works (or on those of writers such as Origen who greatly influenced Ambrose), rather than other contemporary exegetes.<sup>108</sup>

### 1.3 *A New Reading of the Passio Sanctae Agnetis*

In order to offer a new analysis of the *PSA* in light of the chapter's opening comments on martyrdom and spiritual marriage, the following study contains three areas of discussion. The first part will explore the role of *imitatio Christi* and how the author of the *PSA* relates Agnes' death to historical events concerning Jesus. The same concept also forms the topic of the following section, which examines Agnes' allegorical rather than physical replication of Jesus' life and death through the concept of sacrifice inherent in both martyrdom and virginity. The chapter concludes with a consideration of the bridal imagery contained within the text and the way in which the allegorical and tropological readings of this theme both complement and contrast the notion of martyrdom raised by the motif of *imitatio Christi*.

From the opening of the *PSA* the element of *imitatio Christi* assigned to Agnes' characterisation is clearly signalled.<sup>109</sup> The first Biblical allusion, which occurs in line 7, is a reference to *Eph* 6.12, part of this epistle's famous description of the Christian arming himself (or herself) with spiritual armour in order to fight the powers of darkness (6.10–17).<sup>110</sup> By situating this echo in the text's initial description of Agnes' birth, age and character, the author of the *PSA* prompts the reader to associate the virgin's forthcoming trial and martyrdom with Christ's cosmic struggle against evil from the start. Once the

<sup>108</sup> E.A. Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved: The Song of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity* (Philadelphia, PA, 1990), p. 25.

<sup>109</sup> All numbers given in brackets after a reference to the *PSA* relate to the line numbers of the edition in Appendix One.

<sup>110</sup> '...certans contra principes et potestates tenebrarum...' (*PSA* 6) – ('...contending against the leaders and powers of darkness...') echoes *Eph* 6.12: '...sed aduersus principes et potestates aduersus mundi rectores tenebrarum harum...' – ('...but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness...').

narrative gets underway, the correlation between Agnes and Jesus is not only emphasised through the shared themes of stoic endurance in the face of persecution and a willingness to die for God, but also through the martyr's use of the Lord's own words.

On four occasions in the *PSA*, Agnes either quotes or alludes to Jesus' speeches. The first instance is the opening of her angry rejection of the Prefect's son: *Discede a me* (18–19).<sup>111</sup> Originally a line from *Ps* 6.9, where it is used by a repentant soul to dismiss the 'workers of iniquity' who have tempted it to sin against the Lord, the phrase also occurs in The Sermon on the Mount (*Mt* 7.23) and in Christ's description of the Last Judgement (*Mt* 25.41, *Lc* 13.27). In the NT, the expression is used in relation to those who lack true faith and will therefore burn in hell on the Last Day, an accurate description of Agnes' suitor before his conversion at the brothel (*PSA* 138–41).

Agnes' second quotation of Christ's words occurs during her trial when she boasts of Jesus' power (*uirtus*) and how He will never allow Simpronius to harm her (*PSA* 80). The Biblical reference on this occasion is to *Lc* 8.46 and the woman troubled with the issue of blood. Agnes' speech, which incorporates the words *ego noui uirtutem*, borrows the opening of Jesus' exclamation: *nam ego noui uirtutem de me exisse*.<sup>112</sup> While this reference recalls Christ's miraculous cures of physical ailments, the *PSA*'s third allusion to the Lord's words evokes the spiritual healing He brought to mankind. Line 126 echoes *Lc* 5.31 and Jesus' response to the Pharisees question of why He dined with the undesirable elements of society: *non egent qui sani sunt medico sed qui male habent*.<sup>113</sup> The quotation here is conscious, revealing and effective. Agnes employs the phrase *sani sunt* to describe those who entered the brothel in order to sin, but, after finding divine revelation inside, leave in full health praising God and cured of their wicked intentions.

The fourth and final phrase where the *PSA* draws on Christ's words is found in the virgin's concluding prayer after the pyre had been miraculously extinguished, when she exclaims: *iam quod credidi uideo* (159).<sup>114</sup> Here Agnes' speech alludes to *Io* 11.40: *nonne dixi tibi quoniam si credideris uidebis gloriam Dei*.<sup>115</sup> These words were used by Jesus to rebuke Martha after she doubted whether He could aid her brother Lazarus, who had been buried for four days. While the *PSA*'s use of this phrase aptly occurs at the moment when

<sup>111</sup> 'Depart from me...' (*Ps* 6.9, *Mt* 7.23 and 25.41, *Lc* 13.27).

<sup>112</sup> '...for I know that virtue is gone out of me...' (*Lc* 8.46).

<sup>113</sup> 'They that are whole, need not the physician, but they that are sick' (*Lc* 5.31).

<sup>114</sup> '...now I see what I have believed in...' (*PSA* 159).

<sup>115</sup> 'Did I not say to thee, that if thou believe, thou shalt see the glory of God' (*Io* 11.40).

Agnes' constant faith finally wins her admission to heaven, the reference to Christ's resurrection miracles also completes an intriguing pattern that runs throughout all four of the echoes to His speeches. The quotations discussed above cover all the major aspects of Jesus' ministry on earth: the NT laws laid down in His preaching, His miraculous cure of both bodies and souls, and the demonstration of God's power over death. Agnes' speeches, through which she preaches the true faith, can thus be seen as a microcosm of Christ's time on earth.

Alongside these Biblical allusions to Jesus' life, there are also three others to His death. These in turn depict Agnes' martyrdom as a re-enactment of the Crucifixion. From the moment Agnes steps into the brothel, the events that befall her appear collectively to function as a reference to the Lord's final days on earth. Both the wall of light cast around her body by her guardian angel, which causes the room to shine like the sun (95–8), and the white *stola* that miraculously appears from heaven (99) were surely meant to allude to the Transfiguration (*Mt* 17.1–13, *Mc* 9.1–12, *Lc* 9.28–36). Just as Christ's divinity was revealed shortly before His death when His garments shone like snow, His face like the sun and a bright cloud (rather than a light) appeared from heaven to proclaim His parentage, so too is Agnes' sainthood manifested before her execution.<sup>116</sup> Later on, after the Prefect requests that she resurrect his dead son (131–3), the angel comforts Agnes as she weeps and prays to God that he will perform this miracle (136–8). The *PSA*'s prose: *confortans animum eius*, recalls *Lc* 22.43 which relates how an angel also appeared to Christ on the Mount of Olives shortly before His arrest in order to comfort Him as He prayed for the strength to endure His death.<sup>117</sup> The final allusion to Christ's Passion concerns the crowd who demand Agnes' execution (143). Just as the people of Jerusalem called on Pilate to

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<sup>116</sup> For example, see *Mt* 17.2 and 5: 'et transfiguratus est ante eos et resplenduit facies eius sicut sol uestimenta autem eius facta sunt alba sicut nix...ecce nubes lucida obumbravit eos et ecce uox de nube dicens hic est Filius meus dilectus...' – ('And he was transfigured before them. And his face did shine as the sun: and his garments became white as snow...Behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them. And lo, a voice out of the cloud, saying: This is my beloved Son...').

<sup>117</sup> '...comforting her spirit...' This phrase echoes a phrase from *Lc* 22.43: 'apparuit autem angelus de caelo confortans eum et factus in agonia prolixius orabat' – ('And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony, he prayed the longer'). Several other Biblical figures also receive angelic visitations when in need of divine reassurance or aid. An angel, of course, appears to Joseph to assure him of Mary's faithfulness (*Mt* 1.20). Another angel reassures Zachary that he and his wife Elizabeth will not remain childless (*Lc* 1.11–17). The OT hero Gideon is also comforted by an angel after he despairs of Israel's plight (*Jdc* 6.11–12).

condemn Christ (*Io* 19.15), the Roman mob likewise cry out for the virgin's blood with the same shout: *tolle* ('away with...').<sup>118</sup>

The degree to which the author of the *PSA* crafted the concept of *imitatio Christi* into his text is revealed not only through the Biblical parallels woven into his depiction of Agnes' words and deeds, but even in the portrayal of her pagan opponents. In the Bible it was the Jews who were Christ's chief persecutors. Although it required Imperial authority actually to condemn Jesus to death, Pilate and the Romans are often portrayed as sympathetic towards His plight.<sup>119</sup> Thus it is highly significant that in the *PSA* none of the Scriptural references used in relation to Agnes' opponents, who of course are quite literally Romans, associates them with Roman individuals from the Bible. Instead, her persecutors are linked solely to Jewish characters. In the *PSA*, as we have seen, the Roman mob's cry of *tolle* connects them to the citizens of Jerusalem; similar correlations can also be discerned for one of the suitor's companions, the Prefect and his son.

The *PSA* narrates that after the suitor was slain by the angel at the brothel, one of his companions discovered his body and *exclamauit uoce magna* (116), a phrase that recalls *Mc* 1.26 and *Lc* 4.33.<sup>120</sup> The Gospel passages in question concern Christ's healing of a man possessed by a devil at the synagogue of Capharnaum, where the devil *exclamauit uoce magna* on realising who Jesus was. Alongside the comparison of the suitor's companion with a servant of Satan, the Prefect is also associated with two scriptural allusions that present him in a negative light. The first occurs during Agnes' initial appearance before his tribunal when he tries to persuade her to marry his son (49). Here the *PSA*'s prose alludes to *Prv* 29.5–6:

*homo qui blandis fictisque sermonibus loquitur amico suo rete expandit gressibus eius peccantem uirum iniquum inuoluet laqueus...*<sup>121</sup>

<sup>118</sup> *Io* 19.15: 'Illi autem clamabant tolle tolle crucifige eum' – ('But they cried out: Away with him; away with him; crucify him'). The word 'tolle' is even found within the Bible as part of a saint's *imitatio Christi*. In *Act* 21.36 and 22.22 hostile crowds use this word when they call upon the imperial authorities to execute Paul, although he is saved on both occasions.

<sup>119</sup> The Gospels of Matthew and John present a far more sympathetic picture of Pilate than those of Mark and Luke. For example, see *Mt* 27.11–24 and *Io* 19.12.

<sup>120</sup> The phrase 'exclamauit uoce magna' ('he cried out with a loud voice') is quite common in the Bible. It is also used at *Mc* 15.34 (Christ's cry on the cross: 'My God...why hast thou forsaken me') and 1 *Sm* 28.12 (when the Witch of Endor sees through Saul's disguise). Given the pattern of Bible quotations used in the *PSA*, however, I believe that the author had the incident at Capharnaum in mind when he included this phrase.

<sup>121</sup> 'A man that speaketh to his friend with flattery and dissembling words, spreadeth a net for his feet (6) A snare shall entangle the wicked man when he sinneth...' (*Prv* 29.5–6). Compare to *PSA* 49: '...et primum quidem blandis eam sermonibus secretius...' – ('...and indeed at first he appeals to her more secretly with flattering speeches...').

This echo reveals the Prefect's true nature to the reader from the outset. Furthermore, his wicked deeds do indeed prove to be his downfall, since his condemnation of the saint to a brothel results in the death of his beloved son (113). The second Biblical reference related to Simpronius has already been commented on above: Agnes' use of the words *sani sunt* (cf. *Lc* 5.31) in her speech to the Prefect following his arrival at the brothel. Agnes' words recall the speech delivered by Christ to the Pharisees and, as the addressee of the saint's discourse, the Prefect is cast in the role of a Jewish elder.

The most striking comparison between one of the *PSA*'s characters and a Jewish figure, however, involves Agnes' suitor. On one level, the youth's death after he arrogantly attempts to rape the saint may have originally been inspired by events from Prudentius' hymn to Agnes. In the *Peristephanon*, a young man dares to gaze upon the naked body of the saint and is immediately blinded by a thunderbolt from heaven, although the saint's prayers later restore his sight (*Pe.* xiv.43–60). Nevertheless, whether the author of the *PSA* drew on Prudentius' work or not, he certainly put his own mark on this scene through his description of the suitor's demise. The phrase *non dedit honorem Deo...exspiravit* (*PSA* 112–13) recalls two Biblical figures whose symbolism points in two different directions: Antiochus (II *Mcc* 9.1–28), who will be discussed later on, and Herod Agrippa (*Act* 12.23).<sup>122</sup> Perhaps best remembered as the king who ordered the execution of the disciple James, John's brother, (*Act* 12.1–2), and the arrest of Peter (*Act* 12.3–19), Herod also endured one of the most gruesome deaths in the entire Bible. *Act* narrates how after the people of Tyre and Sidon acclaim Herod as a god:

*Confestim autem percussit eum angelus Domini eo quod non dedisset honorem Deo et consumptus a uerminibus exspiravit* (*Act* 12.23)<sup>123</sup>

The suitor's arrogance in hastening into the brothel and ignoring the wall of light around Agnes (111–12) clearly echoes Herod's own proud assumption that he could act as he pleased without acknowledging God. Furthermore, the account in *Act* explicitly states that Herod was struck down by an angel of the Lord, which may well explain the two different descriptions of the suitor's death given in the *PSA*. The general narrative at lines 111–13 claims that the young man was suffocated by the devil, yet roughly ten lines later Agnes

<sup>122</sup> '...he did not give honour to God...(and) breathed his last' (*PSA* 112–3). For a discussion of the reference to Antiochus and II *Mcc* 9.1–28, see p. 42.

<sup>123</sup> 'And forthwith an angel of the Lord struck him down, because he had not given the honour to God: and being eaten up by worms he gave up the ghost' (*Act* 12.23).

states that her guardian angel had struck him down (*PSA* 131). In this way, the first report makes the suitor's links to the devil clear, while Agnes' speech later reinforces the connection between her primary oppressor and one of the archenemies of the NT Christians.

The result of suggesting a link between Herod and the suitor further strengthens the *PSA*'s pattern of associating Agnes' Roman opponents with Biblical persecutors, for it also brings to mind the king's NT namesakes. Herod Agrippa was the son of King Herod the Great, who appears in the Nativity stories as the deceiver of the Magi and the king who orders the Massacre of the Innocents (*Mt* 2.1–23). Another of Herod the Great's sons (and brother of Herod Agrippa) was Herod Antipas, to whom Christ is sent by Pilate in Luke's Passion narrative (*Lc* 23.7–12). Furthermore, according to the Gospels of Matthew (14.3–11) and Mark (6.17–28), it was Herod Antipas who ordered the execution of John the Baptist.

There are two more matters to comment on in the suitor's final scene. First, the phrase *cecidit in faciem suam* (113) is one of several examples where the *PSA* employs a common expression from the Bible.<sup>124</sup> On this occasion it draws on a Biblical phrase that describes how people prostrate themselves in prayer to God (or to honour the Prophets).<sup>125</sup> The use of these words in the *PSA* not only adds a rather ironic touch to the manner of the suitor's death, but also foreshadows his later resurrection and conversion. Second, the description of the suitor *egressus foras* (138–9) following his resurrection echoes *Lc* 22.62 and Peter's exit from Caiphas' courtyard after his denial of Christ.<sup>126</sup> The relevance of the comparison is clear: both Peter and the suitor at one time deny Christ, yet repent and go on to fearlessly preach the word of God.<sup>127</sup>

Alongside the use of Biblical quotations, allusions and motifs that evoke comparisons between the lives of Agnes and Christ, the *PSA* also draws on passages from the Bible in order to emphasise how the virgin's death equates to Jesus' final sacrifice. One

<sup>124</sup> '...he fell onto his face...' (*PSA* 113). See also p. 251.

<sup>125</sup> For example, see *Gn* 17.3: 'cecidit Abram in pronus faciem' – ('Abram fell flat on his face'). See also *Nm* 16.4, *II Sm* 1.2, *III Rg* 18.39, *Mt* 17.6 and *Lc* 17.16.

<sup>126</sup> '...(once) he had gone forth through the doors...' (*PSA* 138–9). See also *Lc* 22.62: 'et egressus foras Petrus fleuit amare' – ('And Peter going out wept bitterly').

<sup>127</sup> This reference may also be another ironic touch by the author of the *PSA*, since Peter is rescued from one of Herod Agrippa's dungeons by an angel (*Act* 12.3–11). It is, therefore, possible that the suitor's death at the angel's hands, which initiates his transformation from Herod to Peter (or persecutor to believer), deliberately alludes to the Apostle's deliverance.

of the most famous NT passages that explicitly draws out the concept of Christ's death as the ultimate sacrifice is *Hb* 9.1–28. Here Christ is cast as the High Priest, who once a year entered the Holy of Holies where he made the blood sacrifice in order to sanctify the altar and thus cleanse the sins of Israel. Through the sacrifice of His own blood, Jesus is said to have purified the celestial rather than terrestrial temple and thus redeemed all of mankind. In Christian thought, however, the word *templum* (temple) not only refers to a physical building, but also to the individual Christian and to all believers who collectively form the universal Church:

*Qui autem consensus templo Dei cum idolis uos enim estis templum Dei uiui sicut dicit Deus quoniam inhabitabo in illis et inambulabo et ero in illorum Deus et ipsi erunt mihi populus (II Cor 6.16)*<sup>128</sup>

Consequently, just as Christ purified the temple, any saint who imitates His sacrifice through the shedding of his or her blood purifies the temple of his or her own body and by extension their faith. Furthermore, if the reader uses both tropology and anagogy to interpret the saint as a figure of both the soul and the Church triumphant, then martyrdom also purifies that institution as well.

The author of the *PSA* incorporated a number of Biblical passages that allude to the theme of sacrifice into his prose. These resonances fall into two groups: those that refer to the suitor, and those that describe Agnes. The first category of allusions comprises two references that occur during the suitor's final scene at the brothel. On the return of his companions, who discovered the wall of light surrounding Agnes and retreated in awe, the suitor is described as *irridens eos* before entering the brothel himself (111).<sup>129</sup> The Latin recalls *I Mcc* 7.34 and the death of the Seleucid general Nicanor in battle against the army of Judas Machabeus.<sup>130</sup> Prior to his last fateful encounter with the Jewish hero, Nicanor had suffered a previous heavy military defeat at Judas' hands and fled to Jerusalem (*I Mcc* 7.31–2). On a visit to the temple, he had mocked the priests and threatened to destroy the Lord's sanctuary unless Judas and his army were handed over (7.33–5). Terrified, the

<sup>128</sup> 'And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God; as God saith: 'I will dwell in them, and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people' (*II Cor* 6.16, referencing *Lv* 26.12). This is probably the most apt passage in relation to the idea that a martyr who rejects paganism cleanses the temple of their body, but similar ideas are expressed in: *I Cor* 3.16–17 and 6.19, and *Eph* 2.19–22.

<sup>129</sup> '...scorning them...' (*PSA* 111).

<sup>130</sup> *I Mcc* 7.34: 'et irridens spreuit eos et pollutit et locutus est superbe' – ('But he mocked and despised them, and abused them: and he spoke proudly').

priests called on God to save His temple (7.36–8) and Nicanor's subsequent death is depicted as divine retribution (7.43–7). The use of this Biblical allusion and the manner of the suitor's subsequent death at God's hands thus encourages the view that Agnes' body is to be equated to the temple in Jerusalem.

The *PSA*'s second reference to the theme of Christ's final sacrifice is not as clear-cut as the first, but its context justifies its inclusion here. The use of *Act* 12.23 and the demise of Herod Agrippa in the suitor's death scene have already been noted above, but the manner of the king's death is worth considering in more detail, for he is not the only monarch to be consumed by worms. II *Mcc* 9.1–28 relates how King Antiochus of Persia met a similar fate at the Lord's hands after threatening to destroy Jerusalem. Consequently, there appears to be a leitmotif associated with the suitor's final moments that likens his attempted rape of the saint to the destruction of the temple / Jerusalem and thus equates Agnes' body with the temple of the Lord. Indeed one might also recall I *Cor* 3.17 at this point:

*si quis autem templum Dei uiolauerit disperdet illum Deus templum enim Dei sanctum est quod estis uos*<sup>131</sup>

Agnes herself endorses this notion when she later describes the suitor's attempted attack (*PSA* 130–1). Her comments recall *Idt* 11.12: Judith's speech to Holofernes where she (fictitiously) told him of the Israelites plight. Judith claimed that her fellow countrymen were so desperate that they had even considered consuming food and drink consecrated to God. The martyr's words *cumque manum suam ad me contingendam aptaret* (*PSA* 130–1) allude to Judith's line about the Israelites touching the sacred items, which in turn reinforces the notion of Agnes' body as a consecrated and holy object.<sup>132</sup> The most convincing reference associated with Agnes' metaphorical depiction as the temple, however, occurs when Aspasius commands a pyre to be lit *in conspectu omnium* (*PSA* 148),

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<sup>131</sup> 'But if any man violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy. For the temple of God is holy as you are' (I *Cor* 3.17).

<sup>132</sup> '...and when he was preparing his hand in order to touch me...' (*PSA* 130–1). *Idt* 11.12: 'et sancta Domini sui quae praecepit Deus non contingi...et uolunt consumere quae nec manibus deberent contingere ergo quoniam haec faciunt certum est quod in perditione dabuntur' – ('And the consecrated things of the Lord their God, which God forbade them to touch...they design to consume the things which they ought not to touch with their hands: therefore, because they do these things, it is certain that they will be given up to destruction').

a phrase that echoes *Nm* 19.3.<sup>133</sup> This particular OT passage refers to the High Priest's public sacrifice of a red cow, whose blood is used to purify the tabernacle and whose corpse is burnt to cleanse the sins of Israel. The ritual described in *Nm* is also one of many sacrificial rites mentioned in the OT that are evoked by the description of Jesus' death in *Hb* 9. This epistle, and indeed the NT as a whole, understood Christ's death to represent the rejection of the entire OT sacrificial system, since it was 'the one perfect sacrifice rendering all others unnecessary.'<sup>134</sup> Thus the *PSA*'s reference to *Nm* 19.3 strengthens the hypothesis that the author deliberately sought to associate Agnes with Christ's cleansing of the temple.

One final observation about this evocation of the OT sacrifice concerns the miraculous growth of Agnes' hair after Simpronius' soldiers strip her.<sup>135</sup> Alexander Denomy has suggested that this detail was incorporated into the *PSA* due to the influence of two lines from Damasus' epigram to the saint.<sup>136</sup>

*Fama refert...Nudaque profusam crinem per membra dedisse,  
Ne domini templum facies peritura uideret* (lines 1 and 7-8)<sup>137</sup>

It is highly likely that the author of the *PSA* was familiar with this poem, yet whether or not he was influenced by these particular lines, it would appear that both he and Damasus were drawing upon the same theological idea.<sup>138</sup> The precise rituals used for OT sacrifices differed according to context, time and place; however, the specific form mentioned in *Hb* 9 describes how it was the High Priest alone who passed through the veil into the inner sanctuary of the Temple in order to carry out sacrifice (9.7).<sup>139</sup> Certainly, the instantaneous clothing of Agnes with her hair can be read as an allusion to the temple veil, which prevented mortal men from gazing upon the objects consecrated to the Lord and housed in

<sup>133</sup> '...in the sight of all...' (*PSA* 148). *Nm* 19.3: 'tradetisque eam Eleazaro sacerdoti qui eductam extra castra immolabit in conspectu omnium' – ('And you shall deliver her (a cow) to Eleazar the priest, who shall bring her forth without the camp, and shall immolate her in the sight of all').

<sup>134</sup> F. Young, *Sacrifice and the Death of Christ* (London, 1975), p. 51, see also pp. 50 and 64-82.

<sup>135</sup> *PSA* 93-5: 'statim autem ut spoliata est, crine soluto, tantam densitatem capillis eius gratia diuina concessit ut melius eorum fimbriis uideretur quam uestibus tecta' – ('As soon as she has been stripped, however, with her hair having been unbound, divine grace granted such a density to her hair that she seemed to have been clothed better by their strands than by (actual) garments').

<sup>136</sup> Denomy, *The Old French Lives of Saint Agnes*, p. 27.

<sup>137</sup> Tradition reports that...she had furnished her hair as a covering all over her naked limbs / lest any transitory countenance should look upon the temple of the Lord.'

<sup>138</sup> A marble slab engraved with Damasus' poem has stood in S. Agnese fuori le mura since the late fourth-century and remains there to this day. The author of the *PSA* appears to have familiar with the layout of this church, since he incorporates a number of relevant topographical details into his work.

<sup>139</sup> Young, *Sacrifice*, pp. 25-9.

the Holy of Holies. The preservation of Agnes' modesty in this manner also removes any possible doubt over her purity, since the male gaze of the pagan onlookers is never allowed to pollute her naked body.

In her role as a figure of the Church or an individual soul imitating Christ, it is clear that Agnes' martyrdom was carefully crafted in order to reflect the Biblical thinking about Jesus' own death. Indeed, even the attempted burning and actual death of the saint, which occurs in close sequence in the narrative (*PSA* 149–67), can be read as signifying the purification of her faith through the proffering of a holocaust, as Christ once sacrificed Himself. The theme of slain and in particular burnt sacrificial offerings, moreover, leads onto another of the principal themes in the *PSA*: fire imagery. In terms of the physical dangers that Agnes faces on her quest for martyrdom, the tortures imposed on her all either involve or evoke the image of fire. Simpronius' order that the saint must sacrifice to Vesta illustrates this point perfectly (58–60). Not only is Agnes commanded to burn offerings on the goddess' altar, but the specific deity whom she must honour was also literally symbolised by fire. No image of the Goddess of the Hearth stood in her temple, instead Vesta was represented by an undying flame that was tended constantly by her priestesses.<sup>140</sup> Agnes' later condemnation to the pyre of course also relates to this pattern of fiery tortures (149–65). So too does her banishment to the brothel, for here she endures the flames of carnal lust exhibited by her assailant (106–13). Indeed, the suitor's pursuit of the virgin throughout the narrative, which is driven first by his burning desire for her (10) and later by his blazing anger after she rejects him (106–8), also reinforces this model.

Through the tortures inflicted on her, Agnes physically suffers in imitation of Christ until she gains her desired martyrdom and becomes one with Him, an achievement highlighted by the *PSA*'s use of Scripture to assimilate the virgin to Jesus. The *PSA*, however, also pays a great deal of attention to how Agnes imitates the virginity of Christ and thus attains marriage with Him in heaven. Both forms of sacrifice ensure the virgin a place in the celestial kingdom and this idea brings us once more to the scheme outlined in section 1.2.<sup>141</sup> The introduction of a romance framework to the tale, whereby Agnes proves the purity of her love for Christ through her rejection of a rival suitor, represents a unique

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<sup>140</sup> See below, pp. 249–50.

<sup>141</sup> See above, pp. 28–35.

feature of the *PSA* in contrast to the earlier accounts of Agnes' death. On one level this structure is one of the principal means by which many virgin martyrs demonstrate their love for the Lord. On another level, it is noteworthy that the *PSA* does not miss an opportunity to show that suffering and love, or religion and marriage, are interchangeable facets of many of the characters and actions throughout his work. For example, it is Agnes' rejection of the suitor's proposal that leads to her arrest and subsequent execution. However, unlike many martyrs, Agnes was not arrested on the grounds of her faith. Moreover, her religion only becomes an issue when Simpronius sees that it may be used as a means to achieve his desires (*PSA* 40–60). Finally, the author also appears to have shaped the suitor's characterisation in order to demonstrate how religion and love can be substituted for each other.

The most relevant aspect of the youth's depiction occurs after Agnes rejects his marriage proposal. The *PSA* describes how he is *amore carpitur caeco* (39) and lies stricken on his bed barely able to breathe.<sup>142</sup> While there appear to be no direct Biblical echoes in the description of the suitor's love sickness, it is likely that the author of the *PSA* had several passages in mind when he composed this scene. The first is *Mc* 3.5:

*Et circumspiciens eos cum ira constrictatus super caecitatem cordis eorum...*<sup>143</sup>

The second, *Mc* 8.17:

*Quo cognito Iesus ait illis quid cogitatis quia panes non habetis nondum cognoscitis nec intellegitis adhuc caecatum habetis cor uestrum*<sup>144</sup>

In the first of these two quotations, the Pharisees condemn Jesus' practice of healing on a Sabbath, which causes Christ to criticise them on the basis that they cannot perceive what is good because their hearts are blinded to God's will. In the second case, it is the disciples who arouse Jesus' wrath after they fail to understand the true meaning of His words and the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand. One final passage that may also have influenced the author at this point is *Eph* 4.17–19:

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<sup>142</sup> '...consumed by blind love...' (*PSA* 39). Both the Classical and Medieval worlds understood lovesickness to be serious ailment and indeed discussions of this malady can be found in a wide range of literature. M.F. Wack, 'The Measure of Pleasure: Peter of Spain on Men, Women and Lovesickness', *Viator* 17 (1986): 173–96, at pp. 174–80. For a more comprehensive survey of works that discuss lovesickness, see also J. Livingston Lowes, 'The Loveres Maladye of Hereos', *Modern Philology* 11 (1914): 491–596, at pp. 495–520.

<sup>143</sup> 'And looking round about on them with anger, being grieved for the blindness of their hearts ...' (*Mc* 3.5).

<sup>144</sup> 'Which Jesus knowing, saith to them: Why do you reason, because you have no bread? Do you not yet know nor understand? Have you still your heart blinded?' (*Mc* 8.17).

*Hoc igitur dico...ut iam non ambuletis sicut gentes ambulant in uanitate sensus sui ...alienati a uita Dei per ignorantiam quae est in illis propter caecitatem cordis ipsorum qui desperantes semet ipsos tradiderunt impudicitiae...*<sup>145</sup>

The common pattern which emerges from all three passages is that blindness of the heart is equivalent to an incapability to perceive God's will and to lead a righteous life. Thus the suitor's carnal love, which renders him incapable of understanding Agnes' choice to remain a consecrated virgin, also appears to reflect his inability to embrace the Christian faith. Consequently it is interesting to note that amongst the Biblical allusions in the suitor's resurrection scene, it is said that *coepit...clamare et dicere* after he left the brothel (139), words which recall *Mc 10.47*.<sup>146</sup> This gospel passage narrates Christ's healing of the blind man of Jericho. The blind man calls out to Jesus, as he passes by, to have mercy on him and the Lord answers:

*...uade fides tua te saluum fecit et confestim uidit...* (*Mc 10.52*)<sup>147</sup>

Thus the suitor's final conversion implies that whilst blinded with *amor* he had been unable to see the truth, and only now when his passion has been slain by the angel, can he embrace the Christian faith. The suitor enters the narrative as a love stricken youth and exits cured of his desires; at the same time, he arrives as a pagan and leaves as a Christian.

To see how this pattern of religion and love works in the broader context of the *PSA*'s overall narrative, it is helpful to consider the bridal imagery used in two principal areas of this text: Agnes' opening speech (18–38) and the events surrounding her condemnation to the brothel (91–106). The remainder of this chapter will demonstrate how the *PSA* can be used to transport the reader on a voyage of theological contemplation concerning the topic of spiritual marriage. In section 1.2, I discussed how the concept of divine nuptials was often seen as a metaphorical expression both of the relationship between the Church and Christ, as well as the ultimate union of the individual soul and

<sup>145</sup> 'This then I say...that henceforward you walk not as also the Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind... being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts. Who despairing, have given themselves up to lasciviousness...' (*Eph 4.17–19*).

<sup>146</sup> '...he began to cry out and to say...' (*PSA 139*). *Mc 10.47*: 'qui cum audisset quia Iesus Nazarenus est coepit clamare et dicere Fili David Iesu Miserere mei' – ('Who when he had heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, began to cry out and to say: Jesus son of David, have mercy on me').

<sup>147</sup> '...go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole.' And immediately he (the blind man) saw... .' (*Mc 10.52*). A similar echo also occurs with *Mt 9.27*: '...secuti sunt eum duo caeci clamantes et dicentes...' – ('...there followed two blind men crying out and saying...'). Again Jesus attributes their cure to their faith (*Mt 9.29–30*).

Jesus. I also drew attention to the fact the many patristic writers in the fourth and fifth centuries frequently employed the concept of spiritual marriage between the soul and Christ in their struggle to persuade late antique society to accept female asceticism. In the discussion below, I demonstrate how Agnes' opening speech and the events at the brothel can be interpreted in an allegorical light as a representation of the Church's union with Christ. These events, however, can also be simultaneously read as a tropological guide to the soul's quest for perfection in Jesus. The notion of the soul as Christ's spouse is an idea that can apply equally to Christians of both sexes; nevertheless, several features of the *PSA* support the hypothesis that this work was written specifically for a community of female ascetics.

The opening of the *PSA* offers the reader a map for the rest of the work. The author initially outlines the general theme of the *PSA* in the opening lines where Agnes is introduced as a beautiful, young and noble maiden who has vowed her love to Christ (5–9). Once Agnes' status as a consecrated virgin has been established, her first speech is employed to offer the reader a condensed guide to the rewards of a spiritual marriage. At its simplest level, Agnes' discourse sketches how her marriage to the Lord will take place. The speech itself can be broken down into three main sections, interspersed by two short interludes where Agnes lists the attributes of her intended spouse. These three divisions consist of: Christ's courtship of Agnes (18–26), how their nuptials will be celebrated (29–32), and their subsequent married life (35–8). Agnes' speech, therefore, provides the reader with the opportunity to contemplate the entire concept of spiritual marriage from betrothal to marriage and finally motherhood.

There are a number of Biblical allusions woven into this speech, but one of the most interesting is Agnes' claim that her lover has clothed her *ciclade auro texta* (*PSA* 24).<sup>148</sup> This phrase alludes to *Ps* 44.10 and the description of the queen of Heaven clad in golden raiment, one of the most famous Biblical passages thought to refer to spiritual marriage. Furthermore, if Agnes' speech is examined in more detail, a number of additional echoes of *Ps* 44 can be distinguished. Below, I quote a number of passages from *Ps* 44 to help illustrate this point:

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<sup>148</sup> '...with a robe woven from gold...' (*PSA* 24).

44.(3) *Speciosus forma prae filiis hominum...*(5) *specie tua et pulchritudine tua et intende prospere procede et regna...*(10) *adstitit regina a dextris tuis in uestitu deaurato circumdata uarietate* (11) *audi filia et uide et inclina aurem tuam et obliuiscere populum tuum et domum patris tui* (12) *et concupiscet rex decorem tuum quoniam ipse est dominus tuus...*(14) *omnis gloria eius filiae regis ab intus in fimbriis aureis* (15) *circumamicta uarietatibus adducentur regi uirgines post eam proximae eius adferentur tibi* (16) *adferentur in laetitia et exultatione adducentur in templum regis* (17) *pro patribus tuis nati sunt tibi filii constitues eos principes super omnem terram*<sup>149</sup>

To return to Agnes' opening speech, it is interesting to note how the *PSA* describes the countenance of Agnes' lover as fairer than that of the suitor, perhaps in relation to comments in 44.3.<sup>150</sup> There is also mention of Christ clothing Agnes in gold and surrounding her with gems, which parallel the golden robe and 'variety' referred to in 44.10.<sup>151</sup> Finally, Agnes also comments that her union will be fertile with offspring, recalling 44.17.<sup>152</sup> As the action of the *PSA* is played out, this final statement also becomes reality, since Agnes generates two children within the narrative framework of the legend itself. The first is the suitor, who converts on his resurrection (*PSA* 137–41). The second is Constantia, daughter of Constantine, whose miraculous healing, conversion and later establishment of a monastic centre at Agnes' tomb concludes the *PSA* (193–205).

Indeed, if late antique exegesis on *Ps* 44 is considered, it appears that the resonances between this work and the *PSA* are not only found in Agnes' opening speech, but throughout the narrative of her martyrdom. One of the most detailed expositions of spiritual marriage can be found in Augustine's *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, where he interprets *Ps* 44 as a depiction of the sacred marriage-feast:

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<sup>149</sup> '(3) Thou art beautiful above the sons of men (referring to the bridegroom)...(5) With thy comeliness and thy beauty set out, proceed prosperously, and reign...(10) The queen stood on thy right hand, in gilded clothing; surrounded with variety. (11) Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline thy ear: and forget thy people and thy father's house. (12) And the king shall greatly desire thy beauty; for he is the Lord thy God...(14) All the glory of the king's daughter is within in golden borders (15) clothed round her with varieties. After her shall virgins be brought to the king...(16) They shall be brought with gladness and rejoicing: they shall be brought into the temple of the king. (17) Instead of thy fathers, sons are born to thee: thou shalt make them princes over all the earth.'

<sup>150</sup> *PSA* 28: '...aspectus pulchrior...' – ('...(whose) countenance is more beautiful...'), which compares Christ to the suitor.

<sup>151</sup> *PSA* 24–5: 'Induit me ciclade auro texta et inmensis monilibus ornauit me' – ('He has clothed me with a robe woven from gold and adorned me with innumerable necklaces').

<sup>152</sup> *PSA* 37–8: 'Nec deerunt post nuptias filii, ubi partus sine dolore succedit, et fecunditas cotidiana cumulatur' – ('Nor will children be wanting after the wedding, when birth follows without pain, and fertility is augmented daily').

*Cantatur enim de sanctis nuptiis de sponso et sponsa, de rege et plebe, de Salvatore et de his qui saluandi sunt. (Enarrationes 1.2–4)*<sup>153</sup>

Augustine then goes on to compare the figure of the queen clothed in gold to the Church clothed in wisdom, while he interprets the ‘variety’ surrounding the queen as a reference to the Christian assemblies of all lands, who celebrate the same truth in different tongues (*Enarrationes* 24.4–22). In relation to *Ps* 44.14, where the queen’s glory is described as within ‘golden borders’, Augustine equates this image to the individual Christian, or the Church as a whole, who need to be beautiful both externally and internally before Christ can truly love them (*Enarrationes* 29.14–30.8). Finally, the virgins who are brought to the temple of the King and the sons that result from the sacred marriage, are said to relate to the conversion of the gentiles who are then brought within the fold of the Church, which is the Temple of the King (*Enarrationes* 31–32).

If Augustine’s thoughts are considered alongside the basic narrative of the *PSA*, it becomes apparent that the martyrdom of St. Agnes can be read as a dramatisation of *Ps* 44. Agnes is not only a physically beautiful maiden, but also proves her inner beauty and wisdom through the testing of her faith, which culminates in her martyrdom and marriage to Christ. The parallels between *Ps* 44 and the *PSA* show how Agnes, both through her reply to the suitor, as well as through the course of her martyrdom, can be interpreted as a figure of both the Church and the individual soul. Agnes’ opening speech, however, does not rely solely on *Ps* 44 for its inspiration. Although the overall structure of her discourse has many points of contact with this Psalm, its contents incorporate numerous Scriptural allusions. Indeed, it would appear that the author of the *PSA* sought to incorporate at least one element from all Biblical passages regarded as relevant to the concept of spiritual marriage. He (or she) may have conceived of this plan as an interpretation aid for the audience, who would no doubt perceive at least one of these references, if not all. On another level, by associating so many ideas with one individual saint, the author also promotes Agnes as the definitive model for all virgins to emulate. The specific format of the speech’s construction, moreover, also strengthens the case that the *PSA* was written for a community of consecrated virgins.

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<sup>153</sup> ‘For it sings (lit. it is sung) concerning the sacred marriage, about the bridegroom and bride, about the king and the people, about the Saviour and those who must be saved.’ E. Dekkers and J. Fraipont (eds.), *Sancti Aurelii Augustini Opera pars x, Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 3 vols., CCSL 38–40 (Turnhout, 1956), I, 493–517, at p. 493. Hereafter *Enarrationes* (numbers in brackets refer to the chapter divisions and then line numbers in Augustine’s discussion of *Ps* 44).

There is a playful element to Agnes' rejection of her suitor: she initially teases the Prefect's son about the identity of her lover and describes his courtship in terms reminiscent of traditional secular Roman practices. It is only as the speech progresses that Agnes intensifies the Biblical elements of her language and finally identifies her suitor as Christ Himself.<sup>154</sup> The commentary in Appendix One draws attention to how the suitor's actual gifts and promises of more costly presents to Agnes reflect late antique dowry customs (PSA 10–16); the same can be said of the wealth that the Lord bestowed on Agnes.<sup>155</sup> Although the maiden had already received jewellery and costly robes (19–25) (the *arra*), Christ has also revealed to her the boundless wealth awaiting her should their marriage take place (25–6) (the full *donatio ante nuptias*). In addition to the ornaments sent to adorn her, Agnes claims that her lover *anulo fidei suae subarrauit* (20). The maiden's words once more recall Roman practices: the bridegroom traditionally bestowed a ring (*anulus pronubus*) on his future wife to mark their engagement.<sup>156</sup> Later on, Agnes also observes that she has been wreathed with spring flowers (22), an image common in late antique wedding hymns.<sup>157</sup>

As the speech progresses beyond Agnes' betrothal to Christ, the references to traditional marital practises dwindle, but never vanish entirely. The description of Christ's preparation of a marriage bed to which the saint will be led accompanied by music and song (29–30) probably recalls customary marriage processions. On the wedding day itself, first the bridegroom and then the bride would publicly parade through the streets from the bride's family home to that of her new husband, accompanied by musicians and singers.<sup>158</sup> In the closing lines of her speech, Agnes also refers to the children that she will bear her husband (37–8). While this comment may not relate directly to wedding customs, Roman society saw the primary function of marriage as the procreation of legitimate offspring to

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<sup>154</sup> The multitude of images used to describe the simple concept of a bride in this speech corresponds to a late antique love of ecphrasis. The frequent use of vivid descriptions, which can be found in both pagan and Christian authors, has led Michael Roberts to describe such literature as written in the 'Jewelled Style.' M. Roberts, *The Jewelled Style: Poetry and Poetics in Late Antiquity*, (Ithaca, NY, 1989), in particular pp. 64–5. The fact that this style is reflected in Agnes' speech provides another piece of evidence to tie the work to the late antique period.

<sup>155</sup> See p. 248.

<sup>156</sup> S. Treggiari, *Roman Marriage: Iusti Coniuges from the Time of Cicero to the Time of Ulpian* (Oxford, 1991), p. 148.

<sup>157</sup> J. Petruccione, 'The Portrait of Eulalia of Merida in Prudentius' *Peristephanon* 3', *AB* 108 (1990): 81–104, at pp. 99–100, following M. Roberts, 'The use of Myth in Late Latin Epithalamia from Statius to Venantius Fortunatus', *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 119 (1989): 321–348.

<sup>158</sup> Treggiari, *Roman Marriage*, pp. 162–8.

continue the family line.<sup>159</sup> Only the birth of children could make a marriage truly successful. Thus the saint's words would resonate with the concerns of a late antique audience and allow them to view Agnes' (and therefore potentially their own) relationship with Christ in terms of traditional concepts and ideas about marriage.

Many aspects of Agnes' speech, however, also echo Biblical verses as the following four extracts reveal. The first of these allusions occurs in Agnes' description of the jewels and gifts bestowed on her by her lover. At first glance, Agnes' comments seem rather out of place, since she has just rejected her suitor's offer of vast wealth; moreover, consecrated virgins were frequently counselled not to adorn themselves with costly ornaments.<sup>160</sup> On the other hand, the image of a beautiful young woman adorned by a bracelet, a necklace of jewels and pearl earrings recalls several Biblical passages.<sup>161</sup> In both the OT and NT descriptions of the union between God and his chosen people, the Lord is frequently said to adorn His bride in costly robes and jewels as a sign of His love.<sup>162</sup> The imagery of one of these passages in particular seems to have caught the author of the *PSA*'s eye, as the following comparison of *Ez* with Agnes' passion demonstrates:

*Et ornaui te ornamento et dedi armillas in manibus tuis et torquem circa collum tuum et dedi inaurem super os tuum et circulos auribus tuis et coronam decoris in capite tuo (*Ez* 16.11–12)<sup>163</sup>*

*Ornauit inaestimabili dextrocherio dexteram meam, et collum meum cinxit lapidibus pretiosis; tradidit auribus meis inaestimabiles margaritas...*  
(*PSA* 21–3)<sup>164</sup>

Given the constant use of *Ct* in late antique treatises on virginity, however, it is also worth recalling the image of the bride adorned in jewellery found in *Ct* 1.9–10:

*Pulchrae sunt genae tuae sicut turturis collum tuum sicut monilia. murenulas aureas faciemus tibi uermiculatas argento.*<sup>165</sup>

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>160</sup> See Ambrose *De uirginibus* I.vi.29–30. But see also D. Janes, *God and Gold in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 61–93, who discusses the late antique and early medieval Church's use of images of heavenly treasure.

<sup>161</sup> For example, see Ambrose *De Isaac uel anima* I.iii.7, where he comments on *Gn* 24.22 and the gifts of gold earrings and bracelets given to Rebecca by Abraham's servant on behalf of Isaac. Ambrose interprets the couple as symbols of the spiritual marriage between the soul and Christ, and the gifts of jewellery as the Bride being adorned with the words of scripture and good deeds. C. Schenkl (ed.), *Sancti Ambrosii Opera pars i*, CSEL 32.1 (Vienna, 1896), pp. 639–700, at pp. 646–7.

<sup>162</sup> For example, see *Is* 61.10 and *Ier* 2.32.

<sup>163</sup> 'I decked thee also with ornaments, and put bracelets on thy hands, and a chain about thy neck. And I put a jewel upon thy forehead and earrings in thy ears, and a beautiful crown upon thy head' (*Ez* 16.11–12).

<sup>164</sup> 'He has adorned my right hand with an inestimable bracelet, and encircled my neck with precious jewels; he has delivered priceless pearls for my ears...' (*PSA* 21–3). The underlining draws out the similarity between the two passages: both picture the bride adorned with bracelets, necklace(s) and earrings.

In his commentary on this passage, Origen argues that the Bride's neck symbolises obedience to the yoke of religion, which is then adorned with faith and Christ Himself.<sup>166</sup> Ambrose too comments briefly on this passage. He states that the Bride's adornment symbolises patience and humility (*De Isaac uel anima* 4.17).<sup>167</sup> In terms of the more specific items of jewellery bestowed on Agnes, her pearl earrings also make a theological point. Lapidary tradition perceived the *margarita* as mystically symbolising the gospel books, an extremely suitable image for the *PSA* to adopt.<sup>168</sup> The martyr has been given words of wisdom to adorn her ears.

After describing how Christ adorned her with spiritual riches, Agnes states that He also:

*Posuit signum suum super faciem meam ut nullum alium praeter ipsum amatorem admittam (PSA 23–4).*<sup>169</sup>

Here, for the first time, the description of Agnes departs from a portrayal of what could be taken for a typical Roman patrician wedding, now indicating more clearly that her marriage is something out of the ordinary. There are two biblical references through which this passage can be interpreted. The first is *Ct* 8.6 in which the Bridegroom asks the Bride to *pone me ut signaculum super cor tuum et signaculum super brachium tuum.*<sup>170</sup> Ambrose comments on this passage:

*Signaculum Christus in fronte est, signaculum in corde: in fronte, ut semper confiteamur, in corde, ut semper diligamus signaculum in brachio, ut semper operemur. (De Isaac uel anima 8.75)*<sup>171</sup>

<sup>165</sup> 'Thy cheeks are beautiful as the turtledove's, thy neck as jewels. We will make thee chains (lit. small necklaces) of gold inlaid with silver' (*Ct* 1.9–10).

<sup>166</sup> R.P. Lawson (trans.), *Origen, The Song of Songs: Commentary and Homilies*, Ancient Christian Writers 26 (Westminster, MD, 1957), pp. 147–159. (Commentary II.vii). See also W. Baehrens (ed.), *Origenes Werke*, GCS 33 (Leipzig, 1925), pp. 61–241.

<sup>167</sup> *Isaac uel anima* I.iv.17: 'iam pulchra sit, quae uultu praeferat castitatis decorem et redimicula ceruicis adtollat, in qua sunt patientiae et humilitatis insignia' – ('Now she is beautiful, who reveals the grace of chastity (on) her face and renders prominent the necklaces of (her) neck, in which are the signs of patience and humility').

<sup>168</sup> See *Mt* 13.45–6. So far the earliest lapidary work that equates the *margarita* to the Gospels, which I have been able to locate, is Hrabanus Maurus, *De uniuerso* XVII.8 (PL 111, 9–614 at col. 472). See also now W. Schipper (ed.), *Hrabanus Maurus, De rerum naturis*, <http://www.mun.ca/rabanus/>, accessed 22.05.08.

<sup>169</sup> 'He has placed his seal upon my face so that I may receive no other lover save him' (*PSA* 23–4).

<sup>170</sup> 'Put me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm...' (*Ct* 8.6).

<sup>171</sup> 'Christ is the seal on the forehead, the seal on the heart. On the forehead so that we may confess him at all times: on the heart, so that we may always love him: a seal on the arm so that we may honour him forever' (*De Isaac uel anima* 8.75).

The second allusion derives from two verses: *Apc* 7.3 and 22.4, where John tells of those who have been marked with the name of Christ on their foreheads. These NT passages recall, amongst others, *Ez* 9.4 and God's command to his angels that they destroy all those in Jerusalem not bearing his mark on their forehead. Thus the sinners are destroyed and the righteous saved. In *Apc* those that receive the mark of Christ are described as servants of God. *Apc* 7.3 records how 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel were chosen to comprise the 144,000 who gather around the throne of God, whilst *Apc* 14.1 notes that these same 144,000 are the Virgins of Christ who follow the Lamb, men judged to be spotless and thus worthy to follow the Lord. One final mention of those marked on their foreheads occurs at *Apc* 22.4, which describes what will happen when the new city of Jerusalem has descended to earth: the servants of God *uidebunt faciem eius et nomen eius in frontibus eorum*.<sup>172</sup> Thus Agnes' comments illustrate how Christ has already judged her to be worthy of a place by his side and has marked her as saved.

The virgin's second departure from a description of a Roman marriage ceremony relates to the golden robe she receives from her lover, which was mentioned above:

*Induit me ciclade auro texta, et immensis monilibus ornauit me. (PSA 24–5).*<sup>173</sup>

Her words cannot possibly refer to Roman bridal attire, which comprised a full-length flame-red veil known as the *flammeum*.<sup>174</sup> Furthermore, neither do her words continue the references to John's visions alluded to in the previous lines of the speech, for *Apc* 19.8 describes how the Bride of Christ is clothed in white. In fact, as noted above, here the author of the *PSA* has moved from the NT to the OT and to yet another Biblical bride, namely the Queen of Heaven in *Ps* 44.10:

*...adstitit regina a dextris tuis in uestitu deaurato circumdata uarietate*<sup>175</sup>

About this bride, clothed in gold and surrounded by riches, Ambrose comments:

*Et aduerte quantum tibi spiritus sanctus scripturae diuinae testificatione detulerit, regnum, aurum, pulchritudinem: regnum, uel quia sponsa es regis aeterni, uel quia inuictum animum gerens ab inlecebris uoluptatum non captiua haberis, sed quasi regina dominaris: aurum, quia sicut illa materies examinata igne pretiosior est, ita*

<sup>172</sup> 'And they will see his face: and his name shall be on their foreheads' (*Apc* 22.4).

<sup>173</sup> 'He has clothed me with a robe woven in gold and adorned me with a vast number of necklaces' (*PSA* 24–5).

<sup>174</sup> P. Lyndon Reynolds, *Marriage in the Western Church: The Christianisation of Marriage during the Patristic and Early Medieval Periods* (Leiden, 1994), p. 30.

<sup>175</sup> 'The queen stood at thy right hand, in gilded clothing; surrounded with variety' (*Ps* 44.10).

*corporis species uirginalis spiritu consecrata diuino, formae suae acquirit augmentum. (De uirginibus I.vii.37)*<sup>176</sup>

Both the *PSA* (on one level) and Ambrose appear deploy the image of the golden queen to encourage contemporary women to regard the rewards of chastity as the greatest possible marriage alliance open to any woman. It is also possible that Ambrose's association between virgins and purified gold was in the author of the *PSA*'s mind when he composed later sections of his own work. This image not only ties into the pattern of fiery tortures inflicted upon Agnes noted above, but it may also inform the content of her speeches to Simpronius (84–90). Unlike the virgin martyr, who will be purified by fire and consecrated through her suffering, Agnes' persecutors are likened to lesser metals doomed to be smelted down and cast into oblivion.<sup>177</sup>

After describing her betrothal, Agnes then turns to a description of her actual marriage:

*A quo mihi iam thalamus collocatus est, cuius mihi organa modulatis uocibus resonant, cuius mihi uirgines iustissimis uocibus cantant. (PSA 29–30)*<sup>178</sup>

Here the Biblical language used comprises elements from the Psalms, *Ct* and *Apc*. The reference to a marriage chamber may well allude to *Ps* 18.6, where God's temple is compared to a bride chamber.<sup>179</sup> In addition, the mention of singing virgins may evoke *Ct* 3.11, which Ambrose believes demonstrates that the daughters of Jerusalem accompany the Bride to her wedding couch singing an epithalamium for her (*De Isaac uel anima* I.v.45–6).<sup>180</sup> The *PSA*'s reference to 'his virgins', however, also recalls the 144,000 of *Apc* 14.3 who sing a canticle to Christ that no other man can intone. Agnes is therefore escorted to

<sup>176</sup> 'And observe how much the Holy Spirit has brought to you by the testimony of divine scripture, a kingdom, gold (and) beauty: a kingdom because you are the bride of the eternal King and because, (through) exhibiting an unconquerable soul, you are not held captive by the allurements of pleasures, but rule them as if a queen: gold, because just as that substance having been tested by fire is more precious, thus the form of the virginal body having been consecrated by the Holy Spirit acquires the augmentation of its appearance' (*De uirginibus* I.vii.37).

<sup>177</sup> It is also possible, however, that the comparison of believers to precious metal, which will be tried and purified by fire in the *PSA* was inspired (presumably as was Ambrose) by Biblical passages such as *I Cor* 3.11–15.

<sup>178</sup> 'By him a marriage bed has already been prepared for me, whose instruments resound for me with musical notes, whose virgins sing to me with the most righteous voices' (*PSA* 29–30).

<sup>179</sup> *Ps* 18.6: 'in sole posuit tabernaculum suum et ipse tamquam sponsus procedens de thalamo suo...' – ('He hath set his tabernacle in the sun: and he, as a bridegroom coming out of his bride chamber...').

<sup>180</sup> *Ct* 3.11: 'egredimini et uidete filiae Sion regem Salomonem in diademate quo coronauit eum mater sua in die disponsionis illius...' – ('Go forth, ye daughters of Sion, and see King Solomon in the diadem, wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals...').

her wedding chamber by those whose ranks she is about to join: the citizens of the heavenly kingdom.

In lines 31–2 Agnes moves onto the consummation of her marriage:

*Iam mel et lac ex ore eius suscepti. Iam amplexibus eius castis astricta sum. Iam corpus eius corpori meo sociatum est.*<sup>181</sup>

Perhaps unsurprisingly, much of the erotic imagery here draws upon *Ct*, although the reference to honey and milk has several precedents.<sup>182</sup> Throughout the OT this phrase recalls the Promised Land of the Israelites, which was said to flow with milk and honey.<sup>183</sup> If one interprets this in a Christian context, the Promised Land is the kingdom of heaven, and Agnes' arrival is thus symbolised by the celestial provisions bestowed upon her. Honey and milk are likewise mentioned in *Ct* 5.1:

*...comedi fauum cum melle meo bibi uinum meum cum lacte meo...*<sup>184</sup>

Ambrose discusses this phrase in conjunction with *Prv* 16.24: *fauus mellis uerba composita...*<sup>185</sup> and argues that the fare mentioned in this passage symbolises the four strengths of the Scripture (*De bono mortis* I.v.20).<sup>186</sup> The image conveyed in the *PSA* appears to represent Agnes as receiving the word of God in the form of kisses, which in turn recalls *Ct* 1.1: *Osculetur me osculo oris sui...*<sup>187</sup> Ambrose does not comment on this passage, but Origen argues that it represents the transfer of spiritual insights into the divine scripture from the Word of God to the believer (I.i).

Overall, Agnes' opening speech is a cleverly crafted amalgamation of Biblical references and contemporary customs that allows this text to function on several different levels. One can interpret the entire speech as a lesson for how a virgin should seek union with Christ. She should adorn herself with virtues and the gifts of Scripture, which are readily given to all who desire them. Once she is thus clothed, Christ finds her most attractive and marks her as his, offering to her a heavenly kingdom if her faith proves true. Upon the demonstration of her faith, Christ comes to her to consummate their union,

<sup>181</sup> 'Already I have accepted honey and milk from his mouth. Already I have been drawn close by his pure embraces. Already his body has been united to mine...' (*PSA* 31–2).

<sup>182</sup> For example, see *Ct* 4.1.1.

<sup>183</sup> For example, see *Ex* 3.8, *Lv* 20.24, *Nm* 13.28, *Is* 7.22 and *Ier* 32.22, although many more examples could be given.

<sup>184</sup> 'I have eaten the honeycomb with my honey, I have drunk my wine with my milk' (*Ct* 5.1).

<sup>185</sup> 'Well ordered words are as a honeycomb' (*Prv* 16.24).

<sup>186</sup> Schenkl, *Sancti Ambrosii Opera*, pp. 701–53, at pp. 721–3.

<sup>187</sup> 'Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth...' (*Ct* 1.1).

kissing her with words of Scripture. Earlier on, however, I also argued that many aspects of the speech were carefully constructed in order to provide a late antique virgin with an inspiring yet reassuringly familiar alternative to secular marriage. It remains now to consider one last strand of additional evidence that suggests Agnes' speech was constructed to enable an audience of female ascetics to identify themselves with the martyr: references to the late antique veiling or *uelatio* ceremony for consecrated virgins.

Italy, and Rome in particular, seems to have witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of aristocratic virgins during the fourth century.<sup>188</sup> Many of these women, who at first remained largely independent of Church control, possessed great wealth and influence and the clergy appear to have sought increased jurisdiction over this group.<sup>189</sup> Consequently, the Church began to develop formal rituals that transformed the vow of virginity from a private ceremony to a public one conducted by the bishop himself.<sup>190</sup> Writing in the mid-fourth century, Ambrose and Jerome provide some of the first accounts of the consecration ceremony or *uelatio* rite, whereby a Christian virgin made a public vow of her chastity to Christ.<sup>191</sup> The ritual appears to have originated in Rome, although Ambrose is known to have spent a great deal of time promoting its use at Milan.<sup>192</sup> No complete contemporary liturgical record for this ceremony has survived, yet it is believed that traces of a fifth- and sixth-century version can be found in the Roman Leonine Sacramentary and the *Liber responsalis* of Gregory the Great (c. 540–604).<sup>193</sup> From these sources it appears that the rite was literally envisaged as a marriage between the virgin undergoing consecration and Christ. Consequently, many of the scriptural passages incorporated into the liturgy drew on *Ct* and the physical format of the whole ritual mirrored that of a traditional late antique Christian marriage ceremony.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> D. Hunter, 'Clerical Celibacy and the Veiling of Virgins: New Boundaries in Late Ancient Christianity', in W.E. Klingshirn and M. Vessey (eds.), *The Limits of Ancient Christianity: Essays on Late Antique Thought and Culture in Honour of R. Markus* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1999), pp. 139–52, at p. 142.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 142–3.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 143–4.

<sup>191</sup> N. Henry, 'The Song of Songs and the Liturgy of the *Velatio* in the Fourth Century: From Literary Metaphor to Liturgical Reality', *Studies in Church History* 35 (1999): 18–28, at p. 19.

<sup>192</sup> N. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital* (Berkeley, CA, 1994), pp. 65–8. McLynn perceives the throngs of women coming to Milan to receive the veil from Ambrose as a carefully orchestrated political exercise by the bishop himself. He argues that through this ceremony Ambrose sought to increase his status in a community divided by the pro- and anti-Nicene factions.

<sup>193</sup> Henry, 'The Song of Songs', pp. 18–28. Editions: C. Feltoe (ed.), *Sacramentarium Leonianum* (Cambridge, 1896). No complete edition exists of the *Liber responsalis*, but the sections concerning the *velatio* ceremony have been edited by Henry, 'The Song of Songs', pp. 24–28.

<sup>194</sup> Hunter, 'Clerical Celibacy', p. 143.

The use of allusions to *Ct* and secular marriage rites in Agnes' speech has already been commented on, but there are a number of further parallels between the *PSA* and the *uelatio* ceremony. First, the martyr's description of how she has been received into the marriage chamber of the Lord (*PSA* 29–30) parallels the use of this image in the prayers for the *uelatio* ceremony found in the Leonine Sacramentary.<sup>195</sup> Second, the statement that Agnes' lover has placed a sign upon her face (*PSA* 23) can be interpreted as a reference to the veil bestowed upon women during their consecration. This symbol appears to have been the only mark given to late antique virgins to distinguish them from other women (items such as a nun's habit appear to be later developments).<sup>196</sup>

The third and most fascinating element of Agnes' opening speech, however, relates to the fact that certain phrases appear to be paralleled in a liturgical text for a *uelatio* ceremony. The *Liber responsalis* of Gregory the Great preserves a series of sung responses for a consecration ritual, which are thought to pre-date his lifetime due to their inclusion of Old Latin rather than Vulgate Scriptural quotations.<sup>197</sup> Two of these surviving antiphons are clearly related to the *PSA*'s text, although it is not clear which work is the earlier.<sup>198</sup> The first parallel appears in the *PSA*'s opening description of Agnes, where it states that she was:

*Pulchra facie, sed pulchrior fide* (9)<sup>199</sup>

This phrase is mirrored almost word for word in the *Liber responsalis* antiphon:

*Pulchra facie sed pulchrior*<sup>200</sup>

In addition, Agnes' claim that her lover has:

*Induit me ciclade auro texta, et immensis monilibus ornauit me* (*PSA* 24–5),<sup>201</sup>

clearly corresponds to the *Liber responsalis* antiphon:

*Induit me Dominus cycladem in gyro textam, et immensis monilibus ornauit me*<sup>202</sup>

<sup>195</sup> Henry, 'The Song of Songs', pp. 20–21 who analyses this section of the prayer. The Latin text can be found in Feltoe, *Sacramentarium Leonianum*, pp. 139–140. The Leonine Sacramentary is preserved in a single seventh-century manuscript, but much of the material contained in it is thought to have originated from Rome between the fourth and sixth centuries. Several scholars have attributed the prayers for the *uelatio* ceremony to Pope Leo I (440–61) on stylistic grounds, although as with all aspects of this sacramentary no universal agreement has yet been reached. D.M. Hope, *The Leonine Sacramentary: A Reassessment of its Nature and Purpose* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 1–22 and 109–10.

<sup>196</sup> R. Metz, *La consécration des vierges: hier, aujourd'hui, demain* (Paris, 2001), p. 68.

<sup>197</sup> Henry, 'The Song of Songs', p. 22.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>199</sup> 'With an attractive countenance, but a more beautiful faith' (*PSA* 9).

<sup>200</sup> Henry, 'The Song of Songs', p. 25.

<sup>201</sup> 'He has clothed me with a robe woven from gold, and adorned me with innumerable necklaces' (*PSA* 24–5).

There is no conclusive proof that the *Liber responsalis* reflects liturgical practices around the turn of the sixth-century, but the similarity between this work and the *PSA* raises fascinating possibilities.

While Agnes' opening speech clearly outlines the rewards of becoming a spiritual bride of Christ, the question remains why the author of the *PSA* played out the ordeal that leads to her triumph in the exact manner that he did. A number of OT passages concerning the depiction of God's relationship with Israel as that of a husband and wife have already been noted; however, Israel was not always a faithful spouse. In particular, the OT prophets comment in some detail upon her periodic lapses into idolatry using the metaphor of marriage and designating Israel's unfaithfulness as adultery, or harlotry.<sup>203</sup> In light of the fact that the NT appropriated such bridal imagery to demonstrate the creation of a new covenant between man and God whereby the Church was envisaged as the faithful Bride Israel had failed to be, the theme of prostitution in the *PSA* takes on a new significance.

To cast a consecrated virgin into a brothel is equivalent to the worst form of punishment possible; it is quite literally a death sentence for chastity.<sup>204</sup> Thus, to endure in such a place is the ultimate test for any maiden. Such scenes also create strong dramatic suspense in the narrative. For example, in the case of the *PSA*, the final contest between Agnes and the suitor can read as a battle between personified chastity and lust, with the ironic touch that chastity triumphs in a brothel. Indeed, it is fair to say that there are a number of reasons why a brothel scene might be included in a passion: they may also reflect historical reality, since Christian women are known to have endured this fate.<sup>205</sup> In the *PSA*, however, these considerations appear to be overshadowed by allusions to one

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<sup>202</sup> Henry, 'The Song of Songs', p. 27. 'The Lord has clothed me in a robe woven around me and adorned me with immense necklaces.'

<sup>203</sup> Scriptural references to Israel's fall into harlotry (or to that of individual cities) include: *Is* 1.21, 23.15–17; *Ier* 3.1–21, 5.7; *Ez* 23.1–49; *Os* 3.3 and 4.15. See also: *Prv* 5.3–7, 6.26, 7.10–27, 23.27–8; *Sir* 9.10, 41.25.

For NT use of the OT imagery see in particular: *Apc* 17.1–5 and 15–18, and 19.2.

<sup>204</sup> M.R. Miles, *Carnal Knowing: Female Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West* (Boston, MA, 1989), p. 74.

<sup>205</sup> J. Schroeder, 'Virgin and Martyr: Divine Protection from Sexual Assault in the *Peristephanon* of Prudentius', in J. Cavadini (ed.), *Miracles in Jewish and Christian Antiquity: Imagining Truth* (Notre Dame, IN, 1999), pp. 169–91, at pp. 170–1. Schroeder references Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 50.12, which relates how one Christian virgin was sentenced to a brothel by the authorities. She also notes another passage by Clement of Rome (1 Clement 6.2), which records how Christian women were forced to re-enact the fate of the Danaids and Dircae in the amphitheatre (and therefore were presumably raped before their death).

particular OT passage: *Ez* 16.1–63.<sup>206</sup> *Ez* 16 provides one of the most graphic descriptions of Israel's rise and fall from the Lord's favour found in the Bible and, though rather long, it is worth quoting a section of it in order to draw out which particular elements the *PSA* borrowed:

*(16.7) multiplicatam quasi germen agri dedi te et multiplicata es et grandis effecta et ingressa es et peruenisiti ad mundum muliebrem ubera tua intumuerunt et pilus tuus germanauit et eras nuda et confusionis plena (8) et transiui per te et uidi te et ecce tempus tuum tempus amantium et expandi amictum meum super te et operui ignominiam tuam et iuraui tibi et ingressus sum pactum tecum ait Dominus Deus et facta es mihi... (11) et ornaui te ornamento... (13) et ornata es auro et argento et uestita es bysso... (14) et egressum est nomen tuum in gentes propter speciem tuam... (15) et habens fiduciam in pulchritudine tua fornicata es in nomine tuo et exposuisti fornicationem tuam omni transeunti ... (16) et sumens de uestimentis meis fecisti tibi excelsa hinc inde consuta et fornicata es super eis sicut non est factum neque futurum est (17) et tulisti uasa decoris tui de auro meo et argento meo quae dedi tibi et fecisti tibi imagines masculinas et fornicata es in eis... (23) et accidit post omnem malitiam tuam uae uae tibi ait Dominus Deus (24) et aedificasti tibi lupanar et fecisti tibi prostibulum in cunctis plateis... (35) propterea meretrix audi uerbum Domini... (37) ecce ego congregabo omnes amatores tuos quibus commixta es... cum uniuersis quos oderas et congregabo eos super te undique et nudabo ignominiam tuam coram eis et uidebunt omnem turpitudinem tuam... (39) et dabo te in manus eorum et destruent lupanar tuum et demolientur prostibulum tuum et denudabunt te uestimentis tuis et auferent uasa decoris tui et derelinquent te nudam plenamque ignominia (40) et adducent super te multitudinem et lapidabunt te lapidibus et trucidabunt te gladiis suis (41) et comburent domos tuas igni ...et desines fornicari... (42) ...et quiescam nec irascar amplius<sup>207</sup>*

<sup>206</sup> See p. 51 for the use of *Ez* 16.11–12 in Agnes' opening speech.

<sup>207</sup> (16.7) 'I caused thee to multiply as the bud of the field: and thou didst increase and grow great, and advancedst, and camest to woman's ornament: thy breasts were fashioned, and thy hair grew: and thou was naked and full of confusion. (8) And I passed by thee, and saw thee: and behold thy time was the time of lovers: and I spread my garment over thee, and covered thy ignominy. And I swore to thee, and I entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine. (11) I decked thee also with ornaments... (13) And thou wast adorned with gold, and silver, and wast clothed with fine linen... (14) And thy reknown went forth among the nations for thy beauty... (15) But trusting in thy beauty, thou playedst the harlot because of thy reknown, and thou hast prostituted thyself to every passenger... (16) And taking of thy garments thou hast made thee high places sewed together on each side: and hast played the harlot upon them, as hath not been seen before, nor shall be hereafter. (17) And thou tookest thy beautiful vessels, of my gold and my silver; which I gave to thee, and thou madest thee images of men, and hast committed fornication with them... (23) And it came to pass after all thy wickedness (woe, woe to thee, saith the Lord) (24) that thou didst also build thee a common stew, and madest thee a brothel house in every street... (35) Therefore, O harlot, hear the word of the Lord... (37) Behold I will gather together all thy lovers with whom thou hast taken pleasure ... with all whom thou hast hated: and I will gather them against thee on every side, and will discover thy shame in their sight, and they shall see all thy nakedness... (39) And I will deliver thee into their hands, and they shall destroy thy brothel house, and throw down thy stews: and they shall strip thee of thy garments and shall take away the vessels of thy beauty: and leave thee naked, and full of disgrace (40) and they shall bring upon thee a multitude, and they shall stone thee with stones, and shall slay thee with their swords (41) and they shall burn thy houses with fire... and thou shalt cease from fornication... (42) ...and I will cease and be angry no more.'

Ezekial's emphasis on how the Lord desires Israel in her adolescence (16.7–8) provides one possible reason for the *PSA*'s statement that Agnes was thirteen when she died. A number of further parallels also exist between the two texts and in many ways the *PSA* reads as a reversal of the OT passage. No matter what form of temptation is placed in front of her, Agnes never despises the riches given to her by the Lord as outlined in her first speech. Nor does she break her vow to God – whereas Israel fails on both these counts (*cf.* 16.8–15). Furthermore, the virgin does not play the harlot as Israel does (16.15–34), but instead is cast into a brothel against her will; there the strength of her chastity and faith bring about the building's conversion into a church. Thus when Agnes' enemies strip her, the Lord does not permit her nakedness to be revealed (*cf.* 16.39). The crowd who gather at the brothel also feel God's anger, rather than act as the instrument of His revenge on Israel (*cf.* 16.40). It could even be argued that the depiction of the events leading up to Agnes' death (she is first burnt on the pyre and then executed with a sword) owes something to 16.40–1 where Israel is destroyed by her enemies' swords and her whorehouses burnt. In addition, Emerentiana's fate (*PSA* 169–84) can be seen as encompassing Israel's third fate: stoning (16.40). All three forms of execution in the *PSA*, however, bring eternal life rather than death. Finally *Ez* 16 also provides one explanation for the addition of a romance framework to Agnes' legend, since now the maiden acquires a pagan suitor and the opportunity to abandon her husband and to fornicate with idolaters (*cf.* 16.16–22).

The true extent of author of the *PSA*'s creativity, however, is revealed through a second set of Biblical references woven around the above-mentioned allusions to *Ez* 16. Through her figural identity as Israel's *alter ego*, Agnes is more easily interpreted as a figure of the Church and her legend as an allegorical re-enactment of the establishment of the NT covenant between God and the gentiles.<sup>208</sup> In addition to these images, the author of the *PSA* appears to have taken great care to illustrate how his heroine could also be understood as a symbol of the virginal soul.

Certain passages of Ambrose of Milan's *De uirginitate* indicate that a deeper symbolic meaning can be found in the depiction of Agnes being stripped of her clothes, coupled with the threefold clothing miracle shortly after (*PSA* 91–103). At I.x.55–6 and I.xiv.92 Ambrose comments on two verses from *Ct*. The first is *Ct* 5.7:

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<sup>208</sup> Indeed this theme may well be the reason why Agnes is actually clothed in white at the brothel, rather than in gold as her opening speech claims. The golden queen of heaven is an OT figure, whereas the New Jerusalem of the NT is clothed in fine white linen.

*Inuenerunt me custodes qui circumeunt ciuitatem percusserunt me uulnerauerunt me tulerunt pallium meum mihi custodes murorum*<sup>209</sup>

Ambrose explains this passage as follows:

*Inuenerunt ergo custodes, et uulnerauerunt eam, et tulerant ei pallium, hoc est actus corporalis inuolucrum sustulerunt, ut nuda mentis simplicitas quaereret Christum. (De uirginitate I.xiv.92)*<sup>210</sup>

Ambrose goes on in this instance to discuss how a mortal person can be clothed *in habitu...sapientiae saecularis* and argues that philosophy in particular blinds the individual to seeing Christ.<sup>211</sup> However, in another section of his treatise the idea of a garment appears again, this time with different connotations. The verse in question is *Ct* 5:3:

*Expoliqui me tunica mea quomodo induar illa laui pedes meos quomodo inquinabo illos*<sup>212</sup>

Ambrose comments on this occasion:

(I.x.55) *Etenim in hac saeculi nocte prius tibi corporalis uitae amictus est exuendus...*<sup>213</sup>

(I.x.56) *Vide anima Deo deuota quid dicat. Sic se actus corporis et terrenos exiit mores, ut nesciat quomodo, etiamsi uelit, rursus possit induere.*<sup>214</sup>

If one follows Ambrose's thoughts on garments as set out above, then the command to strip Agnes in the *PSA* is a symbolic act. It also appears to be a carefully orchestrated narrative manoeuvre on the author's part, since this aspect of Agnes' legend is omitted from several of the earlier versions.<sup>215</sup> Agnes has just spurned both her mortal suitor and the chance to become a Vestal Virgin, which would have given her access to untold wealth and fame. She has rejected the worldly desires which Ambrose interprets as signifying a garment; therefore, it is fitting that she be stripped of her clothes as one stage of the purification process she must undergo in order to become a bride of Christ. This idea takes on a deeper

<sup>209</sup> 'The keepers that go about the city found me: they struck me: and wounded me: the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me' (*Ct* 5.7).

<sup>210</sup> 'Therefore the guards discovered her and wounded her and took her cloak away from her, that is, they removed the covering of corporeal deed(s), so that the naked innocence of the mind might seek Christ' (*De uirginitate* I.xiv.92).

<sup>211</sup> '...in a garment...of secular wisdom...'

<sup>212</sup> 'I have put off my garment, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?' (*Ct* 5.3).

<sup>213</sup> 'For in this night of the (transitory) world, the garment of corporeal life must first be stripped from you...' (*De uirginitate* I.x.55).

<sup>214</sup> 'See what the soul devoted to Christ might say. Thus she divests herself of the deed(s) of the body and earthly customs, so that, even if she wished, she would be ignorant of how she might clothe herself (in them) again' (*De uirginitate* I.x.56).

<sup>215</sup> Neither of Ambrose's two accounts makes any mention of a command to strip Agnes.

significance when considered alongside the clothing miracles, especially the heavenly garment granted to Agnes at the brothel.

One particularly puzzling aspect of the *PSA* is the author's decision to clothe Agnes three times during the brothel scene. First, Agnes' hair miraculously grows and covers her body, maintaining her modesty on the way to the brothel (93–5). On Agnes' arrival at the house of prostitution, the angel sent to guard her surrounds her with a shining wall of light (95–8). Finally, Agnes receives a shining white *stola* from God himself (98–103). The author of the *PSA* does not need to clothe Agnes more than once, so it seems logical to argue that each stage must represent something. The miraculous growth of Agnes' hair was identified earlier on as a metaphor for the temple veil and as a device to preserve Agnes' modesty; therefore, it is the two remaining miracles, namely the wall of light and heavenly robe, which are the central focus of this section.<sup>216</sup>

In relation to Agnes' shining fortifications, it is worth recalling that in Christian literature, the image of light is always connected with good. At the highest level, light can be seen to represent Christ Himself:

*Iterum ergo locutus est eis Iesus dicens ego sum lux mundi qui sequitur me non ambulabit in tenebris sed habebit lucem uitae (Io 8.12)*<sup>217</sup>

But light can also be seen to represent faith:

*Lux iustorum laetificat lucerna autem impiorum extinguetur (Prv 13.9)*<sup>218</sup>

Thus if we return to the action of stripping Agnes of her corporeal ways so she can seek Christ, the wall of light can be interpreted as a sign of the strength of Agnes' faith. The main point of interest in this second miracle, however, is in the appearance of the angel who provides the defensive barrier. Ambrose makes several connections between virgins and angels that cast an interesting perspective on this version of Agnes' legend. One comment that sums up much of Ambrose's thinking on this subject is:

*Neque mirum si pro uobis angeli militant, quae angelorum moribus militatis. Meretur eorum praesidium castitas uirginalis, quorum uitam meretur.*<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> See p. 43.

<sup>217</sup> 'Again therefore, Jesus spoke to them, saying: I am the light of the world. He that followeth me, walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life' (*Io* 8.12).

<sup>218</sup> 'The light of the just giveth joy: but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out' (*Prv* 13.9).

<sup>219</sup> 'Nor is it wondrous if the angels serve as soldiers for you, who wage war (in) the fashion of the angels. Virginal chastity is deserving of the assistance of those of whose life it is worthy' (*De uirginibus* I.viii.51).

In *De uirginitate* Ambrose expounds his ideas about the roles of the angels and describes them as the guards of the heavenly city of Jerusalem, the city to which all virgins aspire to enter (*De uirginitate* I.xvi.85). Furthermore, he links the watchmen of *Ct* 5.7 with the twelve angels who guard the gates of Jerusalem in *Apc* 21.12:

(xiv.85) *Inuenerunt illam custodes murorum...Est enim ciuitas quae portas murorum clausas non habet, de qua dictum est: Et portae eius non claudentur per diem (Apc 21.25)...Illa est ergo ciuitas Hierusalem quae in caelo est...*<sup>220</sup>  
 (xiv.87) *...disce portas, disce custodes. Habet, inquit, portas duodecim; et in portis angelos duodecim (Apc 21.12)...Ergo uos, sanctae uirgines, et quicumque iusti estis et immaculatam animae geritis castitatem, ciues sanctorum estis et domestici Dei. Sed tunc nobilitatem istam patriae possidebitis si Christum intra ciuitatis huius saepta quaeratis...uersantes inter angelos.*<sup>221</sup>

This representation of angels as guardians is fascinating when juxtaposed with the *PSA*. Agnes has been stripped of earthly desires and now as she nears the end of her quest an angel appears, perhaps not only to defend her chastity, but also to symbolise how close she is to entering heaven. She has now encountered the guards at the gates of paradise.

The form of the final clothing miracle reinforces the notion that the events which befall Agnes at the brothel should be symbolically interpreted as a reference to her acceptance into heaven. Once inside the brothel, despite the imminent danger to her chastity, Agnes demonstrates her devotion to God by immediately prostrating herself in prayer. This action appears to be accepted as the final proof of her faith and marks the stage at which she is judged worthy to enter the celestial city. As Agnes prays, a *stola candidissima* (99) appears before her and a few lines later it is described thus:<sup>222</sup>

*...et nimio candore praespiciuum, ut nullus dubitaret hoc nisi manibus angelicis praeparatum. (102-3)*<sup>223</sup>

<sup>220</sup> 'The guardians of the wall discovered her...For this is city which does not have closed gates (along) its walls, concerning which it is said: 'and the gates thereof shall not be shut by day' (*Apc* 21.25)...This, therefore, is the city of Jerusalem which is in heaven...' (*De uirginitate* I.xiv.85).

<sup>221</sup> '...Learn about the gates! Learn about the guardians! It is said: 'It has twelve gates and in the gates twelve angels (*Apc* 21.12)...Consequently, you O holy virgins and those of you who are righteous and exhibit an unstained chastity of the soul, you are citizens of the saints and the servants of God. But then you will have that nobility of the fatherland, if, (while) abiding amongst angels, you should search for Christ within the walls of this city' (*De uirginitate* I.xiv.87).

<sup>222</sup> '...the most shining white robe...' (*PSA* 99).

<sup>223</sup> '...and was notable by (its) extreme whiteness so that no one doubted that it had been created only by angelic hands' (*PSA* 102-3).

This white garment immediately recalls *Apc* 7.9 and 13–14 where the inhabitants of the heavenly city of Jerusalem are described as clothed in white. Agnes has now passed by the guard at the gate and entered into the heavenly city.

In addition, the white garment also evokes passages such as *Ct* 2.1–2:

*Ego flos campi et lilium conuallium sicut lilium inter spinas sic amica mea inter filias*<sup>224</sup>

In his commentary on this passage, Origen writes that Christ is clothed as the white lily of the valley and that any soul who trusts in Christ and follows his teaching may also become a lily like him (III.iv). Finally, it is surely important that the early sources also indicate that during veiling ceremonies the virgin undergoing consecration would be dressed in a white robe.<sup>225</sup>

Overall, the Biblical allusions used in the *PSA* illustrate that a multiple range and type of readings exist within this one text. The way in which even the briefest flash back to Scriptural vocabulary seems to have been designed to make a salient point at a crucial stage in the narrative suggests that there is a degree to which an authorial strategy can be determined in this text. Indeed, the compiler of the *PSA* appears to have carefully constructed the entire narrative of Agnes' martyrdom as a reflection on the Christian virtue of *caritas* and used the figure of the virgin martyr to illustrate how love and religion travel hand in hand. Furthermore, the scheme through which *caritas* is often partially disguised a romantic love points to the author deliberately attempting to rewrite secular romance as a contemplative tract for religious. While the date and specific origin of the *PSA* remain speculative, many aspects of this text do indeed suggest that the initial audience may well have been a community of female ascetics. The author appears to have gone to some trouble to cast Agnes' forthcoming spiritual marriage as a mirror of late antique nuptial traditions and the links to early *uelatio* ceremonies strengthen this hypothesis further. But while the Biblical allusions in the *PSA* may have been directed to one original purpose, their existence allowed later readers, who were no doubt equally familiar with Scriptural vocabulary, to access many of the literal and symbolic meanings of this text.

The remainder of this thesis now turns to examine what happened when later readers also became the authors of their own adaptations of the *PSA*. Such accounts present

<sup>224</sup> 'I am the flower of the field, and the lily of the valleys. As the lily among the thorns, so is my love among the daughters' (*Ct* 2.1–2).

<sup>225</sup> Metz, *La consécration des vierges*, p. 67.

a fascinating opportunity to try and gauge how a select few responded to the original author's Biblical signposts. The following three chapters consider the reception of the *PSA* into Anglo-Saxon England and examine how various Insular authors interpreted and rewrote the late antique passion to address new concerns and audiences. Before moving onto the texts themselves, this chapter concludes with a brief consideration of the possible routes by which both Agnes' cult in general, as well as *BHL* 156 in particular, may have made their way to English shores.

Agnes' status amongst the saints of the Western Church alone guaranteed that knowledge of her existence would have reached this island with, or soon after, Augustine of Canterbury's arrival in 597. As one of Rome's foremost female saints, her cult was not only venerated in the Eternal City from an early date, but it was also quickly disseminated throughout Europe along with a number of other important Roman saints. Indeed, the virgin's feast (21 January) appears in all the earliest known surviving calendars, martyrologies and sacramentaries of the Western Church.<sup>226</sup> Agnes' name is also invoked during the *Nobis quoque* of the Canon of the Mass.<sup>227</sup> Consequently, all subsequent liturgical texts tended to honour her feasts and it seems probable that the earliest such material to reach England introduced her cult to this island.

The *PSA* also appears to have reached England at an early date; the works of Aldhelm and Bede testify that a wide range of hagiographical texts including the *PSA* had reached the island by the mid to late seventh century.<sup>228</sup> Beyond these writers, however, the precise requirement for and use of such *passiones* and *uitae* by the early English Church remains hard to clarify, especially since practices appear to have differed across Europe.<sup>229</sup> It is probable, however, that throughout the Anglo-Saxon period legendaries were used to

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<sup>226</sup> For a brief overview of when Agnes' name first appeared in various early calendars and liturgical texts, see M.C. Solana Villamor, 'El culto a Santa Ines y su diffusion en occidente', *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 94 (1980): 411–30, at pp. 419–26. See also Chapter Four.

<sup>227</sup> See Chapter Four, pp. 152–72.

<sup>228</sup> M. Lapidge, 'The Saintly Life in Anglo-Saxon England', in M. Godden and M. Lapidge (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 243–63, at p. 253. See also Appendix 3.2, pp. 281–4.

<sup>229</sup> See in particular B. De Gaiffier, 'La lecture des Actes des martyrs dans la prière liturgique en occident: A propos du passionnaire hispanique', *AB* 72 (1954): 134–66. B. De Gaiffier, 'La lecture des passions des martyrs à Rome avant le ix<sup>e</sup> siècle', *AB* 87 (1969): 63–78. G. Philippart, *Les légendiers latins et autres manuscrits hagiographiques*, Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental 24–25 (Turnhout, 1977), pp. 112–17.

provide some if not all of the following functions: readings during chapter or at mealtimes, lections for the Night Office and reading material for individual devotions.<sup>230</sup>

Two further possible routes also exist by which both Agnes' cult and legend may have travelled to England: relic collections and pilgrimage. Peter Brown's renowned work on the cult of saints in the early medieval period has highlighted the extraordinary power associated with relics in the early medieval imagination.<sup>231</sup> Whether physical remains, or contact relics such as the dust from a saint's tomb covering, these artefacts brought untold blessings to those fortunate enough to possess them.<sup>232</sup> Relic collections, moreover, were highly sought after in Anglo-Saxon England by both ecclesiastical institutions as well as individuals, since the English Church followed the Roman practice of consecrating church altars by incorporating relics into them.<sup>233</sup> Agnes' name appears in one of the two pre-conquest Insular catalogues of relic collections that have survived, namely those of Exeter and New Minster, Winchester.<sup>234</sup> It is quite possible, however, that there were a number of Anglo-Saxon individuals and churches which owned (probably contact) relics associated with Agnes due to the popularity of pilgrimage to Rome during this period.

A variety of reasons drove people to make the perilous journey across Europe: to ask for a saint's intercession to aid their soul's salvation or to bring about physical healing, the acquisition of relics, or, in the case of a number of archbishops, to receive their pallium from the Pope himself.<sup>235</sup> Augustine of Canterbury's mission to evangelise the Anglo-Saxons on behalf of Pope Gregory the Great inspired the early Insular Church with a love of all things Roman, as well as a burning desire to behold the great shrines of that city with

<sup>230</sup> M. Lapidge, 'Editing Hagiography', in C. Leonardi (ed.), *La critica del testo mediolatino* (Spoleto, 1994), pp. 239–57, at pp. 240–43. Lapidge notes, however, that saints' *uitae* and *passiones* were unlikely to have been used during the liturgy until after 800, when the Church in Rome removed a number of restrictions on the reading of such texts in churches (p. 243).

<sup>231</sup> P. Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*, The Haskell Lectures on History of Religions n.s. 2 (Chicago, IL, 1981).

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 87–90.

<sup>233</sup> A. Thacker, 'In Search of Saints: The English Church and the Cult of Roman Apostles and Martyrs in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries', in J. Smith (ed.), *Early Medieval Rome and the Christian West: Essays in Honour of Donald A. Bullough* (Leiden, 2000), pp. 247–77, at p. 259, citing Bede, *HE* I.30.

<sup>234</sup> I.G. Thomas, 'The Cult of Saints' Relics in Medieval England', (unpubl. PhD dissertation, University of London, 1974), pp. 341–350 and 358. Editions: P. Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter: A Tenth-Century Cultural History*, Studies in Anglo-Saxon History 4 (Woodbridge, 1993), pp. 176–205. S. Keynes (ed.), *The Liber vitae of the New Minster and Hyde Abbey, Winchester*, Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile 26 (Copenhagen, 1996). Agnes' name does appear in one of the relic lists contained in this manuscript (f. 57v); however, Simon Keynes dates the script of this particular catalogue to the late twelfth century.

<sup>235</sup> D.J. Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome in the Middle Ages: Continuity and Change* (Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 2–3 and 6–7.

their own eyes.<sup>236</sup> In his study of Anglo-Saxon pilgrimage to Rome, Wilfred Moore records fifty-four named pilgrims plus various other groups of travellers who are known to have made this journey in the seventh and eighth centuries alone.<sup>237</sup> The early to mid eighth-century establishment of the *Schola Saxonum*, an Anglo-Saxon colony which dwelt just beyond the walls of St Peter's itself, is also a testimony to the large numbers of Insular pilgrims who descended on Rome.<sup>238</sup> This institution not only possessed its own church, cemetery and property, but also provided services such as a hospice for travellers, as well as a dwelling place for those who sought to end their days in the city.<sup>239</sup>

While the Anglo-Saxons are known to have been frequent visitors to Rome, the survival of several seventh- and eighth-century pilgrim itineraries relating to this city also allows a more detailed picture to be built up concerning the churches most commonly visited by such travellers.<sup>240</sup> Not only does Agnes' church on the Via Nomentana appear in all such lists, but her shrine is likewise recorded in the only known Anglo-Saxon Roman pilgrim diary to have survived, namely the tenth-century work of Archbishop Sigeric of Canterbury, who journeyed to Rome in 990.<sup>241</sup> On such evidence, Agnes' tomb on the Via Nomentana appears to have formed part of a popular pilgrim route around the major shrines of Rome, a path no doubt trodden by many an Anglo-Saxon pilgrim. Indeed, it is possible that the author of the first Insular adaptation of the *PSA* considered in the following chapter, namely Aldhelm of Malmesbury, was one such man. Aldhelm is known to have made at least one visit to Rome and the influence of several epigrams from martyrs' tombs across the city on his literary compositions suggests that he had visited many of these shrines.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> Thacker, 'In Search of Saints', p. 276.

<sup>237</sup> W.J. Moore, *The Saxon Pilgrims to Rome and the Schola Saxonum* (Fribourg, 1937), pp. 126–7. Indeed some individuals made several journeys to Rome, including St Wilfrid (d. 709) and Abbot Ceolfrith of Monkwearmouth-Jarrow (d. 716), although no one is known to have surpassed Benedict Biscop's (d. 689) record of six pilgrimages to Rome.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 90–108.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 109–10.

<sup>240</sup> R. Valentini and G. Zuchetti (eds.), *Codice topografico della città di Roma*, 4 vols. (Rome, 1940–53), II, 67–207. These catalogues include the seventh-century work *De locis sanctorum*, the eighth-century 'Itinerary of Einsiedeln' and another seventh-century guide now preserved in William of Malmesbury's *Gesta regum anglorum*. See also the catalogue preserved under Pope Leo III's (795–816) name in the *LP* (c.98).

<sup>241</sup> V. Ortenberg, 'Archbishop Sigeric's Journey to Rome in 990', *ASE* 19 (1990): 197–246, at pp. 199 and 214–15.

<sup>242</sup> Lapidge, 'The Career of Aldhelm', pp. 52–64. See also pp. 56–7 where he suggests that the pilgrim guide preserved in William of Malmesbury's *Gesta regum anglorum* (which is the earliest surviving *itinerarium*) may have once belonged to Aldhelm. If this is so, then Aldhelm is almost certain to have visited S. Agnese fuori le mura.

## CHAPTER TWO

The Portrayal of St Agnes in Aldhelm's *De uirginitate*

The prose and verse adaptations of the *PSA*, which are found in Aldhelm's (d. 709 or 710) *opus geminatum*, *De uirginitate* represent two of the five existing Anglo-Saxon versions of Agnes' martyrdom.<sup>1</sup> The other three texts comprise: a hymn by Bede (c. 673–735); the entry for Agnes' feast in *The Old English Martyrology* (? ninth-century) and Ælfric's (c. 950–c. 1010) vernacular translation of the *Passio Sanctae Agnetis* included in his *Lives of Saints*. Roughly three centuries separate the composition of the *PSA* and Aldhelm's works; consequently, the distance between them in space and time means that the cultural meaning of Agnes' life underwent changes during this period. Aldhelm also provides an ideal starting point for exploring the influence and significance of both the *PSA* and Agnes' cult in Anglo-Saxon England. Written in the late seventh to early eighth century, *De uirginitate* is not only the earliest Anglo-Saxon account of Agnes' death, but also the first surviving Insular work to praise and expound Christian concepts of virginity.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, it is the only one of the five Anglo-Saxon texts concerning Agnes to focus primarily on the notion of chastity in a similar manner to the *PSA*. In addition, the widespread circulation of *De uirginitate* throughout Anglo-Saxon England during the eighth to tenth centuries, when it became an important component of the school curriculum,<sup>3</sup> means that it is likely to have influenced the three later Anglo-Saxon versions of Agnes' martyrdom.

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<sup>1</sup> The prose work is entitled *De laude uirginitatis* (hereafter *Dlu*), and the verse account, *Carmen de uirginitate* (hereafter *Cdu*). The English translations used in this chapter, apart from those for the prose and verse accounts of Agnes' martyrdom in section 2.2 which are my own, are taken respectively from: M. Lapidge and M. Herren, trans., *Aldhelm: The Prose Works* (Cambridge, 1979) and M. Lapidge and J. Rosier, trans., *Aldhelm: The Poetic Works* (Cambridge, 1985). The standard Latin editions for this work are: R. Ehwald (ed.), *Aldhelmi Opera*, MGH, Auct. Antiq. 15 (Berlin, 1919). pp. 226–323 and 350–471 and S. Gwara (ed.), *Aldhelmi Malmesbiriensis Prosa de uirginitate cum glossa latina atque anglosaxonica*, 2 vols., CCSL 124–124A (Turnhout, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> E. Pettit, 'Aldhelm's *Opus Geminatum De uirginitate* in its Early Anglo-Saxon Context', (unpubl. PhD dissertation, York Univ., 2004), pp. 1–7. For a discussion on the dating of *De uirginitate* see M. Lapidge, 'The Career of Aldhelm', *ASE* 36 (2007): 15–69, at pp. 66–9. Michael Lapidge dates the *Dlu* to the period before Aldhelm's appointment as the abbot of Malmesbury, namely somewhere between 682–86. However, apart from the fact that the *Cdu* must have followed the *Dlu* (since in *Dlu* c.lx Aldhelm promises that a verse work will follow), no clear date can be assigned to this text.

<sup>3</sup> M. Lapidge, 'The Hermeneutic Style in Tenth-Century Anglo-Latin Literature', *ASE* 4 (1975): 67–111, at pp. 73–5.

The subject matter of *De uirginitate* places this work within a well-established tradition of patristic discourse on virginity.<sup>4</sup> Aldhelm's use of the *opus geminatum* form to structure his treatise, however, is unparalleled in any of the surviving late antique discussions on this topic.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, Bede asserts that Aldhelm modelled his work on the *Carmen* and *Opus Paschale* of the fifth-century poet Caelius Sedulius, a hugely popular *opus geminatum* on Christ's life and miracles.<sup>6</sup> Aldhelm's choice of literary form, moreover, is not the only feature of his work that differs from the earlier tracts on virginity by the Church Fathers. Both the prose and verse volumes of *De uirginitate* open with a theoretical discussion of the concept of virginity, which is then followed by a catalogue of male and female virgins (whose *passiones* and *uitae* illustrate how the theory worked in practice). These lists of saints also constitute a radical departure from the late antique treatises in which virginity tended to be discussed in relation to women, regardless of whether or not the intended audience was solely female. One further difference between *De uirginitate* and the patristic tracts is, of course, Aldhelm's unique outlook on the three

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<sup>4</sup> Lapidge and Herren, *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, p. 52. Patristic Treatises include: Cyprian, *De habitu uirginum* (G. Hartel (ed.), *S. Thasci Caecili Cypriani Opera omnia*, 3 vols., CSEL 3.1–3 (Vienna, 1868–71), I, 185–205); Tertullian, *De uirginibus uelandis* (PL 2, 935–62); Ambrose, *De uirginibus* (E. Cazzaniga (ed.), *De uirginibus libri tres*, Corpus Scriptorum Latinorum Paravianum (Turin, 1948)); Augustine, *De sancta uirginitate* (J. Zycha (ed.), *Sancti Aurelii Augustini Opera*, CSEL 41 (Vienna, 1900), pp. 233–302) and Jerome, *Epistula xxii* (I. Hilberg (ed.), *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulae*, 3 vols., CSEL 54–56 (Vienna, 1910–18; repr. with indices and additional notes by M. Kamptner, Vienna, 1996), I, 143–211).

<sup>5</sup> P. Godman, 'The Anglo-Latin *Opus Geminatum*: From Aldhelm to Alcuin', *Medium Aevum* 50 (1981): 215–29, at pp. 217–18. Peter Godman notes that the first Christian writer to employ this form was Juvencus (*fl.* c. 330), who produced a verse paraphrase of selected extracts from the Bible. The most important works in relation to the development of the Christian *opus geminatum*, however, are the *Carmen* and *Opus paschale* of Caelius Sedulius (*fl.* c. 425–50), who was the first author to paraphrase his own work.

<sup>6</sup> Lapidge and Rosier, *Aldhelm: The Poetic Works*, p. 98, quoting Bede's *HE* V.18. (B. Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (eds.), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, 1969), pp. 512–17). Gernot Wieland, however, suggests the possibility that Aldhelm may have modelled his *opus geminatum* on an earlier patristic model. Aldhelm clearly knew Jerome's (c. 340–420) *Epistula xxii* (since he directly refers to it at *Dlu* xlix), in which Jerome instructed the virgin Eustochium to consult a number of well-known patristic treatises on virginity, including those by Ambrose (c. 340–397) and Cyprian (d. 258). In addition, she was also to read a work (now lost) by Damasus (c. 304–84), which is described in terms reminiscent of an *opus geminatum*: 'lege...et papae Damasi super hac re uersu prosaque composita...' (xii.22). (G. Wieland, 'Geminus Stilus: Studies in Anglo-Latin Hagiography', in M. Herren (ed.), *Insular Latin Studies: papers on Latin texts and manuscripts of the British Isles, 550–1066* (Toronto, 1989), pp. 113–33, at p. 119). Several points, however, must be kept in mind with regards to this suggestion. First, Damasus may have composed a prosimetrum treatise on virginity, employing both prose and verse within the same text (on this subject see P. Dronke, *Verses with Prose from Petronius to Dante: The Art and Scope of the Mixed Form* (London, 1994). This suggestion remains unlikely, since Jerome's description seems to imply more than one work. Second, if Damasus had composed an *opus geminatum* his work would have been a notable innovation, because the genre is believed to have emerged around sixty years later with the works of Caelius Sedulius. (Godman, 'The Anglo-Latin *Opus Geminatum*', p. 217). Third, it is possible that Damasus merely composed two unconnected works on one of the greatly debated subjects of his day. For example, Ambrose composed both a verse and prose account of Agnes' martyrdom that shared no connection beyond the same subject. Overall, it remains most likely that it was Aldhelm who first employed the *opus geminatum* style for a treatise on virginity.

forms of chaste lifestyle that a Christian could lead. In the works of the Church Fathers, these three states of existence are listed as virginity, widowhood and marriage, whereas Aldhelm names them as virginity, chastity and marriage (*Dlu* xix).<sup>7</sup> The alteration of widowhood to chastity is thought to reflect an Anglo-Saxon custom, and one contrary to Biblical teaching, whereby both men and women could dissolve their marriages in order to enter a monastery.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, Aldhelm's new scheme opens up the rewards of the virginal life to divorcees who had previously been excluded under the patristic system.

Aldhelm's striking innovation of discussing virginity alongside chastity with reference to both genders also raises questions over his intended audience, a frequently debated subject amongst researchers. For many centuries scholars have followed William of Malmesbury's deduction from *Dlu*'s opening list of dedicatees that the work was written for Abbess Hildelith and the nuns of the East-Saxon double monastery of Barking.<sup>9</sup> *Dlu*'s concluding promise of a subsequent metrical treatise on virginity should the nuns encourage Aldhelm to write one, has also led scholars to presume that the *Cdu* was likewise intended for the same community.<sup>10</sup> Recently, this assumption has been challenged by Emma Pettit and Scott Gwara, who have argued that whilst William was probably correct to identify Hildelith as the Abbess of Barking, the remainder of the dedicatees were not members of her house. A number of these women have been tentatively identified as the abbesses of double monasteries scattered across the kingdom of Wessex and just beyond its borders.<sup>11</sup> If this is the case, then it would appear that Aldhelm's primary audience was not merely the female nuns of Barking, but the heads and, no doubt, also the female and male religious of numerous double houses. This hypothesis, of course, would also explain Aldhelm's unique dual-gendered catalogue of virgins.<sup>12</sup>

In the previous chapter I argued that the *PSA*'s account of Agnes' martyrdom was constructed to appeal primarily to a female audience. *De uirginitate* on the other hand appears to provide an opportunity to examine a didactic depiction of virginity, as personified by the figure of the virgin martyr, aimed at both sexes. Furthermore, Aldhelm's innovative alterations to several prominent and common features of patristic discourse on

<sup>7</sup> Lapidge and Herren, *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, pp. 53–6.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 54–6. St Paul forbids the practice of divorce at I *Cor* 8.10–11.

<sup>9</sup> Gwara, *Aldhelmi Malmesbiriensis*, p. 47.

<sup>10</sup> Lapidge and Rosier, *Aldhelm: The Poetic Works*, p. 97.

<sup>11</sup> Gwara, *Aldhelmi Malmesbiriensis*, pp. 47–54, and Pettit, 'Aldhelm's *Opus Geminatum*', pp. 72–85.

<sup>12</sup> Lapidge and Herren, *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, pp. 56–7.

virginity indicate that his understanding and interpretation of Agnes' legend will differ considerably to the *PSA*.

The following discussion has a three-fold purpose: first, I shall demonstrate that the narrative structures of Aldhelm's two accounts of Agnes' legend were based almost entirely on the late antique *PSA*. Second, a detailed analysis of *De uirginitate*'s prose and verse accounts of Agnes' martyrdom will reveal that, although both discuss the same saint using an identical basic narrative structure, Aldhelm actually produced two remarkably different versions. Finally, the chapter will conclude by exploring the issues raised in the preceding section in order to reveal how the differences between the two versions shed light on Aldhelm's views about virginity.

### 2.1 *The Narrative Elements in the Passio Sanctae Agnetis and Aldhelm's De uirginitate*

The table in Appendix 2.1 illustrates that Aldhelm based virtually the entire narrative structure of his two renditions of Agnes' death on the *PSA*, although some elements are only found in either the *Dlu* or *Cdu*.<sup>13</sup> Thus all of the narrative scenes found in Aldhelm's two works (apart from two exceptions discussed below) are based on those found in the *PSA*. Aldhelm's close adherence to the *PSA*'s account is highly significant, since it appears that he was familiar with at least some, if not all, of the four fourth-century versions of Agnes' martyrdom, which predate this text: Damasus' epigram, Ambrose's *De uirginibus* and hymn *Agnes beatae uirginis*, and Prudentius' *Peristephanon*.<sup>14</sup> Certainly Aldhelm seems to have been acquainted with Prudentius' poem for he paraphrases *Pe.* xiv.25 at *Cdu* 1952.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, if Lapidge's conjecture that Aldhelm's double treatise as a whole was modelled on Ambrose's *De uirginibus* is correct, then Aldhelm would also

<sup>13</sup> See pp. 266–7. *De uirginitate*'s two accounts are roughly similar in length. In Ehwald's edition, the *Dlu* equates to 29 lines of prose text and the *Cdu* to 50 lines of verse text. If one line of verse is viewed as roughly half a prose line, then the *Cdu* equates to around 25 lines of prose. The narrative in *Dlu* is the more complex of the two accounts, retaining three more components from the *PSA* than the *Cdu* (see Appendix 2.1). According to Ehwald's critical apparatus, it is also the *Dlu* alone that contains a direct quote from the *PSA* (*Dlu* xlv.6–10 directly borrows from *PSA* 18–20, 23–4 and 32–4). Four additional paraphrases of the *PSA* are also noted for the *Dlu*: a) xlv.11–14 paraphrases *PSA* 91–99, b) xlv.16–18 and 25–6, *PSA* 106–13 and 129–41, c) xlv.26–27, *PSA* 164–7, and d) xlv.27–29, *PSA* 193–215. In contrast, the *Cdu* account of Agnes' martyrdom owes surprisingly little to the *PSA*'s actual text; it contains no direct quotes and only one paraphrase. Agnes' reported rejection speech to her suitor (*Cdu* 1942–1945) faintly echoes the *PSA*'s speech at lines 18–38, although this may be a second-hand borrowing via Aldhelm's abridgement of the same speech at *Dlu* xlv.6–10.

<sup>14</sup> See pp. 17–21. The *Peristephanon* is hereafter abbreviated to *Pe*.

<sup>15</sup> Ehwald, *Aldhelmi Opera*, p. 433 indicates that *Cdu* 1952: 'Truditur ad tetrum scortorum casta lupanar', is an allusion to *Pe.* xiv.25–6: 'Hanc in lupanar trudere publicam / certum est... .' (M.P. Cunningham (ed.), *Aurelii Prudentii Clementis Carmina*, CCSL 126 (Turnhout, 1966), pp. 251–389, at p. 387).

have known at least one of Ambrose's renditions of Agnes' martyrdom.<sup>16</sup> There is also a slight possibility that several features of Aldhelm's accounts originate from the fourth-century sources. Ambrose and Prudentius each depicted Agnes as a *sponsa Christi* (bride of Christ) and the *Pe.* also contains an account of Agnes' incarceration in a brothel.<sup>17</sup> Both of these narrative elements, however, are also incorporated into the *PSA*'s rendition and it seems more probable that Aldhelm borrowed them from this particular source.

*De uirginitate*'s two new and additional scenes (one per treatise) also have possible links to the earlier accounts. The comparison of Agnes to the Ark of the Testament (*Dlu* xlv.19–21) may have been inspired by a line of Damasus' epigram where he compares Agnes' body to the *Domini templum* (line 8), which of course housed the Ark. Furthermore, the heavenly beam of light that frees Agnes' eyes from the darkness of her prison (*Cdu* 1946–51) may be a reversal of Prudentius' celestial thunderbolt that blinds the youth who dares to gaze upon Agnes' naked body (*Pe.* xiv.43–9).<sup>18</sup> Neither of the earlier sources, however, provides an exact match for Aldhelm's additions.

Indeed, it is striking that unique features of each of the fourth-century sources are clearly absent from Aldhelm's account. Thus in neither the *Dlu* nor the *Cdu* does Agnes flee from her nurse's embrace and achieve martyrdom amidst the flames of a pyre as she does in Damasus' epigram (3 and 5). Ambrose's descriptions of Agnes' encouragement to her hesitating and fearful executioner (*De uirginibus*, I.ii.9) and her death beside the altars where she refused to sacrifice (*Agnes beatae uirginis*, verses 5–8) are similarly not present. Even Prudentius' poem, which certainly influenced Aldhelm's verse, appears to have had little impact on *De uirginitate*'s narrative content. Accordingly, neither the impudent youth who gazed on Agnes' body only to be blinded by a thunderbolt by heaven, nor Agnes' passionate speech to her executioner and subsequent ascent to heaven are mentioned in the two Insular versions (*Pe.* xiv.43–60, 69–84 and 91–123). Consequently, the use of the *PSA*

<sup>16</sup> Lapidge and Herren, *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, p. 56. See also Lapidge, 'The Career of Aldhelm', pp. 53–64 who suggests that during his trip to Rome in 668–9, Aldhelm encountered a number of the *tituli* written by Pope Damasus for various Roman martyrs. Echoes of at least five of Damasus' compositions have been detected in Aldhelm's works, although Damasus' inscription from Agnes' church in Rome is not among them.

<sup>17</sup> Prudentius' *Peristephanon* (xiv.25–30 and 38–9) was (probably) the first account of Agnes' martyrdom to include the brothel scene. References to Agnes as a bride of Christ can be found in both Prudentius (*Pe.* xiv.79) and Ambrose (*De uirginibus* I.ii.8–9; *Agnes beatae uirginis*, verse 4). (J. Fontaine (ed.), *Ambroise de Milan: Hymnes* (Paris, 1992), pp. 376–403, at p. 377). Most of the additional narrative elements such as the suitor and the divine protection of Agnes at the brothel appear to originate with the author of the *PSA*. For further discussion of the earliest accounts of Agnes' martyrdom see pp. 17–27.

<sup>18</sup> See also p. 80.

as *De uirginitate*'s main source appears to have been a deliberate choice. Aldhelm's reliance on this text might also suggest that not only was the *PSA* known in England by the end of the seventh century, but that it was the most widely read and recognised account of Agnes' martyrdom.<sup>19</sup>

Whilst Aldhelm clearly drew heavily upon the *PSA*, the exclusion of certain elements from this text also sheds light on his intentions in adapting this account. The most striking omission in both the *Dlu* and *Cdu* is that of the suitor's father, the *PSA*'s main judicial figure. This exclusion has two major effects. First, it means that a debate on paganism can be avoided, with the consequence that the contest between chastity and marriage becomes the central focus of the tale. As a result, Agnes now has only one opponent to conquer. Thus Aldhelm is able to represent her martyrdom as a clear combat between chastity and carnal desire. Second, the reduction of the *dramatis personae* to only two central characters may also explain the omission of the suitor's conversion in both the prose and verse *De uirginitate*. Readers are allowed no opportunity to feel sympathy for the suitor; instead, they are consistently presented with two opposing forces at war with each other. In short, it is now a starker and more black and white combat between good and evil.

Various other minor omissions can also be detected by studying Appendix 2.1. These include the removal of Simpronius' order that Agnes sacrifice to Vesta and the omission of the pyre scene; the sequence of miraculous happenings at the brothel is only partially retained in the *Dlu* and removed completely from the *Cdu*.<sup>20</sup> These alterations will be examined in detail in the following section, where I explore Aldhelm's subtle changes to the *PSA*.

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<sup>19</sup> Numerous manuscripts of the *PSA* ascribe the work to Ambrose of Milan (including the three surviving Anglo-Saxon manuscripts). It is possible that Aldhelm knew of this claim and thus viewed the text as the authoritative version of her legend; however, he makes no reference to Ambrose's alleged authorship in either of his two notices for Agnes.

<sup>20</sup> For Vesta see *PSA* 58–60 and 74–9. For the pyre scene see *PSA* 147–64. For the miracles at the brothel see *PSA* 93–106.

## 2.2 *St Agnes in Aldhelm's Two Accounts of her Martyrdom*

Aldhelm concludes the *Cdu* with a *captatio benevolentiae*: a plea to his readers to contemplate his work in a kindly manner and to pray for him.<sup>21</sup> Four lines of this conclusion reveal how Aldhelm himself wished *De uirginitate* to be studied:

*Nunc in fine precor prosam metrumque legentes,  
Hoc opus ut cuncti rimentur mente benigna,  
Dum patulis lustrent textum sub fronte fenestris,  
Quod geminum constat discretis forte libellis... (Cdu 2867–70)<sup>22</sup>*

The *opus geminatum* is to be regarded as a single work, with the implication that Aldhelm wished his readers to study the prose and verse accounts together in order to fully understand *De uirginitate*'s overall message.<sup>23</sup> Modern readers, however, tend to focus upon either the *Dlu* or *Cdu*. Indeed, the same appears to be true for the medieval world, where manuscript evidence suggests that few, if any, followed Aldhelm's plea to study these two texts together.<sup>24</sup> Consequently, the following discussion offers a new case study, which simultaneously analyses *De uirginitate*'s two corresponding narratives of Agnes' martyrdom in order to explore Aldhelm's intentions and to reveal how the two accounts both differ from and complement one another.

Table 2.1: *Agnes' Initial Appearance*<sup>25</sup>

<i>De laude uirginitatis</i>	<i>Carmen de uirginitate</i>
<i>Sed et operae pretium uidetur, ut gloriosum illustris Agnae exemplar caelibes integritatis aemulatores et carnalis spurciciae contemptores minime lateat, quinimmo eiusdem uirginalis propositi participibus et castae sodalitatatis consortibus innotescat.</i> (xlv.1–4) <sup>26</sup>	<i>Floruit in mundo quaedam uirguncula Christi, Agne cui nomen prisca dixere parentes. Inclita haec fuerat flagrans uirtute pudoris, – aetatis decimus necnon et tertius annus fluxerat in terris – cum primo glesceret aeuo illuuiem mundi contemnens corde nefandam.</i> (1925–30) <sup>27</sup>

<sup>21</sup> For a discussion of this rhetorical device see E.R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. W. Trask, Bollingen Series 36 (Princeton, NJ, 1953), pp. 407–13.

<sup>22</sup> 'Now, at the end, I beseech those reading my prose and verse to peruse this work thoroughly with a kindly mind while, with their eyes open, they survey the text which is by chance two-fold in two distinct books...'

<sup>23</sup> Both Godman ('The Anglo-Latin *Opus Geminatum*', p. 220) and Wieland ('*Geminus Stilus*', p. 123) agree that Aldhelm's *De uirginitate* was composed as one work in two parts, as opposed to two separate tracts on the same subject.

<sup>24</sup> Godman, 'The Anglo-Latin *Opus Geminatum*', p. 221. The one known medieval exception appears to be Bede, who notes in his *HE* (V.18) that Aldhelm: 'scripsit et de uirginitate librum eximium, quem in exemplum Sedulii geminato opere, et uersibus exametris, et prosa composuit' – ('He (i.e. Aldhelm) also wrote a most excellent book on virginity both in hexameter verse and in prose, producing a two-fold work after the example of Sedulius').

<sup>25</sup> The underlining used in Tables 2.1–2.5 indicates the principal points of interest in each passage.

The opening lines of each account immediately signal the extent to which Aldhelm intentionally produced two very different portraits of Agnes. The *PSA* commences by describing Agnes' feminine attributes of maidenhood, beauty and love for Christ in order to heighten the reader's sympathy for her forthcoming trials. In the *Dlu*, Aldhelm omits these traits and replaces them with far more masculine language of a distinctly military flavour.<sup>28</sup> Accordingly, the prose account casts Agnes as a heroic warrior, a *gloriosum...exemplar* (xlv.1), whose deeds are worthy of celebration by poets and emulation by those who likewise wish to preserve their chastity.

In contrast, the parallel section of the *Cdu* presents Agnes as a delicate young maiden rather than a warrior. Agnes' vulnerability is emphasised, not only by the statement that she was merely thirteen when she was executed, but also through the use of the diminutive *uirguncula* (1925). Two additional strands of imagery woven into Aldhelm's Latin also develop this portrayal. The first is the emotion of love, noticeable for its absence in the *Dlu*, but explicitly stated in the *Cdu*. Agnes is said to *flagrans uirtute pudoris* (1927), an emotion later elaborated upon when she outlines her love for Christ (1942–5). The second motif is the theme of nature that runs through the description of Agnes' childhood. This idea is evoked by the use of three particular verbs: *florere* (1925), *fluere* (1929) and *gliscere* (1929).<sup>29</sup> The depiction of Agnes blossoming into life like a flower appears to have two purposes: first, it reinforces the gentle feminine characterisation already achieved by the use of the diminutive noun. Second, the motifs of plant life and flowing water recall imagery from *Ct*, which contains some of the most frequently used metaphors in relation to the concept of the bride of Christ, a status that Agnes will later

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<sup>26</sup> 'And there seems (to be a great) worth to this labour, so that the glorious exemplar of illustrious Agnes should not lie hidden by any means from the unmarried emulators of integrity and disdainers of carnal dung, and indeed should become known to the participants of that same virginal intention and to comrades of the pure brotherhood.'

<sup>27</sup> 'A certain little virgin of Christ flowered in the world, to whom (her) ancient parents appointed the name of Agnes. This celebrated girl had been passionately blazing with the virtue of chastity – and yet (only) the thirteenth year of (her) life arose on the earth – she increased with the first life, despising with her heart the abominable filth of the world.'

<sup>28</sup> Compare *PSA* 5–8 to *Dlu* xlv.1–4 (see Table 2.1). *PSA*: 'Tempore illo erat quaedam uirgo Romae nobilis generis orta natalibus, nomine Agnes, quae, certans contra principes et potestates tenebrarum, tertio decimo aetatis suae anno mortem perdidit et uitam inuenit quia uitae solum dilexit auctorem.' See also M. Lapidge, 'Beowulf, Aldhelm, the *Liber Monstrorum* and Wessex', *Studi Medievali* 3<sup>rd</sup> ser. 23 (1982): 151–92; repr. in his *Anglo Latin Literature, 600–899* (London, 1996), pp. 271–312, at p. 279, who argues that Aldhelm portrayed virginity as a 'vigorously aggressive virtue.'

<sup>29</sup> *L&S* s.v. *florere* *ere ui* – to bloom, blossom, flower; *fluere* *ere xi xum* – to flow (often used of water in rivers and streams) and *gliscere* *ere* – to grow or swell up.

claim (1942). Indeed, one particular passage from *Ct* encapsulates the images employed within this section:

*hortus conclusus soror mea sponsa hortus conclusus fons signatus (Ct 4.12)*<sup>30</sup>

In other words, the opening sections of the *Dlu* and *Cdu* set forth two contrasting images of Agnes: a warrior seeking to defend her chastity versus the gentle maiden who desires a marriage to Christ.

Table 2.2: *The Suitor's Proposal*

<i>De laude uirginitatis</i>	<i>Carmen de uirginitate</i>
<p><i>Quae pro integritate seruanda omnem ornamentorum gloriam a proco, praefecti filio, oblatam, quatenus optata impetraret conubia, ut lurida fetentis cloacae uolutabra contempnens huiuscemodi responsa reddidisse fertur: 'Discede a me, fomes peccati, nutrimentum facinoris, pabulum mortis, quia iam ab alio amatore praeuenta sum, qui me anulo fidei suae subarrauit, circumdedit me uernantibus atque coruscantibus gemmis, induit me ciclade auro texta, cuius pater feminam nescit, cuius mater uirgo est, cui angeli seruiunt, cuius pulchritudinem sol et luna admirantur'.</i> (xliv.4–10)<sup>31</sup></p>	<p><i>Sed procus illustrem praefecti filius Agnam, qui famosus erat regali fasce, togatus subnixis precibus thalamis adsciscere nitens aurea cum rubris offert crepundia gemmis necnon argenti spondendo plura talenta, nititur intactam donorum fallere uisco, sicut auem nectit nodosis retibus auceps. Sed mox letiferam sensit uirguncula cladem, crebrius hauriret si spurcas aure loquelas aut pulsaretur probrosis uirgo labellis: muscipulam metuens spreuit sermone petulcum. Nam sponsam potius spondebat se fore Christi uirgineo semper seruantem foedere corpus, qui se rite subarrauit cum dote fidei anulus et cuius sacrauit membra puellae.</i> (1931–45)<sup>32</sup></p>

<sup>30</sup> 'My sister, my spouse, is a garden enclosed, a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed up.' Interestingly, this verse is one of only two direct references to *Ct* used throughout the entire *Cdu*, both of which occur in the notice for the Virgin Mary. *Ct* 4.12 is alluded to at lines 1698–9 and Aldhelm then refers to Mary as a dove (1700), which recalls a number of passages from *Ct*, including 2.14 and 5.2. See also fn. 38.

<sup>31</sup> '(Agnes), who for the sake of guarding her chastity, (and) despising like the ghastly hog pools of a stinking drain all the glory of the ornaments offered by (her) suitor, the son of the Prefect, in order that he might procure (his) desired marriage, in this manner gave such a reply: 'Depart from me, tinder of sin, food of crime, nourishment of death, since I have already been taken by another lover, who has betrothed me with the ring of his faith and has surrounded me with spring flowers and glittering gems, he has clothed me with a robe woven from gold, whose father knows no woman, whose mother is a virgin, the angels serve him, and the sun and moon wonder at his beauty.'

<sup>32</sup> 'But (Agnes') suitor, the son of the Prefect, a Roman citizen, who was renowned for his royal authority, (endeavouring) by supported entreaties to receive noble Agnes (into) a marriage-bed, offers a shining gold amulet with red gems, and also by promising many talents of silver, he endeavours to deceive the untouched (maiden) with the birdlime of gifts, just as a bird catcher binds a bird with knotted snares. But straightaway the little virgin perceived the fatal misfortune if she repeatedly took in these impure words with her ears, or if she, a virgin, should be struck by his shameful little lips: fearing the mousetrap, she rejected the lascivious man with a speech. For she vowed that she would rather be the bride of Christ constantly preserving her body with a virginal treaty, who, with due religious observances, betrothed her with a dowry of faith, and whose ring dedicated the girl's limbs.'

In terms of thematic development within the *Dlu* and *Cdu*, these sections perform two central tasks. Not only do they continue to expand the contrasting masculine and feminine portrayals of Agnes initiated by the opening lines of each account, but, in conjunction with these, they also introduce the notion of deeds versus words.

The prose account further emphasises Agnes' warrior traits through the manner in which the saint is presented as the dominant agent in the narrative. Indeed, the suitor is physically banished from the text at this point, leaving only his gifts as a reminder of his existence (xlv.4–5). Aldhelm also grants Agnes the power of direct speech, which can be thought of as a masculine trait if one recalls classical ideals and early Christian prohibitions on women preaching.<sup>33</sup> Agnes' demonstration of rhetorical ability here also connects her to civilised society, unlike her suitor, who, as the tale progresses, is increasingly equated with immoderate and uncivilised behaviour.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, at no point in the *Dlu* account does Aldhelm provide the suitor with an opportunity for either direct or indirect speech. Finally, the way Agnes' words repel the suitor from her chaste body, as if she was defending a castle against besiegers, provides yet another example of the military overtones present in this passage. At xlv.4, Aldhelm employs the verb *seruare* to describe how Agnes wishes to guard her chastity. This word implies the protection of an object and consequently strengthens the notions of defence and fortification that run through this section.<sup>35</sup>

The actual content of Agnes' speech in the prose version is also of great interest. Aldhelm presents a four-line adaptation of the *PSA*'s account of the saint's first reply to her suitor (*PSA* 18–38).<sup>36</sup> This abbreviated quotation introduces nuptial imagery into Aldhelm's masculine depiction of the saint, a theme that at first glance seems out of place. The *PSA*'s sexually explicit language is largely omitted, however, which reinforces the argument that Agnes' love for Christ does not constitute the prose account's most

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<sup>33</sup> P. Brown, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire* (Madison, WI, 1992), in particular c.2 'Paideia and Power', pp. 35–70. Here Brown outlines the ideals of refined and educated speech cultivated by the male governing elite as a status symbol. See also I *Cor* 14.34: 'mulieres in ecclesiis taceant non enim permittitur eis loqui...' – ('Let women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted them to speak...').

<sup>34</sup> E.g. xlv.16–18: 'Nam cum praefatus obscenitatis amator flammis carnalibus succensus lupanar...aggrederetur, ut uirgini sacratissimae spurca lenocinii ludibria labris procacibus irrogaret...'. See fn. 44 for translation. The description of the suitor's fellow pagan citizens as animals further demeans his character by association, e.g. xlv.22–5: '...ut insultatores catholicae fidei...balbis buccarum labellis obmutescerent et porcinus paganorum strepitus contra immunem ecclesiae castitatem saeuens spumosis dentibus acriter grunnire desisteret...'. See fn. 67 for translation.

<sup>35</sup> '...pro integritate seruanda...' (xlv.4).

<sup>36</sup> See fn. 31.

prominent theme. Furthermore, although the speech may not directly reinforce the image of Agnes as a warrior, its focus of the notion of the family once again associates Agnes with civilised society.

The *Dlu's* depiction of the martyr's *parrhesia* stands apart from the *Cdu's* presentation of Agnes as a vulnerable and silent figure. Here it is the suitor who controls the proposal scene, although, in contrast to the prose account, he is associated with words rather than material wealth. In the verse account, the suitor comes with only one gift, a gold and ruby amulet, and his marriage proposal consists largely of seductive verbal entreaties to the saint (1934–5). The connection between the suitor and dangerous words is developed by two *leit-motifs* running throughout this narrative, which artistically complement the use of the nature theme associated with Agnes.

On one level the suitor is portrayed as a sorcerer offering Agnes a *crepundia* (amulet) and attempting to ensnare her with his words as if he were casting a spell upon her (1934).<sup>37</sup> Aldhelm specifies that it is the power of his words to sway her that the saint fears the most; hence, Agnes' own rejection speech can be interpreted as a counter-incantation against his charm. The second feature of the suitor's characterisation is his depiction as a hunter who attempts to ensnare the virgin within his traps (1936–7). This metaphor not only serves to reinforce the depiction of Agnes as a vulnerable young girl, now represented as a hunted wild creature, but once again evokes *Ct*. The suitor is specifically described as a bird trapper and Agnes as his prey, an image intended to recall the bride of *Ct*, who alongside her association with gardens and flowers is also compared to a dove.<sup>38</sup>

As in the *Dlu*, the *Cdu* also contains an adaptation of the *PSA's* opening speech; only here the verse account constitutes a condensed version of the adaptation already used in the prose narrative (1942–5). Recast into indirect discourse, it maintains the submissive characterisation of Agnes used throughout the *Cdu* account; it also highlights how the

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<sup>37</sup> For contemporary Insular ecclesiastical prohibitions on the use of amulets, see for example: a) Theodore of Canterbury's *Canones* II.x.5, which permits the use of amulets for those possessed by a devil (which are presumably therefore forbidden in all other circumstances). (P.W. Finsterwalder (ed.), *Die Canones Theodori Cantuariensis und ihre Überlieferungsformen* (Weimar, 1929), p. 324). See also A.J. Frantzen, *The Literature of Penance in Anglo-Saxon England* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1983), pp. 63–9, who argues that this work genuinely records Theodore's judgements. b) Bede, *HE* IV.27, who praises Cuthbert for dissuading his congregation from the pagan use of amulets. Both of these passages are noted by A.L. Meaney, *Anglo-Saxon Amulets and Curing Stones*, BAR, British Series 96 (Oxford, 1981), pp. 13–14. Aldhelm's description of a gold amulet with red gems may also reflect contemporary artefacts, if one recalls the tradition of Anglo-Saxon gold jewellery inlaid with red garnets. Indeed, Meaney tentatively identifies four such pieces found in graves as amulets (*Ibid.*, pp. 30, 193, 218 and 230).

<sup>38</sup> For dove imagery in *Ct* see: 1.14, 2.14, 4.1, 5.2, and 6.8. See also fn. 30.

power of words appears, at first, to be the weapon of her opponent. Once again, the most sexually explicit language of the *PSA*'s speech has been omitted; nonetheless, this retelling allows for a more feminine overtone through its explicit naming of Agnes as a bride of Christ (1942).

Collectively, these sections introduce and amplify the central themes of Aldhelm's two accounts: the dominant warrior verbally rejects the temptation of material wealth, whilst the hunted bride flees from the lure of seductive, treacherous words.

Table 2.3: *Agnes' Punishment and Tortures*

<i>De laude uirginitatis</i>	<i>Carmen de uirginitate</i>
<p><i>Et licet huius rei gratia ad inuisum prostibuli lupanar, <u>ubi scortorum detestanda obscenitas bachatur et frontosa mecharum impudentia turpiter stupratur, ad infame dedecus natalium propriis exuta uestibus truderetur, tamen corusco immensi luminis splendore uallata angelicis fruitur conspectibus et peplis donatur dominicis. O quanta est furibundae libidinis ferocitas et ediuerso quanta est reconciliati pudoris pietas!</u></i> (xlv.10–15)<sup>39</sup></p>	<p><i>Plurima quapropter patiens discrimina uirgo pertulit in terris insons ergastula tetra, <u>sed prius aspectans certantis bella puellae Arbiter horrendas discussit carceris umbras et clarum e caelo lumen de lumine fudit, uirginis ut tenebras non ferrent lumina furuas. Truditur ad tetrum scortorum casta lupanar, quatenus incesti fuscetur crimine uirgo almaque probrosis notetur uita loquelis, quae infamare student bernarum nomina Christi, ut lacerare solent latrantes fauce molosi.</u></i> (1946–56)<sup>40</sup></p>

The divergence between the two accounts continues to grow as the narratives reach Agnes' incarceration in the brothel. Aldhelm's efforts to disassociate Agnes from the language of passionate love in the *Dlu* have been noted above; however, during the prose account's brothel scene graphic sexual imagery suddenly floods into the tale (xlv.11–12). The striking feature of this language is that it is strictly used solely in relation to Agnes'

<sup>39</sup> 'Although on account of this matter she was thrust into a hateful brothel of whores – stripped of her own clothes and to the notorious shame of her family – where the detestable obscenity of prostitutes revels in a wanton manner and the bold shamelessness of adulterers is dishonourably debauched; however, having been fortified by the splendid gleaming of an immense light, she enjoyed angelic visions and was given the robe of the Lord. O how great is the ferocity of rampant sexual passion, and on the contrary how great is the gentleness of reconciled propriety.'

<sup>40</sup> 'Wherefore the innocent virgin, enduring many dangers, suffered foul prisons on earth, but first, (whilst) gazing upon the contest of the girl's struggles, the Judge shattered the prison's fearful shadows and hurled a brilliant beam of light from heaven so that the virgin's eyes did not endure the gloomy darkness. The pure maiden was (then) thrust into a foul brothel of prostitutes, in order that she be darkened by impure slander and that her bountiful life be marked by disgraceful words, which strive to disgrace the names of Christ's household, just as barking hounds are accustomed to lacerate (their victims) by the throat.'

opponents. In marked contrast, in the *Cdu* it is the virgin who possesses the emotions of love and desire for Christ, whereas her opponents lack virtually any trace of carnal lust. In the *Dlu*, the brothel is described as a place of diabolical and wanton actions against which the warrior saint must fight. In conjunction with the image of Agnes defending the fortress of her body noted above, it is also crucial to perceive the attempted penetration in this scene. The Romans strip the saint and attempt to ensure the loss of her virginity, but the result is the spiritual fortification of Agnes' body against both impure gaze and touch through the wall of light and the heavenly garment.<sup>41</sup>

The prose account's brothel miracles will be considered in more detail below together with the comparison of Agnes to the Ark of the Testament. Aldhelm's subtle change to Agnes' angelic guardian, however, merits a brief consideration at this point. In the *PSA*, the angel clearly acts as Agnes' protector at the brothel; however, in the *Dlu* she is said to enjoy angelic visions. Visions of angels are a common hagiographic motif. For example, they are often found in the early lives of the Desert Fathers where the virginity and holiness of the saint enables him or her to behold those beings whose life he or she imitates.<sup>42</sup> Aldhelm may have altered this motif to reinforce Agnes' saintly stature. This modification, however, allows him to dispense with the *PSA*'s angelic guardian, who is hardly a fitting companion for a warrior.

The parallel brothel scene in the *Cdu* opens with the first of Aldhelm's two additions to Agnes' tale: she is initially confined in a prison and later saved from the terrifying darkness by a celestial shaft of light (1946–51). In some ways this element of the scene is more of an adaptation than an addition, since the inspiration for the shining beam probably came from the miraculous wall of light found in the *PSA* and *Dlu*.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, this alteration has several important consequences for the type of divine aid that Agnes receives. First, it serves to emphasise the portrayal of the saint as a young girl, terrified, alone in the dark, and in need of a divine protector. Second, the replacement of the *PSA*'s

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<sup>41</sup> It is interesting that Agnes is only stripped of her earthly clothes in the *Dlu*. It is possible the Aldhelm intended his reader to imagine Agnes as an athlete of Christ stripping in order to prepare for a competition (cf *I Cor* 9.25). Alternatively, Aldhelm may have wished to direct his reader to view the heavenly robe as an allusion to the idea of 'putting on Christ' contained in *Rm* 13.14 and *Gal* 3.27. One final option is that Aldhelm used Agnes' tale to comment on how one should leave behind secular garments on entering a monastery. This reading ties in well with the complaints that he makes elsewhere in the *Dlu* (lv–lvi) about the finery worn by some contemporary religious.

<sup>42</sup> J. Bugge, *Virginitas: An Essay in the History of a Medieval Idea* (The Hague, 1975), pp. 30–5. Bugge also notes that the first monastic rule is said to have been dictated to Pachomius by an angel.

<sup>43</sup> See also p. 72 for Prudentius' possible influence on this scene.

enclosing protective wall by a beam of light that frees Agnes' eyes from the darkness transforms God's intervention from an act of confinement to one of illumination, liberty and enlightenment.

Following Agnes' time in prison, the *Cdu* recounts her subsequent incarceration in the brothel. Here too Aldhelm makes a number of changes. There is no trace of the explicit language used in the *Dlu*; instead, the description of the brothel is reduced to a mere three words: ... *tetrum scortorum...lupanar* (1952). This change harmonises with the form of punishment envisaged for Agnes. The verse account explicitly states that the saint is sentenced to the brothel so that she might be ...*incesti fuscetur crimine...* (1953). This alteration not only serves to amplify the theme of the danger of words in the *Cdu*, but also accentuates the pattern of enclosure versus exposure noted throughout both accounts. In the *Dlu*, the sexual language used to describe the brothel befits the physical danger Agnes faces: the threat of rape that would break open her defences and destroy her chastity. In the *Cdu*, Agnes faces the aural threat of foul words, with the implication that the pagans are trying to blacken and thus shroud her good name with slander. Aldhelm goes to great lengths to depict the magnitude of the threat associated with words by linking them to the hunting imagery applied earlier to the suitor. Lines 1953–56 liken slander to hunting dogs, a comparison vividly evoked by the use of *lacerare* to describe the effect of such language at 1956, as the verb possesses two meanings: to physically mutilate something, or to tear someone to pieces with words.

Overall, these sections serve to characterise Agnes' opponents and to intensify their existing traits in a manner consonant with *De uirginitate*'s two contrasting depictions of the virgin. Consequently, the prose suitor is linked to ideas of carnal desire, a physical attribute that Agnes in her guise as a *miles Christi* can actively fight against. In the verse account, however, the association of hunting and words is employed to reinforce the saint's role as a suffering victim, a caged bird (temporarily) imprisoned by the hunter's snare.

Table 2.4: *The Arrival of the Suitor at the Brothel*

<i>De laude uirginitatis</i>	<i>Carmen de uirginitate</i>
<p><i>Nam cum praefatus obscenitatis amator flammis carnalibus succensus lupanar cum sodalibus scelerum aggredereetur, ut uirgini sacratissimae spurca lenocinii ludibria labris procacibus irrogaret, caelestis irae mucrone perniciousiter percussus occubuit et, ueluti Oza arcam testamenti, ubi uirga pontificalis, quae fronderat, et urna aurea caelesti munere referta simulque tabulae decalogi litteris sulcatae recondebantur, profanis manibus contingere non metuens, ilico immaturae mortis uindictam exsoluit.</i> (xlv.16–21)<sup>44</sup></p>	<p><i>Tunc procus aduenit densa comitante caterua garrula uerbosis contorquens spicula labris, quod sua dispiceret castis conubia uotis; sed Deus, insontes qui semper iure triumphat, irae caelestis punit mucrone reatum. Nam dicto citius crudeli funere uitam liquerat horrendi contingens tartara Ditis, qui sanctam uoluit maculoso laedere gestu.</i> (1957–64)<sup>45</sup></p>

The climax of the battle between chastity and lust concludes when Agnes finally overcomes her suitor. The two modes of her victory once more reinforce the *miles Christi* / *sponsa Christi* contrast found in the *Dlu* and *Cdu* accounts.

In the prose narrative, the arrival of the suitor at the brothel marks his first physical appearance in the tale. Agnes' faith had already been tested against the temptation of material wealth and the threat posed by the brothel; the suitor's appearance thus marks her final and greatest challenge: a face-to-face confrontation with the personification of lust itself. At this stage the identification of the suitor with this vice is also emphasised for the reader through the vivid comparison of his desires to those of a pimp (xlv.16–18). Nevertheless, the suitor's evil intentions are thwarted by a swiftly inflicted celestial death that preserves Agnes' chastity; furthermore, the manner in which his demise is compared to Uzzah's death in II *Sm* 6.6–7 presents one of the most intriguing aspects of the *Dlu*'s notice.

<sup>44</sup> 'For when the aforementioned lover of obscenity kindled with carnal flames approached the brothel with his villainous companions, so that he might inflict the impure sports of a pimp's trade with shameless lips on the most sacred virgin, swiftly he lay at rest, destroyed by the sword of celestial anger, just as Uzzah, who, not fearing to touch the Ark of the Testament with (his) profane hands, where the pontifical rod which had put forth green leaves and the golden urn returned with a heavenly gift and the tablets carved with the words of the Decalogue were enclosed together, released the vengeance of an untimely death in that very place.'

<sup>45</sup> 'Then the suitor arrives with an accompanying dense band of men, hurling babbling arrows from his verbose lips, because, due to her chaste vows, she scorned their marriage. But God, who always leads the innocent ones in triumph with justice, punished the judged man with the sword of celestial anger. For more quickly than a word, he poured forth (his) life from the cruel corpse reaching the infernal regions of fearful Dis, who had desired to wound the holy (maiden) with a defiling gesture.'

### 2.2.1 *The Use of II Sm 6.6–7 in De laude uirginitatis xlv.19–21*

Despite Aldhelm's focus on the suitor in lines nineteen to twenty-one of the *Dlu*'s account, it is clear that the reader is expected to relate the reference concerning the Ark of the Testament to Agnes: just as Uzzah touched the Ark and was struck down by God, so too the suitor touches the virgin and receives an identical fate. The full significance of Aldhelm's figural characterisation and his alterations to the *PSA*'s theological message, however, are only revealed by a close analysis of his adaptation of the entire brothel scene from this passion. Three of the *PSA*'s four brothel miracles are retained in the *Dlu* with minor variations: the wall of shining light (xlv.13–14), Agnes' angelic guardian (xlv.14) and the appearance of a heavenly garment (xlv.14).<sup>46</sup> The previous chapter argued that in the *PSA* these miracles were based on Scriptural allusions drawn from *Ct* and *Apc* and functioned as a symbolic representation of Agnes' acceptance into heaven as a bride of Christ. Aldhelm's prose account of Agnes' martyrdom has already been noted for its masculine depiction of the virgin; therefore, it seems highly improbable that he would wish to maintain the feminine and nuptial imagery invoked by the *PSA*. The following discussion demonstrates just how strategically Aldhelm altered his account to suit Agnes in her guise as a *miles Christi*.

Various subtle alterations to the abovementioned miracles transform them from a representation of the pathway to heaven into an elaborate three-fold description of the Ark itself. Based upon passages from *Ex* and moving from depictions of the Ark's outer appearance to its inner centre, Aldhelm employs these miracles to present the symbolic transformation of Agnes' body into a figure of this most sacred of chests.

First, the wall of light sent to protect Agnes becomes an analogue for the pure gold propitiatory, or mercy seat, that covered the Ark:

...et propitiatorium de auro mundissimo duos cubitos et dimidium tenebit longitudo eius cubitum ac semissem latitudo (*Ex* 25.17)<sup>47</sup>

Not only do both light and gold reflecting light often shimmer, but the wall also shields Agnes from the gaze of the pagan onlookers, just as the propitiatory concealed the sacred contents of the Ark. This correlation might appear tenuous on its own, but it is reinforced by two further images. The *Dlu* goes on to narrate how Agnes, protected by the wall of

<sup>46</sup> Aldhelm omits the *PSA*'s account of how Agnes' hair suddenly grows to cover her nakedness (*PSA* 93–5).

<sup>47</sup> 'Thou shalt make also a propitiatory of the purest gold: the length thereof shall be two cubits and a half, and the breadth a cubit and a half' (*Ex* 25.17).

light, *angelicis fruitur conspectibus* (xlv.14). In the *PSA*, Agnes has only one angelic guardian; however, the change from a singular to plural angels makes perfect sense in relation to Aldhelm's comparison of the saint to the Ark. *Ex* tells us that the Ark was overlooked by the statues of two cherubim, who sat on the propitiatory:

(25.18) *duos quoque cherubin aureos et productiles facies ex utraque parte oraculi*  
 (25.19) *cherub unus sit in latere uno et alter in altero* (25.20) *utrumque latus propitiatorii tegant expandentes alas et operientes oraculum respiciantque se mutuo uersis uultibus in propitiatorium quo operienda est arca*<sup>48</sup>

The last of the *PSA*'s brothel miracles that Aldhelm chose to include in the *Dlu* is the clothing of Agnes with the heavenly garment. Once again Aldhelm makes a subtle, yet crucial, alteration. The *PSA* describes the celestial robe as *candidissima* (*PSA* 99), whilst the prose account omits any reference to the vestment's colour. Aldhelm appears to deliberately exclude the depiction of Agnes clothed in white, which likens her, amongst other images, to the bride of *Ct* (2.1) and to the saints who dwell in the New Jerusalem (*Apc* 7.13–16). If the start of the *Dlu* is recalled, however, Agnes states in her speech that her lover has clothed her in gold (xlv.9). Presumably, Aldhelm wished his readers to assume that this prophecy was enacted out in reality at the brothel through the provision of a golden robe. Once more, Aldhelm's alterations seem to consciously relate Agnes to aspects of the Ark, since *Ex* 25.11 describes how the Ark was covered both on the outside and on the inside with the purest gold:

*et deaurabis eam auro mundissimo intus et foris faciesque supra coronam auream per circuitum*<sup>49</sup>

It is clear that Aldhelm wished to modify the spiritual message of his source text. Questions remain, however, over the precise purpose behind his alterations of the *PSA*'s scriptural references to those from *Ex* concerning the Ark. One answer is provided by the characterisation of Agnes as a *miles Christi*. What Aldhelm has actually achieved is an ingenious reuse of the very narrative elements that evoked bridal imagery in the *PSA* to reinforce his characterisation of Agnes as a warrior in the *Dlu*. The OT contains numerous references to the Ark that relate to its power as a military symbol and to how it was often

<sup>48</sup> 'Thou shalt make also two cherubims of beaten gold, on the two sides of the oracle. / Let one cherub be on the one side, and the other on the other. / Let them cover both sides of the propitiatory, spreading their wings, and covering the oracle, and let them look one towards the other, their faces being turned towards the propitiatory wherewith the ark is to be covered' (*Ex* 25.18–20).

<sup>49</sup> 'And thou shalt overlay it (the ark) with the purest gold within and without: and over it thou shalt make a golden crown round about' (*Ex* 25.11).

carried into battle by the Israelite army to indicate that God was with them. For example, in *Ios* 6.4–5, the appearance of the Ark before the walls of Jericho heralds the city's destruction by the Lord.<sup>50</sup>

A second reason for Aldhelm's deployment of the Ark as a figure for Agnes concerns his concept of the rewards of virginity. Aldhelm preached that virgins would receive a place in heaven where they could lead the life of angels in the image of Christ.<sup>51</sup> If such views are considered in conjunction with allegorical and tropological interpretations of the Ark, the application of this image to Agnes resonates perfectly. In early Christian thought, the OT Temple symbolically represented three concurrent figures: Christ,<sup>52</sup> the Church<sup>53</sup> and the individual soul.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, the division of the OT Temple into the outer and inner sanctuaries was thought to prefigure the NT life, which also consisted of two stages: mortal and celestial life.<sup>55</sup> Thus the Church and each individual Christian strove to progress through the Temple in order to attain entrance to the Holy of Holies, heaven and Christ himself. The Ark, which was housed in the Holy of Holies, was also held to represent the same three concepts as the Temple.<sup>56</sup> The dominant trend amongst exegetes, however, appears to have focused upon the Ark as a figure of Christ: the Ark contained the tablets of the law, just as Christ contains all divine wisdom.

If these exegetical interpretations are linked to the imagery in the *Dlu*, then Agnes' miraculous protection at the brothel takes on a new theological significance. The figural depiction of the virgin as the Ark, an object that can be interpreted allegorically as a figure

<sup>50</sup> See also: *Nm* 10.35, *Ios* 3.13–17, *I Sm* 4.3–11 and 5.1–12.

<sup>51</sup> S. O'Sullivan, 'The Patristic Background to Aldhelm's *De uirginitate*', *Milltown Studies* 37 (1996): 56–64, at pp. 56–7. See pp. 94–8 for a more detailed discussion of Aldhelm's teaching on virginity.

<sup>52</sup> Following *Io* 2.19 and 21: 'Respondit Iesus et dixit eis soluite templum hoc et in tribus diebus excitabo illud... / ille autem dicebat de templo corporis sui' – ('Jesus answered, and said to them: Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up... / but he spoke of the temple of his body').

<sup>53</sup> Following *II Cor* 6.16: '...uos enim estis templum Dei uiui sicut dicit Deus...' – ('...for you are the temple of the living God, as God saith...').

<sup>54</sup> Following *I Cor* 3.16: 'nescitis quia templum Dei estis et Spiritus Dei habitat in uobis' – ('Know you not, that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you').

<sup>55</sup> The first author to expound this idea was the Eastern writer Origen (d. c. 253), whose works were later translated into Latin by Rufinus (c. 344–410). See Origen, *Homiliae in Levitico* IX.ix.2. (W.A. Baehrens (ed.), *Origenes Werke*, GCS 29 (Leipzig, 1920), pp. 280–507, at pp. 435–8).

<sup>56</sup> For the Ark as a figure of the individual soul see Jerome *epist.* xxii. 23–4; as a figure of the Church, see Ambrose *De uirginibus* l.i.2). Three further authors also argue that the Ark should be equated to Christ: Ambrose, *epist.* I (O. Faller (ed.), *Sancti Ambrosii Opera, pars x: epistulae et acta*, 4 vols. CSEL 82 (Vienna, 1968–96), I, 2–14); Augustine, *De civitate Dei* x.17 (B. Dombart and A. Kalb (eds.), *Sancti Aurelii Augustini De civitate Dei*, 2 vols., CCSL 47–8 (Turnhout, 1955), I, 291–2) and Bede, *De tabernaculo* 1.3 (D. Hurst (ed.), *Beda Venerabilis Opera pars ii: opera exegetica 2a*, CCSL 119a (Turnhout, 1969), pp. 5–139, at p. 13).

of Christ, utilises the hagiographical device of *imitatio Christi*. Consequently, this imagery literally fulfils Aldhelm's claim that the virginal life guarantees one a place in heaven in the image of Christ.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, it is clear that Aldhelm intended his audience to recognise the use of *imitatio Christi* in this section due to the careful insertion of a Scriptural key in his prose. During the comparison of the suitor to Uzzah, the *Dlu* provides a description of the Ark's contents: the rod of Aaron, the urn of manna and the Commandment tablets (xliv.19–20). None of these items are mentioned in *II Sm* 6; therefore, apart from Aldhelm's love of verbosity there seems, at first, little reason for him to mention them at all. In fact they act as a pointer to the NT and *Hbr* 9, where the same three items are listed as residing in the Ark (9.4). Neither Ehwald nor Gwara note the epistle as a source for *Dlu* xlv; however, the theme of *Hbr* 9 confirms Aldhelm's deliberate reference to this text. The passage describes Christ's Passion in terms of Christ as the High Priest performing the yearly sacrifice to cleanse the Holy of Holies. Through the sacrifice of his own blood, Christ of course purified not only the Temple, but also the sins of mankind and established the covenant of the NT.<sup>58</sup> Agnes, in her figural representation as the Ark, likewise re-enacts Christ's purification of the Holy of Holies through her own martyrdom. The allusion to *Hbr* 9 may also explain why Aldhelm included a description of Agnes' death in the *Dlu*, a narrative element omitted for some of the female martyrs in the prose catalogue. Furthermore, Agnes' final scene specifically evokes the image of sacrifice:<sup>59</sup>

...et mox roseo purpurei cruoris rubore perfusa immaculatam uirginitatis uictimam Christo offerens martirizauit. (*Dlu* xlv.26–7)<sup>60</sup>

The association of Agnes with the Ark also works on a typological plane corresponding to the Christian soul journeying through the temple to Christ. Indeed,

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<sup>57</sup> Agnes may also be intended to stand as a figure of Mary, who can also be equated to the Ark, as she carried divine wisdom in her womb. However, the only pre-Aldhelm reference I can find for this idea comes from Ambrose's *sermo* xlii, which is probably a forgery (PL 17, 709–12). Aldhelm, however, obviously enjoyed using the motif of the Ark with reference to *II Sm* 6.6. Although this image is not found in Agnes' entry in the *Cdu*, it does appear in the verse catalogue's entry for SS Chrysanthus and Daria (who, like Agnes, was also cast into a brothel), at lines 1233–42.

<sup>58</sup> See *Hbr* 9.1–28, and in particular 9.11–12: 'Christus autem adistens pontifex futurorum bonorum per amplius et perfectius tabernaculum non manufactum id est non huius creationis / neque per sanguinem hircorum et uitulorum sed pro proprium sanguinem introiuit semel in sancta aeterna redemptione inuenta' – ('But Christ, being come an high Priest of the good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hand, that is, not of this creation: / neither by the blood of goats, or of calves, but by his own blood, entered once into the holies, having obtained eternal redemption').

<sup>59</sup> Seventeen virgin martyrs are included in the *Dlu*'s catalogue of female saints, twelve of which have their deaths described by Aldhelm (this equates to 71%).

<sup>60</sup> '...and thereupon bedewed by the rosy redness of red blood Agnes became a martyr, offering her immaculate sacrifice of virginity to Christ.'

Jerome (*epist.* xxii.23–4) also compared the virgin soul to the Ark. Again neither Ehwald nor Gwara note this passage in their apparatus for *Dlu* xlv; however, Jerome's comments might underlie Aldhelm's changes to Agnes' legend. Jerome's *epist.* xxii counsels virgins to remain out of the public gaze, lest the Lord's sanctuary be polluted by the gazes of unbelievers just as Uzzah touched the Ark. He then comments:

*Sponsa Christi arca est testamenti extrinsecus et intrinsecus deaurata, custos legis domini. Sicut in illa nihil aliud fuit nisi tabulae testamenti, ita et in te nullus sit extrinsecus cogitatus. Super hoc propitiatorio quasi super cherubim sedere uult dominus. (epist. xxii.24)*<sup>61</sup>

Jerome's use of the metaphor of the Ark promotes the concept of spiritual marriage: the virgin must constantly strive to maintain a pure mind so that the Lord will dwell with her. Aldhelm, on the other hand, modifies Jerome's teaching through his additional reference to *Hbr* 9 so that the Ark becomes the ultimate goal for all male and female Christian souls, namely the perfected mind that becomes the image of Christ himself.

Finally, the image of the Ark may have been employed to emphasise a further aspect of Aldhelm's teaching on virginity: his belief that spiritual purity mattered more than physical chastity.<sup>62</sup> As noted above, patristic exegesis viewed the Old Testament Ark, which contained the Tablets of the Law, as a figure for Christ in whom all divine wisdom is contained. Alongside this idea, the Church Fathers, drawing in particular on *I Cor* 3.16, also promoted the notion of the human body as a temple for the Holy Spirit.<sup>63</sup> Together these concepts advance the idea that the inner soul is more important than its casing. This view ties in well to Aldhelm's replacement of the three states of chastity outlined by the Church Fathers (virginity, widowhood and marriage) in favour of his own innovative scheme: virginity, chastity and marriage.<sup>64</sup> Aldhelm appears to have extended the boundaries of what constituted a virginal life to embrace all who truly wished to follow Christ.

<sup>61</sup> 'The bride of Christ is (like) the Ark of the Testament, gilded on the outside and on the inside, the guardian of the Lord's law. Just as there was no other thing in the Ark apart from the tablets of the Testament, thus in you there should be no worldly thought. The Lord wishes to sit upon this propitiatory (i.e. the virgin) as if above the cherubim.' See also J.N.D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings and Controversies* (London, 1975), pp. 99–103. Aldhelm refers to Jerome's *epist.* xxii at *Dlu* xlix and *Cdu* 2121–61.

<sup>62</sup> G.T. Dempsey, 'Aldhelm of Malmesbury's Social Theology: the Barbaric Heroic Ideal Christianised', *Peritia* 15 (2001): 58–80, at pp. 64–6.

<sup>63</sup> See fns. 51–3.

<sup>64</sup> Lapidge and Herren, *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, pp. 55–6.

Moving onto the suitor's arrival at the brothel in the *Cdu*, the themes of seductive words and hunting noted in the earlier sections of this narrative are reinforced. Once more there is a complete lack of sexual language within the text, and the suitor is described as approaching the brothel:

...*garrula verbosis contorquens spicula labris, quod sua dispiceret castis conubia uotis* (1958–9).<sup>65</sup>

The suitor of the *Cdu* does not pose a sexual danger to Agnes: he comes to curse with words, rather than to touch her. Interestingly, the suitor specifically curses Agnes for her vow of chastity, indicating that the virgin's words have proved more powerful than his own (1959). Overall, Agnes conquers both aspects of the suitor's nature, for she not only overcomes his spell, but also escapes the hunter's snare, an idea that maintains the concepts of exposure and openness attached to all her triumphs in the *Cdu*.<sup>66</sup>

As the central combat of the narratives is played out, almost to its conclusion, Aldhelm reveals the true extent of Agnes' powers in her two opposing states. In the *Dlu* Agnes is equated to the most powerful military symbol of the OT, the Ark, which emphasises her martial status. The contrasting image of the dove is recalled in the final battle of the *Cdu*, where Agnes defiantly escapes from the suitor's bird trap to fly to her Bridegroom.

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<sup>65</sup> '... hurling babbling arrows from his verbose lips, because due to her chaste vows she scorned their marriage.'

<sup>66</sup> During the description of the suitor's death he is described as desiring 'to wound the holy maiden with a defiling gesture.' This action can be interpreted as a wish to physically attack Agnes, but given the connection between the suitor's words and actual wounds throughout the *Cdu* account, it seems more likely that this phrase was intended to recall the curses that he heaps on Agnes following his arrival at the brothel. The idea of wounding may also deliberately recall the Bride of *Ct* once more, as the keepers of the walls strike and wound her as she searches for her Beloved (*Ct* 5.7).

Table 2.5: The Miraculous Cure of the Suitor and Agnes' Martyrdom

<i>De laude uirginitatis</i>	<i>Carmen de uirginitate</i>
<p><i>Sed rursus ad potiorem Dei gloriam, ut insultatores catholicae fidei, qui cogitauerunt consilium, quod non potuerunt stabilire, <u>balbis buccarum labellis obmutescerent et porcinus paganorum strepitus contra immunem ecclesiae castitatem saeviens spumosis dentibus acriter grunnire desisteret, eundem rediuiua sospitate subnixum de inferni uoragine reduxit ad lumina uitae et mox roseo purpurei cruoris rubore perfusa immaculatam uirginitatis uictimam Christo offerens martirizauit.</u></i> (xlv.22–27)<sup>67</sup></p>	<p><i><u>Mox igitur precibus disruptit uincula mortis pallida purpureo restaurans membra colore, quae mulcata prius torpebant frigore leti, quatenus inde forent laudis praeconia Christo, unde prius fuerant spurcis ludibria uerbis.</u></i> (1965–1969)<sup>68</sup></p>

The resurrection of the suitor and the death of Agnes bring the main narratives of the *Dlu* and *Cdu* to a close. Aldhelm exploits the closing scenes to reiterate the divergent characterisation of the saint in these two accounts: the heroic warrior undertaking great deeds versus the devout woman armed with the power of her prayers.

Once more the contrasting elements of direct and indirect action surrounding Agnes are brought out in the corresponding accounts of the suitor's revival. In the *Dlu* it is Agnes herself who raises the suitor to life without any directly named divine intervention (xlv.25–6). This action is of great interest. In her study of Sulpicius Severus' hagiographical accounts of St Martin, Claire Stancliffe drew attention to the depiction of two distinct types of miracle: those enacted through Martin's prayers and those brought about by Martin's own personal *uirtus*.<sup>69</sup> More recently, Emma Pettit has argued that these same two distinct forms of miracles can also be found amongst Aldhelm's saintly *exempla*: the saints either

<sup>67</sup> 'But on the other hand for the greater glory of God, (Agnes) returned the same supported (youth) back to the light of life from the abyss of the lower regions with his health restored, so that the revilers of the Catholic faith, who had pursued a plan which they were not able to establish, might become mute with the stammering little lips of (their) bawling mouths, and that the porcine din of the pagans raging with foaming teeth against the unstained chastity of the Church would sharply cease to grunt, (and) thereupon bedewed with the rosy redness of (her) purple blood Agnes became a martyr, offering the immaculate sacrifice of (her) virginity to Christ.'

<sup>68</sup> 'Thereupon (the virgin) soon severed the chains of death by (her) prayers, renewing his pale limbs with a reddish tinge, which before were stiff, (and) beaten by the coldness of death, in order that thenceforth there would be the proclaiming of praise for Christ, when previously there had been mockery with impure words.'

<sup>69</sup> C. Stancliffe, *St. Martin and His Hagiographer: History and Miracle in Sulpicius Severus* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 241–8.

enact miracles via their own holy powers or with prayers inspired by the Holy Spirit.<sup>70</sup> Pettit argues that in the *De uirginitate* performing miracles via one's own holy power tends to be a masculine trait; in contrast the women usually perform miracles in a more passive manner.<sup>71</sup> Thus Agnes' performance of raising the suitor herself in the *Dlu* reinforces the masculine aspect of her effectiveness and strength. In contrast, the *Cdu*'s Agnes raises the suitor by praying to God, a method that not only maintains her passive feminine manner, but also reinforces the revelation from the previous section that it is actually the virgin who possesses the true power of words in the *Cdu* (1965). Overall, Aldhelm closes his two versions of the virgin's legend in the manner he began it, by using two contrasting portrayals of one saint.<sup>72</sup>

As a final aside, Aldhelm's depictions of the pagan crowds, who demand the saint's death in both accounts, are also worth briefly considering. In the *Dlu*, the pagan crowd are characterised as wild raging animals physically besieging the Church (xlv.22–5). Unsurprisingly, the *Cdu* focuses once more on the use of words and Agnes' miraculous revival of the suitor results in the transformation of the pagans' negative complaints against the Church into positive praise (1968–9).

In light of this discussion, it is apparent that *De uirginitate*'s two accounts of Agnes' martyrdom were deliberately created so that every feature of one tale is reversed in the other. If a list of these pairings is drawn up one finds male (warrior) and female (maiden) traits, as well as the contrasting ideas of civilisation and nature, physical deeds and words, dominance and submissiveness, and enclosure and liberation. Furthermore, the virgin's suitor is consistently cast as a reversal of the saint: the *Dlu*'s youth is an immoderate and barbaric man, while in the *Cdu* he represents human society and rhetorical ability to Agnes' wild creature. Even the pagan crowd is used to reinforce these images; its members are cast as animals in the prose and as the suitor's fellow hunters in the verse. The crucial importance here is that each pairing represents opposite sides of one coin. For example, Aldhelm uses the *Dlu* to illustrate Agnes' rejection of physical lust and the *Cdu*, her dismissal of flattery, which can lead to the sin of pride. Together these actions: the

<sup>70</sup> Pettit, 'Aldhelm's *Opus Geminatum*', pp. 178–83.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 181–3.

<sup>72</sup> The final closing scenes of both the *Dlu* and *Cdu* entries for Agnes relate the miraculous healing of Constantina at the martyr's tomb. This section is omitted from the discussion due to its brevity and the fact that both the *Dlu* and *Cdu* contain a separate entry for Constantine's daughter.

rejection of both physical and spiritual temptations, represent the two major threats to any virgin's chastity. Furthermore, if *De uirginitate's* two accounts are read together as Aldhelm requests, Agnes is presented as a model of both physical and spiritual virginity, both of which were required for the perfect virginal state.

Aldhelm's use of imagery involving the notions of enclosure and liberation, however, also presents an intriguing conundrum. In both classical and patristic thought the concept of enclosure is a definitive feminine trait, yet Aldhelm assigns this idea to his masculine depiction of the virgin.<sup>73</sup> Indeed, one can also argue that in the *Cdu*, where Agnes emerges as the victor in the contest over whose words are the more powerful, she has been assigned the masculine trait of rhetorical ability. Whilst Aldhelm's imagery makes perfect sense at one level, he also appears to have used Agnes' tale to manipulate traditional ideas concerning gender.

A full understanding of Aldhelm's strategy in his two accounts of Agnes' legend is important in order to comprehend the message of both the individual treatises as well as *De uirginitate* as a whole, since the patterns discussed above occur not only in Agnes' entries, but also, to a certain extent, in the remainder of the female catalogues. There are, however, differences between the number of images deployed for each individual saint for two reasons. First, as in Agnes' case, Aldhelm appears to have deliberately retained the narrative outlines of the original *passiones* and *uitae* for most of his saints. Second, his catalogues incorporate several types of female saints whose legends involve a variety of different situations.<sup>74</sup> If these two restrictions are considered together it becomes apparent that the exact same number and type of motif could not be applied to each account; some tales were easier to manipulate than others. Within this framework, however, Aldhelm creatively exploited whatever elements he could to promote a series of opposing motifs between his two narratives of each female saint.

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<sup>73</sup> The Church Fathers praised women whose lips were sealed and their hands closed in prayer. See for example Ambrose, *De uirginibus* III.iii.11 on the virtue of silence; *eadem*, *De uirginitate* xiii.80, which likens the ideal virgin to the walled garden of *Ct* 4.12 (E. Cazzaniga and F. Gori (eds.), *Opera omnia di Sant' Ambrogio: Verginità e Vedovanza*, vol. 2, Bibliotheca Ambrosiana 14.2 (Milan, 1989), p. 66); and Jerome, *epist.* xxii.25–6, which counsels virgins to stay at home out of public sight and to veil themselves.

<sup>74</sup> Aldhelm narrated the lives of martyrs (e.g. Agnes), abbesses (e.g. Eustochium), nuns (e.g. Demetrias), transvestite saints (Eugenia) and women cast in the role of confessors or desert fathers (Cecilia, Anatolia and Victoria).

The tables in Appendix 2.2 indicate that the female saints of the *Dlu* are cast primarily as *milites Christi* and those of the *Cdu* as *sponsae Christi*, apart from two understandable exceptions.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, it is only the saints of the prose account who are related to images of besieged citadels, and receive various military and athletic accolades after their martyrdom. The military nature of the *Dlu*'s female catalogue is further reinforced by another two trends noted for Agnes: the idea of enclosure and the fact that the saints do not require God's direct intervention to save them. In contrast, the *Cdu* saints follow the feminine trends observed in Agnes' second account, apart from the same two exceptions noted for the *Dlu*. Thus bridal imagery, nature motifs, the danger of seductive words and the notion of liberation are clearly the province of the verse catalogue.

It is surely significant that the contrasting patterns between the prose and verse catalogues are also found in the two notices for the Virgin Mary, who heads each register, in the various titles assigned to her:

*Dlu xl En, ut supra retulimus, beata Maria, uirgo perpetua, hortus conclusus, fons signatus, uirgula radicis, gerula floris, aurora solis, nurus patris, genetrix et germana filii simulque sponsa ac felix bernacula, sanctarum socrus animarum, supernorum regina ciuium, columba inter ·LX· reginas et bis quadragenas pelices, propter perenne puritatis priuilegium obsidem saeculi, monarchum mundi, rectorem poli...*<sup>76</sup>

*Cdu (1696–1700) Haec fuit, egregius quam promit carmine uatis,  
Qui Solimis quondam diues regnauit in aruis  
Hortus conclusus florenti uertice uernans  
Fons quoque signatus caelesti gurgite pollens  
Necnon et turtur tremulus...*<sup>77</sup>

<sup>75</sup> The exceptions are the two notices for Eugenia (*Dlu* xlii, *Cdu* 1884–924) and Demetrias (*Dlu* xlix, *Cdu* 2162–93). In the case of Eugenia, the *miles Christi* motif is found in both the prose and verse catalogues of *De uirginitate*, while the idea of the saint as a *sponsa Christi* image is only (faintly) alluded to in the *Cdu*. A feminine aura, however, is applied to the saint in the *Dlu* by the comparison of Eugenia to the OT figure Susannah, who, like the martyr, was accused of adultery. The combination of both masculine and feminine aspects in these two accounts may well stem from the fact that Eugenia is the sole representative of the transvestite saint genre in *De uirginitate*. Both notices for Demetrias specifically name this virgin as a Bride of Christ. However, of these two catalogue entries roughly seventy-five percent of the *Dlu* account consists of a direct quote from the *Epistula ad Demetrium* (once assigned to Jerome, but now acknowledged as a work by Pelagius) and the *Cdu* text contains a long description of her wealth and beauty. Both accounts are fundamentally adaptations of the actual letter quoted and neither really focuses on the maiden's personality or deeds. (Edition: PL 30, 15–46).

<sup>76</sup> 'Well now, as we mentioned above, the blessed MARY, the perpetual virgin, 'a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed up' (*Ct* 4.12), 'the rod out of the root of Jesse bearing a flower' (*Is* 11.1), the dawn of the sun, the daughter-in-law of her Father, the mother and sister of the Son and at the same time his bride and blessed handmaid, the mother-in-law of holy souls, the queen of heavenly citizens, 'a dove...among three score queens and fourscore concubines' (*Ct* 6.7–8): because of the privilege of her perpetual purity, was blessedly found worthy to beget, with joyful heart, the ransom of the world, the monarch of the earth...'

<sup>77</sup> 'It was she (the Virgin) whom the excellent prophet, who once ruled as a wealthy man over the fields of Jerusalem, revealed in his song: '(My sister, my spouse) is a garden closed up, verdant on the flowering

In the *Dlu*, although nature motifs from *Ct* are employed in the opening lines of Mary's attributes, the passage focuses chiefly upon familial ties and positions of royal power. Mary is depicted as the bride of Christ, yet this is merely one of her many titles. In contrast, the *Cdu* employs purely the nature motifs from *Ct*, portraying Mary solely as the bride of Christ.<sup>78</sup> Together, *De uirginitate's* notices transmit two common representations of Mary: Mary as *Regina Caeli* (and thus queen of the heavenly hosts) and Mary as *Sponsa Christi*.<sup>79</sup> In turn, these contrasting roles introduce the basic themes of soldier versus bride and civilisation versus nature already noted above for the remainder of *De uirginitate's* female catalogues. Mary's characterisation appears to govern the type of imagery employed throughout the two lists: she thus functions as a prototype for each female catalogue, a fitting role for the woman who would come to be widely regarded as the first 'nun'.<sup>80</sup>

Interestingly, the use of Mary as a template for the female catalogues is paralleled in the male registers. Here the OT prophet Elijah, who was widely regarded both as the first desert ascetic and also as one of the principal male monastic role models, heads the list of male saints.<sup>81</sup> In addition, Elijah's NT ascetic counterpart John the Baptist later marks the beginning of the NT section of male virgins, who follow the OT figures in both parts of *De uirginitate*.<sup>82</sup> The basic structures of both the prose and verse catalogues, therefore, depict

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summit, a fountain sealed up, welling from the heavenly pool (cf. *Ct*. 4.12), a quivering dove (*Ct*. 2.4, 5.2 and 6.8)...'. The same passage is found word for word in Aldhelm's *Carmen ecclesiasticum* ii.18–22 (Ehwald, *Aldhelmi Opera*, pp. 11–32, at p. 13).

<sup>78</sup> As noted above (see fns. 30 and 38) the imagery from *Ct* used in the two notices for Mary (in particular the theme of gardens and doves) can also be found in the *Cdu* account of Agnes' martyrdom.

<sup>79</sup> Interestingly, these titles appear together in the Old English poem *Christ I* (278–85): '...ealle reordberend hatað ond secgað, hæleð geond foldan, ...þæt þu bryd sie þæs selestan swegles bryttan. Swylce...cweþað ond singað þæt þu sie hlæfdige... wuldorweorudes...' – ('...all men throughout the world... name (you) and say ...that you are the bride of the most noble Prince of the heavens. Likewise, ... they (also) declare and sing that you are the Queen... of the heavenly host...'). The Old English text is taken from G.P. Krapp and E. Van Kirk Dobbie (eds.), *The Exeter Book*, ASPR 3 (New York, 1936), pp. 10–11. In relation to the Marian imagery in this poem, Mary Clayton notes that *Christ I* was based on various liturgical antiphons from the advent liturgy. Thus it is possible that Aldhelm's audience would also have come across this dual image of Mary through exposure to similar material encountered during pre-Christmas church services. M. Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England*, CSASE 2 (Cambridge, 1990), p. 180.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6 and 11–12.

<sup>81</sup> Elijah: *Dlu* xx and *Cdu* 248–82.

<sup>82</sup> John the Baptist: *Dlu* xxiii and *Cdu* 395–459. Cassian also refers to Elijah and John the Baptist as the leading monastic role models from the OT and NT in his *Institutes coenobiorum* I.1. M. Petschenig (ed.), *Iohannis Cassiani: De institutis coenobiorum*, CSEL 17 (Vienna, 1888), pp. 8–9.

two groups of male and female virgin saints, each headed by the relevant monastic *exemplum*.<sup>83</sup>

### 2.3 Aldhelm's Concept of the Christian Virtue of Virginity

Aldhelm clearly employed an elaborate system of imagery in his *opus geminatum*, yet the full purpose of its existence still remains to be deduced. It seems clear, however, that the creation of such a scheme must relate to Aldhelm's teaching on the virtue of virginity itself, which is personified by the virgin saints such as Agnes. Stephanie Hollis has argued that the basic structural division of *De uirginitate*'s catalogues into two groups of male and female saints was designed to:

represent the union of all varieties of virginity into a mystic One, compounded of male and female but beyond the specificity of gender.<sup>84</sup>

The notion of genderless chastity, as Hollis points out, is based upon passages such as Paul's teaching in *Gal*, a text Aldhelm presumably knew well:<sup>85</sup>

*non est Iudaeus neque Graecus non est seruus neque liber non est masculus neque femina omnes enim uos unum estis in Christo Iesu (3.28)*<sup>86</sup>

Furthermore, this Scriptural concept also appears to extend beyond the format of the male and female catalogues into the more theoretical sections of Aldhelm's *De uirginitate*. Recently, Carol Braun Pasternack has shown that Aldhelm's technique of drawing equally on both male and female aspects to characterise chastity as a genderless virtue constitutes a major feature of his thinking on virginity.<sup>87</sup> Pasternack's argument focuses in particular on the *Dlu*'s opening discussion on the virtue of virginity itself (iv-vi), where she analyses

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<sup>83</sup> It should be noted, however, that neither of the *De uirginitate* catalogues actually conclude with the entries for the female virgins. The *Dlu* ends with brief accounts of the lives of the OT patriarchs and the widow Judith, whilst the *Cdu* closes with a miniature psychomachia. In the case of the *Dlu*, the catalogue appears to finish with the second and third orders of spiritual purity: the widows and married.

<sup>84</sup> S. Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church: Sharing a Common Fate* (Woodbridge, 1992), p. 109. See also her comments on pp. 109–12, where she discusses various ways in which Aldhelm's imagery might have resonated with the inhabitants of double monastic houses.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 109–10.

<sup>86</sup> 'There is neither Jew nor Greek: there is neither bond nor free: there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.'

<sup>87</sup> C. Braun Pasternack, 'The Sexual Practices of Virginity and Chastity in Aldhelm's *De uirginitate*', in C. Braun Pasternack and L.M.C. Weston (eds.), *Sex and Sexuality in Anglo-Saxon England: Essays in Memory of Daniel Gillmore Calder* (Tempe, AZ, 2004), pp. 93–120, at pp. 96–105. See also pp. 109–20 for her discussion of Aldhelm's failure to maintain this equality of the sexes throughout his treatise.

Aldhelm's comparison of virgins to bees in order to highlight his dual approach to the gender of virginity.<sup>88</sup> Two extracts are given below to illustrate her point.<sup>89</sup>

i) *APIS, inquam, propter peculiaris castimoniae priuilegium pudicissimae uirginitatis tipum et ecclesiae portendere speciem indubitata scripturarum auctoritate asstipulatur, quae florentes saltuum cespites ineffabili praeda depopulans dulcia natorum pignora, nesciens coniugii illecebrosa consortia...producit... (Dlu v)*<sup>90</sup>

ii) *Quamdiu enim antiquas inhabitare sedes et exigua fouere tuguria gracillimis contexta uiminibus seu cauatis consuta codicibus ille, qui inter ceteras magistratus officio fungitur, decreuerit, nulla ex immensa multitudine fugitiuis discursibus et passiuus uolatibus per aethera uagatur...(Dlu vi)*<sup>91</sup>

Aldhelm here appears to envisage virginity as comprising important qualities of both genders and, moreover, places these traits on an equal footing. It is apparent that Hollis' astute analysis of the basic structure of *De uirginitate*'s catalogues merely touched upon the tip of an iceberg. The concept of two male and female aspects forming a unified entity can be found in virtually every aspect of Aldhelm's *opus geminatum*. Not only are the catalogues formed from both male and female *exempla*, but the metaphors used for virginity in the theoretical discussions also combine masculine and feminine traits. Indeed, this pattern is, of course, also found in the two contrasting genders assigned to female saints in *De uirginitate*'s catalogues. Together, these three areas advance the idea that Aldhelm went to great lengths to promote the concept of genderless virginity, and thus Godhead, in his work.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 100–102.

<sup>89</sup> Pasternack only cites the first of these two passages, since her argument focuses on the use of male and female sexual imagery within Aldhelm's digression on bees; however, Aldhelm's comments also illustrate how he depicted chastity as a combination of male and female attributes in general.

<sup>90</sup> 'The bee, I say, by virtue of the special attribute of its peculiar chastity, is by the undoubted authority of the scriptures agreed to signify a type of virginity and the likeness of the Church: robbing the flowering fields of pastureland of an ineffable booty she produces her sweet family and children, innocent of the lascivious coupling of marriage...'

<sup>91</sup> 'For as long as that bee who among the others discharges the office of magistrate, shall decree that they should inhabit their ancient dwellings and care for their little cottages woven with slender cane or knitted together with hollow stems, no bee from the immense multitude roams through the air on wandering routes or with undirected flights...'

<sup>92</sup> An interesting example of how Aldhelm breaks down the gender categories in relation to a male saint can be found in the *Cdu* entry for the martyr Chrysanthus, whose abhorrence of marriage is described in the following terms: 'Oscula uirginis dispexit lubrica labris... Non, sicut cecinit sponsali carmine uatis, mellea tunc roseis haerescunt labra labellis, dulcia sed Christi lentescunt labra labellis' (*Cdu* 1155–1160) – '(he) scorned the dangerous kisses of maiden-lips... The 'honey-sweet lips' did not, as the poet sang in the betrothal song, 'cling to his rosy-lips', but rather Christ's sweet lips lingered upon his'). See also S. Salih, 'Queering *Sponsalia Christi*: Virginity, Gender and Desire in the Early Middle English Anchoritic Texts', *New Medieval Literatures* 5 (2002): 155–75, who argues that Christ is all inclusive (he is both human and divine, male and

At this point it is worth briefly pausing in order to consider Aldhelm's actual teaching on the rewards of chastity as found within *De uirginitate*. Both the prose and metrical accounts promote a two-fold reward for maintaining one's virginity: it allows an individual to dwell in heaven in the manner of the angels:<sup>93</sup>

*Virginitas summo uirtutum uertice paret,  
Dum soror angelicae constet castissima uitae, ...  
His igitur gradibus pandit regnator Olympi  
Aulae caelestis ualuas et limina uitae... (Cdu 100–1 and 108–9)<sup>94</sup>*

The Biblical precept for the correlation of virginity to the angelic life is found in Matthew's gospel, a passage used by many patristic writers and indeed Aldhelm himself (*Dlu* xviii):

*In resurrectione enim neque nubent neque nubentur sed sunt sicut angeli Dei in caelo (22.30)<sup>95</sup>*

The early Church taught that the angels were androgynous creatures whose asexual status man had once possessed before the Fall.<sup>96</sup> In particular, the Eastern Church under the influence of Gnosticism laid heavy emphasis on the idea that the sexual transgression, which had led to the Fall of Man, resulted in the creation of mortal sexuality and gender.<sup>97</sup> Thus for man to regain his place in paradise he had to overcome these facets of his nature and become asexual like the angels once more.<sup>98</sup> This view in turn also works alongside *Gal* 3.28, where the loss of gender allows one to live in the chaste image of Christ (as the angels do).

Since Aldhelm clearly promotes virginity as a genderless concept, it is interesting to consider briefly two examples of the language used by the Eastern Fathers to discuss the nature of monasticism and virginity. Basil of Caesarea, who composed one of the earliest monastic rules and through this work greatly influenced Western ascetic practises, argued that men and women possessed 'the same fundamental vocation and potential for human

female) and thus a virgin's desire for Christ / desire to be like Christ, which breaks down the boundaries between the individual and Christ, allows each virgin to share in His unique nature.

<sup>93</sup> O'Sullivan, 'The Patristic Background', p. 56.

<sup>94</sup> 'Virginity... appears at the highest station of the virtues, since it is the most chaste sister of the angelic life... to these categories (3 levels of spiritual perfection), therefore, the Ruler of Olympus opens the gates of the celestial courts and the thresholds of life...'. See also *Dlu* xv and xviii for similar sentiments.

<sup>95</sup> 'For in the resurrection they shall neither marry nor be married, but shall be as the angels of God in heaven.'

<sup>96</sup> Bugge, *Virginitas*, pp. 17–19.

<sup>97</sup> S. O'Sullivan, 'Aldhelm's *De uirginitate* – Patristic Pastiche or Innovative Exposition?', *Peritia* 12 (1998): 271–95, at pp. 272–3. See also pp. 272–77 for a discussion of the various patristic writers who discussed virginity and their possible influence on Aldhelm's thinking.

<sup>98</sup> Bugge, *Virginitas*, pp. 18–19.

excellence.<sup>99</sup> Indeed, amongst the communities Basil advised it is fascinating to note that the male and female ascetics shared exactly the same lifestyle (although they did not live in mixed sex communities), a situation no doubt linked to his views that:

For there is no male or female in the resurrection, but there is one certain life and it is of one kind... (*Homiliae in Psalmos*, for Psalm 114)<sup>100</sup>

A similar attitude towards gender is also found in Gregory of Nyssa's discussion of the rewards of virginity (i.e. spiritual marriage) in his treatise *De uirginitate*:

It is clear that the eagerness for this kind of marriage is common to men and women alike, for since, as the apostle says: 'There is neither male nor female' (*Gal* 3.28), and Christ is all things for all human beings, the true lover of wisdom has as his goal the divine One who is true wisdom, and the soul, clinging to its incorruptible Bridegroom, has a love of true wisdom which is God. (c.20)<sup>101</sup>

The teachings of the Eastern fathers had a great impact on Western monasticism.<sup>102</sup> Aldhelm's clear interest in virginity as a genderless virtue may well be derived from any number of sources, or indeed stem solely from his own personal beliefs. Nevertheless, there is also a possibility that he was more heavily influenced by Eastern ideas than other Western writers. This hypothesis might gain corroboration through Aldhelm's education under Theodore and Hadrian at Canterbury.<sup>103</sup> In particular, Theodore of Tarsus (602–90), an Eastern monk whose rule as Archbishop of Canterbury (668–90) saw the introduction of numerous Greek texts and ideas into Anglo-Saxon England, provides one possible channel for Aldhelm to have encountered works such as Basil's monastic rule.<sup>104</sup> Interestingly, the ecclesiastical canons attributed to Theodore often cite Basil as an authority, particularly in

<sup>99</sup> V. Harrison, 'Male and Female in Cappadocian Theology', *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s. 41 (1990): 441–71, at p. 446.

<sup>100</sup> Quotation taken from *Ibid.*, p. 451. Basil, *Homiliae in Psalmos* (PG 29, 207–494, at 491).

<sup>101</sup> V. Woods Callahan, trans., *Saint Gregory of Nyssa: Ascetical Works*, The Fathers of the Church 58 (Washington DC, 1967), p. 64. Gregory of Nyssa, *De uirginitate* (PG 46, 317–416, at 398–9).

<sup>102</sup> Bugge, *Virginitas*, p. 6.

<sup>103</sup> Lapidge, 'The Career of Aldhelm', pp. 31–48.

<sup>104</sup> For the transmission of Greek texts into early Anglo-Saxon England see in particular articles by Franklin, Stevenson and Lapidge in M. Lapidge (ed.), *Archbishop Theodore: Commemorative Studies on his Life and Influence*, CSASE 11 (Cambridge, 1995). For surviving Anglo-Saxon manuscript evidence for the works of the three Cappadocian fathers see Gneuss (*Handlist*), which lists one eighth-century Latin copy of Basil's *Homiliae in Psalmos* (759.5). No works by Gregory of Nyssa have been preserved and only three tenth- and eleventh-century Latin copies of treatises by Gregory of Nazianzen (689, 699 and 714). For a slightly different view on the influence of Greek theology on Aldhelm's works see also M. Herren, 'Aldhelm the Theologian', in K. O'Brien O'Keefe and A. Orchard (eds.), *Latin Lore and English Learning: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature for Michael Lapidge*, 2 vols. (Toronto, ON, 2005), I, 68–89, at p. 84. Herren argues that 'there is nothing that is 'Greek' about Aldhelm's theology', although he does allow for the possibility that the odd turn of phrase in Aldhelm's works may have been influenced by 'a Greek source possibly mediated through Theodore.' This article, however, does not consider Aldhelm's teaching on virginity.

relation to the issue of divorce on the grounds of one partner wishing to enter a monastery.<sup>105</sup> These laws form a major part of the contemporary backdrop to Aldhelm's unique tripartite system of chastity, which appears to have been designed to accommodate such divorcees.<sup>106</sup>

Whilst it is possible that Eastern teaching lies behind Aldhelm's pioneering dual sex catalogues and his innovative imagery in the individual entries for the female virgins, the unusual structure of *De uirginitate* itself may also be linked to his concept of virginity. The *geminus stilus* originated from the technique of paraphrase, an important facet of late antique education, which involved one author reworking another's work:<sup>107</sup>

It is important that the writer not deviate from the sense of the original... The aim of the writer is to rival and, if possible, surpass his model...(for) originality of expression was prized over originality of invention.<sup>108</sup>

The first author to paraphrase his own work and thus create the concept of an *opus geminatum* was the fifth-century Christian poet Caelius Sedulius, in his *Opus* and *Carmen Paschale*. Sedulius, however, rather than attempting to stylistically improve his work, innovatively strove to create two books that formed one unified text, even though they did not necessarily meet the levels of fidelity to each other demanded by the technique of paraphrase.<sup>109</sup>

Aldhelm was the first Anglo-Saxon author to compose an *opus geminatum* and clearly followed Sedulius, whose works he knew well.<sup>110</sup> Godman argues that Aldhelm dispensed with classical traditions to a greater degree than Sedulius, since the two halves of *De uirginitate* do not retain the same content and structure. He believes, therefore, that Aldhelm's *Dlu* and *Cdu* are too different to uphold the author's statement that they are two

<sup>105</sup> G. Corona, *Ælfric's Life of Saint Basil the Great: Background and Context*, Anglo-Saxon Texts 5 (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 29–31.

<sup>106</sup> Lapidge and Herren, *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, pp. 55–6. See also T. Charles-Edwards, 'The Penitential of Theodore and the *Iudicia Theodori*', in Lapidge, *Archbishop Theodore*, pp. 141–174, at pp. 158–9.

<sup>107</sup> G. Wieland, 'Geminus Stilus', p. 114.

<sup>108</sup> M. Roberts, *Biblical Epic and Rhetorical Paraphrase in Late Antiquity* (Liverpool, 1985), pp. 29–30.

<sup>109</sup> Both Roberts (*Ibid.*, pp. 79–82) and Godman ('The Anglo-Latin *Opus Geminatum*', pp. 219–20) argue that Sedulius viewed his works as two complementary texts, rather than following older scholarship which had interpreted several comments made by Sedulius in the *Opus*' preface to mean that he had rewritten his *Carmen* after offending readers by using Biblical material too freely. Godman also discusses the manuscript transmission of Sedulius' *opus geminatum*, noting that few readers appear to have followed his notion of two complementary works, since only four manuscripts survive containing both parts. Interestingly, Aldhelm suffered a similar fate as twenty-one manuscripts of the *Dlu* survive and another twenty preserve the *Cdu*, but not a single manuscript contains both works. (Ehwald, *Aldhelmi Opera*, pp. 225 and 349).

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220. Godman notes that Aldhelm's works contain thirty-eight direct quotes from Sedulius.

complementary tracts (*Cdu* 2870).<sup>111</sup> Nevertheless, Aldhelm's claim should not be dismissed too quickly, for his younger contemporary Bede upheld the assertion that the *De uirginitate* was one work in two parts (*HE* V.18).<sup>112</sup> Aldhelm, moreover, wrote in an age where no set rules existed as to how one ought to write an *opus geminatum*; therefore, it is possible that he felt that he could experiment with traditional literary concepts, as Sedulius himself had done.

Indeed, later Anglo-Saxon authors who composed an *opus geminatum* followed Sedulius' idea of two complementary works by producing texts linked by both theme and purpose. For example, Alcuin's two lives of St Willibrord comprise one that was intended for reading in Church (prose) and one for private meditation (verse).<sup>113</sup> In Aldhelm's case, although he claimed to have followed Sedulius by producing two paired works, the questions remains that if they do not closely follow one another in terms of structure, in what manner can they be said to represent two complementary halves of one text?

Wieland, in a groundbreaking article, argued that Aldhelm had never intended the *Cdu* to be a paraphrase of the *Dlu* and called attention to three passages from the *De uirginitate* that illustrated the Anglo-Saxon author's unique development of the *opus geminatum* style.<sup>114</sup> First, at *Dlu* lx.4–8 Aldhelm uses the metaphor of a partially constructed building, casting the *Dlu* as the foundations and walls, and the promised *Cdu* as the roof.<sup>115</sup> Second, this theme of complementary pairs appears again in the introduction of the *Cdu*:

*Omnipotens genitor mundum dicione gubernans,  
Lucida stelligeri qui condis culmina caeli,  
Necnon telluris formans fundamina uerbo... (Cdu 1–3)*<sup>116</sup>

The opening pair of heaven and earth is followed by a list of such dual entities (e.g. sun and moon, air and water...), which ends with a description of Aldhelm's work in prose and

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 221. In particular, Godman views the inclusion of a unique miniature psychomachia at the end of the *Cdu* as an infringement of the classical rules on paraphrase, which demand a level of similarity between the two works in question.

<sup>112</sup> For *HE* V.18, see fn. 24.

<sup>113</sup> For the purpose of both Bede's *Vita S. Felicis* and *Vitae S. Cuthberti*, and Alcuin's *Vitae S. Willibrordi*, see Wieland, 'Geminus Stilus', pp. 116–18, and Godman, 'The Anglo-Latin *Opus Geminatum*', pp. 222–226. Bede, like Alcuin, claimed that he created a prose account of Paulinus of Nola's *Vita S. Felicis* in order to simplify the work and thus make it accessible to a wider audience. Aldhelm never intimates that these are the reasons behind *De uirginitate*'s division into two parts.

<sup>114</sup> Wieland, 'Geminus Stilus', pp. 115–26.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>116</sup> 'Almighty Progenitor, guiding the world by Your rule, Who are the Creator of the shining heights of the star-filled heaven, (Who) also formed the foundations of the earth by Your Word...'

verse (*Cdu* 19–22). Wieland argues that Aldhelm deliberately placed his own work at the conclusion of this list in order to promote the concept that his composition should also be viewed as a corresponding pair that shared certain features, yet also differed from one another.<sup>117</sup> Finally, the conclusion of the *Cdu* (2867–70) reiterates again the idea of parallel yet distinct pairs. Wieland argues that Aldhelm's use of *opus...geminum* (2868 and 2870) deliberately echoes *geminato sidere* (10) in order to create a link back to his opening list of pairs.<sup>118</sup> In conclusion, Wieland speculated persuasively about why Aldhelm might have written an *opus geminatum*. Amongst his suggestions he proposed that one work might be a revision of the other (rather than a paraphrase), or that one text was intended to be accessible to a wide audience whilst the other was deliberately written in complex Latin as an offering to God.<sup>119</sup> Although he could not pinpoint Aldhelm's exact motivation, Wieland was convinced that two parts of *De uirginitate* had been carefully constructed to complement each other.

It seems possible to extend Wieland's arguments in order fully to comprehend Aldhelm's use of the *opus geminatum* structure and the overall message of his work. Aldhelm clearly viewed *De uirginitate* as a single work (*Cdu* 2867–70). Furthermore, all of the parallel pairs highlighted by Wieland seem to have been chosen because together they form one whole entity. Thus the walls and roof form one complete building, heaven and earth, God's creation and so on. If such ideas are applied to Aldhelm's central theme of virginity, it would appear that he employed a literary form that has enabled him to present two works, which, when read together, present a theological statement to their reader: a true virgin is a genderless being. This argument would explain not only why the *Dlu* and *Cdu* catalogues contain both men and women, but also present two contrasting depictions of their female saints.

This chapter set out to investigate three questions: which sources did Aldhelm draw upon in his two accounts of Agnes' martyrdom, how did he adapt them, and why. In conclusion, it is clear that both of Aldhelm's notices were based upon the fifth-century *Passio Sanctae Agnetis*, with a brief nod to Prudentius. Despite sharing the same source, however, the prose and verse narratives present two strikingly different tales about one

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<sup>117</sup> Wieland, '*Geminus Stilus*', p. 115.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.* *Cdu* 2867–70 are quoted with a translation on pp. 73–4.

<sup>119</sup> Wieland, '*Geminus Stilus*', pp. 118–26.

virgin martyr. A number of contrasting images, such as masculine versus feminine traits, civilisation against nature, and deeds in opposition to words, can be found both within and between either account. Moreover, if the reader follows Aldhelm's request to read both parts of *De uirginitate* together, it becomes apparent that together these motifs represent two sides of one coin. A consideration of Aldhelm's teaching on virginity revealed that he considered this virtue to consist of an equal number of male and female aspects which consequently rendered it genderless, a belief that had a huge impact not only on his adaptation of the *PSA*, but indeed his entire treatise. Virtually every aspect of Aldhelm's work, from its theoretical discussions on virginity to the structure of the catalogues and even the very imagery used in each notice appears to have been carefully designed to reinforce the notion that virginity subsumes gender. Such ideas lend weight to Gwara's and Pettit's argument that *De uirginitate* was intended for a number of double houses, rather than merely the nuns at Barking. Aldhelm's promotion of the idea of virginity as a combination of two complementary, yet fundamentally different genders, resonates perfectly if his intended audience were the male and female religious of various double houses. In addition, this hypothesis may also explain Aldhelm's decision to compose a double treatise. For prose and verse are the two halves of literature, just as male and female unite to create virginal perfection. Thus by using an *opus geminatum* Aldhelm could truly weave the concept of *Gal* 3.28 not only into the imagery, but also into the very heart of his work's structure:

There is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ.<sup>120</sup>

The notion that Agnes' martyrdom was a tale which could address the needs and concerns of both genders is also mirrored in the second of the two comprehensive Insular adaptations of the *PSA*: Ælfric's 'Life of Agnes' from *Lives of Saints*. As the next chapter demonstrates, however, Ælfric sought to create a text that would not only appeal to male and female religious, but also to layfolk.

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<sup>120</sup> It is also interesting to consider why the *miles Christi* motif was assigned to the prose work and the *sponsa Christi* motif to its verse counterpart. In classical tradition, prose and verse were thought to represent the low and high style of literature. Poetry was considered to be the more suitable form to express universal and mystical truths, whilst prose was used to communicate more mundane ideas. (Roberts, *Biblical Epic*, p. 74). This custom may well explain why Aldhelm choose to deploy the *sponsa Christi* motif, which was based largely on the mystical book of *Ct*, in his metrical work.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### Interpreting Ælfric's 'Translation' of the *Passio Sanctae Agnetis*

A period of around three hundred years separates the composition of Aldhelm's *De uirginitate* from that of Ælfric of Eynsham's (c. 950–c. 1010) *Lives of Saints*, which in chronological terms contains the final Anglo-Saxon reworking of the *Passio Sanctae Agnetis*.<sup>1</sup> Ælfric's account is the longest of all the insular works considered in this thesis; it is also the second of two surviving vernacular versions of Agnes' death (the first comprises a brief notice in the *OEM*). The inclusion of Agnes in *LS* allows for the development of her legend from the early to the late Anglo-Saxon period to be analysed. In addition, it also provides an opportunity to explore a depiction of the virgin martyr composed during the English Benedictine Reform.

Ælfric of Eynsham was perhaps the greatest named author to emerge from the English Benedictine Reform.<sup>2</sup> Educated at Winchester Cathedral by one of the Reform's founders, St. Æthelwold, Ælfric went on to produce a large catalogue of works, which ranged from two series of *Catholic Homilies* to a Latin grammar.<sup>3</sup> The majority of Ælfric's compositions, however, were united by one common theme: a desire to instruct the English people in orthodox Christian doctrine through vernacular works that could target the widest possible audience.<sup>4</sup> Ælfric's views on this subject, as well as many others, reflect contemporary concerns voiced by the Benedictine Reformers.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the decision to include an account of Agnes' martyrdom for her faith and chastity in *LS* was no doubt influenced by the Reform's promotion of Benedictine monasticism and, in particular,

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<sup>1</sup> All Latin and Old English citations from *Lives of Saints* are taken from W. Skeat (ed.), *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, EETS os 76, 82, 94 and 114 (London, 1881–1900; repr. as 2 vols., London, 1966). *Lives of Saints* is hereafter referred to as *LS* and all line numbers given refer to Skeat's edition. All translations of passages from *LS* are taken from Skeat's edition, except for those from the 'Life of Agnes' which are my own. Ælfric mentions Agnes on one further occasion in his works: *Depositio Sancti Martini Episcopi* (*CH* II xxxiv. 221–5), where he narrates how Martin once enjoyed a vision of SS Mary, Peter, Paul Thecla and Agnes. M. Godden (ed.), *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The Second Series*, EETS ss 5 (London, 1979). Hereafter *CH* II. Throughout this chapter, the translations used for the *CH* are taken from B. Thorpe (ed.), *The Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church*, 2 vols. (London, 1844–6). See also P. Clemoes, 'Ælfric', in E.G. Stanley (ed.), *Continuations and Beginnings: Studies in Old English Literature* (London, 1966), pp. 176–209, at p. 179 for a brief outline of Ælfric's life.

<sup>2</sup> J. Wilcox (ed.), *Ælfric's Prefaces*, Durham Medieval Texts 9 (Durham, 1994), pp. 3–4.

<sup>3</sup> P. Clemoes, 'The Chronology of Ælfric's Works', in P. Clemoes (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxons: Studies in Some Aspects of their History and Culture Presented to Bruce Dickins* (London, 1959), pp. 212–47, at pp. 214–19.

<sup>4</sup> Clemoes, 'Ælfric', pp. 182–3.

<sup>5</sup> For an overview of the Benedictine Reform see B. Yorke, 'Introduction', in B. Yorke (ed.), *Bishop Æthelwold: His Career and Influence* (Woodbridge, 1988), pp. 1–12.

clerical celibacy.<sup>6</sup> Works such as the Preface to the first series of the *Catholic Homilies*, moreover, reveal that Ælfric himself fervently believed that the coming of the Anti-Christ was imminent.<sup>7</sup> Consequently he perceived an urgent need to strengthen the orthodox beliefs of the faithful in order to prepare them for the troubled times ahead.

Composed c. 992–8, *LS* comprises Ælfric's third great collection of works and followed the *Catholic Homilies*.<sup>8</sup> Only one complete manuscript of this text survives: London, British Library, Cotton Julius E.vii, which was produced in the early eleventh century.<sup>9</sup> This codex may date to Ælfric's own lifetime, or shortly after; however, it is unlikely to reflect the initial format of *LS*. The volume contains both a number of interpolated items by anonymous authors, as well as several Ælfrician non-hagiographic works that he may or may not have intended to include as part of the original collection.<sup>10</sup> Unlike the *Catholic Homilies*, where surviving manuscripts not only indicate Ælfric's editorial decisions but also the widespread popularity of the work, *LS* may have undergone fewer revisions and had a more limited reception.<sup>11</sup>

The twenty-seven Ælfrician hagiographic narratives contained in Cotton Julius E.vii indicate that *LS* was intended to provide a short vernacular equivalent to the Latin anthologies of *passiones* and *uitae* used in the monasteries.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the hagiographic material found in both *LS* and the *Catholic Homilies* may have been based on one such Latin compilation. The so-called Cotton-Corpus Legendary is a collection of one hundred and sixty-five saints' lives originally drawn up in the diocese of Noyon-Tournai in North France around the late ninth to early tenth century, but which now survives solely in later

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2–5.

<sup>7</sup> P. Clemoes (ed.), *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series*, EETS ss 17 (Oxford, 1997). Hereafter *CHI*. See Preface, lines 57–9: '... and eac for ðam ðe menn behofiað godre lare swiðost on þisum timan þe is geendung þyssere worulde.' – ('...and also because men have need of good instruction, especially at this time, which is the ending of this world'). Thorpe, *Homilies*, I, 3.

<sup>8</sup> M. Lapidge (ed.), *The Cult of St. Swithun* (Oxford, 2003), p. 577. See also Clemoes, 'Chronology', pp. 243–4, who argues that *LS* was probably completed by 998, although the possibility remains that it may not have been finished until 1002. The dedication of *LS* to the laymen Æthelweard and Æthelmær indicates that both men were alive at the time of completion. The last charter witnessed by Æthelweard dates to 998 and it is generally assumed that he died in that same year, although there is of course a chance that he may have lived a little longer.

<sup>9</sup> Ker 162, Gneuss 339. (A number of fragments and excerpts of *LS* also survive, see Gneuss: 146, 262, 310, 355, 406 and 476).

<sup>10</sup> J. Hill, 'The Dissemination of Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*: A Preliminary Survey', in P.E. Szarmach (ed.), *Holy Men and Holy Women: Old English Prose Saints' Lives and Their Contexts* (Albany, NY, 1996), pp. 235–59, at p. 235.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 235–6.

<sup>12</sup> On the development and use of Legendaries in England, see R. Love (ed.), *Three Eleventh-Century Anglo-Latin Saints' Lives*, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, 1996), pp. xiii–xxxiii.

English manuscripts.<sup>13</sup> Comparisons between the Cotton-Corpus Legendary and *LS* have revealed not only striking similarities in content between the two works, but also that both texts usually employ the same account for a particular saint, even for those individuals whose *uitae* circulated in several different versions.<sup>14</sup> The surviving manuscripts of the Legendary are too late to have been Ælfric's exact source; furthermore, they also exhibit some variants from the Latin text he must have used. Nevertheless, many scholars believe that Ælfric consulted either an earlier version of this Legendary or a comparable collection.<sup>15</sup>

Hagiographic encyclopaediae such as the Cotton-Corpus Legendary were employed by religious communities for both public and private acts of devotion, which included liturgical use, as well as recitals during chapter and individual meditative reading.<sup>16</sup> While *LS* was probably never intended to serve such a wide a range of purposes, its principle aims as expounded by Ælfric himself in the opening preface, reveal several parallel functions:

*Nam memini me in duobus anterioribus libris posuisse passiones uel uitas sanctorum ipsorum quos gens ista caelebre colit cum ueneratione festi diei, et placuit nobis in isto codicello ordinare passiones etiam uel uitas sanctorum illorum quos non uulgus sed coenobite officiis uenerantur. Nec tamen plura promitto me scripturum hac lingua...ne forte despectui habeantur margarite Christi. ...Nec potuimus in ista translatione semper uerbum ex uerbo transferre, sed tamen sensum*

<sup>13</sup> Lapidge, *St Swithun*, p. 578. See pp. 205–10 for a more comprehensive discussion of two of the surviving manuscripts of the Cotton Corpus tradition, which form part of the edition in Appendix 1.

<sup>14</sup> P. Zettel, 'Saints' Lives in Old English: Latin Manuscripts and Vernacular Accounts: Ælfric', *Peritia* 1 (1982): 17–37, at pp. 20–1. See also P. Zettel, 'Ælfric's Hagiographical Sources and the Legendary Preserved in British Library, Manuscript Cotton Nero E.i + CCC Manuscript 9 and Other Manuscripts', (unpubl. DPhil dissertation, Oxford Univ., 1979).

<sup>15</sup> Zettel, 'Saints' Lives', p. 22 and Lapidge, *St Swithun*, p. 578. For a note of caution see G. Whatley, 'Late Old English Hagiography, ca. 950–1150', in G. Philippart (ed.), *Hagiographies: histoire internationale de la littérature hagiographique, latine et vernaculaire en Occident des origines à 1550*, 4 vols. (Turnhout, 1994–2006), I, 429–99, at pp. 473–82. Whatley urges caution in accepting the Cotton-Corpus Legendary as Ælfric's source on three fronts. First, it cannot be proved that a manuscript of the Legendary was available in England during Ælfric's own lifetime. Second, Zettel did not compare the Legendary with any other similar manuscripts (English or Continental) that survive from the late ninth to early tenth century; therefore, it is not clear whether the similarities between Ælfric and the Legendary are uniquely characteristic of these two works, or part of a common tradition. Third, Zettel's examples were too selective. For instance, Zettel cited three passages in the 'Life of Agnes', which he argued showed that the Legendary, as opposed to the tradition illustrated by the PL, was Ælfric's source. However, Whatley points out that in two of these extracts both the Legendary and the *Acta SS* version could be a possible source for Ælfric's vernacular translation and that the Legendary is not as unique as Zettel would have us believe. For a more detailed overview of scholarship on the relationship between the Cotton-Corpus Legendary and Ælfric see G. Corona, *Ælfric's Life of Saint Basil the Great: Background and Context*, Anglo-Saxon Texts 5 (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 2–3.

<sup>16</sup> Lapidge, *St. Swithun*, p. 577. For a more comprehensive discussion on the use of legendaries see G. Philippart, *Les légendiers latins et autres manuscrits hagiographiques*, Typologie des sources du Moyen Âge occidental 24–5 (Turnhout, 1977), pp. 112–17.

*ex sensu, sicut inuenimus in sancta scriptura, diligenter curauimus uertere Simplicii et aperta locutione quatinus proficiat Audientibus* (Preface, lines 5–12 and 22–5)<sup>17</sup>

In particular, Ælfric wished to make known to laymen, in the first instance his lay patrons Æthelweard and Æthelmær who had requested the collection's production, the lives of those saints honoured solely by the monasteries, as opposed to those universally celebrated by the English Church (5–9). Unlike the *Catholic Homilies*, *LS* appears to have been principally intended as private devotional reading (or listening) for at least two well-known devout Christians and was no doubt also aimed at other laymen of a similar disposition.<sup>18</sup>

On several occasions throughout *LS*, Ælfric praises the capacity of *passiones* to inspire the Christian reader zealously to maintain his faith against worldly temptations.<sup>19</sup> Despite such views, however, the Preface to *LS* also contains a note of caution about hagiography, since Ælfric states that he does not wish to translate too many of these tales *ne forte despectui habeantur margarite Christi* (11–12).<sup>20</sup> Ruth Waterhouse has argued that the reference to pearls recalls *Mt* 7.6, a verse often used to explain how Christ's pearls of wisdom (i.e. the parables) can be interpreted both literally and figuratively.<sup>21</sup> The evocation of *Mt* in the Preface indicates that Ælfric understood *uitae*, like Scripture, to contain numerous levels of meanings. Ælfric's decision to limit the number of lives he was prepared to let a layman study, however, suggests that he was also concerned that these passages could be dangerously misunderstood through ignorance.<sup>22</sup> In conjunction with his concern for orthodoxy, it would therefore appear that Ælfric carefully selected the texts that

<sup>17</sup> 'For I call to mind that, in two former books, I have set forth the Passions or Lives of those saints whom that illustrious nation celebrates by honouring their festival, and it has [now] pleased me to set forth, in this book, the Passions as well as the Lives of those saints whom not the vulgar, but the monks, honour by special services. I do not promise, however, to write very many in this tongue, ... lest peradventure the pearls of Christ be had in disrespect... Nor am I able, in this translation, to render everything word for word, but I have at any rate carefully endeavoured to give exact sense for sense, just as I find it in the holy writing, by means of such simple and obvious language as may profit them that hear it.'

<sup>18</sup> G. Whatley, 'Pearls Before Swine: Ælfric, Vernacular Hagiography and the Lay Reader', in T.N. Hall (ed.), *Via Crucis: Essays on Early Medieval Sources and Ideas in Memory of J.E. Cross* (Morgantown, WV, 2002), pp. 158–84, at pp. 173–4. Peter Clemoes ('Chronology', p. 220 fn. 3) also argues that there is a clear difference between the *Catholic Homilies* and *LS*. The hagiographical pieces in the *Catholic Homilies* refer to an anniversary 'today', indicating their intended use as preaching material. No such references are found in *LS* and it would appear that they were provided for the reader to use at whatever time was convenient.

<sup>19</sup> See for example, *LS* Preface, lines 14–17 and *Sermo de memoria sanctorum*, lines 9–12. Clemoes ('Ælfric', p. 205) believes that the *Sermo de memoria sanctorum* was also intended to head *LS* collection as an opening introduction on the importance of the saints. This piece appears as item xvi in Skeat's edition.

<sup>20</sup> 'Lest peradventure the pearls of Christ be had in disrespect.'

<sup>21</sup> R. Waterhouse, 'Ælfric's *Usitatus*: Use of Language in *Lives of Saints*', *Parergon* 7 (1989): 1–45, at p. 3. *Mt* 7.6: 'Nolite dare sanctum canibus neque mittatis margaritas uestras ante porcos ne forte conculcent eas pedibus suis et conuersi dirumpant uos' – ('Give not that which is holy to dogs; neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest perhaps they trample them under their feet, and turning upon you, they tear you').

<sup>22</sup> Whatley, 'Pearls before Swine', pp. 160–1 and 167–8.

were included in *LS* in order to produce a collection that would not be easily misconstrued.<sup>23</sup> Ælfric's statement that he had translated his Latin sources *sensum ex sensu* further suggests that his selected *uitae* were carefully doctored to remove any suspect passages.<sup>24</sup>

Agnes is one of only seven female saints included in Ælfric's collection of twenty-seven *uitae*.<sup>25</sup> Whilst her appearance indicates that her feast-days were not widely celebrated by the late Anglo-Saxon Church in general, Ælfric seems to have viewed her *passio* as appropriate didactic material for a lay audience, which contained no concepts that they might misconstrue. Nevertheless, two questions remain: first, whether the exact manner in which Ælfric wished his audience to appreciate the *Passio Sanctae Agnetis* can be ascertained. Second, whether his personal interpretation of the *PSA*'s central message caused him to modify the original Latin text.

Ælfric's claim that he had translated the *PSA sensum ex sensu* implies that he preserved at least the general narrative structure of the Latin work. Certainly this impression is maintained on a first reading, since all of the *PSA*'s narrative elements (apart from the martyrdom of Emerentiana) are replicated in the Anglo-Saxon version.<sup>26</sup> A word count comparison between these two works, however, reveals that the Old English text has been streamlined and although it narrates a virtually identical tale to the Latin, it does so in notably fewer words.<sup>27</sup> It would therefore appear that to appreciate Ælfric's translation of Agnes' martyrdom, not only must any dramatic narrative changes be considered, but indeed all decisions to keep, alter or remove material from the Latin source.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> In the Preface to *LS* (lines 12–14), Ælfric admits he has deliberately omitted the *uitae* from the *Vitae Patrum*: 'in quo multa subtilia habentur quae non conueniunt aperiri laicis, nec nos ipsi ea quimus implere' – ('in which are contained many subtleties, which are not suitable to be disclosed to the laity, nor are we personally able to follow (them)').

<sup>24</sup> 'sense for sense.'

<sup>25</sup> The other female saints are: Eugenia, Basilissa, Agatha, Lucy, Æthelthryth, Cecilia and Daria. Skeat's edition also includes the Lives of Mary of Egypt and Eufrosia, but these are non-Ælfrician pieces. See H. Magennis, 'Contrasting Features in the Non-Ælfrician Lives in the Old English *Lives of Saints*', *Anglia* 104 (1986): 316–48. See also below, pp. 152–8, where the Insular calendrical evidence for the celebration of Agnes' feast-days is discussed.

<sup>26</sup> For the martyrdom of Emerentiana, see *PSA* 169–84.

<sup>27</sup> The *PSA* contains 2,823 words as opposed to Ælfric's 'Life of Agnes', which comprises 2,228 words. Thus the Old English text equates to 79% of the length of the Latin original. If, however, the section of Emerentiana's martyrdom (141 words) is removed from the total number of words in the *PSA*, the calculation then stands at 83%.

<sup>28</sup> One possible reason for Ælfric's retention of the *PSA*'s narrative outline is the fact that he believed Ambrose of Milan to be the author of this work. The Old English account opens, 'Ambrosius bisceop binnan Mediolana afunde in ealdum bocum...' – (Ambrose, bishop of Milan found in old books...). Ælfric was the first author, as far as I am aware, to add the location of Ambrose's bishopric to *PSA* 1: 'Ambrosius episcopus,

### 3.1 *The Relationship between Ælfric's Theology and the Principal Themes of the Passio Sanctae Agnetis*

At this point it is helpful to consider two broad questions before moving on to a detailed analysis of Ælfric's Old English recasting of Agnes' martyrdom. The first is whether Ælfric's works contain any clues about how he wished his readers to approach and interpret his texts in general. The second is whether there are any reasons besides those given in the Preface that prompted Ælfric to include a translation of Agnes' martyrdom in *LS*. In particular, it seems possible that certain elements of the *PSA* appealed to Ælfric due to their resonance with his own teaching.

The dedication of *LS* to two laymen raise questions over the extent to which Ælfric expected his readers to be able to comprehend a complex text that contained both literal and symbolic readings and thus whether he ever intended to create such a work. A partial answer is provided in the *Catholic Homilies*, another collection aimed largely at laymen, where Ælfric lays down clear guidelines about the interpretation of Scripture. The homily *Dominica in media quadragesima* explains:

*ne gæð na mare to metinge buton þæt ðu hit geseo. and herige; Nis na genoh þæt ðu stafas scawie. buton þu hi eac ræde. and þæt andgit understande; swa is eac on ðam wundre þe god worhte mid þam fif hlafum. ne bið na genoh þæt we ðæs tacnes wundrian. oððe þurh þæt god herian buton we eac þæt gastlice andgit understandon;... (CHI xii.68–73)<sup>29</sup>*

Based on patristic exegetical traditions, Ælfric's teaching is explicit: his audience must understand not only the literal meaning of the text, but also the spiritual ideas concealed in the narrative. Furthermore, the majority of the sermons in the *CH* frequently employ both tropological explanations of the Scriptures, which offer moral instruction for the individual soul, as well as allegorical interpretations, whereby all Biblical persons and events are seen as figures of Christ and the Church.<sup>30</sup> Overall, it is clear that Ælfric expected his audience

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seruus Christi' – ('Bishop Ambrose, servant of Christ'), in order to make clear that the work was penned by one of the four great Fathers of the Western Church.

<sup>29</sup> 'Nothing more is necessary for a picture than that you see and praise it: but it is not enough to look at characters without, at the same time, reading them, and understanding their signification. So also it is with regard to the miracle that God wrought with the five loaves: it is not enough that we wonder at the miracle, or praise God on account of it, without also understanding its spiritual sense.' Thorpe, *Homilies*, I, 187. For similar comments see also *CHI* x.34–44, and *CH* II xii.165–77.

<sup>30</sup> Overall, Ælfric's homilies appear to use tropological explanations of Scripture more frequently than allegorical interpretations. I read Ælfric's exegesis as tropological and allegorical in nature following the definitions given in H. De Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture* (Paris, 1959–62; trans. M. Sebanc and E.M. Macierowski and repr. as 2 vols., Edinburgh, 1998–2000), II, 84–93 and 127–9.

to be able to understand a multi-tiered interpretation of any Scriptural passage. His opinion suggests that anyone who was familiar with the *CH*, as no doubt Ælfric's patrons were, was thus trained to approach all sacred literature in a similar manner. Certainly, a number of the hagiographic pieces included in the *CH* (as well as *LS*) incorporate brief comments about the spiritual message of each narrative, indicating that this was indeed the case.<sup>31</sup>

One important difference between the *CH* and *LS*, however, is that the former appear to have been composed not only for public preaching but also as meditative tracts for readers, while the latter seem to have been intended solely as private devotional literature.<sup>32</sup> In the *CH*, Ælfric clearly outlines the spiritual readings contained in Scripture.<sup>33</sup> These explanations are largely lacking from *LS*, however, analysis of Ælfric's hagiographical style suggests that here too he employed a similar but more-subtle scheme. Dorothy Bethurum once argued that in *LS* Ælfric's adaptation of his Latin sources 'omitted all that did not contribute to effective story-telling.'<sup>34</sup> There is no doubt that *LS* is characterised by a strong narrative drive, but woven into the plot lines are a number of devices that appear to act as guides to the spiritual and moral lessons behind the literal storyline. Ælfric's use of alliterative prose and his employment of epithets in order to emphasise the combat of good and evil at play in these tales, allows a reader to easily discern the moral lesson of each piece.<sup>35</sup> In addition, Malcolm Godden has shown how Ælfric carefully developed a narrative technique devoid of bibliographical and historical detail in order to promote 'the universality' of each saint's life.<sup>36</sup> The reader, therefore, is not only presented with the story of a saint, but one which allows them easily to perceive

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Interestingly, Ælfric appears to offer relatively few anagogical explanations in his works: those that explain how Biblical events relate to Judgement Day.

<sup>31</sup> Examples from *CH* include: *CH* II xi.536–46 (Benedict), *CH* II xviii.53–61 (*Inuentio Sanctae Crucis*), *CH* II xxxii.1–79 (Matthew the Evangelist). The three sermons for the feast-day of One Martyr (*CH* II xxxvii), One Confessor (*CH* II xxxviii) and One Virgin (*CH* II xxxix) can also be read as a guide to interpreting such hagiographic literature. Examples from *LS* include: xi.278–364 (40 Soldiers), xx.120–35 (Æthelthryth) and xxxv.341–61 (Chrysanthus and Daria).

<sup>32</sup> See M. Godden, *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: Introduction, Commentary and Glossary*, EETS ss 18 (Oxford, 2000), pp. xxi–ix for a discussion of Ælfric's target audiences for *CH*. Hereafter *CH* III.

<sup>33</sup> *CH* may contain more detailed explanations than *LS* because their intended audience included laymen with little learning, who required such clarity. Furthermore, since the *CH* may have often been heard as opposed to read, it is also possible that Ælfric deliberately provided comprehension aids for his audience who would not have had time to dwell on a particular passage of Scripture.

<sup>34</sup> D. Bethurum, 'The Form of Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*', *Studies in Philology* 29 (1932): 515–33, at p. 519.

<sup>35</sup> A. Middleton, 'Ælfric's Answerable Style: The Rhetoric of Alliterative Prose', *Studies in Medieval Culture* 4 (1973): 83–91 at pp. 85–6.

<sup>36</sup> M. Godden, 'Experiments in Genre: The Saints' Lives in Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies*', in P.E. Szarmach (ed.), *Holy Men and Holy Women: Old English Prose Saints' Lives and Their Contexts* (Albany, NY, 1996), pp. 261–87, at pp. 280–1. See also Waterhouse, 'Usitatus', p. 44, who argues that Ælfric constructed his texts in order to 'activate different levels of awareness in his lay audience.'

the overlap between all hagiographic works and comprehend the spiritual message embodied in each text. If Agnes' tale is placed in such a framework, it would appear that Ælfric viewed her legend as both an exemplary heroic story to inspire the majority of his audience, as well as a work that could preach a sophisticated spiritual message to more learned folk. But while the 'Life of Agnes' may well have been intended to provide a multi-layered didactic work, questions still remain over the form of spiritual guidance made available to the reader.

Agnes' martyrdom results from two parallel combats: the preservation of her Christian faith in the face of heathen persecution and the defence of her chastity against the sin of carnal desire. If Ælfric's views on martyrdom, paganism and chastity are examined, it becomes apparent that Agnes' tale provided a narrative through which he could explore three important elements of his theological teaching. It is clear from numerous references to martyrs, both in the *CH* and *LS*, that Ælfric viewed such figures as important exemplars to inspire and fortify the faith of contemporary Christians against the imminent coming of the Anti-Christ.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, an analysis of the homily *In natale sanctorum martirum*, where Ælfric sets out his teaching on the act of martyrdom itself, begins to explain his specific interest in Agnes and the *PSA*:

*Twa cynn sind martirdomes. An dearnunge. oðer eawunge; Se ðe on ehtnysse for cristes geleafan his lif alæt. se bið openlice martir; Eft se ðe forberð ðurh geðyld hosp. and teonan. and ðone lufað þe hine hatað. and his agene unlustas. and þæs ungesewenlican deofles tihtinge forsihð. se bið untwylice martyr on digelre dæde...And we magon beon martiras ðeah ðe wé mid isene acwealde ne beon. gif we þæt geðyld on urum mode unleaslice healdað;...(CH II xxxvii.132–52)<sup>38</sup>*

Here Ælfric outlines two distinct forms of martyrdom: physical death at the hands of pagan persecutors and spiritual martyrdom through enduring the hardships caused by other humans or the temptations of sin. The idea that the title of 'martyr' could refer to any person who suffered for God has had a long history in Christian thought, especially the

<sup>37</sup> See in particular *CH* II xxxvii.79–88.

<sup>38</sup> 'Of martyrdom there are two kinds: one secret, the other manifest. He who in persecution lays down his life for Christ's belief, is openly a martyr. But he who through patience endures scorn and injury, and loves him who hates him, and despises his own vices and the prompting of the invisible devil, he is undoubtedly a martyr by secret deed... And we may be martyrs, though we be not killed with iron, if we sincerely hold that patience in our minds.' Thorpe, *Homilies*, II, 545–7. For similar sentiments, see also *CH* I xxxvii.272–81. *CH* II xxxvii is based on a work by Gregory the Great: *Homiliae in Evangelia* 35 (PL 76, 1075–314, at 1259–65). Godden notes that whilst Gregory's concept of a living martyrdom places a great deal of emphasis on the virtue of patiently enduring torments inflicted by other humans, Ælfric's views emphasise the value of not only enduring God's punishments without complaint, but also resisting temptation and sin. *CH* III, pp. 641–6.

notion that asceticism was a form of bloodless martyrdom.<sup>39</sup> Ælfric, however, offers a subtle variation on a familiar theme, for his contemporary martyrs were not solely ascetic religious, but all Christian men and women who were willing to spiritually strive against the machinations of the devil. Interestingly, Ælfric's promotion of both the physical and spiritual aspects of one concept is repeated in relation to the other two major themes of Agnes' *passio*, namely idolatry and chastity.

In the late tenth century, idol worship was no longer a fundamental concern of the Anglo-Saxon Church, which worried far more about lingering pagan superstitions.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, as Malcolm Godden points out, during the period in which *LS* was composed, heathen Vikings were once again raiding English shores. These incursions seem to have troubled Ælfric greatly since a number of texts included in *LS* depict Christian warfare against pagan opponents.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, as J.E. Cross noted, *LS* provides the sole surviving Old English definition of the concept of just war and does so in relation to the Vikings.<sup>42</sup> Consequently, Godden argues that Ælfric clearly saw:

a similarity between the times of the early martyrs under persecution and the contemporary pressure, or at least temptation, to side with the Vikings, which he interpreted as abandoning the faith.<sup>43</sup>

In these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that Ælfric still deemed idolatry to be a topic worthy of discussion. One of his most interesting passages on this subject occurs in his homily *De auguriis* (*LS* xvii):

*Deofol-gild bið þæt man his drihten forlæte • and his cristendóm •  
and to deofollicum hæðenscype gebuge • bysmrigende his scyppend •*

<sup>39</sup> C. Stancliffe, 'Red, White and Blue Martyrdom', in D. Whitelock, R. McKitterick and D. Dumville (eds.), *Ireland in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 21–46, at pp. 29–36. Stancliffe discusses the history of the idea of bloodless martyrdom from the second-century writer Clement of Alexandria to seventh-century Irish texts, many of which relate this concept to acts that leave physical traces of suffering on the body, e.g. fasting and penance.

<sup>40</sup> L. Grundy, *Books and Grace: Ælfric's Theology* (London, 1991), p. 11.

<sup>41</sup> M. Godden, 'Ælfric's Saints' Lives and the Problems of Miracles', *Leeds Studies in English* n.s. 16 (1985): 83–100, at p. 95.

<sup>42</sup> J.E. Cross, 'The Ethic of War in Old English', in P. Clemoes and K. Hughes (eds.), *England Before the Conquest: Studies in Primary Sources Presented to Dorothy Whitelock* (Cambridge, 1971), pp. 269–82, at pp. 272–3 quoting *LS* xxv.708–9 (*Passio Machabeorum*): 'Iustum bellum • is rihtlic gefeoht wið ða reðan flotmenn • / opbe wið oðre þeoda þe eard willað fordon' – ('Just war is rightly fought against the cruel seamen / or against other people who wish to destroy (our) country').

<sup>43</sup> Godden, 'Problem of Miracles', p. 97. See also M. Godden, 'Apocalypse and Invasion in Late Anglo-Saxon England', in M. Godden, D. Gray and T. Hoad (eds.), *From Anglo-Saxon to Middle English: Studies Presented to E.G. Stanley* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 130–62. Godden argues that Ælfric's works contain two models to explain the Viking raids. The first characterises them as instruments of divine wrath, while the second uses hagiographic *exempla* to encourage his countrymen to stoically endure these trials sent by God to test the faith of his people.

*Oðer deofolgild is derigendlic þære sawle ·  
 ðonne se man forsihð his scyppendes beboda ·  
 and þa sceandlican leahtras begæð · þe se sceocca hine lærð · (lines 47–51)<sup>44</sup>*

In a similar manner to his teaching on martyrdom, Ælfric offers a two-fold definition of idolatry, a religious practice that for him clearly exists once more in both a physical and spiritual form: literal idol worship and participation in sinful activities. The opening of *De auguriis*, moreover, quotes two Biblical passages (*Gal* 5.16 and *I Cor* 6.9) where idolatry is defined as one of the works of the flesh, which the soul must conquer in order to follow a Christian life. Alongside the worship of idols, the passage from *Gal* also categorises a number of other vices as ‘works of the flesh’ including fornication and here lies the central reason behind Ælfric’s keen interest in virgin martyrs.

The two virtues that function as counterparts to the vices of idolatry and fornication are faith and chastity. Katy Cubitt has argued that in Ælfric’s thought:

Chastity and Christianity were... coextensive; Christ’s incarnation embodied a new sexual code which at times almost seems to be identified in Ælfric’s writings with Christianity itself<sup>45</sup>

Chastity constitutes one of the most important elements of Ælfric’s theology based on his teaching that Christ was not only the first Christian, but also the first virgin.<sup>46</sup> In Ælfric’s eyes, the fact that the first apostles called to follow Christ also adopted a celibate lifestyle justifies his belief that to lead a Christian life means to live chastely.<sup>47</sup> Ælfric’s interest in

<sup>44</sup> ‘Idolatry is that a man forsake his Lord and his Christianity, and yield to diabolical heathenism, dishonouring his Creator. There is another idolatry, hurtful to the soul, when a man despiseth his Creator’s commands, and practiseth the shameful sins which the devil teacheth him.’ See Grundy, *Books and Grace*, pp. 11–13 for a more detailed discussion of Ælfric’s views on idolatry.

<sup>45</sup> C. Cubitt, ‘Virginity and Misogyny in Tenth- and Eleventh-Century England’, *Gender and History* 12 (2000): 1–32, at p. 5. See also pp. 3–7 for a detailed discussion of how chastity formed a central theme in Ælfric’s theology. Cubitt also draws attention to the way in which Ælfric associates sexual activity with paganism in contrast to the chastity of Christianity and comments on how this idea is played out in the *passiones* of the virgin martyrs in *LS*.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4, which quotes Fehr, Letter 1.2: ‘Crist sylf astealde cristendom and clænnysse, and ealle þa, þe ferdon on his fare mid him, forleton ealle woruldþing and wifes neawiste’ – (‘Christ himself instituted Christianity and chastity, and all those who departed on his journey with him, abandoned all earthly riches and the society of (their) wife’). B. Fehr (ed.), *Die Hirtenbriefe Ælfrics in altenglischer und lateinischer Fassung*, Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Prosa 9 (Hamburg, 1914; repr. with a supplementary introduction by P. Clemoes, Darmstadt, 1966), pp. 1–34, at p. 2.

<sup>47</sup> Cubitt, ‘Virginity and Misogyny’, p. 4, which quotes *CH* I xxi.218–22: ‘for þan ðe he is ord and angin ealra clænnysa. and him is seo clænnys swiðe lufiendlic mægen; Ðæt he geswutelode þa ða he geceas him mædenmann to meder. and eall se halga heap ðe him fyligde wæs on clænnysse wuniende swa swa he cwæð on sumum godspelle; Se þe to me cymð ne mæig he beon min leorningcniht buton he his wif hatige’ – (‘for (i.e. Christ) is the origin and beginning of all chastities, and to him chastity is a very amiable virtue, which he manifested when he choose him a maiden for a mother. And all the holy company which followed him was living in chastity, as he says in one of his gospels: ‘He who comes to me, may not be my disciple, unless he hate his wife’ – cf. *Lc* 14.26). Thorpe, *Homilies*, I, 309.

physical chastity is understandable given his links with the Benedictine Reform. However, since his works often address laymen he did not preach chastity for all, but rather the use of the conjugal right for procreation alone.<sup>48</sup> It is hardly surprising, therefore, that his views on chastity, the third major theme of the *PSA*, provide yet another example of a state which he defines both physically and, in his homily for the feast of the holy virgins, spiritually:

*Nu is for ði seo halige gelaðung gelic tyn mædenum. for ðan ðe seo gelaðung is gegaderod of ægðores hades mannum. þæt is werhádes. and wifhádes; Ælc ðæra manna ðe hine forhæfð fram unalyfedlicere gesihðe. fram unalyfedlicere heorcunge. fram unalyfedlicum swæcce. fram unalyfedlicum stence. fram unalyfedlicere hrepunge. se hæfð mædenes naman. for ðære anwalhynysse...*  
(*CH* II xxxix.38–44)<sup>49</sup>

Overall, it is clear that Ælfric viewed not only martyrdom, but also idolatry and chastity as both physical and spiritual manifestations. These views suggest that he was drawn to Agnes' legend by the way her dual crown of martyrdom and chastity could simultaneously evoke these concepts. The historical tale of virgin saint who was martyred for her faith by heathen persecutors clearly provides the perfect model for the contemporary Christian who strove for spiritual chastity and pure faith in his or her combat against sin. Furthermore, such tropological ideas reinforce the view that Ælfric deliberately composed his account of the *Passio Sanctae Agnetis* to create a multi-level text.

Indeed, the association between the *PSA* and Ælfric's theology can be further strengthened through a consideration of the reward for both martyrdom and chastity in Ælfric's eyes: eternal salvation. Whilst both actions achieve the same goal, they do so by two different routes, martyrdom through imitating Christ's suffering and chastity by spiritual marriage with Christ:

*Nis na gewunelic þæt mægðhád si gecweden on sinscipe. ac swa ðeah ðær is þæs geleafan mægðhad. þe wurðað ænne soðne god. and nele forligerlice to leasum hæðengylde bugan; Eal seo gelaðung... eal heo is genamod to anum mædene. swa*

<sup>48</sup> R.K. Upchurch, 'For Pastoral Care and Political Gain: Ælfric of Eynsham's Preaching on Marital Celibacy', *Traditio* 59 (2004): 39–78, at p. 44. See also p. 43, fn. 12 where Upchurch provides a comprehensive list of Ælfric's sermons that discuss the notion of 'clænnyss', twelve of which discuss physical chastity and seven, spiritual chastity.

<sup>49</sup> 'Now, therefore, is the holy Church like to the ten maidens, because the Church is gathered from persons of each sex, that is, of the male sex and of the female sex. Every one of those persons who abstain from unallowed sight, from unallowed hearkening, from unallowed taste, from unallowed smell, from unallowed touch, has the name of maiden for that purity.' Thorpe, *Homilies*, II, 563–5. The notion of the Church as a living entity constructed from the bodies of faithful believers can of course be found in a number of NT passages, including: *Mt* 21.42; *Mc* 12.10; *Lc* 20.17, *I Cor* 12.12–28 and *Eph* 2.20–2. Godden, however, also notes two patristic sources for Ælfric's comments: Gregory the Great's *Homiliae in Evangelia* 12 and Augustine's *sermo* xciii (PL 38, 573–80). Ælfric's teaching that all Christians possessed the capability to become spiritual virgins is based on Augustine's sermon. *CH* III, pp. 656–7.

*swa se apostol Paulus cwæð. to geleaffullum folce; Disponsauī uos uni uiro uirginem castam. exhibere christo; ... Nis ðis na to understandenne lichamlice. ac gastlice; Crist is se clæna brydguma. and eal seo cristene gelaðung is his bryd. þurh ða he gestrynd ðæghwomlice mennisce sawla to his heofenlican rice; Seo gelaðung is ure modor and clæne mæden. for ðan þe we beoð on hire geedcynnede to godes handa. Þurh geleafan and fulluht;...(CH II xxxix.78–92)<sup>50</sup>*

The *PSA*'s depiction of Agnes' actual martyrdom for her faith and chastity as the event that consecrates her desired marriage with Christ clearly correlates with Ælfric's views outlined above. In addition, the *PSA*'s depiction of the way faith and chastity unite in one virginal figure ties in well to Ælfric's own thoughts on how the Church, as well as each individual Christian, acquired the status of maidenhood through true faith.

Ælfric's opinions, of course, are primarily based on certain Biblical passages where steadfast faith is linked with correct sexual conduct. The concept of divine nuptials is a recurring theme throughout the Bible; nevertheless, two distinct strands of thought need to be distinguished. The first is perhaps the most famous Old Testament discussion of spiritual marriage: *Canticum Canticorum*, one of the most figurative books of the Bible. In the first chapter of this thesis, it was demonstrated that the Latin *PSA* was compiled by someone who was heavily influenced by writers such as Ambrose and Jerome, whose writings often expound verses from *Ct*.<sup>51</sup> In the works of these authors, the figure of the bride was identified as a type of both the Church and the individual Christian virgin; nevertheless, the relationship between the bride and the soul was far more heavily emphasised in order to advance the nascent institution of asceticism. Due to Ælfric's concerns over the ability of laymen to fully comprehend mystical Scripture, however, it seems strange that he would employ these images in works intended for a lay audience.

Patristic writers who wished to avoid citing *Ct*, the most influential of whom was Augustine of Hippo, employed a second and alternative set of Biblical statements about spiritual marriage. Augustine rarely mentioned *Ct* in his works although he often used the image of the bride and bridegroom, which he constantly interpreted as representing the union of Christ and the Church, or Christ and each individual member of the universal

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<sup>50</sup> 'Maidenhood is not usually spoken of in connection with marriage, but, nevertheless, there is a maidenhood of faith, which worships one true God, and will not adulterously bow to an idol. All the Church... it is all named as one maiden, as the apostle Paul said to the believing folk: "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ...". This is not to be understood bodily, but spiritually. Christ is the pure bridegroom, and all the Christian Church is his bride, by which he daily begets human souls to his heavenly kingdom. The Church is our mother and a pure maiden, because we are in her born again to God's hand, through faith and baptism.' Thorpe, *Homilies*, II, 567.

<sup>51</sup> See pp. 47–64.

Church.<sup>52</sup> In his works, divine marriage was not chiefly linked with individual ascetic practices, but rather to the universal congregation of the Church who had achieved the status of spiritual virgins: Christians, married or otherwise, who lived chastely without sin.<sup>53</sup>

Augustine's ideas derive from Old Testament passages that depict the relationship between the Lord and Israel as a marriage, with Israel's periodic lapses into idolatry as acts of adultery or harlotry.<sup>54</sup> When the New Testament was composed, this bridal imagery was adapted in conjunction with various other motifs to indicate the implementation of a new covenant between God and the Gentiles, one that replaced the Old Testament covenant with Israel. In the New Testament, the Church is cast as the pure virginal bride that Israel failed to be, an image perhaps best expressed in *Apc* 18 and 21, where the angel of the Lord casts down the Whore of Babylon (who is depicted as a city/nation) and the new Jerusalem (the Church) appears from heaven, adorned as a bride.<sup>55</sup>

Augustine is known to have had an overwhelming impact on Ælfric's theology and it is noticeable that this influence extended to his thoughts on spiritual marriage.<sup>56</sup> The two passages quoted above from *CH* II xxxix are based on Augustine's *sermo xciii* and show that Ælfric clearly embraced not only Augustine's views on the universal membership of

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<sup>52</sup> Augustine's minimal use of *Ct* can also be shown through a comparison of his works to those of Ambrose. There are around forty-five thousand Biblical citations employed in Augustine's surviving corpus. Only one hundred and sixty-four of these references, however, come from *Ct*. In contrast, Ambrose's four works on virginity alone contain more than one hundred and thirty quotations from *Ct*. For Augustine see F.B.A. Asiedu, 'The Song of Songs and the Ascent of the Soul: Ambrose, Augustine, and the Language of Mysticism', *Vigiliae Christianae* 55 (2001): 299–317, at p. 306. For Ambrose see N. Henry, 'The Song of Songs and the Liturgy of the *Velatio* in the Fourth Century: From Literary Metaphor to Liturgical Reality', *Studies in Church History* 35 (1999): 18–28, at p. 18.

<sup>53</sup> See P. Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York, 1988), pp. 396–408 and 416–18, where he discusses how Augustine possessed a very different outlook on society and marriage in comparison to the more ascetically minded Patristic writers such as Jerome and Ambrose. Augustine taught that Adam and Eve had dwelt as a married and sexually active couple in Paradise, whose punishment for disobeying God was to be inflicted with irrational carnal desire. In contrast, writers such as Jerome believed that marriage had been created after the Fall to provide for man's newly created sexual needs. Consequently, Augustine never saw the institution of marriage itself in the negative light that many of his contemporary colleagues did.

<sup>54</sup> OT passages that depict Israel (or individual Jewish cities) as a bride or a harlot include: *Idc* 2.17; *Is* 1.21, 49.18; *Ier* 2.32, 7.34, 16.9, 25.10, 33.11; the book of *Osee* and *Ioel* 2.16. *Ct* and certain of the Psalms can also be interpreted figuratively in this manner.

<sup>55</sup> NT references to bridal imagery include: *Mt* 9.15, 22.2–14 (parable of the King's wedding feast), 25.1–13 (parable of the ten virgins); *Mc* 2.19–20; *Lc* 5.34–5; *Io* 3.29; *II Cor* 11.2; *Apc* 18.23, 19.7–9, 21.2, 21.9 and 22.17.

<sup>56</sup> For Augustine's influence on Ælfric see Grundy, *Books and Grace*, p. 7 and *CH* III, pp. xxxviii–xl. See also Fontes Anglo-Saxonici Project (ed.), *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici: World Wide Web Register*, <http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/>, accessed September 2007. The database records that Augustine's works were used on 922 occasions as a source text by an Anglo-Saxon author. 501 of these instances (or 54%) occur in Ælfric's literary corpus.

spiritual chastity, but also his avoidance of *Ct*.<sup>57</sup> In total, seven of Ælfric's sermons discuss the theme of the divine union and all of these works depict it both as the relationship between Christ and his Church, as well as that of Christ and all individual Christians, who together comprise the Church on earth.<sup>58</sup> In these homilies, Ælfric employs a variety of Biblical quotations all of which are taken from the New Testament (apart from two exceptions from the Psalms).<sup>59</sup> *Ct* is used on only one occasion in the *CH*: the homily *De assumptione beatae mariae* where Ælfric quotes *Ct* 6.9 in a description of Mary (*CH* I xxx.114–16).<sup>60</sup>

Augustine and Ælfric both promote a form of spiritual chastity and marriage focused primarily on the Church rather than the individual. One crucial difference, however, separates them on this subject: their definition of precisely which Christians were eligible to be called spiritual virgins. For Augustine, restraint from vice and a life filled with good deeds achieved this status, but in Ælfric's work the title applies to Christians who do not abandon God by committing adultery with false idols. Fundamentally both descriptions concern the rejection of sin, but Ælfric's choice of defining his views by employing Scriptural motifs that associate faith with correct sexual behaviour further reinforces the importance he attached to chastity.<sup>61</sup> Ælfric appears to have advanced his own distinctive theological scheme about the acquisition of eternal salvation, one in which the concepts of martyrdom, idolatry, chastity and harlotry were not only closely intertwined, but also applicable to all believers. In this way Ælfric promotes a dual path to heaven. Just as Christ was both the first New Testament martyr and the instigator of chastity under the New Law, so the Church and the individual believer within the holy assembly, could become one with Him through imitating either or both actions. The *Passio Sanctae Agnetis*

<sup>57</sup> *CH* III, pp. 654–61.

<sup>58</sup> These seven sermons are: *CH* I xxxiii.19–27; *CH* I xxxv.40–6; *CH* II i.91–120; *CH* II iv.25–36; *CH* II xxxix.78–92 and Assmann iii.54–184 and vi.89–105. B. Assmann (ed.), *Angelsächsische Homilien und Heiligenleben*, Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Prosa 3 (Kassel, 1889; repr. with a supplementary introduction by P. Clemoes, Darmstadt, 1964). This list of sermons is taken from Upchurch, 'Pastoral Care', p. 43, fn. 12.

<sup>59</sup> The Biblical quotations discussed in these seven sermons are: *Mt* 22.2–14 (*CH* I xxxv); *Mt* 25.1–13 (*CH* II xxxix); *Lc* 7.11–16 (*CH* I xxxiii); *Io* 2.1–11 (*CH* II iv); *Io* 3.3 and 5 (*CH* II i); *Io* 3.29 (*CH* II i, Assmann iii), *Rm* 8.18 (Assmann vi) and *II Cor* 11.2 (*CH* II i, iv and xxxix, and Assmann iii). The two passages from the Psalms are: *Ps* 18.6 (*CH* II i and Assmann iii) and *Ps* 44.10 (Assmann iii).

<sup>60</sup> This practise is also reflected in Aldhelm's *De uirginitate*, where *Ct* is likewise used solely in reference to Mary. Indeed, Ælfric's knowledge of Aldhelm, whose works not only drew heavily upon Augustine, but were also popular school texts in Ælfric's day, may have influenced his infrequent use of *Ct*. See: *Dlu* xl (*Ct* 4.12 and 6.7–8) and *Cdu* 1697–9 (*Ct* 4.12) At 1699 Aldhelm also refers to Mary as a dove, which alludes to *Ct* 1.14, 2.14, 4.1, 5.2 and 6.8. For Aldhelm's use of Augustine see S. O'Sullivan, 'Aldhelm's *De uirginitate* – Patristic Pastiche or Innovative Exposition?', *Peritia* 12 (1998): 271–95.

<sup>61</sup> *CH* III, pp. 657–8.

clearly offered Ælfric a story where he could explore the interplay of both his literal and spiritual concepts of martyrdom and chastity through the trials inflicted on the body of a virgin martyr that eventually lead to her martyrdom and marriage to Christ. The figure of a virgin martyr encapsulated Ælfric's theological teaching into one visual image, which clearly symbolised not only the living body of the Church, but also each Christian member of the holy assembly:

*Godes gelaðung hæfð on sibbe lilian. þæt is clæne drohtnung. on ðam gewinne, rosan. þæt is martyrdom. (CH II xxxvii.153–4)*<sup>62</sup>

Through her dual triumph over pagan persecution, Agnes provides an image of the Church who throughout her history has truly become one with Christ in every possible sense. Agnes also functions as an icon that is equally relevant to either sex and to both religious and laymen, all of whom were viewed by Ælfric as eligible to participate in the Church's final triumph. It remains now to see to what extent, if any, Ælfric adapted the Latin *PSA* in order to emphasise his own theological views.

### 3.2 *The Tropological Reading of Ælfric's 'Life of Agnes'*

Ælfric is renowned for his ability to increase the dramatic tension of the original hagiographic plot lines that he borrowed and reworked, in order to encourage his readers both to empathise with each saint's suffering and to seek to emulate them.<sup>63</sup> Depending on the individual under consideration, this goal could be achieved in a variety of ways. One of Ælfric's favoured techniques, however, consists of characterising the saint's opponents in order to create a much starker combat between the forces of good and evil than is found in the original Latin.<sup>64</sup> This device is used on several occasions in the 'Life of Agnes'. Both the *PSA* and *LS* cast Agnes' suitor and his father, the Prefect of Rome, as the saint's two main persecutors; nevertheless, a comparison of the depiction of these men in both accounts reveals some subtle yet crucial differences.

In the case of Agnes' suitor, Ælfric's alterations appear directly linked to his views that virginal faith required the rejection of sin on both a spiritual and physical plane. The Old English account not only casts the youth as a far more degenerate individual than in the Latin, but does so in relation to two specific aspects of his character: his religious beliefs

<sup>62</sup> 'God's Church in peace has lilies, that is, a pure life-course; in strife, roses, that is martyrdom.' Thorpe, *Homilies*, II, 547.

<sup>63</sup> Bethurum, 'The Form of Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*', p. 520.

<sup>64</sup> R. Waterhouse, 'Ælfric's Use of Discourse in Some Saints Lives', *ASE* 5 (1976): 83–103 at p. 92.

and emotional state. At no point in the *PSA* is the suitor directly named as a pagan, instead the Latin text merely introduces the suitor as the son of the Prefect of Rome and leaves it to the reader to assume the heathen identity of Agnes' opponent.<sup>65</sup> In contrast, Ælfric places great emphasis on the suitor's paganism by means of several small additions to the Latin, the first of which can be found in the opening lines of his narrative:

... · *ða awogode hi sum cniht*  
*simpronies sunu · þe wæs geset ofer ða burh ·*  
*to heahgerefan · and wæs hæðengilda (14–16)*<sup>66</sup>

Furthermore, when the suitor next appears in the Old English account at the brothel where he attempts to rape Agnes, his heathenism is reiterated by two references to the devil. The *PSA* narrates how, after the suitor tried to touch Agnes through the wall of light surrounding her, *cecidit in faciem suam, et praefocatus a diabolo, expirauit* (113).<sup>67</sup> Later on, however, when Simpronius demands to know how his son died, Agnes attributes responsibility elsewhere and states that *dedit eum angelus Domini in reprobam mortem* (131).<sup>68</sup> Ælfric on the other hand takes a different view and portrays the suitor's death as the devil's work on both occasions:

1) *ac he feol astreht ætforan þam mædene adyd ·*  
*burh ðone deofol þe he dwollice gehyrsumede · (171–2)*<sup>69</sup>  
 2) *Bin sceamleasa sunu · mid sceamleasum anginne ·*  
*arn into me · ac se encgel hine afylde ·*  
*and ðam deofle betæhte · þe hine adydde þærrihthe · (189–91)*<sup>70</sup>

Two changes are achieved in these lines. The more striking modification is the devil's portrayal as the suitor's master, as opposed to merely his slayer. The repeated emphasis on Satan's involvement in the youth's death also strengthens the link between the two characters and reinforces Ælfric's depiction of the young man as a pagan idolater.

The second of the Old English alterations to the characterization of the suitor focuses on the young man's infatuation with the virgin martyr rather than his heathenism. In the *PSA*, the narrative describes how Agnes' suitor is smitten with love for the maiden

<sup>65</sup> *PSA* 10: 'a praefecti urbis filio adamatur' – '(Agnes) was deeply loved by the son of the Urban Prefect'. Elsewhere in the *PSA* the suitor is merely referred to as either 'filius' or 'iuuenis.'

<sup>66</sup> 'Then a certain youth wooed her, the son of Simpronius, who had been appointed as Prefect over the city and who was an idolater.' Compare to *PSA* 10 (see fn. 65).

<sup>67</sup> 'he fell onto his face, and, having been suffocated by the devil, breathed his last.'

<sup>68</sup> 'the angel of the Lord gave him into a condemned death.'

<sup>69</sup> '...but he fell headlong stretched out before the maiden, destroyed by the devil whom he erroneously served.'

<sup>70</sup> 'Your shameless son hastened into me with shameless design, but the Angel struck him down and entrusted him to the devil who thereupon killed him.'

and thus attempts to win her hand in marriage in order to fulfill his passion (10–17 and 38–40). The Latin text repeatedly tells of the depth of his feelings for Agnes and the pain her rejection brings him. Consequently, the *PSA* creates two devoted suitors competing for the saint's hand (namely the youth and Christ) and through this narrative device enhances the dramatic tension surrounding Agnes' choice of husband.<sup>71</sup> Ælfric's interpretation of the suitor's burning desire for Agnes is best expressed by a direct comparison with the Latin in two crucial places: the suitor's opening proposal and his attack on Agnes at the brothel.

Table 3.1: *The Suitor's Proposal*

PSA	Ælfric
<p><i>Putans eam meliora uelle accipere ornamenta, omnem lapidem pretiosum secum defert ad gloriam, et per se ipsum, et per amicos, et notos et adfines, coepit aures uirginis appellare, diuitias, domos, possessiones, familias, atque omnes diuitias mundi repromittere, si consensum suum eius coniugio non negaret. Vnde factum est ut iuuenis maiori perurgeretur stimulo. (13–17)</i><sup>72</sup></p>	<p><i>Ða brohte se cniht to ðam clænan mædene · deorwurða gimmas · and woruldlice glencga · and behet hire welan gif heo wolde hine · (21–3)</i><sup>73</sup></p>

The significant change in this first instance lies in the manner of the suitor's offer, for the *PSA*'s proposal scene is not repeated in the Old English. Ælfric makes no mention of marriage here. Instead, his suitor offers worldly treasures should Agnes *wille hine*, a phrase which creates the impression that he wishes the saint to become his mistress or concubine, rather than his wife.<sup>74</sup> The conjugal feelings of *amor* attributed to the suitor in the Latin account are thus suppressed in *LS* and replaced with those of lustful desire. A second reference to the proposed marriage between the suitor and Agnes is then made in a later section of the *PSA* (40–7). The Latin states that the Prefect repeats his son's

<sup>71</sup> See for example *PSA* 38–41: 'Audiens haec, insanissimus iuuenis, amore carpitur caeco... Inter haec lecto prosternitur, et per alta suspiria amor a medicis aperitur' – ('Hearing these (things), the most insane youth is consumed by blind love... Amidst these (afflictions) he is ruined upon (his) bed, and through (his) deep sighs love is discovered by the physicians').

<sup>72</sup> 'Thinking that she wished to receive superior ornaments, he (then) brought with him for (her) renown every kind of precious jewel, and through himself and through friends, acquaintances and kinsmen, he began to accost the ears of the virgin, (and) to promise wealth, houses, possessions, household slaves and all the riches of the world, if she would not refuse her consent to their marriage. Whereupon it happened that the youth was urged on by a greater goad.'

<sup>73</sup> 'Then the youth offered costly jewels and earthly honours to the chaste maiden and promised riches to her if she desired him.'

<sup>74</sup> 'desire him.'

*petitionem uirginis* (42) and in response Agnes *abnegat...se nullo pactu asserit prioris sponsi foedera uiolare* (42–3).<sup>75</sup> Ælfric translates this passage virtually word for word into Old English:

*Ða sende se fæder sona to þæm mædene •  
 þæt ylce ærende • þe his sunu ær abead •  
 ac agnes wiðsoc • sæde þæt heo nolde  
 þæs ærran bryd-guman æþelan truwan •  
 æfre gewemman þurh ænig wedd • (69–73)<sup>76</sup>*

However, since Ælfric fails to mention a specific marriage proposal in his opening scene between Agnes and the suitor, it is not entirely clear what message the Prefect repeats. Indeed, it is possible to interpret *LS* vii.69–73 as an instance of miscommunication: the Prefect reiterates his son's desire for Agnes to become his mistress, which the maiden mistakenly construes as a marriage proposal. Whether or not a reader interprets either or both of Ælfric's two scenes as constituting a marriage proposal, the ambiguity created over the precise nature of the suitor's actions more importantly serves to cast the young man in a negative light. It is clear that the suitor lusts after Agnes and hopes that she will reciprocate his feelings in a manner that will lead to a union (marriage or otherwise) based on the fact that each partner carnally desires the other.<sup>77</sup> Such sentiments, of course, are in complete opposition to Ælfric's teaching on marriage, since he notes that Christ:

*he wolde geswutelian þæt ða giftu beoð herigendlice. ðe for bearnteame beoð gefremode swiðor þonne for galnysse;... (CH II iv.27–9)<sup>78</sup>*

Through the suitor's pursuit of Agnes' body, as opposed to her love, Ælfric creates a far more sinister account than his Latin source and heightens the sense of sexual menace surrounding the young man's actions. Furthermore, the suitor's behaviour later on during the brothel scene serves to reinforce this initial bad impression of his character:

<sup>75</sup> 'petition of the virgin' and 'declares that by no covenant would she violate the (marriage) contracts of (her) first husband.' See also *PSA* 43–7.

<sup>76</sup> 'Then the father immediately sent to the virgin that same message, which his son had already related, but Agnes refused (it) and said that she did not ever wish to defile the pledge of (her) first noble bridegroom for the sake of any dowry.'

<sup>77</sup> See in particular *LS* vii.21–3.

<sup>78</sup> 'he would manifest that that marriage is praiseworthy which is made rather for the sake of a family of children than for lust.' Thorpe, *Homilies*, II, 55. Godden notes that Ælfric expresses similar sentiments in *CH* II iv.300–1 and II vi.118–27. *CH* III, p. 372.

Table 3.2: *The Suitor's Death*

PSA	Ælfric
<i>locum ubi uirgo orabat audacter ingressus est, et, uidens tantum lumen circa eam, non dedit honorem Deo, sed, irruens in ipsum lumen, priusquam manu eam contingeret, cecidit in faciem suam, et, ..., exspirauit.</i> (111–13) <sup>79</sup>	<i>Arn þa him sylf inn · mid sceandlicum willan · ac he feol astreht ætforan þam mædene adyd ·</i> (170–1) <sup>80</sup>

Both narratives contain the idea of penetration expressed by means of a *double entendre*, but the most explicit is in *LS*. The *PSA* had offered a subtle innuendo (the image of the suitor entering into the brothel to rape Agnes), yet the sexual overtones are played down by the fact that he merely tried to touch Agnes with his hand.<sup>81</sup> In contrast, the Old English contains an element of ambiguity because it fails to specify not only whether the suitor enters the brothel or Agnes, but also his precise behaviour in the moments before he is slain.<sup>82</sup> Any reader of a *passio* would no doubt know that Christian virgins are never actually violated in such legends, but Ælfric's prose allows for a moment of doubt that amplifies the aspect of sexual danger in his work.

The brothel scene contains the most dramatic and explicit representation of the suitor's true nature; however, Ælfric draws attention to the youth's association with sinful lust on several additional occasions through the alliteration employed by his rhythmic prose. Three nouns are used to refer to the youth: *cniht* (youth) and *hlaford* (lord), both of which are occasionally used in an alliteration, and *sunu* (son), which alliterates on four occasions. In three of these expressions *sunu* (or *sylf*) alliterates with a derivation of *sceamleas* (shameless / impudent).<sup>83</sup>

<sup>79</sup> 'He entered audaciously the place where the virgin was praying, and, seeing such a great light around her, he did not give honour to God, but, forcing himself into that same light, before he could touch her with (his) hand, he fell onto his face, and... breathed his last.'

<sup>80</sup> 'Then he himself hastened in with shameful desire, but he fell headlong stretched out before the maiden...'

<sup>81</sup> See in particular *PSA* 111–13: 'locum ubi uirgo orabat audacter ingressus est... priusquam manu eam contingeret...'

<sup>82</sup> See in particular *LS* vii.170–1: 'Arn þa him sylf inn · mid sceandlicum willan · ac he feol... adyd ·'

<sup>83</sup> The four alliterations on 'sunu' occur at lines:

a) 15 – 'simpronies sunu · þe wæs geget ofer ða burh' – ('The son of Simpronius, who was set over the city').

b) 163–4 – 'þa com þæs gerefan suna to þære scinenden stowe / mid his sceandlicum gegadam · wolde þa godes þinene gebysmirian' – ('Then the son of the Prefect came to the shining place with his shameful companions, when he wished to ill-treat the handmaid of God').

c) 170 – 'Arn þa sylf inn · mid sceandlicum willan' – ('Then he himself hastened in with shameful desire').

d) 189 – 'þin sceamleasa sunu · mid sceamleasum anginne' – ('Your shameless son with shameless design').

Notes: In line 15, the alliteration also acts to reinforce the link between Simpronius and the suitor. Later on in lines 163–4, the alliteration on 'scinenden stowe' may be used to indicate the brothel's transition from a place

To a certain extent, Ælfric's alterations to the second of Agnes' persecutors, Simpronius, present a similar pattern to those we saw with his son. Again, if the Latin and Old English passages about the Prefect are juxtaposed there appears to be little difference between the two accounts at first glance. Only a close examination reveals Ælfric's subtle adjustments to Simpronius' character. Once more Ælfric focuses on emphasizing two particular traits in his persecutor, but on this occasion he calls attention to the Prefect's heathenism and his cruel nature, rather than any sin of carnal desire.

Various scholars have noted that Ælfric often creates a stark contrast between the saint and the judge of his *passiones* by attributing opposite morals to the two characters, an effect usually achieved by the addition of 'qualifying epithets'.<sup>84</sup> Agnes' tale is no exception to this rule, since Ælfric's account adds a number of such epithets to the narrative borrowed from the *PSA*. For example, the Judge is referred to as *se manfulla dema* (91) and *se sceandlica dema* (116), neither of which expressions occur in the original Latin.<sup>85</sup> In addition, not only does Agnes' trial before Simpronius contain the new line that *Agnes ða andwyrde þam arleasan...* (102), but Ælfric also includes a new three-line depiction of the Judge after he has been thwarted by the strength of Agnes' faith:

*He gesæt þa his domsetl · dreorig on mode ·  
and behet ðam mædene menigfealde wita  
buton heo wiðsoce þone soðan hælend · (95–7)*<sup>86</sup>

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of sin to one of purity, since alliterations involving several derivations of 'scinan' (to shine) are later used in relation to Agnes (see further, pp. 128–9). For the use of 'cniht', see lines: 14, 21, 24, 63 and 201. For the use of 'hlaford', see lines: 167 and 179.

<sup>84</sup> G. Corona, 'Ælfric's Schemes and Tropes: *Amplificatio* on Persecutors', in H. Magennis and M. Swan (eds.), *A Companion to Ælfric* (Leiden, Forthcoming). See also Middleton, 'Ælfric's Answerable Style', pp. 85–6 and Waterhouse, 'Ælfric's Use of Discourse', p. 92. It should be noted, however, that neither Middleton nor Waterhouse compared Ælfric's works to the Latin texts preserved by the Cotton-Corpus tradition. Middleton's comments are made during a direct comparison of Ælfric's 'Life of Martin' to that of Sulpicius Severus (on which Ælfric's account is ultimately based), whilst Waterhouse compares the 'Life of Julian' to the Latin *passio* printed in the *Acta SS*.

<sup>85</sup> 'The wicked Judge' and 'the shameful Judge.' The corresponding lines in the *PSA* read: a) *PSA* 54 for *LS* vii.91 – 'sequenti autem die Agnem sibi praesentari iubet...' – ('On the following day, however, he orders Agnes to be placed before him...') and b) *PSA* 65–6 for *LS* vii.116 – 'Audiens haec, Simpronius Praefectus dixit...' – ('Hearing these (things), the Prefect Simpronius said...'). Ælfric appears to have used qualifying epithets far more in his descriptions of Simpronius' character than in his depiction of the suitor. Only one added epithet can be identified for the suitor: line 167, where the companions exit the brothel and return to 'heora bysmorfullum hlaforde' – ('their shameful lord'). It is possible that Ælfric omitted epithets for the suitor because he had already blackened his character in other ways.

<sup>86</sup> *LS* vii.102: 'Agnes answered the cruel one.' In contrast, the corresponding line of the *PSA* (60) reads: 'Ad haec beata Agnes respondit...' – ('To these (things) the blessed Agnes responded'). *LS* vii.95–7: 'He occupied his tribunal, cruel in mind and threatened the maiden with various tortures, unless she denied her true Saviour.'

This passage reveals the Old English account's increased emphasis on Simpronius' cruelty and his tendency towards violence. Furthermore, these same two aspects of the Prefect's nature also appear in a later speech where he describes the fate that awaits Agnes should she refuse to obey him. The Latin describes how Agnes *meretricibus scortaberis in contubernio lupanari* (75–6),<sup>87</sup> whereas Ælfric rewords this line in Old English as *oððe þu laðum myltestrum scealt beon geferlæht and fullice gebysmrod* (119–20).<sup>88</sup> Not only does the danger facing Agnes become more realistic and basely put, but Ælfric's depiction of Simpronius casts the Prefect as a rather more perverted character than his Latin counterpart, who seems to truly revel in the punishment that awaits the virgin.

In addition to such comments about the Prefect's vindictiveness, Ælfric also employs five alliterative phrases based on the Old English title of *heahgerefa* (prefect) to accentuate Simpronius' depiction as a pagan ruler. Both the first and last appearance of the Judge use *heahgerefa* to alliterate with *hæðengilda* (idolater), so that Simpronius both enters and leaves the narrative with a reminder to the reader of his heathen beliefs.<sup>89</sup> In the lines that fall between these two occurrences, *heahgerefa* is twice used in relation to *halgan* (holy, i.e. Agnes). Here the alliteration seems to be employed in order to emphasize the stark contrast between the heroine and villain of the tale.<sup>90</sup> Elsewhere, the alliteration of *heahgerefa* with *huxlic* (shameful) resonates with the other four occurrences to create the idea that heathenism is a sinful attribute and one that stands in absolute opposition to Christianity.<sup>91</sup>

Overall, the changes evident in the Old English account of Agnes' persecutors achieve several purposes. Ælfric's modifications to the suitor allow him to pit his heroic saint against a heathen tormenter consumed by carnal desire, rather than casting her in opposition to a nobleman who fails to gain his desired marriage alliance. Not only does the Old English account present a far clearer battle between good and evil as a result of these alterations, but Ælfric also achieves a close alignment of the *PSA* with his own teaching.

<sup>87</sup> 'you will be associated with prostitutes in a brothel.'

<sup>88</sup> 'or you shall be associated with hateful harlots and shamefully reviled.'

<sup>89</sup> a) line 16: '...to heahgeretan · and wæs hæðengilda' – ('...as Prefect and who was an idolater') and b) 211: 'þa ne dorste se heahgerefa naht ongean þa hæðengildan' – ('Then the Prefect did not dare to do anything against the heathens').

<sup>90</sup> The same line is repeated at 107 and 192: 'þa cwæð se heahgerefa · to ðam halgan mædene...' – ('Then the Prefect said to the holy maiden...').

<sup>91</sup> Line 74: 'þa þuhte ðam heahgeretan huxlic on mode...' – ('Then it seemed shameful to the Prefect in (his) heart...').

Beyond the literal portrayal of the suitor as an immoral character, the youth can also be interpreted as a personification of lust, a vice that all souls must conquer in order to acquire pure faith according to Ælfric's thinking. A similar effect is also achieved through the newly emphasised focus on Simpronius' religion and cruelty. *LS* streamlines, yet retains, the fundamental outlines of the *PSA*'s two confrontation scenes: Agnes' refusal of the suitor and her trial before his father. Thus the Old English account likewise contains the crucial idea that the martyr conquers the temptations of both carnal desire and idolatry. By casting the virgin's opponents as the personifications of these two vices, Ælfric manipulates the narrative so that he can explore the interplay of both literal and spiritual martyrdom through Agnes' trials and eventual death.

The heathenism of both Simpronius and the suitor is strongly emphasized, but Simpronius' challenge to Agnes to sacrifice to Vesta (or enter the brothel) casts him as the personification of physical idolatry (117–20). On the other hand, the carnal desire of the suitor neatly fulfills Ælfric's definition of a spiritual idolater: someone who practices vile sins in which they have been instructed by the devil. Indeed, this idea of spiritual heathenism appears to be the chief reason why the Old English account alters the suitor's proposal from marriage to concubinage. In addition, the enhanced sexual tension in Ælfric's text amplifies the focus on acts of chastity and harlotry to the detriment of the concept of marriage. Agnes' rejection of the suitor's lustful desire protects her corporeal virginity, yet through her refusal to sacrifice to idols she also avoids spiritual harlotry. Both actions constitute the avoidance of sin and thus on each occasion Agnes' spiritual chastity is preserved. Furthermore, Agnes not only endures physical martyrdom, but also spiritual martyrdom through her patient endurance of the hardships inflicted on her by Simpronius and his son. By the end of the narrative, Christ's bride proceeds to heaven as a chaste virgin and martyr in both the physical and spiritual sense according to Ælfric's definitions of these two states.<sup>92</sup>

The scenes of altercation outlined above comprise the core of Agnes' tale. Ælfric's modifications to these passages provide him with the opportunity to instruct the Church,

<sup>92</sup> See also P.A. Thompson, 'Contamination and Consent: The Illustration of an Augustinian Principle in Ælfric's Lives of Saints Agnes and Lucy', in J. Goering (ed.), *Limina, Thresholds and Borders* (Ottawa, ON, 2005), pp. 107–16. Thompson also believes that Ælfric used Agnes' tale to illustrate Christian doctrine; however, her arguments focus on a different area of thought. She analyses the three clothing miracles at the brothel and argues that this scene was designed to illustrate Augustine's doctrine that the body cannot be defiled unless the mind consents as well. Thompson believes Ælfric maintains this message from his Latin source in order to send encouragement to the women of his day, who suffered the threat of rape during the tenth-century Viking raids.

both individually and collectively, as to how they must purify themselves in order to attain salvation. Encircling these events are Agnes' response to the suitor about her forthcoming marriage to Christ and her final exclamation signifying the consummation of that union. Together these two speeches reveal the rewards that await those who follow her example. Thus in *LS* marriage becomes the prize awarded, rather than the institution (mortal or divine) under debate as it is in the *PSA*. Such suggestions hint at the depth of complexity which Ælfric may have endeavored to achieve in his translation. A number of additional narrative elements, however, need to be considered in order to fully appreciate the message that he appears to have woven into his 'Life of Agnes'. It is in the 'translations' of Agnes' opening and closing speeches and the miracles at the brothel where Ælfric's gift for editing truly comes into play; therefore, it is to these elements that the final section of this chapter now turns.

### 3.3 *The Allegorical Reading of Ælfric's 'Life of Agnes'*

In the *PSA*, Agnes' opening and closing speeches outline both the chaste union of her spiritual body to Christ, as well as the miraculous protection of her corporeal body on earth and thus draw attention to the importance of the martyr's body in the narrative.<sup>93</sup> Ælfric's repositioning of Agnes' tale to use it solely as a meditation on the idea of chastity (faith) versus harlotry (idolatry) means that these scenes still usefully support his principal theme; consequently, they are all retained in *LS* with minor variations.<sup>94</sup> Again, a comparison of the Old English with its Latin source produces a number of seemingly insignificant variants. Analysis of these alterations, however, indicates that they were deliberately designed to emphasise certain Scriptural imagery and thus provide a path to comprehending the entirety of Ælfric's spiritual message. Two pivotal areas will be examined below in order to illustrate Ælfric's technique: Agnes' discourses on her divine nuptials and certain of the martyr's actions during her trial and execution scenes.

It is noticeable that Ælfric changed very little when he translated Agnes' first and last speeches.<sup>95</sup> The Old English text retains a series of motifs that depict Agnes as a noble

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<sup>93</sup> Indeed, Agnes's trial scene, discussed above, also contains this focus upon the saint's body. Simpronius attempts to inflict physical punishment on the saint and Agnes concludes her altercation with the judge by stating her belief that God will defend her person against any harm (*PSA* 47–90).

<sup>94</sup> The exact differences between the *PSA* and *LS* will be given in detail as each scene is individually assessed.

<sup>95</sup> In the *LS*, Agnes' opening speech consists of 38 lines of which 37 are rendered directly from the Latin into Old English. The odd phrase is reworded to express it in a more succinct manner, but Ælfric never alters the sense of the original. The only new addition to the Old English account is line 31: 'and me gefrætewode · mid

or even royal bride adorned in unimaginable wealth and clothed in gold, who is to be united to the noblest and fairest of men. These ideas of course recall the idea of sacred marriage and the nuptial images employed in figurative Biblical books such as *Canticum Canticorum*, *Apocalypsis* and the Psalms. However, Ælfric's disinclination to allude to highly allegorical Scriptural works was noted above and it seems strange that he would alter his practice for merely one text.<sup>96</sup> Part of Ælfric's reluctance to use works such as *Ct* was no doubt due to the influence of Augustine on his teaching. Augustine, nevertheless, did not avoid every metaphorical work of Scripture and like all Christian writers held the Psalms in great esteem. Indeed, one of Augustine's most detailed expositions of spiritual marriage can be found in his commentary on *Ps* 44.<sup>97</sup> An echo of this Psalm is of course contained in the *PSA*'s account of Agnes' opening speech, where the description of the golden garment she receives from her lover (24) recalls *Ps* 44.10: *adstitit regina ...in vestitu deaurato*.<sup>98</sup> The *PSA*'s allusion to the Queen of Heaven clothed in gold is also retained in Ælfric's account through Agnes' statement that her lover has: *He geglængde me mid orle of golde awefan* (36).<sup>99</sup>

In chapter one, it was demonstrated how both Agnes' opening speech and the *PSA* as a whole could be read in conjunction with Augustine's exegesis as a dramatisation of *Ps* 44 and the sacred marriage between Christ and the Church or individual Christian.<sup>100</sup> Consequently, Agnes can be seen as a figure of the golden queen of heaven, whom Augustine interprets as a symbol of the Church. Since *LS* maintains such a large proportion of the *PSA*'s speeches and narrative, Ælfric's account can also be read in this way. Indeed,

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unasmeagendlicra wurðfulnyse · – ('and he has adorned me with inconceivable honour'). This line may replace *PSA* 22–3: 'tradidit auribus meis inestimabiles margaritas, et circumdedit me uernantibus atque coruscantibus gemmis' – ('he has delivered priceless pearls for my ears and surrounded me with spring flowers and glittering gems'). This phrase contains the most explicit motifs from classical epithalamia that can be found in the Latin version of this speech and perhaps Ælfric felt that his audience would be unfamiliar with such imagery. Apart from this line, a portion of one other line is also missing from the Latin. *PSA* 28–9 contains five descriptions of Christ: 'cuius est generositas celsior, possibilitas fortior, aspectus pulchrior, amor suauior et omni gratia elegantior' – ('whose nobility is greater, his power stronger, his countenance more beautiful, his love more delightful and his courtesy more elegant than all other men'). Ælfric maintains only the attributes concerning Christ's countenance and love: 'His ansyn is wlitigre · and his lufu wynsumre ·' – ('His countenance is fairer and his love more delightful') (line 42). The account of Agnes' closing speech in *LS* presents an even closer rendition of the Latin text, since all fifteen lines parallel the Latin text and no material has been added or omitted.

<sup>96</sup> See pp. 113–15.

<sup>97</sup> E. Dekkers and J. Fraipont (eds.), *Sancti Aurelii Augustini Ennarationes in Psalmos I–L*, CCSL 38 (Turnhout, 1956), pp. 493–517.

<sup>98</sup> 'The queen stood... in gilded clothing... ' *Ps* 44.10 is alluded to at *PSA* 24: 'Induit me ciclade auro texta' – ('he has clothed me with a robe woven from gold').

<sup>99</sup> 'he has adorned me with a robe woven from gold.'

<sup>100</sup> See pp. 47–9.

besides *LS* vii.36, several additional lines of the maiden's opening speech from the *PSA* that are preserved in the Old English account also appear to evoke *Ps* 44. Thus both the *PSA* and Ælfric note that the countenance of Agnes' lover is fairer than that of the suitor, perhaps in relation to comments in 44.3.<sup>101</sup> There is also mention of Christ clothing Agnes in gold and surrounding her with gems, which may parallel the golden robe and 'variety' referred to in 44.10.<sup>102</sup> Finally, Agnes also comments that her union will be fertile with offspring, recalling 44.17.<sup>103</sup> Indeed, this final statement becomes reality even before Agnes' martyrdom, since two children are begotten within the narrative framework of the legend itself. The first is the suitor, who converts on his resurrection.<sup>104</sup> The second is Constantia, daughter of Constantine, whose miraculous healing, conversion and later establishment of a monastic centre at Agnes' tomb conclude both the *PSA* and Ælfric's account.<sup>105</sup>

It is interesting that Ælfric maintains the legend of Constantia, since he appends another item to the end of Agnes' account entitled *Alia sententia quam scripsit Terrentianus* (*LS* vii.296–429). This addition is Terentianus' life of St Gallicanus, the Roman general whose conversion to Christian asceticism was brought about by Constantia after their betrothal (*BHL* 3236–42). Whilst opinion differs over whether the *item alia* found in *Julius E* vii were handled by the compiler of the manuscript in a different manner to that intended by Ælfric, the inclusion of Gallicanus' life significantly contributes to the comparison of Agnes' martyrdom to *Ps* 44. It is noticeable that all the *item alia* of *LS* emphasise the principal message of the main hagiographic text to which they are appended.<sup>106</sup> In the case of the Life of Gallicanus, its central themes relate to the

<sup>101</sup> *PSA* 28: 'aspectus pulchrior' – '(whose) countenance (is) more beautiful'. *LS* vii.42: 'His ansyn is wlitigre' – '(His countenance is fairer)'. Compare to *Ps* 44.3: 'speciosus forma prae filiis hominum...' – '(Thou art beautiful above the sons of men...').

<sup>102</sup> *PSA* 24: 'Induit me ciclade auro texta' – '(He has clothed me with a robe woven from gold)'. *LS* vii.36: 'He geglængde me mid orle of golde awefan' – '(He has adorned me with a robe woven from gold)'. Compare to *Ps* 44.10: '... adstitit regina a dextris tuis in uestitu deaurato circumdata uarietate' – '(... The queen stood on thy right hand, in gilded clothing; surrounded by variety)'.  
<sup>103</sup> *PSA* 37–8: 'Nec deerunt post nuptias filii, ubi partus sine dolore succedit, et fecunditas cotidiana cumulatur' – '(Nor will children be wanting after the wedding, when birth follows without pain, and fertility is augmented daily)'. *LS* vii.61–2: 'and þær bærn ne ateoriað on ðam brydlace. Þær is eacnung buton sare and singallic wæstmbærnyss' – '(and there children do not fail in the bridal condition, there is conception without pain and everlasting fruitfulness)'. Compare to *Ps* 44.17: 'pro patribus tuis nati sunt tibi filii...' – '(Instead of thy fathers, sons are born to thee...').

<sup>104</sup> For the conversion of the suitor see: *PSA* 137–41 and *LS* vii.201–6.

<sup>105</sup> For the healing of Constantia see: *PSA* 193–215 and *LS* vii.260–95.

<sup>106</sup> For example, the life of St. Swithun, whose spirit is said to have appeared to many faithful Christians in order to aid them, is followed by a tale concerning the desert father Macarius who aids a young girl, whom a

abandonment of idolatry and the birth of spiritual children. Not only does Constantia bring about the ascetic conversion of her prospective pagan husband, but also that of his daughters from his first marriage, thus creating a truly spiritual family. Such a narrative can be seen to reiterate the concept inherent in both *Ps* 44 and the *PSA* that the sacred marriage of the heavenly queen (the Church) to the King (Christ) is a union fertile with offspring (the living Church).

In addition to the scenes discussed above, several other differences between the narratives of *LS* and the *PSA* indicate that Ælfric deliberately manipulated his source in order to promote Agnes as the Queen of *Ps* 44 above all other Biblical images associated with the concept of the bride of Christ. One striking inconsistency in the *PSA*'s narrative occurs in the dual colour of the two heavenly robes associated with Agnes. Her opening speech comments *induit me ciclade auro texta* (24), yet during the brothel scene the Latin word used to describe the garment sent by God is *candidissima* (99).<sup>107</sup> Later on this second robe is also referred to as *hoc indumento misericordiae suae* (127).<sup>108</sup> It is only in the tale about Agnes' post mortem appearance at her tomb, which is appended to the *PSA*'s conclusion, that Agnes (and the throng of maidens) are once more explicitly described as *omnes auro textis cycladibus indutae* (186).<sup>109</sup> Thus the Latin offers two alternative colours for Agnes' robe: gold and white.

The Latin superlative *candidissima* from the adjective *candidus* carries a dual connotation of both 'the most shining / bright' as well as 'the most dazzling white.' Nevertheless, this word (and others from the same root) more commonly evoke the picture of a shining white object as opposed to any other colour.<sup>110</sup> Indeed, the Anglo-Saxon author of the *OEM* clearly associated the superlative with connotations of whiteness. The martyrology's entry for Agnes describes her miraculous robe in a manner clearly intended to recall the Transfiguration of Christ in *Mc* 9.2, where the Lord's garments are explicitly described as *candida nimis uelut nix*.<sup>111</sup> Overall, the *PSA*'s assignment of two colours to

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local magician has enchanted in order to look like a mare. Both tales deal with distinguishing between true and false visions.

<sup>107</sup> Respectively: 'he has clothed me with a robe woven from gold' and 'the most shining white (robe).'

<sup>108</sup> 'this garment of His (i.e. God's) mercy.'

<sup>109</sup> 'all having been clothed with garments woven from gold.'

<sup>110</sup> For example, the adjective 'candidatus a um' means 'clothed in white.' In addition, the noun formed from this word translates as 'a candidate for office', due to the fact that such men would be clothed in a bright white toga. See *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* (Leipzig, 1900–), III, cols. 236–45.

<sup>111</sup> The *OEM* (lines 7–9) comments: 'þær hire brohte Godes engel swylcne gerelan swylcne næfre nænig fulwa... þæt mihte don on eorðan' – ('There an angel of the Lord brought such apparel to her as never any fuller... might make on earth'). G. Kotzor (ed.), *Das altenglische Martyrologium*, 2 vols. (Munich, 1981), II,

Agnes' robes allows the various images of the saint to evoke a wide range of Scriptural motifs including: the golden queen of heaven, a lily of the valley like the Bride of *Ct* or the Saints of *Apocalypsis*, who dwell in the heavenly city of Jerusalem clothed in white.<sup>112</sup>

Ælfric on the other hand presents Agnes as a monochrome saint. In the maiden's opening speech her robe is described as *of golde awefan* (36) and later on the garment at the brothel is a *scinende tunecan* (155).<sup>113</sup> When Agnes narrates the appearance of her clothes to the Prefect, Ælfric maintains a rough sense of the Latin commenting, *þe (God) me myldheortlice gescrydde* (186).<sup>114</sup> Finally, during the vision at her tomb, the maidens and Agnes are all *geglegede mid gyldenum gyrlum* (252), a phrase where Ælfric uses his alliterative prose to reinforce the idea of golden garments.<sup>115</sup> Overall, the main change to note here is that while *scinende*, like *candidus*, bears the meaning 'shining', it is not associated with any specific colour.<sup>116</sup> The only colour ever explicitly linked with Agnes' clothes in *LS*, therefore, is gold. Furthermore, Ælfric also skilfully crafts his prose, so that his use of words related to the verb *scinan* (to shine) constantly refer solely to images of gold.

In the brothel scene, Ælfric initially introduces Agnes' divine guardian as a *scinende godes engel* (149).<sup>117</sup> Due to the shining brightness of the angel, Ælfric later

22–3, at p. 22. This passage recalls *Mc* 9.2 'et vestimenta eius facta sunt splendentia candida nimis velut nix qualia fullo super terram non potest candida facere' – ('and his garments became shining and exceeding white as snow, so as no fuller upon earth can make white'). The glosses to Aldhelm's *De uirginitate* found in Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, 1650, which Mechthild Gretsich links to the circle of Bishop Æthelwold (Ælfric's teacher), gloss Aldhelm's use of 'candidus' at *Dlu* xvii.12 with the Latin 'albus' ('white'). For the same line, London, BL, Royal 5.E.xi, from the Salisbury family of glosses, provides the Old English 'hwī' (from 'hwit' – 'white'). M. Gretsich, *The Intellectual Foundations of the English Benedictine Reform*, CSASE 25 (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 132–225 and 332–83. S. Gwara (ed.), *Aldhelmi Malmesbiriensis Prosa de uirginitate cum glossa latina atque anglosaxonica*, 2 vols., CCSL 124–124A (Turnhout, 2001), II, 198–9. Thus, Ælfric's avoidance of any language that has connotations with 'white' appears deliberate.

<sup>112</sup> Throughout the Bible five main images are used in conjunction with the depiction of Israel or the Church as a bride: a) ornaments or jewels (probably the most common OT description, e.g. *Is* 49.18 and *Ier* 2.32); b) the white lily of the valley (*Ct* 2.1–2); c) the white dove (e.g. *Ct* 2.10); d) white linen clothing (e.g. *Apc* 19.8, which uses the adjective 'candidus' to describe these garments) and e) adornment in gold (*Ps* 44.10 and *Apc* 21.18 where the new Jerusalem or heavenly Church is likened to pure gold).

<sup>113</sup> Respectively: 'woven from gold' and 'a shining tunic.'

<sup>114</sup> 'who mercifully clothed me.'

<sup>115</sup> 'they were all adorned with golden apparel.'

<sup>116</sup> Bosworth-Toller (<http://beowulf.engl.uky.edu/~kiernan/BT/bosworth.htm>, accessed 06.05.08) gives a number of words related to the verb 'scinan' – 'to shine', including: 'scin' – 'brightness, shine'; 'scinendlic' – 'clear, bright' and 'scinness' – 'brightness, splendour.' None of these words, however, refer to a specific colour. The Old English Corpus likewise indicates that 'scinan' and related words tend to be used to refer generally to bright shining light from a variety of objects, rather than to evoke a specific colour

(<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/o/oc.htm>, accessed 07.05.08). Indeed, in Ælfric's works 'scinan' is frequently employed to describe the light that shines from heavenly bodies, e.g. the sun, moon, stars and angels. Finally, the Corpus notes that in the OE glosses to Aldhelm's works 'scinende' glosses the Latin 'splendida' (shining).

<sup>117</sup> 'a shining angel of God.'

comments for *þan þe ðet hus eall scean swa swa sunne on dæg* (152).<sup>118</sup> The constant alliteration on ‘s’ associates the light emitted by the angel to protect Agnes from the gaze of impious men with the image of golden sun beams, a connection which also evokes the initial description of the virgin’s golden raiment. Once this link has been established, Ælfric’s later portrayal of a literal *scinende* heavenly garment, immediately associates this robe with the colour of sunlight as well.<sup>119</sup>

Ælfric’s text clearly included a number of signposts to aid his readers’ comprehension of the spiritual message woven into his literal narrative, yet questions remain over the extent to which his audience would have appreciated them. An examination of two late Anglo-Saxon works, however, suggests the possibility that devout laymen would indeed have recognized Ælfric’s allusions to Psalm 44. The first of these texts is the book of Psalms itself. The Psalter was a fundamental part of the liturgy, including the Divine Office and Mass, but it was also used for educational purposes such as the teaching of Latin and private devotion.<sup>120</sup> The Rule of St. Benedict states that monastic communities should chant the Psalter in its entirety at least once a week (18.22–4).<sup>121</sup> Furthermore, Mechthild Gretsch has argued that the English Benedictine Reformers surpassed even Benedict in their reverence of the Psalter.<sup>122</sup> The Psalter would certainly

<sup>118</sup> ‘for all the house shone so brightly, just as the sun in the daytime.’ Interestingly, Ælfric also subtly alters the Latin here, for *PSA* 97–8 comments that the brothel shone ‘quasi sol radians in uirtute sua’ – (‘just as the sun shines in his power’). Yet again Ælfric’s ‘translation’ promotes a clearer message to the audience as to how to read this phrase.

<sup>119</sup> It would be interesting to know whether or not Ælfric’s casting of Agnes as a golden queen was influenced by Aldhelm’s depiction of the virgin martyr as the golden tabernacle in the *Dlu* (xliv.19–21). Aldhelm also quotes *Ps* 44.10 at *Dlu* xv, but in reference to the state of virginity (both bodily and spiritual). Ælfric cites *Ps* 44.10 on two occasions in his homilies (*CH* II xl.188–91 and Assmann iii.106) both of which compare the Queen to the faithful Church. The appearance of saints and angels shining like the sun is also commonplace in Ælfric’s works, perhaps due to *Ps* 18.6: ‘in sole posuit tabernaculum suum et ipse tamquam sponsus procedens de thalamo suo exultauit...’ – (‘He hath set his tabernacle in the sun: and he, as a bridegroom coming out of his bride chamber hath rejoiced...’). Ælfric comments on this verse in Assmann iii.78–82, again in relation to the marriage of Christ and the Church. Two additional Bible passages also employ the image of the sun: first, *Mt* 13.43: ‘tunc iusti fulgebunt sicut sol in regno Patris eorum...’ – (‘Then shall the just shine as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father...’). This verse is alluded to in Assmann iii.483. Second, *I Cor* 15.41: ‘alia claritas solis alia claritas lunae et alia claritas stellarum stella enim ab stella differt in claritate’ – (‘One is the glory of the sun, another the glory of the moon, and another the glory of the stars. For star differeth from star in glory’). This verse is quoted at Assmann iii.487. Both verses are cited during a discussion on how the righteous will shine like the sun in paradise.

<sup>120</sup> Gretsch, *Intellectual Foundations*, pp. 13–17.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14. T. Fry et al. (ed.), *RB 1980: The Rule of St Benedict in Latin and English with Notes* (Collegeville, MN, 1981), pp. 214–15.

<sup>122</sup> Gretsch, *Intellectual Foundations*, pp. 14–16. Gretsch argues that, whilst the Rule of Benedict lays a heavy emphasis on the memorisation of the Psalms and their chanting, it is noticeable that one of the most important areas of additions made to the Rule of Benedict by Æthelwold’s *Regularis concordia* concerns an increase in the number of occasions when the Psalms were to be used. The *Regularis concordia* even encourages religious to chant the Psalms whilst undertaking both active physical work and private study.

have been a familiar work to any monk and the fact that *LS* was composed for two extremely devout laymen suggests that its intended recipients would also have been acquainted with such an important part of the Bible.

Æthelweard and Æthelmær would no doubt have often listened to the recitation of the Psalms during ecclesiastical services, but their keen interest in religious literary tracts suggests that they may have also studied these texts in a similar fashion to the Benedictine monks.<sup>123</sup> Whether or not both men could read Latin, the text of the Psalms would also have been available to them in Old English as well as Latin.<sup>124</sup> Ten surviving late Anglo-Saxon Psalters contain continuous Old English glosses, which were usually added to Latin manuscripts to aid those learning Latin; texts no doubt familiar to Ælfric in some form or another from his teaching days at Cerne Abbas.<sup>125</sup> There are three families of Old English Psalter glosses, as well as the ninth-century West-Saxon translation of the Psalms.<sup>126</sup> If the four Old English texts for *Ps* 44.10 are laid out alongside Ælfric's final description of Agnes and the throng of maidens appearing at her tomb, some interesting verbal echoes can be found:

West-Saxon Psalms: *And þær stent cwen þe on þa swyðran hand, mid golde getuode and mid ælcere mislicre fægernesse gegyred, þæt ys eall Cristnu gesamnung.*<sup>127</sup>

Family A: *ætstod cwoen to swiðian ðire in gegerelan bigyldum ymbswapen misenlicnisse.*<sup>128</sup>

Family D: *ætstod cwen to þam swyþran þinum on gegyrelan gegyldum ymbgyrd mislicnisse.*<sup>129</sup>

Family I: *ætstod kquen † hlæfdige æt swiðran þinum on ofergyldum hrægle ymbsett mid fagnesne † missonlicnyse.*<sup>130</sup>

<sup>123</sup> *CH* III, p. xxiii. Not only was *LS* dedicated to these two laymen, but the preface to the first series of the *CH* notes that a copy was also produced especially for Æthelweard (*CHI* Preface, line 134 in the *apparatus criticus*).

<sup>124</sup> Æthelweard's authorship of the Latin translation of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle indicates that at least one of these men certainly possessed a good knowledge of Latin. A. Campbell (ed.), *The Chronicle of Æthelweard* (London, 1962).

<sup>125</sup> Gretsche, *Intellectual Foundations*, p. 17.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 26–7. The oldest witness of each family is as follows: A: London, BL Cotton Vespasian A.i (Ker 203, Gneuss 381, the OE gloss was produced at Canterbury and dates to s. ix (prob. ix med)); D: London, BL, Royal 2.B.v (Ker 249, Gneuss 451, Winchester, s. x med. This production is based on family A), and I: London, Lambeth Palace, 427, fols.1–202 (Ker 280, Gneuss 517, Winchester?, s. xi<sup>1</sup>).

<sup>127</sup> 'And there the queen stands on your right hand, bedecked with gold and encircled with every diverse beauty, that is the entire Christian assembly.' J.W. Bright and R.L. Ramsey (eds.), *Liber Psalmorum: The West Saxon Psalms* (London, 1907), p. 106.

<sup>128</sup> 'The queen stood to your right hand in golden apparel, wrapped round with variety.' All three Psalm glosses are taken from P. Pulsiano (ed.), *Old English Glossed Psalters: Psalms 1–50* (Toronto, 2001), pp. 650–1.

<sup>129</sup> 'The queen stood at your right hand in golden apparel, surrounded by variety.'

<sup>130</sup> 'The queen or queen stood at your right hand in clothing overlaid with gold surrounded by variety of colour or variety.'

Ælfric (*LS* vii.252): *Hi wæron ealle geglengede mid gyldenum gyrlum.*<sup>131</sup>

The clearest relation between Ælfric's line and the Psalter glosses occurs with Family D, whose oldest witness is London, BL, Royal 2.B.v, the Royal Psalter, (and to a lesser degree with Family A). Although the Royal Psalter and Ælfric use different verbs, *gegierelian* (to clothe) and *geglengan* (to adorn), it is noticeable that Ælfric has matched the fivefold alliteration on a 'g' of the Royal Psalter.<sup>132</sup> Furthermore, Ælfric's additional word for garments, *gyrlum*, has a remarkable resemblance to the Royal Psalter's verb, *gegierelan* (spelt *gegyrelan*), which Ælfric omits in preference to *geglengan*. It is interesting that Ælfric echoes the Royal Psalter gloss, for not only was this a contemporary work, but it may also have been composed by his teacher Æthelwold, bishop of Winchester (963–84), and thus been well known to him.<sup>133</sup> Furthermore, the apparent influence of a Bible gloss on the composition of *LS* vii.252 strengthens the argument that Ælfric deliberately adorned his work with scriptural signals to spiritual reading of his text.

The second work that may have influenced Ælfric's depiction of Agnes is another Winchester production: the Benedictional of Æthelwold, a late tenth-century deluxe liturgical manuscript of Episcopal mass blessings commissioned by the bishop himself.<sup>134</sup> Recent scholarship has drawn attention to how a series of illuminated miniatures incorporated into this manuscript appear to have influenced both Ælfric's selection and depiction of saints in *LS*.<sup>135</sup> In relation to Ælfric's association of Agnes with the queen of Psalm 44, it is important to note that one of the principal iconographic themes of the work was 'the imperial and Christological conception of kingship.'<sup>136</sup> The Benedictional was one of the chief objects through which the Benedictine Reformers promoted close links between the monastic houses and royal family, by stressing the idea that the king functioned as the earthly counterpart to Christ's heavenly kingship.<sup>137</sup> Furthermore, it is

<sup>131</sup> 'They were all adorned with golden apparel.'

<sup>132</sup> (Royal Psalter) 'gegyrelan gegyldum ymbgyrd', (*LS*) 'geglengede mid gyldenum gyrlum.'

<sup>133</sup> Gretsch, *Intellectual Foundations*, p. 130.

<sup>134</sup> R. Deshman, *The Benedictional of Æthelwold* (Princeton, NJ, 1995), p. 3. Agnes is one of several virgin martyrs to whom individual prayers are allocated in this work. For the text of the Benedictional blessings for Agnes, see G.F. Warner and H.A. Wilson (eds.), *The Benedictional of Saint Aethelwold, Bishop of Winchester 963–984*, Roxburghe Club (Oxford, 1910), pp. 10–11 (ff. 31v–33r). See also pp. 172–9 for further discussion of the Anglo-Saxon Benedictionals.

<sup>135</sup> M. Gretsch, *Ælfric and the Cult of Saints in Late Anglo-Saxon England*, CSASE 34 (Cambridge, 2005). Gretsch's work focuses on the depiction of five saints: Gregory the Great, Benedict, Cuthbert, Swithun and Æthelthryth.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

likely that the manuscript was produced for the coronation of King Edgar at Bath in 973, where it may also have been on display and seen by laymen such as Ælfric's patrons.<sup>138</sup>

The Benedictional contains two sets of illustrations that may have influenced the imagery which Ælfric associates with Agnes: the depiction of crowned saints and the way certain saints are portrayed as dressed in gold. The opening folios of the Benedictional (1–2) depict choirs of confessors and virgins, all of whom (apart from two exceptions) are portrayed as wearing trefoil crowns. Later on Christ (as a figure of the Trinity) is depicted crowned with a diadem (folio 70) and the illustration of Mary's death and coronation also shows angels descending with another trefoil crown for the Virgin (folio 102v). Importantly, all three representations of crowned saints appear to be innovations of the Benedictional illustrator, who was presumably influenced by contemporary political ideas.<sup>139</sup> Crowns first became a symbol of power under King Æthelstan (924–39) and continued to be an important royal emblem during the reign of Edgar when the monastic reform flourished.<sup>140</sup> The promotion of links between the king and Christ, which led to heaven being depicted as the archetypal royal kingdom, indicates that viewing saints as royalty was also an essential part of Reform iconography.<sup>141</sup> In terms of the shared imagery between *LS* and the Benedictional, however, the most significant figure depicted in these illustrations is Mary, who appears not only crowned, but also dressed in gold on folio 102v.

In the Benedictional's miniatures crowned saints are a fairly common feature, while gold vestments are used less often. The most noticeable figure clothed in gold is Christ Himself, who is consistently portrayed in a full length gold garment with a mantle over the top in one of two colours: a pale red-brown or blue. Due to the subject matter of the various depictions of Christ, it would appear that the alternating colour of his mantle is used to indicate either his human (pale red) or divine nature (blue).<sup>142</sup> The fact that selected

<sup>138</sup> Dushman, *The Benedictional*, pp. 214–16 and 260–1.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 126–7 and 149 (see also p. 149, fn. 241). There is a clear distinction between the two forms of crown, since the diadem is worn by Christ alone and the trefoil crown by all other saints (the one exception is Benedict, see *Ibid.*, pp. 117–21).

<sup>140</sup> Gretsche, *Intellectual Foundations*, pp. 103–4.

<sup>141</sup> Dushman, *The Benedictional*, pp. 193–5 and 207–9.

<sup>142</sup> Christ appears in gold and red when depicted as a child (folios 22v, 24v and 34v), in the depiction of Stephen's martyrdom (17v), during the doubting of Thomas (56v) and His Ascension (64v). Such scenes would appear to reflect Christ's human nature – the frail child, Thomas who will only believe after touching the Lord's mortal flesh and the Ascension when Jesus at last departs from his mortal existence. The depiction of Christ's earthly nature in the miniature of Stephen's martyrdom is probably due to this picture's portrayal of Stephen's vision in *Act* 7.55–6, when he sees God in heaven and the 'Son of man' standing at His right

saints also appear in gold garments with the same two different coloured mantles, initially suggests that there is an element of *imitatio Christi* at play in the iconography. On closer inspection, however, a rather more complex pattern emerges. For if gold and blue clothing were used to indicate that the saints had become one with Christ in heaven, why were none of the choirs of confessors or virgins (except two) or even the Apostles (except two) depicted in gold? If the list of golden saints is examined, it would appear that only those closely associated with the monastic reform were selected to parallel Christ's raiment.<sup>143</sup>

The Benedictional illustrator clothed three female saints in gold: the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene and Æthelthryth. Interestingly, both Mary Magdalene and Æthelthryth are the only two figures in the choir of virgins (folio 2) to be named, dressed in gold (with pale red mantles) and depicted without a crown (each has a nimbus).<sup>144</sup> Furthermore, on folio 90v Æthelthryth is the sole female saint (apart from Mary) to appear individually in a miniature, again with a nimbus as opposed to a crown and dressed once more in gold with a pale red mantle. Robert Deshman notes that both Mary Magdalene and Æthelthryth feature significantly in various Winchester litanies, which accounts for their prominence in the choir of virgins.<sup>145</sup> He also argues that the attribution of the nimbus is used to link these women to Mary (who is also depicted as wearing a nimbus until her coronation scene) and to cast them as the finest examples of virginity to emulate.<sup>146</sup> In terms of the colour scheme, however, of all three women it is Mary alone whose vestments are associated with heavenly divinity. The Virgin appears in seven surviving miniatures that depict: The Annunciation (5v), The Nativity (15v), The Naming of Christ (22v), The Adoration of the Magi (24v), The Presentation in the Temple (34v), the Ascension (64v) and The Death and Coronation of the Virgin (102v). In the first six scenes Mary appears either with a nimbus or without (but certainly not crowned) and in gold and pale red garments that portray her mortality. It

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hand (Deshman, *The Benedictional*, p. 114). Gold and Blue garments are used for the Second Coming (9v), His Baptism (25), The Entry into Jerusalem (45v), His depiction as the Trinity (70) and God (91). These depictions seem to recall either the revelation of Christ's divinity – God's announcement at Jesus' baptism and the Crucifixion –, or Christ as he dwells in heaven.

<sup>143</sup> These figures include: John the Evangelist (folio 19v), who Deshman notes was an exemplar of the monastic life and a figure to whom Æthelwold himself was often compared (*The Benedictional*, pp. 177–8); St Peter (64v and 67v), who along with Mary was the central saintly figurehead of the Reform movement; St. Paul (95v), whose Epistles often discuss chastity; St. Swithun (97v), Æthelwold's patron saint at Winchester and St Benedict (99v), the founder of Benedictine monasticism. Interestingly, the bishop depicted blessing his congregation in folio 118v also wears a blue and gold upper tunic; presumably this was intended to be Æthelwold himself.

<sup>144</sup> These two figures are identifiable since their names are inscribed on the books that they hold. Deshman, *The Benedictional*, p. 146.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 150.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.

is only on her deathbed that she is depicted in blue, lying on golden drapes, while angels descend to crown her as Queen of Heaven. Thus it is the Virgin solely in her role as *Maria Regina*, the celestial empress of heaven, who appears as a crowned queen in gold.

The Benedictine Reform heavily promoted Mary's cult. In particular, her role as the Queen of Heaven was emphasised and through the use of this image the Reformers sponsored the growing political role and religious importance of Anglo-Saxon queens.<sup>147</sup> Ælfric appears to have shared the Reform's general devotion to the Virgin and his homilies likewise often depict Mary as the Queen of Heaven. In addition, he also portrays her as the greatest martyr of all, drawing on *Lc 2.35*, where Simeon prophesies to Mary that her soul will be pierced by a sword in reference to the Crucifixion.<sup>148</sup> A further interesting aspect of Ælfric's teaching on Mary appears in the homily *Nativitas Sanctae Mariae Virginis* (Assman iii), which includes two crucial passages contained in a discussion of the spiritual marriage between Christ and the universal assembly of the Church. At line 106, *Ps 44.10* is quoted as part of a list of Old Testament motifs that relate to the Church (which also include the Bride and Dove). Later on, at 216–21 Ælfric then directly compares the Church to Mary:

*Eall Cristes gelaðung is Cristes modor,  
forðan ðe heo acenð Cristes sylfes limu  
þurh ða halgan gife on ðam halgan fulluhte.  
And Maria is his modor lichamlice  
and gastlice his swustor and soðlice his modor.  
And heo is ana for ði modor and mæden...*<sup>149</sup>

For Ælfric, Mary was clearly a symbol of royalty, martyrdom and the faithful Church united in marriage to Christ. Overall, it seems highly likely that Ælfric's descriptions of Agnes deliberately drew on his audience's familiarity not only with the Psalms, but also contemporary iconography and notions about Mary. Consequently, he could then drive home his point that the virgin saint represented the corporate body of the English Church and her martyrdom, the Church's path to salvation. In this way, Ælfric promotes the authority of the Church over each person and distances his work from images that relate to the trials and tribulations of the individual ascetic soul. Each Anglo-Saxon Christian must

<sup>147</sup> M. Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England*, CSASE 2 (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 164–5.

<sup>148</sup> *CHI* ix.169–80.

<sup>149</sup> 'All the Church of Christ is the Mother of Christ, because she brings forth the limbs of Christ himself by means of holy grace during holy baptism. And Mary is his mother bodily and spiritually his sister and truly his mother. And therefore she alone is (both) a mother and a maiden...'

participate in the faith of the orthodox Church in order to receive the full benefit of a spiritual union with Christ.

So far this chapter has argued that Ælfric's depiction of Agnes deliberately sought to associate the saint with images of the queen of Heaven, which also recall the figures of Mary and the Church itself. One final subtle alteration to the spiritual reading in *LS*, moreover, strengthens this conclusion. Chapter one has already revealed how the author of the *PSA* carefully crafted a number of Scriptural allusions into the text's prose in order to implement the device of *imitatio Christi*.<sup>150</sup> Throughout the *PSA* numerous Biblical references were employed to draw attention to parallel features between the martyrdoms of Agnes and Christ, with a particular and unsurprising emphasis on the use of NT passages. Ælfric was no doubt aware of the scheme employed by the *PSA*, but one allusion in particular appears to have caught his eye: Moses, who prefigures Christ and recalls the Exodus of the Israelites. Not only does *LS* maintain various passages of the *PSA* that evoke this event, but Ælfric also appears to have deliberately enhanced this theme in order to cement his theological teaching into the Old English account.

The *PSA*'s first allusions to the *Liber Exodi* are shadowy and vague. For example, the confrontation between the Christian saint and pagan judge distantly recalls the altercations between Moses and Pharaoh.<sup>151</sup> Furthermore, Agnes' journey to the brothel where she receives her desired martyrdom can be viewed as a reflection of the Israelites' journey through the wilderness to Canaan. These echoes alone are not a convincing demonstration that the *PSA* was crafted to reflect elements of *Ex*; however, if they are considered alongside two additional motifs, the case is considerably strengthened.

The first incident concerns the pagan crowd who demand Agnes' execution after the suitor's resurrection. The *PSA* narrates how Agnes is cast onto a pyre, yet the flames divide into two leaving her unharmed as they reach out to destroy the hostile crowd.

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<sup>150</sup> See in particular, pp. 35–44.

<sup>151</sup> For example compare chapters 5–12 of *Ex* with *PSA* 47–90 and *LS* 91–140.

Table 3.3: The Pyre Scene

PSA	Ælfric
<i>Quod, cum fuisset impletum, statim in duas partes diuisae sunt flammae, et hinc atque illinc seditiosos populos exurebat, ipsam penitus in nullo contingebat incendium.</i> (149–51) <sup>152</sup>	<i>Hit wearð þa swa gedon · swa se wælhreowa het · ac se lig hine todælde · on twegen dælas sona and forswælde þa ðe þa ceaste macedon · and agnes seo eadige · stod in æle middan gesund ·</i> (220–23) <sup>153</sup>

Ælfric retained this scene in its entirety, no doubt immediately perceiving the Biblical allusion behind the miraculous division of the flames:

*cumque extendisset Moses manum super mare abstulit illud Dominus flante uento uehementi et urente tota nocte et uertit in siccum diuisaque est aqua (Ex 14.21)  
et ait Dominus ad Mosen extende manum tuam super mare ut reuertantur aquae ad Aegyptios super currus et equites eorum (Ex 14.26)*<sup>154</sup>

The second event involves Agnes' action of *extendens manus suas in medio ignis* (PSA 153), which can be interpreted as merely a common gesture of prayer.<sup>155</sup> Given its location just after her miraculous deliverance from the pyre, however, it seems more probable that the phrase is a deliberate reference to Moses' control over the waters of the Red Sea (Ex 14.16, 21 and 26–27). Again Ælfric maintained this line in his translation.<sup>156</sup>

The parting of the Red Sea is, of course, not the only Scriptural passage evoked by the PSA's prose, whose description of the crowds' destruction by the pyre's flames also recalls Dn 3.1–100 and the three youths cast into the furnace. Indeed, Agnes' words during her final prayer also evoke this incident when she comments that *rore caelesti perfusa sum* (PSA 156–7, cf. Dn 3.50).<sup>157</sup> It would appear that during Agnes' final scene the PSA, as well as LS which also maintains this reference, sought to keep a window open to both

<sup>152</sup> 'Which, when this had been accomplished (i.e. throwing Agnes onto the pyre), the flames were immediately divided into two parts, and on one side and on the other side were consuming the seditious people, (yet) the heart (of the) conflagration was touching her in no (way).'

<sup>153</sup> 'Then it was done in this way, just as the bloodthirsty man ordered, but the fire thereupon seperated into two parts and consumed those who had caused the strife, yet the blessed Agnes stood entirely uninjured in the middle (of the flames).'

<sup>154</sup> Ex 14.21: 'And when Moses had stretched forth his hand over the sea, the Lord took it away by a strong and burning wind blowing all the night, and turned it into dry ground: and the water was divided.' Ex 14.26: 'And the Lord said to Moses: Stretch forth thy hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and horsemen.'

<sup>155</sup> 'extending her hands in the middle of the fire.'

<sup>156</sup> 'astræhtum handum þus hi gebiddende' (224) – ('with outstretched hands she was praying thus').

<sup>157</sup> 'I have been bathed with heavenly dew.'

Biblical books through the phrasing of their prose.<sup>158</sup> There are faint suggestions, however, that the reference to *Ex* was intended to be the primary reading. For example, Agnes' final prayer in both works includes the passage:

Table 3.4: Agnes' Final Prayer

PSA	Ælfric
<p><i>...Pater Domini mei Iesu Christi benedico Te, quia per Filium Tuum euasi manus hominum impiorum, et spurcitas diaboli impolluto calle transiui... Benedico Te, Pater Praedicande, qui etiam inter flammam intrepidam me ad Te uenire permittis.</i> (154–59)<sup>159</sup></p>	<p><i>mines drihtnes fæder • ðe ic bletsige • forðan þe Ic ætwand þurh þinne wynsuman sunu • þæra arleasra þeowracan • and eac þæs deofles fylðe • ...</i> <i>Ic bletsige ðe fæder bodigendlic god • þæt ic þurh fyr unforht to ðe faran mot •</i> (227–33)<sup>160</sup></p>

The *PSA* and Ælfric use two verbs of different meaning to describe Agnes' journey to heaven (*transeo* 'to cross over' and *ætwindan* 'to escape'); nevertheless, both of them evoke the idea of travelling through danger to reach God, which would intimate that an Exodus typology was intended in this passage. In addition, Ælfric's alterations to earlier scenes of *LS* indicate that he deliberately constructed his text to recall images from *Ex* at various points throughout the tale. These instances might have been intended to prime his audience to interpret Agnes' triumph on the pyre in relation to the Israelites' departure from Egypt.

Table 3.5: Agnes' Angelic Protector at the Brothel

PSA	Ælfric
<p><i>Ingressa igitur turpitudinis locum, angelum Domini illic ita paratum inuenit, ut circumdaret eam inmenso lumine ita ut nullus posset eam prae splendore perspicere, nec contingere, nec uidere.</i> (95–7)<sup>161</sup></p>	<p><i>Hi tugon ða þæt mæden to þæra myllestrena huse •</i> <i>ac heo gemette þær sona scinende godes encgel •</i> <i>swa þæt nan man ne mihte for ðam mycclum leohte</i> <i>hire on beseon • oððe hi hreppan •</i></p>

<sup>158</sup> 'Efne ic eom begoten mid godcundlicum deawe' (230) – ('behold I am covered with celestial dew').

<sup>159</sup> '...Father of my Lord Jesus Christ... I bless Thee, since through Your son I have escaped the hands of wicked men, and passed over the filths of the devil by an unpolluted path. ...I bless Thee Father Who must be Proclaimed, You who also permit me to come to You undaunted amidst the flames.'

<sup>160</sup> 'Father of my Lord, I adore You, because through Your delightful Son I have escaped the threats of impious men and likewise the impurity of the devil, ...I adore You Father, God (who is) to be celebrated, that I may be allowed to travel to You fearless through the fire.'

The ingenious difference between these two scenes concerns the way in which the angel surrounds Agnes with light. The *PSA* creates the impression that a barricade of light encircles the saint, as if she was a town or castle to be defended. By omitting *circumdaret eam immenso lumine*, Ælfric abandons this notion of fortification and attributes the heavenly light to the very body of God's angel, casting the immortal as a beacon of light that bedazzles all who look at it. The Bible relates that the Israelites were guided to the Red Sea not only by a pillar of cloud during the day and one of fire by night (*Ex* 13.21), but also by an angel of the Lord who travelled before them (*Ex* 14.19). Through altering the wall of light to a beacon, it is probable that Ælfric actively sought to use Agnes' guardian angel to recall these events. But although it would appear that Ælfric maintained and strengthened the references to the Exodus already present in the Latin text, questions remain about what purpose this imagery was intended to serve.

If the *Catholic Homilies* are examined for Ælfric's teaching on the Red Sea crossing, two exegetical interpretations can be found. On a general level Ælfric viewed the Israelites' departure from Israel to the Promised Land as a prefiguration of how Christ led the Gentiles from the Devil's service to heaven, a journey from sin to virtue (*CH* II xv.325–35). In addition, he also interprets the actual crossing of the Red Sea as a symbol of baptism, an act that saves a Christian from the Devil, just as God drowned Pharaoh who was persecuting His people (*CH* II xii.178–91). Thus the retention and expansion of the Exodus imagery in *LS* ties in well with Ælfric's use of Agnes' tale as a commentary that the Church must spurn both physical and spiritual idolatry to achieve divine marriage.

If such thoughts are considered in relation to Agnes' execution, Ælfric appears to have carefully selected his imagery to reinforce his views that it is only through the orthodox Church that all Christians can attain salvation. The depiction of the young virgin as a figure of the Church clothed in gold amidst the pyre's flames works on two levels in relation to Ælfric's teaching. The allusion to Exodus recalls the sacrament of Baptism, which cleanses each believer from original sin and, of course, can only be administered by

<sup>161</sup> 'Then, having entered the place of foulness, she found an angel of the Lord there prepared in such a way that he encircled her with an immense light so that no one could glimpse her on account of the brightness, nor touch or see (her).'

<sup>162</sup> 'Then they led the maiden to a house of prostitutes, and thereupon she encountered there a shining angel of God, so that no man was able to look on her or touch her on account of that great light.'

the Church.<sup>163</sup> Baptism grants entry to the life of the earthly Church; however, Ælfric's representation of Agnes also recalls his teaching on the spiritual Church.

The homily *In dedicatione ecclesiae* (CH II xl.52–293) contains Ælfric's thoughts on the history of the Church from the Old Testament to the New Testament and the transition from a physical to a spiritual institution. Ælfric begins with three principal Old Testament images that prefigure the assembly of Christ: Solomon's temple (described as a golden building), the Queen of Sheba, who came bearing gold and precious jewels to Solomon in order to learn from his wisdom (III Rg 10.1–13) and the golden Queen of *Ps* 44, whom Ælfric introduces by quoting *Ps* 44.10 (188–91). For the New Testament Church, Ælfric draws on Paul's teaching in I *Cor* 3.10–16, which not only depicts the terrestrial Church as built from the living stones of believers, but also argues that each Christian constructs a temple of God within their own body. This earthly Church, however, is built from a variety of materials – gold, gems, wood or straw – depending on the virtuousness of each believer. On Judgement Day these structures will be tested by fire, yet only those built of gold and jewels will be purified and win eternal life. Ælfric's retention and adaptation of Agnes' final scene, when clothed in gold she is cast onto a pyre just moments before her martyrdom and the consummation of her marriage to Christ, was surely intended to reflect his theological teaching about the Church. In that one visual image Agnes' body encapsulates Ælfric's entire symbolic history of the Church through motifs of both physical and spiritual golden queens and temples. The virgin recalls not only the earthly Church, whose members are individually cleansed from sin through baptism, but also the Church's final triumph on the Last Day, when tested and purified she will be joined to Christ.

The Latin *Passio Sanctae Agnetis*, as we saw earlier, is a work that allows a reader to dwell on an edifying tale; furthermore, through its wide range of Scriptural allusions it may also have simultaneously served as a contemplative text for those who were well acquainted with the Bible. Ælfric's 'translation' of the *PSA* is a far more complex narrative than the Preface of *LS* would lead us to believe. Both the literal and spiritual readings of the original text have been maintained in general, yet subtly altered to enable Ælfric to emphasise a much narrower and more specific path of interpretation for his audience: one which reinforces his theological teaching. But whilst Ælfric may have sought to educate

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<sup>163</sup> See Grundy, *Books and Grace*, pp. 175–83 for a discussion of Ælfric's teaching on baptism.

his flock with a tale about the triumph of true faith over sin it remains to be briefly considered to what extent a contemporary late tenth-century audience would have related to his message.

Earlier on, the reader's attention was drawn to the fact that *LS* was composed during a period of renewed Viking raids on English shores.<sup>164</sup> But if Ælfric viewed *LS* as a means of advising and encouraging his beleaguered compatriots, what manner of assistance did he believe the exemplar of a young female virgin martyr would bring? Godden draws attention to the inclusion of tales about Christian Kings and warriors physically combating heathen foes in *LS*, yet Agnes conducted her warfare on a spiritual not a physical level.<sup>165</sup> Nevertheless, the virgin's tale is still one of both didactic purpose and of hope. On a moralizing plane, her legend carries perhaps not only the obvious ethical lesson that every Christian must combat sin, but also, through her rejection of the pagan suitor, a comment on not fraternizing with the Vikings. As a message of hope, Agnes' tale is a vision that if the Church, and by extension each member of its body, remains true to the faith then evil can be defeated. It is a message not only for those in high office, be it lay or ecclesiastical, but also for every man and woman.

Ælfric's 'Life of Agnes' was created as a vehicle through which he could address all the faithful, who heard or read his text. The following chapter now turns to address the question of Agnes' status within the English Church and the extent to which Agnes' name, cult and legend were a part of the religious experiences of both monastic and lay English Christians.

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<sup>164</sup> See p. 110.

<sup>165</sup> Godden, 'Problem of Miracles', p. 95.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### A Catalogue of Anglo-Saxon Liturgical Sources that Celebrate St Agnes

Honoured as one of Rome's foremost martyrs and invoked by various common liturgical prayers from the fifth century onwards, St Agnes of Rome was no doubt known to many Christians across early medieval Europe. Indeed, it would have been surprising if knowledge of her cult had not reached Anglo-Saxon shores. The majority of the chapters in this dissertation have focused on one major work that recounts the martyrdom of St Agnes. While these texts clearly reveal that Agnes' cult and legend were known in Anglo-Saxon England, the popularity of the martyr's feast-days and of the saint herself cannot be easily ascertained.<sup>1</sup> The aim of this chapter is to examine the wealth of extant Insular liturgical evidence in order to ascertain to what extent her cult formed part of Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical life. Two principal areas require exploration: first, whether Agnes' feast-days were celebrated throughout Anglo-Saxon England or restricted to certain areas, second, the status of these two occasions amongst the hierarchy of festivals celebrated by the English Church. Perhaps one of the hardest questions to answer is whether her feasts were celebrated only by those in orders, or by both secular and ecclesiastical institutions. Finally, this chapter also attempts to determine whether the Anglo-Saxon liturgy shows any evidence for familiarity with the *Passio Sanctae Agnetis*.

In conducting such an investigation it is crucial to bear in mind that customs varied not only according to place, but also through time. Thus the traditions of an eighth-century Northumbrian monastery may have differed dramatically from those of an eleventh-century reformed institution. One further criterion to consider is Agnes' category of sanctity: virgin martyrs and in particular virgin martyrs culted at Rome. To focus solely on Agnes in this chapter would be to represent only part of the picture, since she was one member of a group of Roman virgin martyrs honoured by the Insular Church. Accordingly, two of the central questions asked of the evidence investigate the popularity of this group of female martyrs amongst the saints culted in Anglo-Saxon England and whether a ranking system can be discerned within this company of women.

This chapter will consider two main areas of evidence: first, the invocation of Agnes' name in commonly used liturgical rites, second, evidence for the celebration of her feast-days. Numerous genres of texts will be considered in turn, each accompanied

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<sup>1</sup> Agnes' two feast-days are: 21 January (the commemoration of her martyrdom) and 28 January (the celebration of her *post mortem* appearance at her tomb, see *PSA* 184–93).

by a discussion of use and examination of references to Agnes' cult. Due to the huge range of surviving material, however, this chapter cannot hope to provide a detailed assessment of each work. Therefore, it is intended as a preliminary catalogue of references to Agnes that could be employed later on for a more comprehensive study.

#### 4.1 *Church Rites and Prayers Unrelated to Agnes' Feast-Days*

Before embarking on an investigation into the status and popularity of the feasts of St Agnes in Anglo-Saxon England, it is worth briefly considering the extent to which her name was invoked beyond these occasions. The inclusion of Agnes' name in a number of common rituals indicates that Anglo-Saxon Christians, whether or not they celebrated her feast-days, may have known of her existence. The extent of their knowledge about this virgin martyr's life and cult, nevertheless, must remain uncertain.

##### 4.1.1 *The Canon of the Mass*

In the late fifth-century, probably during the reign of Pope Gelasius (492–6), a number of new prayers derived from eastern traditions were introduced into the Roman Canon of the Mass.<sup>2</sup> Amongst these texts were two prayers based on the invocation of a number of individually named saints: the *Communicantes*, which calls on solely male apostles, popes and martyrs, and, more importantly, the *Nobis quoque*, whose list of saints includes both male and female martyrs.<sup>3</sup> Over the course of the following centuries the form of the *Nobis quoque* underwent various changes. By the seventh century three distinct versions existed: the Ambrosian, Franco-Irish and Gregorian.<sup>4</sup> Individual manuscripts of these three forms of the prayer tend to vary since locally venerated saints were often invoked alongside their more universally known colleagues; nevertheless, all three adaptations of the *Nobis quoque* clearly contain a common core of female martyrs:<sup>5</sup>

<i>Ambrosian</i>	<i>Franco-Irish</i>	<i>Gregorian</i>
Agnes	Perpetua	Felicity
Cecilia	Agnes	Perpetua
Felicity	Cecilia	Agatha
Perpetua	Felicity	Lucy
Anastasia	Anastasia	Agnes
Agatha	Agatha	Cecilia
Eufemia	Lucy	Anastasia

<sup>2</sup> V. Kennedy, *The Saints of the Canon of the Mass*, Studi di antichità cristiana 14 (Vatican City, 1938), pp. 9–38, in particular pp. 32–8.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8–9 and 34–5.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

## Lucy

The variation in Agnes' rank across the three lists can be, at least partly, explained by the way in which names were added to each version of the *Nobis quoque*. The Ambrosian and Franco-Irish catalogues are thought to originate from an early Roman record that had reached Milan by the end of the fifth century.<sup>6</sup> That document's inventory of names appears to have been organised chronologically according to when each saint's feast became a prominent feature of the Roman ecclesiastical calendar.<sup>7</sup> Agnes' position at the head of these lists is therefore unsurprising since her cult had been heavily promoted at Rome from at least the fourth century onwards.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, Kennedy points out that the organisation of the Gregorian recension was based on geographical considerations because the women are listed according to their nationality: two African saints, two Sicilian, two Roman and one Oriental.<sup>9</sup>

Seven complete or substantial sacramentaries survive from late Anglo-Saxon England, three of which contain the Canon of the Mass. All three preserve the Gregorian recension of the *Nobis quoque*, which indicates that the English Church was aware of Agnes' existence and her position as one of the time-honoured female saints of the western Church.<sup>10</sup> The diffusion of such knowledge, however, remains unclear. The priest officiating at the Eucharist recited the Canon of the Mass, including the *Nobis quoque*, silently until the final few words of the doxology that formed the concluding prayer.<sup>11</sup> It may, therefore, have been only the mass-priests and scribes of liturgical manuscripts who were aware of Agnes' importance from this rite. The female saints of the *Nobis quoque*, however, are also invoked in another prayer-form that was more widely available to both laymen and religious.

### 4.1.2 Litanies of the Saints

In contrast to the *Nobis quoque*, which incorporates a consecutive list of saints' names within one prayer, litanies of the saints comprise 'invocations for mercy and

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3 and 53–9. Kennedy's arguments draw on the work of S.J. Savio, *I dittici del canone Ambrosiano et del canone Romano*, Miscellanea di Storia Italiana di Torino, series III, no. II (Turin, 1906), pp. 211–23.

<sup>7</sup> Kennedy, *The Saints of the Canon*, p. 63.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63. See pp. 251–4 for discussion of Agnes' early cult in Rome.

<sup>10</sup> As far as I am aware, the Gregorian canon is preserved in the following Mass books: The Leofric Missal, The Winchcombe Sacramentary and The Missal of Archbishop Robert of Jumièges. See p. 272 for details of these texts.

<sup>11</sup> E.C. Ratcliff and A.H. Courtain, 'The Early Roman Canon *Missae*', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 20 (1969): 211–24, at pp. 220–1 who note that the Roman Canon may have been recited silently from as early as the sixth century, although the surviving evidence is not completely clear on this point.

deliverance addressed to the three persons of the Trinity and for intercession to the Blessed Virgin Mary', as well as to other male and female saints.<sup>12</sup> This type of prayer originated in the East and, until recently, very little was known about when and how litanies of the saints first reached the West.<sup>13</sup> The earliest western manuscript witness to preserve such a composition is an eighth-century prayerbook (London, BL, Royal 2.A.xx, written *c.* 750–800), which contains a Latin translation of a seventh-century Greek litany used in the Patriarchate of Antioch.<sup>14</sup> On the basis of Theodore of Tarsus' eastern background and links to Antioch, Michael Lapidge has argued that it was the Archbishop of Canterbury (668–90) who first introduced litanies of the saints to England, possibly as a form of private devotion.<sup>15</sup> Very few early litanies now survive and the majority of the manuscript evidence dates to the tenth and eleventh centuries when the late Anglo-Saxon Church had begun to re-import continental versions of the early Insular prayers.<sup>16</sup>

Anglo-Saxon litanies of the saints had a wide variety of purposes; these uses included, but were not limited to, private prayer. A number of monastic ceremonies employed litanies including the Offices of Prime and Sext, ordination services for monks and the Office for the visitation of the sick and dying.<sup>17</sup> Several additional rites that also incorporated litanies, such as church dedications and penitential or baptismal processions, open up the likelihood that litanies of the saints were familiar to both laymen and clerics.<sup>18</sup> One problem with using litanies as an indicator of Agnes' status and popularity, however, is the unique content of every surviving prayer. Indeed, this is an issue reflected in all early liturgical material because each church adapted its rites to reflect its own concerns and traditions. No two litanies are the same, either in length (which can range from under ten named saints to over one hundred depending on its context), or content, since each church promoted its own set of favoured saints.<sup>19</sup> Nonetheless, these texts still share a common framework and collectively they provide

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<sup>12</sup> F.L. Cross (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., rev. E.A. Livingstone (Oxford, 1997), p. 985.

<sup>13</sup> M. Lapidge (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Litanies of the Saints*, HBS 106 (London, 1991), pp. 13–16. (All numbers quoted in relation to the Anglo-Saxon litanies of the saints refer to this work, which prints all known surviving texts of this kind).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15–25. Litany no. xxvi (Ker 248, Gneuss 450, s.viii<sup>2</sup> or ix<sup>1/4</sup>, Mercia).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* To strengthen his case, Lapidge points out that there are also references to litanies of the saints in the anonymous *Vita S Gregorii* (BHL 3637, composed *c.* 704–14) and a decree of the Council of Clovesho (747), which reveal the use of such prayers in England some years before they appear on the continent.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 41–3.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 43–5.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 43 and 46–8.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1–2.

an indication of the status accorded by the Anglo-Saxons to individual holy men and women.

The central component of any Insular litany comprises the lists of saintly names invoked by each prayer. Grouped according to type of sanctity, the lists are hierarchically arranged from the highest to the lowest rank of sainthood, starting with the apostles and ending with the female martyrs and non-martyrs (if they are included at all).<sup>20</sup> Within each category of saints, it is also possible that an individual's status was reflected by his or her position in a particular list. This supposition is partially confirmed by the almost constant appearance of six of the seven core female saints from the Canon of the Mass, including Agnes, among the first ten women invoked by each litany.<sup>21</sup>

Amongst the copyists of litanies, then, Agnes appears to have been regarded as one of the more prominent female saints of the Anglo-Saxon Church. Due to the variation among litanies, however, it is difficult to draw any straightforward conclusions.<sup>22</sup> For example, one litany of interest is that found in London, BL, Royal 2.A.xx, where the list of eleven female saints is actually headed by Agnes.<sup>23</sup> A slightly later litany from c. 800 again maintains her high status, although on this occasion she is placed second after Petronella, the daughter of St Peter.<sup>24</sup> In contrast, between the early ninth century and the Benedictine reform, Agnes slips down the rankings to occupy a lower place (usually fifth or sixth). This new position is more akin to her place in the Gregorian Canon of the Mass, where she appears as the fifth virgin martyr evoked in the *Nobis quoque*. Agnes maintains this lesser status in the litanies throughout the Benedictine Reform era.

The registers of female saints in the later Anglo-Saxon litanies also contain an interesting subtle adjustment to the order of the Gregorian canon.<sup>25</sup> Lapidge's edition of the Anglo-Saxon litanies lists forty-three texts that include women. One litany composed pre 930 and fifteen post 930 commence their lists of female saints as follows:

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<sup>20</sup> For example, litanies xvii, xx and xxxi do not list any female saints. It should be noted here that the discussion of the litanies in this chapter omits any reference to the Virgin Mary, who is usually found much higher up the lists of saintly genres.

<sup>21</sup> The one saint who makes a fairly infrequent appearance in the top ten is Anastasia. See Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Litanies*, pp. 28–9 for the influence of the Canon of the Mass upon the litany of the saints.

<sup>22</sup> Apart from Agnes' inclusion in the majority of surviving litanies, the other two saints from the *PSA* receive little attention, each appearing in only one litany: Emerentiana in xxiii (London, BL, Harley 863: Ker 232, Gneuss 425, s.xi<sup>3/4</sup>, Exeter), which is also the longest known litany from Anglo-Saxon England, and Constantia in xxv (London, BL, Harley 7653: Ker 244, Gneuss 443, s.viii/ix or ix in., Mercia).

<sup>23</sup> Litany xxvi.

<sup>24</sup> Litany xxv (London, BL, Harley 7653).

<sup>25</sup> It should be noted that many of the litanies bear little resemblance to each other and this one pattern is the only one detected so far.

Felicity  
 Perpetua  
 Agatha  
 Agnes  
 Cecilia  
 Lucy...<sup>26</sup>

It must be noted, however, that this pattern is often broken by the insertion of one or two additional female saints, usually after Perpetua.<sup>27</sup> The one individual in this list who occupies a rank lower than her place in the Canon of the Mass is St Lucy, who moves from fourth place to sixth. This alteration breaks the geographic arrangement of the Gregorian scheme: the two Roman saints (Agnes and Cecilia) are now encircled by their Sicilian counterparts (Agatha and Lucy), rather than placed after them. On its own this small drop in status means little, since Lucy was clearly still associated with the other female saints of the Canon. When this change is taken into consideration alongside evidence from late Anglo-Saxon benedictionals, however, it appears to have greater significance.<sup>28</sup> The benedictionals (collections of episcopal blessings) celebrate several female saints from the Canon of the Mass, but often omit prayers for Lucy's feast-day. Furthermore, this specific order in the Anglo-Saxon litanies may also partially explain an intriguing editorial decision by Ælfric in his *Lives of Saints*. Ælfric included the *passiones* of four of the virgin martyrs from the Canon of the Mass in this work: Agnes, Agatha, Cecilia and Lucy.<sup>29</sup> The first three women all merited their own individual entries. Lucy, however, did not and she appears as the *alia sententia* (or companion piece) appended to the account of her fellow Sicilian martyr, Agatha.<sup>30</sup>

Overall, the litanies provide a source through which all Anglo-Saxons may have come across Agnes' name, although the degree of her popularity and status cannot be ascertained. One further use of the litanies, however, provides another opportunity to develop a clearer picture of Agnes' fame and eminence amongst Insular Christians.

<sup>26</sup> This equates to thirty-five percent of litanies containing female saints.

<sup>27</sup> There are three female saints of whom one or two commonly appear between Perpetua and Agatha: Mary Magdalene, Scholastica and Petronella. All three women can be clearly linked to the English Benedictine Reform. Petronella is the daughter of St Peter, one of the most venerated Reform saints. Scholastica was Benedict of Monte Cassino's sister and Mary Magdalene's cult was also especially promoted by the Benedictine Reformers. For example, Mary Magdalene is one of only three female saints accorded special prominence in the miniatures of the Benedictional of Æthelwold (see p. 133).

<sup>28</sup> See pp. 172–9 and Appendix 3.5, pp. 287–8.

<sup>29</sup> W. Skeat (ed.), *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, EETS os 76, 82, 94 and 114 (London, 1881–1900; repr. as 2 vols., London, 1966). Agnes (c. 7), Agatha (c. 8), Lucy (c. 9, but see fn. 30) and Cecilia (c. 34).

<sup>30</sup> J. Hill, 'The Dissemination of Ælfric's Lives of Saints', in P.E. Szarmach (ed.), *Holy Men and Holy Women: Old English Prose Saints' Lives and Their Contexts* (Albany, NY, 1996), pp. 235–59 at pp. 238–9. The manuscript evidence for *Lives of Saints* clearly shows that Ælfric's text concerning Lucy was composed as a 'companion piece' for the narrative of Agatha's martyrdom and that both passions were intended to be read on Agatha's feast-day (5 February). Skeat's edition, however, ignores the manuscript rubrics and numbers Lucy as a separate entry (no. 9).

### 4.1.3 Medical Texts

A number of Anglo-Saxon medical charms and cures employ the use of Christian prayers and rites to assist the sufferer, especially in the treatment of serious diseases where herbal remedies provided little relief.<sup>31</sup> The recitation of the Mass and prayers such as the *Pater noster* are prescribed by a number of texts, but a few also mention the use of litanies.<sup>32</sup> Only one cure specifies the use of a 'litany of the saints', but it is likely that other charms, which involve litanic prayers, also refer to this specific form since the invocation of named saints occurs in many medical texts.<sup>33</sup> Agnes' frequent appearance in the surviving litanies thus indicates the possibility that her name was included whenever such prayers were used as part of a treatment.

In addition to the inclusion of Agnes' name in medical cures through the use of litanies, the virgin martyr may also have been invoked individually since a number of surviving charms employ specific saints' names. Unsurprisingly, the saints who are usually called on in these texts are Biblical: Christ, Mary and the four Evangelists, although the majority of the Apostles are largely absent.<sup>34</sup> Non-Biblical saints are only occasionally invoked; however, those who are named comprise an intriguing group of holy individuals. It would appear that many important and well-known saints, such as St Lawrence, tended to be overlooked by the charms in favour of less familiar figures, who may have had a particular connection with the ailment in question. For example, amongst the cures contained in the *Lacnunga* is a charm against fever that calls on the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, who were clearly associated with this disease since their names occur in other medieval remedies for fevers.<sup>35</sup> No surviving charm contains an individual reference to Agnes. Indeed, very few female saints apart from Mary are mentioned at all; nevertheless, several virgin martyrs do appear in these texts and it is thus possible that Agnes' name was also used in a similar manner. Those women who are called on in Insular cures include: Elizabeth (the mother of John the Baptist), who

<sup>31</sup> For example cures lxii–lxv in *Leechbook I*, which deal with diseases such as typhus and demonic possession involve the use of common Christian prayers. T.O. Cockayne (ed.), *Leechdoms, Wortcunning and Starcraft of Early England*, 3 vols, Rolls Series 35.1–3 (London, 1864–6), II, 136–41. Bald's *Leechbook*: London, BL, Royal 12.D.xvii (Ker 264, Gneuss 479, s.xi/xii, Canterbury, Christ Church).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 113 (*Leechbook I*, cure xlv.5, a remedy for flying venom and venomous swellings) and 345 (*Leechbook III*, cure lxii, a remedy for elf disease).

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 136–9 (*Leechbook I*, cure lxiii, a remedy for a frenzied man – for part of the cure the sufferer must 'sing...in the church litanies, that is the name of the hallows or saints, and the *Pater noster*...').

<sup>34</sup> See *Ibid* in general (in particular *Leechbooks I–III*).

<sup>35</sup> E. Pettit (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Remedies, Charms and Prayers from British Library MS Harley 585: The Lacnunga*, 2 vols. (Lampeter, 2001), I, 73. (Ker 231, Gneuss 421, s.x/xi and xi<sup>1</sup>). On the connection between the Seven Sleepers and fever cures, see V. Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 315–16. One obvious example of a cure and a saint possessing a clear connection is the invocation of St Helena in the charm for recovering lost goods noted above. Helena, of course, was famed for her discovery of the True Cross.

appears alongside Mary in a charm for childbirth.<sup>36</sup> Two charms for lost livestock invoke several women: the first calls on Saints Garmund and Helena (Constantine's mother) and the second, Saints Peter, Paul, Patrick, Philip, Mary, Brigid and Felicity (the latter could be either Felicity of Carthage or Felicity of Rome).<sup>37</sup> Finally, St Brigid also appears alongside Saints Marina (St Margaret of Antioch), Edward, Grimbald, and Caedda in a cure for foot ailments from London, BL, Cotton Galba A.xiv.<sup>38</sup> Overall, while it is clear that some people regarded the virgin saints as powerful intercessors to aid healing, the infrequency with which they appear in medical texts suggests that the majority of Anglo-Saxons placed far greater trust in Biblical saints. The appearance of Brigid and Marina's names suggest that Agnes might have been invoked outside of cures involving litanies, but probably not on a regular basis.

#### 4.1.4 Private Devotions

Many so-called 'medical cures' use prayers and it is often hard to decide whether to designate such texts as charms or prayers. In addition to the medical texts considered above, there are a number of surviving manuscripts containing texts that invoke named saints and which were clearly used in the context of private devotions. Private prayer has been an integral part of Christian life from the time of Christ himself, who in *Mt* 6.6-13 specifically requests that his followers pray in such a manner.<sup>39</sup> Throughout the history of the Church both religious and laymen have been expected to engage daily in such devotions.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, beyond the gospel command to recite the *Pater noster*, it would appear that private prayers could take whatever form the worshipper wished. Surviving Anglo-Saxon prayers encompass a variety of liturgical forms including litanies, gospel or psalter extracts, hymns and prayers in the modern sense of the word.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Cockayne, *Leechdoms*, I, 392 (charm from Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 85 – Ker 336, Gneuss 642, s.xi med., SE England).

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 384–5 and 392–3 (both charms appear in the margins of CCCC 41 – Ker 32, Gneuss 39, s.xi<sup>1</sup>–xi med., ?S England).

<sup>38</sup> B.J. Muir (ed.), *A Pre-Conquest English Prayer-book: (BL MSS Cotton Galba A.xiv and Nero A.ii (ff.3–13))*, HBS 103 (Woodbridge, 1988), p. 89. Ker 157 and Gneuss 333 and 342, s.xi<sup>2/4</sup>, ?Winchester. One further possible mention of a female saint is found in a charm (no. lxxv) for elf-disease in *Leechbook I* that calls upon Christ and Veronica (Cockayne, *Leechdoms*, I, 140–1). However, 'Veronica' may refer either to the lady who wiped Christ's face with her handkerchief at the Crucifixion, or to the handkerchief itself, preserved as a relic at Rome, which was also known by the same name.

<sup>39</sup> *Mt* 6.6–9: 'tu autem cum orabis intra in cubiculum tuum et cluso ostio tuo ora Patrem tuum in abscondito... sic ergo uos orabitis Pater noster...' – ('But thou, when thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret... thus therefore shall you pray: Our Father...'). *Act* 10.9 and 30 provide additional examples of early Christians praying alone.

<sup>40</sup> J.A. Jungmann, *The Early Liturgy to the Time of Gregory the Great*, trans. F.A. Brunner (Notre Dame, IN, 1959), pp. 98–104.

<sup>41</sup> M. Lapidge, 'Private Prayer', in M. Lapidge et al. (eds.), *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 375–6.

In addition to the individual prayers that can be found scattered throughout numerous Insular manuscripts, a number of actual prayerbooks have also survived. Two such manuscripts, which date to the eleventh century, contain a number of prayers to named individual saints including both Biblical and non-Biblical figures. Amongst the female saints invoked in these works are: the Virgin Mary, two Anglo-Saxon women (Mildburg and Eadgifu) and two virgins (Brigid and Cecilia).<sup>42</sup> Neither of these works contains a prayer to Agnes, yet the existence of prayers to saints such as Cecilia, a fellow Roman virgin martyr, indicates the possibility that some once existed. The relatively infrequent invocation of female saints in both private prayers and medical remedies, however, suggests that the virgin saints did not enjoy a high level of popularity as divine intercessors in the late Anglo-Saxon Church.

In addition to the above-mentioned eleventh-century works, another four prayerbooks from the eighth and ninth centuries have also survived, which comprise the earliest known European examples of this genre.<sup>43</sup> Again, none of these texts contain prayers to Agnes alone; however, they do present a fascinating insight into the influence of saints' *passiones* on other religious texts. The earliest surviving prayerbook with English connections is Alcuin's *De laude Dei* (Bamberg, Stadtbibliothek, Misc. Patr. 17/B.II.10, ff. 133–61<sup>v</sup> and El Escorial, Real Biblioteca, b–IV–17, ff. 93–108). This work is a compilation of devotional material compiled in York around 790, which may have been based on an early eighth-century Insular exemplar.<sup>44</sup> Amongst the miscellany's four books of gospel and patristic extracts and antiphons and poems are found a group of prayers composed from fragments of hagiographic accounts of saints with feast-days in January and February.<sup>45</sup> These texts include two extracts from the *Passio Sanctae Agathae* (BHL 133), three from the *Passio Sancti Valentini* (BHL 8463–

<sup>42</sup> i) Muir, *A Pre-Conquest English Prayer Book*, pp. xiii–xvi. For prayers to Brigid, Milburg (x2), and Eadgifu, see respectively pp. 90 and 187–9. This text (now surviving in two manuscripts) is from St Mary's, Winchester and dates the mid eleventh-century. According to its most recent editor, this collection of prayers and computistical material may well have served as a teaching aid at St Mary's. ii) B. Günzel (ed.), *Ælfwine's Prayerbook* (London, British Library, Cotton Titus D.xxvi + xxvii), HBS 108 (London, 1993), pp. 1–3. For the prayer to Cecilia, see p. 140. This manuscript dates to c. 1029 and appears to be a 'portable service and prayer-book' used by Ælfwine (abbot of New Minster, Winchester c. 1031–57) in his days as the monastery's dean, a role which probably involved him spending time away from the monastery, inspecting his house's land-holdings. (Ker 202, Gneuss 380).

<sup>43</sup> B.J. Muir, 'The Early Insular Prayer Book Tradition and the Development of the Book of Hours', in M.M. Manion and B.J. Muir (eds.), *The Art of the Book: Its Place in Medieval Worship* (Exeter, 1998), pp. 9–19, at pp. 12–13.

<sup>44</sup> R. Constantinescu, 'Alcuin et les "Libelli Precum" de l'époque carolingienne', *Revue de l'histoire de la spiritualité* 50 (1974): 17–56, at p. 17. See also D. Bullough, 'Alcuin and the Kingdom of Heaven: Liturgy, Theology and the Carolingian Age', in U.R. Blumenthal (ed.), *Carolingian Essays* (Washington, DC, 1983), pp. 1–69, at pp. 4–5 (in particular fn. 10).

<sup>45</sup> Constantinescu, "Libelli Precum", pp. 25–7. Two further prayers based on hagiographical works are preserved shortly after this group. One is an extract from the *Passio Polychronii* (BHL 4753–9), the other from the *Passio Cosmae et Damiani* (BHL 1970).

5), one from the *Passio Sanctae Julianae* (BHL 4522) and another from the *Passio Sanctae Agnetis*:<sup>46</sup>

*Benedico te, pater predicande. te confiteor laudabilius. et corde credo te totis uisceribus concupisco. uiuum et uerum Deum. qui cum Domino Iesu Christo Filio Tuo. et Sancto Spiritu, uiuis et regnas modo et semper in cuncta secula seculorum Amen.*<sup>47</sup>

One striking feature of all seven of *De laude Dei*'s prayers is that they are taken from the speeches delivered by each saint during his or her ordeal.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, these speeches are not usually borrowed from the opening of a *passio*, but rather from various stages throughout the narrative, suggesting that they were carefully selected.<sup>49</sup>

The practice of adapting saintly speeches into prayers, moreover, is found not only in Alcuin's work, but also in the abovementioned three English prayerbooks. These comprise: The Book of Cerne (Cambridge, UL, L1.I.10), The Book of Nunnaminster (London, BL, Harley 2965) and The Royal Prayerbook (London, BL, Royal 2.A.xx).<sup>50</sup> All three works are similar in structure to *De laude Dei* and include a mixture of gospel extracts, prayers and other devotional material.<sup>51</sup> Unlike *De laude Dei*, however, which, if it was intended for Alcuin's own use, was clearly a Churchman's book, the three English prayerbooks may well have been owned by laymen and, in some cases such as The Book of Nunnaminster, women.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>47</sup> These lines are taken from the Bamberg manuscript and represent a shortened (and slightly altered) version of *PSA* 158–63: 'Benedico Te Pater Praedicande, qui etiam inter flammas intrepidam me ad Te uenire permittis. Ecce, iam quod credidi uideo, quod speraui iam teneo, quod cupiui complector. Te confiteor labiis et corde, Te totis uisceribus concupisco. Ecce, ad Te uenio uiuum et uerum Deum, qui, cum Domino Nostro Iesu Christo Filio Tuo et Sancto Spiritu, uiuis et regnas modo et semper et in cuncta saecula saeculorum, Amen.' I am extremely grateful to Mary Garrison for checking the text of the *PSA* against her copy of the microfilm of the Bamberg manuscript.

<sup>48</sup> Bullough, 'Alcuin and the Kingdom of Heaven', p. 12.

<sup>49</sup> a) *Passio Sanctae Agathae* II.10: *Acta SS.* Feb I, pp. 622–4, at p. 623. b) *Passio Sancti Valentini*, paragraph 3: *Acta SS.* Feb II, pp. 754–5, at p. 754 (no chapter divisions supplied). c) *Passio Sanctae Iulianae* I.5: *Acta SS.* Feb II, pp. 875–9, at pp. 875–6.

<sup>50</sup> a) The Book of Cerne: Ker 27, Gneuss 28, c. 820x840, Mercia, prov. Worcester?, (prov. Cerne?). Edition: Dom A.B. Kuypers (ed.), *The Prayer Book of Aedelwald the Bishop Commonly Called The Book of Cerne* (Cambridge, 1902). b) The Book of Nunnaminster: Ker 237, Gneuss 432, s.viii/ix or ix<sup>i</sup>, Mercia or S England? Edition: W. De Gray Birch (ed.), *An Ancient Manuscript of the Eighth or Ninth Century Formerly Belonging to St Mary's Abbey or Nunnaminster, Winchester* (London, 1889). c) The Royal Prayerbook: Ker 248, Gneuss 450, s.viii<sup>2</sup> or ix<sup>1/4</sup>, Mercia (Worcester?). Edition: The text of the Royal Prayerbook is printed as an appendix in Kuypers, *The Prayer Book of Aedelwald*, pp. 199–225. One further unedited fragment of an early Insular prayerbook also survives: The Harleian Prayerbook (London, BL, Harley 7653), Ker 244, Gneuss 443, s.viii/ix or ix in., Mercia (Worcester?). All three complete prayerbooks contain a number of prayers to individual named saints, including (in addition to the Trinity): Mary, John the Baptist, the archangel Michael and various Apostles. Whilst these manuscripts all date from the eighth or ninth centuries, K. Hughes has argued that many of their prayers date back to the seventh century and show a heavy debt to Irish and British works. K. Hughes, 'Some Aspects of Irish Influence on Early English Private Prayer', *Studia Celtica* 5 (1970): 48–61.

<sup>51</sup> Constantinescu, 'Libelli Precum', p. 18.

<sup>52</sup> Lapidge, 'Private Prayer', p. 375. On the possible female ownership of several of these prayerbooks, see M. Brown, 'Female Book-Ownership and Production in Anglo-Saxon England: the Evidence of the

Although *De laude Dei*'s prayer from the *PSA* is not repeated in any of these three works, the prayer adapted from the *Passio Sanctae Julianae* appears in the Book of Nunnaminster.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, another prayer from this work may also contain a faint echo of the *PSA*. Line 154 of the *PSA*, which occurs at the start of the speech whose later lines were used to form the prayer in *De laude Dei*, reads:

*Omnipotens, Adorande, Tremende, Colende, Pater Domini...*

The Nunnaminster prayer opens:

*O tremende, adorande et colende Deus ...*<sup>54</sup>

Sadly, the rest of the following prayer has no links to the *PSA* at all, but a more conclusive and hitherto overlooked quotation from one of Agnes' speeches can be found in The Royal Prayerbook. Royal 2.A.xx contains a number of abecedarial prayers, including one exceptionally long example whose letter O begins:

*O unigenitus dei filius, qui mihi murus es inexpugnabilis et custos numquam obdormiens ac defensor numquam deficiens.*<sup>55</sup>

Again the remainder of the prayer is unrelated to the *PSA*, but it appears possible that it was a fairly common practice during the early Anglo-Saxon period to employ hagiographic extracts as private prayers.<sup>56</sup>

Agnes' inclusion in the English Canon of the Mass and litanies of the saints indicates that the Anglo-Saxon Church followed Rome in according a level of importance to her cult. These two prayer forms, in particular the litanies, also provide a possible route through which Anglo-Saxons might have encountered the saint's name. Beyond her inclusion in these collective prayers, however, there is little evidence to suggest that Agnes gained any significant degree of individual popular devotion. The infrequent invocations of named holy women (with the exception of Mary) in both medical charms and private prayers suggests that foreign female saints in general had a

Ninth-Century Prayerbooks', in C.J. Kay and L.M. Sylvester (eds.), *Lexis and Texts in Early English: Studies Presented to Jane Roberts* (Amsterdam, 2001), pp. 45–67, in particular pp. 51–8. Brown notes (p. 54) that The Book of Nunnaminster contains records of land holdings belonging to one Ealhswith, who was probably Queen Ealhswith (d. 902), the wife of King Alfred (871–99).

<sup>53</sup> Constantinescu, "Libelli Precum", p. 27. This prayer appears to have been quite popular, since Constantinescu located it in a further three manuscripts, two of which are continental works and one English (Cambridge, UL, G.g.V.35, Gneuss 12, s.xi med., Canterbury, St Augustine's?).

<sup>54</sup> De Gray Birch, *An Ancient Manuscript*, p. 68 (folio 24v).

<sup>55</sup> Kuypers, *The Prayer Book of Aedeluald*, p. 215 (folio 34r). This is virtually a direct quote of *PSA* 83–4: 'Nam unigenitus Dei Filius, quem ignoras, murus mihi est inexpugnabilis, et custos mihi est numquam dormiens, et defensor mihi est numquam deficiens.'

<sup>56</sup> The Book of Cerne does not draw on the *PSA* at all; however, it does appear to have followed the pattern of using hagiographic works to form its prayers, since several of the prayers to the Apostles draw upon their apocryphal lives. M. Brown, *The Book of Cerne: Prayer, Patronage and Power in Ninth-Century England* (London and Toronto, 1996), pp. 138–9.

relatively small popular following, at least in late Anglo-Saxon England. Furthermore, even the use of hagiographic extracts in private prayers sheds little light on the question of Agnes' status. Few of the surviving manuscripts provide any indication of where these prayers were borrowed from; therefore, it seems probable that many readers were never aware of the existence of the longer and more detailed source texts.<sup>57</sup>

## 4.2 *Calendars and Martyrologies*

The remainder of this chapter will examine material from the *sanctorale* of the Anglo-Saxon liturgy: 'the portion of the Calendar and of liturgical books with material related to the observance of dated feast-days, mostly of Saints.'<sup>58</sup> In the following section, the surviving calendrical and martyrological evidence is examined in order to ascertain the popularity and diffusion of Agnes' two feasts (21 and 28 January).<sup>59</sup> Agnes' inclusion in a number of early martyrologies also presents an opportunity to explore the question of when her cult might have first reached English shores. The final two sections of the chapter analyse the prayers, blessings and hymns used to honour Agnes on her two feast-days during Mass and the celebration of the Divine Office.

### 4.2.1 *Calendars*

The *Depositio martyrum*, composed by Furius Dionysius Philocalus in 354, is the earliest known western calendar and comprises a brief list of saints venerated by the fourth-century Roman church.<sup>60</sup> St Agnes (on 21 January) is one of only four women recorded by this text and the inclusion of her name at such an early date means that any later calendar with a connection to Rome or a Roman model is likely to contain at least her major feast.

Twenty-seven complete and partial calendars survive from Anglo-Saxon England. They are transmitted in a range of liturgical texts, which date from the early eighth to the late eleventh century and come from geographically disparate locations

<sup>57</sup> The only manuscript to provide such information (as far as I am aware) is the Bamberg manuscript of Alcuin's *De laude Dei*, where the prayers based on *passiones* have the name of the saint written vertically in capitals in the margin alongside each prayer.

<sup>58</sup> J. Harper, *The Forms and Orders of the Western Liturgy From the Tenth to the Eighteenth Century: A Historical Introduction and Guide for Students and Musicians* (Oxford, 1991), p. 314.

<sup>59</sup> Agnes' martyrdom is remembered on 21 January and her *post mortem* appearance at her tomb (see *PSA* 184–93) on 28 January.

<sup>60</sup> T.E. Mommsen (ed.), *Chronica Minora saec. iv., v., vi., vii.*, 3 vols., MGH Auct. Antiq. 9, 11 and 13 (Berlin, 1892–8), I, 71–2. The other female saints mentioned are Perpetua, Felicity and Basilla.

stretching from Northumbria to Salisbury.<sup>61</sup> On one level such testimonies provide an overview of feasts celebrated throughout the country for the entire Anglo-Saxon Age, although, due to the individuality of each calendar caution must also be exercised. Twenty-four Anglo-Saxon calendars record Agnes' major feast-day on 21 January; twenty-three also note her Octave on 28 January.<sup>62</sup> The final three calendars of the twenty-seven that have survived may also have once included her feasts, but they are now fragmentary and no longer contain any saints for the month of January.<sup>63</sup> On such overwhelming evidence it seems safe to conclude that Agnes' feasts were universally celebrated throughout England during the Anglo-Saxon period.

The surviving calendrical evidence also offers a clue for ascertaining the relative importance accorded to Agnes' feasts. The nineteen calendars printed by Francis Wormald reveal that it was customary for such records to indicate the status of each feast by employing various systems to distinguish more important festivals from less significant ones.<sup>64</sup> Some calendars contain the names of certain saints written in either coloured ink or majuscule script (or both), others mark the most holy days with the symbol of the cross or note that a vigil was to be held the night before. On occasions, all four methods are employed simultaneously in one work. Inevitably, due to the nature of calendars, the list of selected feasts differs from manuscript to manuscript; nevertheless, if these graded feasts are tabulated, one can clearly perceive a hierarchy of rank amongst the saints culted in Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>65</sup>

Appendix 3.1 reveals that in total across the nineteen calendars which possess a ranking system, two hundred and fifty-four feasts are designated as particularly eminent celebrations by at least one calendar. Furthermore, an analysis of the frequency with which feast-days were assigned a prominent position illuminates precisely which

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<sup>61</sup> F. Wormald (ed.), *English Calendars before A.D. 1100*, HBS 72 (London, 1934) and R. Rushforth, *An Atlas of Saints in Anglo-Saxon Calendars* (Cambridge, 2002). Throughout this chapter, all numbers referring to calendars are taken from Rushforth's catalogue.

<sup>62</sup> Rushforth, *An Atlas of Saints*, table i. The one calendar that omits Agnes' octave is no. 26.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.* The three calendars lacking January are 2, 3 and 10. It is interesting that St Emerentiana, whose martyrdom is recorded at the end of the *PSA* (169–84), also finds a fairly regular place in the Anglo-Saxon calendars. Ten calendars record her feast-day with that of St Macharius (8, 11–13, 19–23 and 25) and four list her alone (6, 16, 18 and 26). I am assuming that calendar 13's 'Erentianus' is a corrupt reference to Emerentiana.

<sup>64</sup> Wormald, *English Calendars*, p. ix, and Rushforth, *An Atlas of Saints*, p. 1.

<sup>65</sup> See Appendix 3.1, pp. 275–80. The feasts for Christ and the Virgin Mary, which unsurprisingly are always graded as especially important feasts, have been ignored for the purpose of this exercise. The appendix lists twenty calendars, nineteen from Wormald's edition, plus the calendar from the Junius Psalter (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 27, Ker 335, Gneuss 641, s.x<sup>1</sup> (920's?) Winchester?), which uniquely indicates high status feasts by allocating them lines from the Metrical Calendar of Hampson (see further, p. 157). See D. Dumville, 'The Kalendar of the Junius Psalter', in his *Liturgy and the Ecclesiastical History of Late Anglo-Saxon England: Four Studies*, Studies in Anglo-Saxon History 5 (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 1–38.

individuals were commonly regarded as high status saints during this period. Only thirty-seven feast-days are marked as an important occasion in more than twenty-five percent of the surviving calendars; moreover, within this small group certain commemorations are regarded as a high status feast with greater frequency than others.<sup>66</sup> Table 4.2.1 below analyses the relative prevalence of these thirty-seven festivals. Overall, those saints with feast-days in the upper two, if not three, quartiles should probably be considered as the universal English Saints.

*Table 4.2.1: Prominent Anglo-Saxon Feast-Days*

Frequency of Feast-Day Occurrence in Anglo Saxon Calendars			
100% <sup>67</sup>	75%–99% <sup>68</sup>	50%–74% <sup>69</sup>	25%–49% <sup>70</sup>
Andrew	Feast of All Saints	Augustine of Canterbury	Æthelthryth
Lawrence	Gregory the Great	Bartholomew	Ælfeah
Matthew	James (the Great)	Benedict	Benedict (translation)
Peter and Paul	John the Baptist (nativity)	Clement	Britius
Simon and Jude	John the Evangelist	Cuthbert	<i>Cathedra Petri</i>
	Stephen (protomartyr)	Holy Innocents	Dunstan
	Thomas	John the Baptist (decollation)	Edward the Martyr
		Martin of Tours	<i>Inuentio sanctae crucis</i>
		Matthias	Lawrence (octave)
		Michael the Archangel	Major Litany
		Paul	Oswald
		Philip and James	Paul (conversion of)
			Swithun

The only female saint whose feast was frequently designated as a high status occasion in the Anglo-Saxon calendars was St Æthelthryth of Ely, perhaps an unsurprising revelation given Æthelwold's promotion of her cult at Winchester and

<sup>66</sup> i.e. five or more manuscripts.

<sup>67</sup> These 5 feasts are graded by all 20 calendars as significant occasions.

<sup>68</sup> These 7 feasts are graded as prominent occasions by between 15 and 19 calendars.

<sup>69</sup> These 12 feasts are graded as eminent occasions by between 10 and 14 calendars. Please note that St Christopher is celebrated in eleven calendars, but his appearance is probably due to the fact that his feast falls on the same day as James the Great.

<sup>70</sup> These 13 feasts are graded as important occasions by between 5 and 9 calendars. Please note that SS Adrianus, Alexander, Menna, Potentiana and Sabina should also technically be counted in the bottom quartile, but again their feasts overlap with other more prominent occasions: Nativity of the Virgin Mary, *Inuentio sanctae crucis*, Martin of Tours, Dunstan and the Decollation of John the Baptist.

Ely.<sup>71</sup> Several additional feasts of individual virgin martyrs are also ranked as important occasions, but only by one or two calendars at the most. Indeed, at least two of these women, Potentiana and Sabina, may have been singled out because each woman shared her feast-day with another eminent celebration: Dunstan (19 May) and the Decollation of John the Baptist (29 August).

Only two late tenth-century calendars, both possibly originating from Canterbury, appear to allocate a high status to the feast-days of a large number of virgin martyrs: The Leofric Missal (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 579) and Bosworth Psalter (London, BL, Add. 37517).<sup>72</sup> Both of these calendars contain over one hundred and forty high-grade feasts (around one hundred more than any other calendar). Furthermore, the two texts also share a common group of female saints, including Agnes' two feasts, although the Leofric Missal seems to have had a slight preference for this category of sanctity, since it contains four more women than the Bosworth Psalter.<sup>73</sup> What is not so apparent is why these two calendars single out so many saints. Various possibilities include the use of these calendars as basic martyrologies, as witnesses to the increasing size of relic collections, or perhaps the two lists reflect which saints were allocated their own proper prayers in a sacramentary.<sup>74</sup>

Whilst the calendrical information discussed above clearly reveals a ranking system of Church feasts, it sheds little light on the popularity of these feasts amongst Anglo-Saxon Christians in general. There is one further piece of evidence, however, that may provide at least a partial answer. *The Old English Menologium* is a metrical calendar that survives uniquely in the Abingdon manuscript of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.<sup>75</sup> The manuscript itself dates to c. 1050, although the poem appears to be an earlier composition from c. 965–1000 and was probably written either at Abingdon itself, or at Canterbury.<sup>76</sup> *The Menologium* lists only twenty-eight church feasts; nevertheless, all of the celebrations that relate to individual saints also form part of the

<sup>71</sup> The five calendars that grade her as a high status feast were all written during the Reform era (6, 7, 9, 17 and 18). D. Farmer, *Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. rev. (Oxford, 1997), pp. 169–70.

<sup>72</sup> Rushforth, *An Atlas of Saints*, pp. 17–20. The Leofric Missal (Ker 315, Gneuss 585) is a French manuscript to which a calendar and computistical material was added in England around 979–87. These additions are linked to Glastonbury by their content and Canterbury by their script. The Bosworth Psalter (Ker 129, Gneuss 291) also dates to the second half of the tenth century, although the calendar can be dated to c. 988–1008 and appears to come from Christ Church Canterbury.

<sup>73</sup> See Appendix 3.1. The common group of female saints comprise: Agnes (21 and 28 January), Agatha, Felicity (of the 7 sons), Praxedis, Beatrice, Lucy of Chalcedon, Cecilia and Lucy of Sicily. The Leofric Missal also includes: Genovefa, Prisca, Potentiana, Affra, Eufemia and Daria, whilst the Bosworth Psalter adds only Scholastica and Anastasia.

<sup>74</sup> See further pp. 167–72.

<sup>75</sup> E. Van Kirk Dobbie (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ASPR 6 (London, 1942), p. lx. The Abingdon Chronicle, or C manuscript, is London, BL, Cotton Tiberius B.i (Ker 191, Gneuss 370.2).

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. lx and lxxv–lxxvi.

central group of eminent feasts compiled from the Anglo-Saxon calendars.<sup>77</sup> This correlation endorses Lapidge's argument that the author of the poem sought to create a universal calendar for England.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, *The Menologium* may also reveal which church feasts were celebrated by both laymen and ecclesiastics, for the poem ends:

*Nu ge findan magon  
haligra tiida þe man healdan sceal,  
swa bebugeð gebod geond Brytenricu  
Sexna kyninges on þas sylfan tiid. (lines 228–31)*<sup>79</sup>

Both the use of Old English and the way in which the list of feasts is said to apply throughout the secular boundaries of the king's realm, suggests that this is a catalogue of saints known to laymen.<sup>80</sup> Only one woman is mentioned in *The Menologium*: the Virgin Mary. Moreover, the complete absence of references to Agnes and the other female saints reinforces the impression derived from the calendrical evidence that the feasts of the virgin martyrs were not considered by the English Church in general to be high status occasions. Indeed, the hypothesis that Agnes and her fellow virgin martyrs were rarely honoured to any great extent beyond the walls of ecclesiastical institutions is, of course, also reinforced by the Preface to *Lives of Saints*. Ælfric states that the hagiographic texts included in his work were carefully selected in order to make available to laymen the *passiones* and *uitae* of those saints whose cults had previously only been celebrated by monks (Preface, lines 5–9).<sup>81</sup> Altogether Ælfric incorporated the legends of Agnes and six other female virgin martyrs into this compilation.<sup>82</sup>

In order to provide a comprehensive catalogue of the surviving Insular evidence for Agnes' cult, three Latin 'metrical calendars' also require notice: *The Metrical*

<sup>77</sup> See Appendix 3.1. In total *The Menologium* contains twenty-one feasts that are not linked to Christ or Mary. Nineteen of these occasions are found in the fifty percent plus category of high status feasts from the Anglo-Saxon calendars (90%). Furthermore, thirteen of these feasts appear in the 75–99% and 100% categories tabulated above on p. 154 (62%).

<sup>78</sup> M. Lapidge, 'The Saintry Life in Anglo-Saxon England', in M. Godden and M. Lapidge (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 243–63, at p. 249.

<sup>79</sup> 'Now you will be able to find the feast-days of the holy saints which must be celebrated, so far as the command of the King of the Saxons extends throughout the kingdom of Britain in this same time.' The Old English text is taken from: Van Kirk Dobbie, *The Minor Poems*, pp. 49–55, at p. 55.

<sup>80</sup> Lapidge, 'The Saintry Life', p. 249. This argument is further strengthened by the fact that eighteen of *The Menologium's* named saints also appear in Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies*, a work intended for both clerics and laymen. For further details see Appendix 3.1. P. Clemoes (ed.), *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series*, EETS ss 17 (Oxford, 1997). M. Godden (ed.), *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The Second Series*, EETS ss 5 (London, 1979). The *CH* names 23 saints' feasts (excluding Christ and Mary), *The Menologium*, 21, and the two texts share 18 feasts. Ælfric's additional feasts are: Cuthbert, Paul, Stephen, John the Evangelist and the Holy Innocents. *The Menologium's* additional feasts are: Matthias, Augustine of Canterbury and Thomas.

<sup>81</sup> This passage is quoted on pp. 104–5.

<sup>82</sup> These seven virgins comprise: SS Eugenia, Basilissa, Agnes, Agatha, Lucy, Æthelthryth, Cecilia and Daria.

*Calendar of York (MCY)*, *The Metrical Calendar of Hampson (MCH)* and *The Metrical Calendar of Ramsey (MCR)*.<sup>83</sup> *The Menologium* clearly operated as a calendar; however, the specific selection of saints named by these three Latin poems indicates that they functioned either as memory aids for important feasts, as hexameter composition practice or even as martyrologies.<sup>84</sup> The eighth-century *MCY* notes only Agnes' major feast on 21 January:<sup>85</sup>

*Bis senas meritis mundo fulgentibus Agnes.*<sup>86</sup>

In contrast, the *MCH* records both of Agnes' feasts. Interestingly, for a number of entries the *MCH* shows a clear dependence on the *MCY* since it borrowed a number of lines from the earlier calendar; however, two new original verses were composed for Agnes' feasts:

21 January: *Agna tenet meritis bis senas casta kalendas.*

28 January: *Tu quoque, uirgo pia, quinis laetaberis, Agna.*<sup>87</sup>

The picture changes again with the final calendar, the *MCR*, which borrowed one line from the *MCY* (21 January) and one line from the *MCH* (28 January, although this entry also contains some original composition):

21 January: *Bis senas meritis mundo fulgentibus Agnes.*

28 January: *Octauas decorat Agnetis uirgo kalendas: Tu quoque, uirgo pia, quinis letaberis, Agna.*<sup>88</sup>

<sup>83</sup> For the texts of these three calendars see: A. Wilmart, 'Un témoin anglo-saxon du calendrier métrique d'York', *RB* 46 (1934): 41–69; P. McGurk, 'The Metrical Calendar of Hampson: A New Edition', *AB* 104 (1986): 79–125 and M. Lapidge, 'A Tenth-Century Metrical Calendar from Ramsey', *RB* 94 (1984): 326–69; repr. in his *Anglo-Latin Literature 900–1066* (London, 1993), pp. 343–86.

<sup>84</sup> Lapidge, 'A Tenth-Century Calendar', p. 343.

<sup>85</sup> The dates of the calendars: a) *MCY* – the earliest manuscript appears to be a school book concerning chronology and history written in Mercia c. 812–13 (Wilmart, 'Un témoin', pp. 47–8); however, based upon the English saints included and omitted by the poem, Lapidge suggests that the *MCY* was originally composed c. 754–66 at either York or the monastery at Ripon ('A Tenth-Century Calendar', pp. 346–9). b) *MCH* – the origin of this poem is unknown; however, it was dated by its most recent editor to the early tenth century, possibly c. 902 (McGurk, 'The Metrical Calendar', pp. 84 and 88–9). c) *MCR* – this work was composed at Ramsey in the late tenth-century (Lapidge, 'A Tenth-Century Calendar', pp. 373–5).

<sup>86</sup> 'On the twelfth (Kalends) Agnes with (her) merits shining for the world.' The *MCY* makes no mention of either Agnes' Octave on 28 January, or Emerentiana's feast on 23 January. The text for Agnes' feast-day is taken from Wilmart's edition of the oldest manuscript witness for the *MCY*: London, BL, Cotton Vespasian B.vi (Gneuss 385, who dates the manuscript to 805x814). This manuscript, however, is missing the first fifteen lines of the poem. Wilmart repaired these lines by using the ninth-century metrical martyrology of Erchempert, which closely follows the Vespasian manuscript. Henri Quentin also printed an edition of the *MCY*, where the line for Agnes appears in exactly the same form as Wilmart's edition (*Les martyrologes historiques du moyen âge: Etude sur la formation du martyrologe romain* (Paris, 1908), pp. 123–6).

<sup>87</sup> 21 Jan: 'chaste Agnes occupies the twelfth Kalends with merits.' 28 Jan: 'You too Agnes, O pious uirgin, shall rejoice on the fifth (Kalends).' As with the *MCY*, Emerentiana's feast-day is also omitted by the *MCH*.

<sup>88</sup> 21 Jan: 'On the twelfth (Kalends) Agnes with (her) merits shining for the world.' 28 Jan: 'The virgin graces the octave of Agnes. You too Agnes, O pious uirgin, shall rejoice on the fifth (Kalends).' For 23 January, the *MCR* lists St Macharius rather than St Emerentiana, which is of some interest since Macharius is the saint often found inscribed alongside Emerentiana in the Anglo-Saxon calendars.

The three poems give little information about each saint beyond the provision of a feast date and the use of Latin to compose these works means that they could only have been used and appreciated by the most learned of audiences, presumably in an ecclesiastical context. These three ‘calendars’ may not reflect widely diffused preferences; nevertheless, they can still reveal which saints were known and culted amongst certain religious communities at the time of their composition.<sup>89</sup>

#### 4.2.2 Martyrologies

Amongst a number of potential uses for the metrical calendars discussed above was the suggestion that they may have functioned as martyrologies. Martyrologies, like calendars, provide information about the yearly *sanctorale* cycle of feasts honoured by the Church. Two criteria, however, distinguish them from calendars: first, most martyrologies list the place of death or cult centre alongside the name and feast-day of a particular saint. Second, only martyrologies are used in liturgical ceremonies.

The first official martyrology was the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* (*MH*), a universal record of thousands of Christian saints compiled from the calendars of churches throughout Europe, Africa and the East.<sup>90</sup> The *MH*'s preface, which falsely ascribes this work to the pen of Saint Jerome (c. 340–420), claims that the martyrology was compiled in order to allow the Italian Church to imitate the Spanish Mass practice of reciting the names of the martyrs whose feast-day it was.<sup>91</sup> The precise date and origin of the *MH* and thus the date of the use of such records during Mass, however, continues to be fiercely debated. A *terminus ante quem* of 605 has been established for the *MH*, since it can be shown to have been in use at Auxerre by this date.<sup>92</sup> Conclusive evidence for the text's earlier history still remains elusive.

<sup>89</sup> See p. 186 for further discussion of the *MCY*.

<sup>90</sup> G.B. De Rossi and L. Duchesne (eds.), *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*, *Acta SS.* Nov II.1 (Brussels, 1894), pp. 1–156. Agnes' two entries (on pp. 11 and 14) read: ‘XII kl rom scae agnae uirginis’ and ‘V kl Feb ...et rom agnae ingenuinum.’ Both quotations are taken from the oldest manuscript witness of the *MH*: the Echternach manuscript, Paris, BnF, lat. 10837 (Gneuss 897, s.viii in). See also J. Dubois, *Les martyrologes du moyen âge latin*, *Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental* 26 (Turnhout, 1978), pp. 29–37 for an overview of the history of the *MH*.

<sup>91</sup> F. Lifshitz, *The Name of the Saint: The Martyrology of Jerome and Access to the Sacred in Francia, 627–827* (Notre Dame, IN, 2006), pp. 139–40.

<sup>92</sup> Two major arguments dominate the debate about the origin of the *MH*. The majority of scholars believe it was composed in northern Italy in the mid-fifth century and later travelled to France (see Dubois, *Les martyrologes*, pp. 29 and 33). The opposing side argue that there is no evidence of an Italian recension and believe that the *MH* was composed in Burgundy around 600. In addition, the most recent study of this text links the conception of the *MH* to the council of Mâcon in 627/8, which attempted to settle the leadership conflict among Columbanus' followers following the saint's death (Lifshitz, *The Name of the Saint*, pp. 16–29).

The practice of employing martyrologies to record the saints who were to be honoured each day was officially endorsed in 817. In this year, Louis the Pious' council of Aix-le-Chapelle issued a capitulary calling on all Carolingian monasteries to initiate a daily reading of the martyrology during chapter.<sup>93</sup> Roughly a century and a half later, Æthelwold's *Regularis concordia* drew on this same capitulary in prescribing an identical practice for late Anglo-Saxon institutions.<sup>94</sup> Prior to the tenth century, there are few references to the use of martyrologies in the English Church. One of the earliest known references to the *MH* found in canon thirteen of the Anglo-Saxon Council of Clofesho in 747, however, suggests that the eighth-century Insular Church followed a similar practice:

*Itemque ut per gyrum totius anni natalitia sanctorum uno eodem die, iuxta martyrologium eiusdem Romanae ecclesiae, cum sua sibi conuenienti psalmodia seu cantilena, uenerentur.*<sup>95</sup>

The *MH* is an important witness to the importation and diffusion of Agnes' cult for two reasons. First, the inclusion of Agnes' name in the earliest known manuscript of the *MH* indicates that the use of martyrologies provided one means by which knowledge of her cult may have been diffused amongst ecclesiastical communities. Second, the *MH* may have been one of the first hagiographical texts to enter England after Augustine's arrival in 597.<sup>96</sup> Consequently, not only might the practices mentioned by the Council of Clofesho predate 747, but the *MH* itself may have introduced Agnes' cult to the Anglo-Saxon Church.

The earliest extant manuscript of the *MH* was written at Echternach, the monastery of the Anglo-Saxon missionary Willibrord, in the early eighth century; it was apparently copied from a Northumbrian exemplar.<sup>97</sup> Additional evidence for the

<sup>93</sup> B. De Gaiffier, 'De l'usage et de la lecture du martyrologe: témoignages antérieurs au xi<sup>e</sup> siècle', *AB* 79 (1961): 40–59, at p. 50.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49. 'And likewise that throughout the course of the whole year the birthday of the saints for each day should be venerated, according to the martyrology of the same Roman church, after its appropriate psalmody or song.' The Latin text is taken from A.W. Haddan and W. Stubbs (eds.), *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents Relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1869–78), III, 362–85, at p. 367.

<sup>96</sup> D. Bullough, 'York, Bede's Calendar and a Pre-Bedan English Martyrology', *AB* 121 (2003): 329–55, at pp. 340–1. Bullough notes that most scholars believe that the *MH* arrived in England during the seventh century, since it acquired a number of new entries for early Insular religious, the last of whom died c. 700. In contrast, D. Chapman proposed that Augustine acquired a copy in Burgundy en route to England ('A propos des martyrologes', *Revue Bénédictine* 20 (1903): 285–313 at p. 293). However, if the most recent dating of the *MH* to 627/8 is correct, Augustine would not have been able to acquire a copy in 597.

<sup>97</sup> P. Ó Riain, *Anglo-Saxon Ireland: The Evidence of the Martyrology of Tallaght*, H.M. Chadwick Memorial Lectures 3 (Cambridge, 1993), p. 2. The Echternach manuscript contains a large number of Northumbrian saints, leading scholars to propose that it was copied from an English exemplar. But see

existence of an early copy of the *MH* in Northumbria has also been detected through its influence on other works. Donald Bullough has argued that ‘a distinctive breviary or *excarpsum* of the *MH* containing around two hundred entries and composed in northern England in the late seventh to early eighth centuries was used in the composition of a number of texts.’<sup>98</sup> These works include not only the *MCY*, but also a group of calendars which are descended from one originally appended to Bede’s *De temporum ratione* that acquired a number of hagiographical entries soon after its initial circulation.<sup>99</sup> Pádraig Ó Riain’s study of the martyrological traditions of seventh- and eighth-century Northumbria and Ireland also concluded that the *MH* was available in Northumbria by this date. He argues that both Bede’s *Martyrologium* and the Martyrology of Tallaght are based on an early copy of the *MH*.<sup>100</sup>

The Echternach manuscript, Bede’s *Martyrologium* and the Martyrology of Tallaght all contain entries for at least Agnes’ major feast, indicating that the first *MH* to reach Northumbria introduced (or strengthened) her cult in the north of England by *c.* 700.<sup>101</sup> The question then remains whether the Northumbrian *MH* was imported from southern England or from abroad. Over a century ago, Chapman proposed that Augustine of Canterbury might have acquired a copy of the *MH* when he passed through Burgundy en route to England.<sup>102</sup> If this was the case, then knowledge of Agnes’ cult would have been diffused from Canterbury throughout the country. Indeed, the catalogues of virgins included in Aldhelm’s *De uirginitate* (composed *c.* 680) indicate that knowledge of various foreign saints’ cults entered the South pre 700. Aldhelm’s work, however, relied on a far more detailed hagiographical compendium than the *MH*.

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also D. Ó Cróinín, ‘Rath Melsigi, Willibrord, and the Earliest Echternach Manuscripts’, *Peritia* 3 (1984): 17–49, for Echternach’s strong Irish connections.

<sup>98</sup> Bullough, ‘A Pre-Bedan Martyrology’, p. 340.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 341–8. See also P. Meyvaert, ‘Discovering the Calendar (*Annalis Libellus*) Attached to Bede’s Own Copy of *De temporum ratione*’, *AB* 120 (2002): 5–64, who first discussed the calendars descended from that in Bede’s *DTR*.

<sup>100</sup> Ó Riain, *Anglo-Saxon Ireland*, pp. 20–1. See also P. Ó Riain, ‘A Northumbrian Phase in the Formation of the Hieronymian Martyrology: The Evidence of the Martyrology of Tallaght’, *AB* 120 (2002): 311–63, at p. 329.

<sup>101</sup> For Bede’s *Martyrologium* see pp. 161–3. R.I. Best and H.J. Lawlor (eds.), *The Martyrology of Tallaght (from the Book of Leinster and MS. 5100–4 in the Royal Library, Brussels)*, HBS 68 (London, 1931), p. 10. The Martyrology of Tallaght reads for 20 January: ‘Agnetis uirginis’, and a marginal note has corrected the misdating and added her to 21 January: ‘Agna uirgo in Roma.’

<sup>102</sup> See fn. 96.

More recently, Ó Riain has suggested that the Northumbrian copy of the *MH* arrived with John, Archcantor of St Peter's at Rome, whom Benedict Biscop escorted to Jarrow in c. 680:<sup>103</sup>

*Accepit et praefatum Iohannem abbatem Britanniam perducendum, quatinus in monasterio suo cursum canendi annum, sicut ad sanctum Petrum Romae agebatur, edoceret; egitque abba Iohannes ut iussionem acceperat pontificis, et ordinem uidelicet ritumque canendi ac legendi uia uoce praefati monasterii cantores edocendo, et ea quae totius anni circulus in celebratione dierum festorum poscebat etiam litteris mandando, quae hactenus in eodem monasterio seruata et a multis iam sunt circumquaque transcripta.*<sup>104</sup>

Overall, the arrival and spread of Agnes' cult in Anglo-Saxon England may have occurred in any one of a number of possible ways. The importation of her cult to Canterbury during the seventh-century, from where it could have been diffused throughout the country remains a plausible explanation. Nonetheless, it is equally likely that she was introduced to the North and the South of the country on two separate occasions.<sup>105</sup> What is clear, however, is that Agnes' cult was known throughout the country at an early date.

Whilst the *MH* provides a possible indication of when and how Agnes' name first reached England, its notices are far too brief to indicate whether they were inspired by any particular source. This is not the case, however, with the first Insular martyrology: Bede's prose *Martyrologium*. Bede's contribution to the martyrological genre was one of the most significant in the history of this text, for he compiled the first 'historical martyrology', a form still used by the modern Church.<sup>106</sup> Martyrologies, as noted above, recorded the names of the saints whose feasts were to be celebrated each day, but gave little further information about each individual. To overcome this problem, Bede composed a series of abbreviated *passiones* to supplement the basic

<sup>103</sup> Ó Riain, *Anglo-Saxon Ireland*, p. 1. But see also Ó Riain, 'A Northumbrian Phase', pp. 338–9, which postulates that the *MH* might have arrived in Northumbria after any one of a number of journeys made from Monkwearmouth-Jarrow to the continent by figures such as Benedict Biscop and Ceolfrith.

<sup>104</sup> 'Benedict received this Abbot John and brought him to Britain in order that he might teach the monks of his monastery the mode of chanting throughout the year as it was practiced at St Peter's in Rome. Abbot John carried out the pope's instructions and taught the cantors of the monastery the order and manner of singing and reading aloud and also committed to writing all things necessary for the celebration of festal days throughout the whole year; these writings have been preserved to this day in the monastery and copies have now been made by many others elsewhere' (*HE* IV.18). Both the Latin text and English translation are taken from B. Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (eds.), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, 1969), pp. 388–9. All Latin texts and translations from the *HE* used in this chapter are taken from Colgrave and Mynors' edition.

<sup>105</sup> R. Marsden, *The Text of the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon England*, CSASE 15 (Cambridge, 1995), p. 75 notes that during the seventh and eighth centuries, Insular ecclesiastical centres in both the North and South of the island appear to have imported Bibles directly from the continent, rather than copying texts from nearer to home. These findings may indicate that the arrival of hagiographical works followed a similar pattern.

<sup>106</sup> Dubois, *Les martyrologes*, pp. 13–14.

martyrology and thereby provided his audience with the relevant details for each feast-day:

*Martyrologium de nataliciis sanctorum martyrum diebus, in quo omnes, quos inuenire potui, non solum qua die uerum etiam quo genere certaminis uel sub quo iudice mundum uicerint, diligenter adnotare studui.*<sup>107</sup>

The textual history of Bede's *Martyrologium* is notoriously complex, largely because the earliest three manuscript witnesses date from the ninth century and contain numerous interpolations. Due to the pioneering work of Dom Henri Quentin, however, it is generally accepted that Bede's work contained one hundred and fourteen entries, which in turn indicates that Bede had access to a large collection of hagiographical works.<sup>108</sup> In total, twenty-seven of the *Martyrologium*'s notices celebrate virgin martyrs.<sup>109</sup> Both Agnes and Emerentiana appear in Bede's work. Furthermore, the two entries for these saints clearly show that he either knew, or had a copy of the *Passio Sanctae Agnetis* in front of him when he composed each notice:

21 January: *Romae, Sanctae Agnetis quae, sub praefecto urbis Sympronio, ignibus iniecta, sed his per orationem eius extinctis, gladio percussa est.*<sup>110</sup>

23 January: *Romae, natale sanctae Emerentianae uirginis Christi et martyris, quae erat conlactanea sanctae Agnetis, et dum oraret ad sepulchrum eius ac simul orantes a Gentilium laesione defenderet, lapidata est ab eis.*<sup>111</sup>

In the entry for Agnes, Bede does not employ any direct quotes from the *PSA*, but this text is the only source from which he could have acquired details such as Simpronius' name and the miraculous extinguishing of the pyre through Agnes' prayers.<sup>112</sup> Emerentiana's martyrdom is only found in one literary source: the *Passio Sanctae*

<sup>107</sup> HE V.24: 'A martyrology of the festivals of the holy martyrs, in which I have diligently tried to note down all that I could find out about them, not only on what day, but also by what sort of combat and under what judge they overcame the world.' Colgrave and Mynors, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 570–1.

<sup>108</sup> Quentin, *Les martyrologes*, pp. 47–8. See also *Ibid.*, pp. 17–119 for Quentin's analysis of Bede's Martyrology.

<sup>109</sup> These saints are listed in Appendix 3.2 (pp. 281–4), which provides a register of all female saints honoured in the Anglo-Saxon Calendars and Martyrologies. I have not included the mothers and wives (or those of unknown status) celebrated by Bede's *Martyrologium* in this number.

<sup>110</sup> 'At Rome, (the feast of) St. Agnes who, under the prefect of the city Sympronius, was cast into the flames, however (when) they were extinguished by her prayer, was pierced by a sword.' Bede did not record Agnes' second feast-day on the 28 January. The text of Bede's Martyrology is taken from: Quentin, *Les martyrologes*, pp. 57–8. The same text is also printed for the 21 and 23 January in J. Dubois et G. Renaud (eds.), *Edition pratique des martyrologes de Bede, de l'annoyne Lyonais et de Florus*, Editions du centre national de la recherche scientifique 15 (Paris, 1976), pp. 18 and 20.

<sup>111</sup> 'At Rome, the feast of St. Emerentiana virgin of Christ and martyr, who was the foster-sister of St Agnes, and while she was praying at her tomb and at the same time defending (the other Christians) praying (there) from the Gentiles with a passionate speech, she was stoned to death by the (heathens).' Underlining indicates a direct quotation from *PSA* 175–6.

<sup>112</sup> Quentin, *Les martyrologes*, pp. 57–8 first drew attention to Bede's close use of the *PSA*.

*Agnetis* and Bede's use of this text is clearly indicated by the use of a direct quote from the *PSA* at the end of her notice.

One critical problem with Bede's work was that it only covered a limited number of days and saints – hence the number of interpolations that it swiftly acquired once it began to circulate.<sup>113</sup> In order to overcome the limitations of this text, between 750 and 1100 at least nine authors followed Bede's example by composing historical martyrologies: the anonymous author of Lyon (writing c. 800), Florus (c. 825–50), Adon (853–60), Rabanus Maurus (d. 857), Usuard (c. 865–70), Wolfhard (d. 902), Notker the Stammerer (d. 912) and Herman of Reichenau (d. 1054).<sup>114</sup> All of these works are continental, but it is worth noting that Bede's brief summary of the *PSA* enjoyed a wide circulation. The authors who followed Bede sought to supplement his work and often incorporated his original entries into their own updated versions. In Agnes' case, the majority of martyrologies up until and including that of Usuard (whose work proved to be the most influential of all such texts) reproduced Bede's entry virtually word for word.<sup>115</sup>

Bede's martyrology, however, was not the only innovative form of this genre composed in Anglo-Saxon England. The first known 'prose vernacular martyrology in Europe' was likewise an Insular composition: the (?) ninth-century *Old English Martyrology (OEM)*.<sup>116</sup> Like Bede's work, the *OEM* is another narrative martyrology; however, the crucial difference between these two texts lies in the adaptation of their Latin sources. Bede's style is to list certain pieces of information (such as place and manner of martyrdom), whereas the *OEM* constructs a short narrative by selecting a

<sup>113</sup> Dubois, *Les martyrologes*, pp. 38–9.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 37–70 outlines the development of the martyrology throughout the medieval period.

Editions – Anon. author of Lyon and Florus: Dubois and Renaud, *Edition pratique* (for Agnes, see pp. 18 and 20). Adon: J. Dubois and G. Renaud (eds.), *Le martyrologe d'Adon: ses deux familles, ses trois recensions: texte et commentaire* (Paris, 1984) (for Agnes, see pp. 24–6). Hrabanus Maurus: J. McCulloh (ed.), *Rabani Mauri Martyrologium*, CCCM 44 (Turnhout, 1979) (for Agnes, see p. 15). Usuard: J. Dubois (ed.), *Le martyrologe d'Usuard: texte et commentaire*, Subsidia hagiographica 40 (Brussels, 1965) (for Agnes, see p. 165). Wolfhard: unedited. Notker the Stammerer: *PL* 131, 1029–1164 (for Agnes, see col. 1038). Herman of Reichenau: unedited.

<sup>115</sup> The one exception is Adon's work, which provided an extremely comprehensive account of each saint's life and death. For example, his entry for Agnes comprises an adaptation (fifty-seven lines long) of the *PSA*. Four Latin martyrologies, all of which date to the eleventh century or later, are preserved in English manuscripts (see Gneuss 41, 66f, 248 and 405). All four of these texts are based on Usuard's martyrology.

<sup>116</sup> J.E. Cross, 'English Vernacular Saints' Lives before 1000 A.D.', in G. Philippart (ed.), *Hagiographies: histoire internationale de la littérature hagiographique, latine et vernaculaire en occident des origines à 1550*, 4 vols. (Turnhout, 1994–2006), I, 413–27, at p. 423.

number of scenes from a *passio* or *uita*, ‘with a tendency towards including the sensational or miraculous.’<sup>117</sup>

The date and origin of the *OEM* remain unclear, since only five fragmentary manuscripts of the text have survived, the earliest of which date to the late ninth century and provide a *terminus ante quem* for the work.<sup>118</sup> The question of dating is also complicated by the debate over whether the *OEM* represents the abridgement of numerous Latin saints’ lives directly into the vernacular, or the translation of an earlier Latin hagiographical encyclopaedia. The most recent contribution to the debate is Michael Lapidge’s argument that the *OEM* is a translation of a Latin work dating to c. 731–40 (possibly compiled by Acca of Hexham (d. 740)).<sup>119</sup> Lapidge notes that the latest English saint included in the collection is John of Beverley (d. 721).<sup>120</sup> Several other popular early Insular saints such as Willibrord (d. 739) and Boniface (d. 754), however, are omitted and this suggests that the work was compiled while they were still alive.<sup>121</sup>

The precise purpose of the *OEM* remains unknown. It has been suggested that it served as: a liturgical work, a reference tool, a work for personal devotion, or perhaps even as part of King Alfred’s (871–99) translation program.<sup>122</sup> Overall, the *OEM* can provide little evidence for Anglo-Saxon knowledge of Agnes’ cult, beyond an indication that even in the ninth century, when literacy and learning may have been seriously diminished, her cult and passion were still known to some.

The *Passio Sanctae Agnetis* has long been acknowledged as the principal, if not sole, source for the *OEM*’s two entries on Agnes and Emerentiana; therefore, there is little sense in offering a detailed exploration of the relationship between the two texts here.<sup>123</sup> Instead a few points of interest are commented on below:

21 January: St Agnes<sup>124</sup>

*On ðone an ond twentigðan dæg bið Sancta Agnan þrowung ðære halgan fæmnan, seo geprowade martyrdom for Criste þa heo wæs þreottene geara. Þa fæmnan Simfronius, Romeburge gerefa, ongan þreatian his suna to wife. Þa heo þæt nolde, þa het he hi nacode lædan to sumum scandhuse. Þær hire brohte Godes engel swylcne gerelan swylcne næfre nænig fulwa – þæt is nænig*

<sup>117</sup> G. Kotzor, ‘Anglo-Saxon Martyrologists at Work: Narrative Pattern and Prose Style in Bede and the *Old English Martyrology*’, *Leeds Studies in English* n.s. 16 (1985): 152–73, at p. 165.

<sup>118</sup> Cross, ‘English Vernacular Saints’, p. 422.

<sup>119</sup> M. Lapidge, ‘Acca of Hexham and the Origin of the *Old English Martyrology*’, *AB* 123 (2005): 29–78.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 40–3.

<sup>122</sup> C. Rauer, ‘The Sources of the *Old English Martyrology*’, *ASE* 32 (2003): 89–109, at pp. 96–102.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>124</sup> The text of the *OEM* is taken from G. Kotzor (ed.), *Das altenglische Martyrologium*, 2 vols. (Munich, 1981), II, 22–5.

*webwyrhta – þæt mihte don on eorðan. Ðæs burhgeretan sunu wolde ræsan on hi on ðæm scandhuse ond hi bysmrian, ac fram deoflum forbroden he aslat. Ða cwædon Romware þæt heo wære dryegge ond scinlæce, ond hire man bestang sweord on ða hracan, ond ðus heo onsende hire gast to Gode. Ond hire lichoma rested neah Romebyrig, on ðæm wege þe hi nemnað Numentana. Ond naht lange æfter hire þrowunge, heo ætywde hire ylðrum on middeniht þær hi wacedon æt hire byrgenne, ond heo cwæp to him: ‘Ne wepað git me na swa ic dead sy; ac beoð me efenbliðe, forðon þe ic eom to Criste on heofonum geþeoded ðone ic ær on eorðan lufade.’<sup>125</sup>*

### 23 January: St Emerentiana

*On ðone ðreo ond twentigðan dæg bið þære halgan fæmnan tid Sancte Emerentiane; seo wæs afeded mid Sancte Agnan þære halgan fæmnan, ond swiðe anrædlice heo ætwat ðæm hæpnum on Rome heora dysignesse. Ond heo wæs stæned fram him, oþþæt heo hire gast onsænde. Ond þa sona com þunerrad ond legetsleht ond ofsloh ðone mæstan dæl þæs hæpnan folces þe hi stænde. Ond hire lichoma restep on ðære ylcan ciricean on Rome þær Sancte Agnan lichoma rested.’<sup>126</sup>*

Overall, the majority of the *PSA*'s narrative elements are preserved in the *OEM* and the vast proportion of the material omitted from the Latin consists of the speeches delivered by both Agnes and her persecutors.<sup>127</sup> A couple of the miracles from the original account are also missing from the Old English text, not surprisingly, for on the whole they are largely superfluous to the narrative flow.<sup>128</sup> The *OEM* adds only one interpolation to the *PSA*: the comments made about the whiteness of the garment Agnes receives at the brothel (21 January 4–6). The reference to a fuller deliberately relates Agnes' garment to Mark's description of Christ's appearance at The Transfiguration

<sup>125</sup> 'On the 21<sup>st</sup> day is the martyrdom of the holy virgin St Agnes, she suffered martyrdom for Christ when she was thirteen years old. Then Simphronius, the prefect of Rome, attempted to force that virgin to (become) his son's wife. When (Agnes) did not desire that, then he commanded that she be led naked to a certain brothel. There an angel of God brought such apparel to her, such (apparel) that no fuller – that is no fuller – would ever be able to make on earth. The Prefect's son wished to proceed with violence against her in the brothel and revile her, but having been pulled (down) by devils he was slain. Then the Romans said that she was a witch and a sorceress, and a sword was thrust into her throat, and thus she sent forth her spirit to God. And her body lies near Rome on the road, which they call Numentana. And not long after her martyrdom she appeared to her parents at midnight where they were holding a vigil at her sepulchre, and said to them: 'You should not weep for me as if I were dead, but be rejoicing with me, for I am joined to Christ in heaven whom I previously loved on earth.'

<sup>126</sup> 'On the 23<sup>rd</sup> day is the feast-day of the holy virgin Emerentiana; she had been raised with the holy virgin St Agnes, and resolutely she censured the heathens in Rome greatly for their blasphemy. And she was stoned (to death) by them, until she sent her spirit forth. And then immediately thunder and lightning bolts came and destroyed the greatest part of the heathen people who had stoned her. And her body rests in the same church in Rome where the body of St Agnes rests.'

<sup>127</sup> For example, the *OEM* omits Agnes' opening speech (*PSA* 18–38), the verbal exchange between Agnes and Simpronius (*PSA* 56–90), Agnes closing prayer (*PSA* 154–63), as well as Emerentiana's final speech (*PSA* 173–5).

<sup>128</sup> For example, the *OEM* ignores the miraculous growth of Agnes' hair to cover her nakedness (*PSA* 93–5), yet the same end is achieved by the heavenly garment sent to the maiden in the brothel, a miracle that the *OEM* retains (21 January, lines 4–6).

(9.2).<sup>129</sup> J.E. Cross suggested that *OEM*'s line stemmed from Aldhelm's account of Agnes' martyrdom in his prose *De uirginitate* (xlv.14), where he narrates how Agnes received the *pepla dominica* (the Lord's robes).<sup>130</sup> The *PSA*, however, already contains a scriptural allusion to The Transfiguration in its description of Agnes' appearance at the brothel; therefore, it is possible that the author of the *OEM* drew solely on the Latin passion for Agnes' entry.<sup>131</sup> Indeed, the author may have chosen to focus especially on this incident, since the *OEM*'s omission of the suitor's resurrection lessens the degree of *imitatio Christi* attributed to Agnes.

One final point of interest about the authorial choices of the *OEM*'s entry for Agnes occurs in the section of direct speech given to the saint at the end of her tale (21 January 12–14), where several extracts from *PSA* 190–2 are quoted. Although the *OEM* is noted for borrowing direct quotes from the speeches of its Latin sources, the quotation chosen on this occasion merits attention.<sup>132</sup> The *OEM*, like Bede, lacks an entry for Agnes' feast on 28 January, the day on which her *post mortem* appearance at her tomb was celebrated.<sup>133</sup> Unlike Bede, however, and largely through the use of the above-mentioned quotation, the *OEM* incorporates this scene into its narrative, thus providing the relevant background details for her celebrations on both 21 and 28 January in one entry.

### 4.3 Mass Prayers for Agnes' Feast-Days

It would appear that through the recitation of martyrologies, religious houses annually recognized Agnes' feast-day. Any community that possessed a historical martyrology would also have received an annual reminder of the main details of her passion. Nevertheless, the martyrology formed only one small part of the ecclesiastical celebrations for an individual saint's feast-day, which also included the use of tailor-made prayers, hymns and lections during the celebration of Mass and the Divine

<sup>129</sup> *Mc* 9.2: 'et uestimenta eius facta sunt splendentia candida nimis uelut nix qualia fullo super terram non potest candida facere' – ('And his garments became shining and exceedingly white as snow, so as no fuller upon earth can make white').

<sup>130</sup> J.E. Cross, 'A Lost Life of Hilda of Whitby: The Evidence of the *Old English Martyrology*', in W.H. Snyder and P.E. Szarmach (eds.), *The Early Middle Ages, Acta: Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 6 (Binghamton, NY, 1982), pp. 21–43 at pp. 31–2.

<sup>131</sup> See p. 37. The *PSA*'s description of how the angel surrounds Agnes with a wall of light, which causes the brothel to shine like the sun, followed by the arrival of the heavenly white garment (lines 95–9), recalls the description of the Transfiguration in *Mt* 17.2. In Matthew's account, Christ's face shines like the sun and his garments appear as white as snow. It is possible, however, that the author *OEM* only linked Agnes' robe to the Transfiguration and therefore turned to Mark's account, which merely mentions the whiteness of Christ's garments.

<sup>132</sup> Rauer, 'The Sources', pp. 92–3.

<sup>133</sup> *PSA* 184–93.

Office.<sup>134</sup> It goes without saying that monastic communities would certainly have known and used such prayers on Agnes' feast days; however, laymen may also have witnessed these rites. During the medieval period, in principle, Mass was said daily by priests and witnessed by laymen at least once a week on Sundays as well as on Holy Days, a practice not dissimilar to that of the modern day Roman Catholic Church.<sup>135</sup>

#### 4.3.1 *Sacramentaries and Missals*

The surviving Anglo-Saxon Mass prayers for the *sanctorale* are preserved in a number of sacramentaries and missals. Ten substantial manuscripts of these liturgical books still exist, although a number of these texts are now large fragments rather than complete books.<sup>136</sup> Apart from six eighth-century minor fragments, all such massbooks date from c. 900–1100 and thus directly reflect only the liturgical practices of Late Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>137</sup> Out of these ten major witnesses, seven still contain a *proprium de sanctis* (the proper (or specific) prayers for various saints' feasts) incorporating at least the month of January. In approximate order of date these are:<sup>138</sup>

<sup>134</sup> One form of text often used at Mass, which is not mentioned below, is the homily. A large number of homilies have survived from Anglo-Saxon England, mainly in the vernacular; however, to the best of my knowledge, none of these texts refer to Agnes. As far as I am aware, there is only one continental Latin homily / sermon for Agnes' feast-day that may have been known to Insular churchmen: *BHL* 158a, which circulated as part of the *Homiliary* of Paul the Deacon (PL 95, 1457–566, at col. 1461, which directs the reader to the edition of this text printed in PL 17, 725–8). Gneuss' *Handlist* lists sixteen complete and partial manuscripts of this compendium, the majority of which date to the late eleventh / early twelfth centuries. One particularly striking feature of this text is that it borrows heavily from the *PSA*. For further discussion of *BHL* 158a, see pp. 24–5.

<sup>135</sup> Harper, *Forms and Orders*, p. 109. The *Regularis concordia* (c.23 and 45) refers to a lay presence at certain Masses. Dom T. Symons (ed. and trans.), *Regularis concordia anglicae nationis monachorum sanctimonialiumque: The Monastic Agreement of the Monks and Nuns of the English Nation* (London, 1953), pp. 19 and 43–4. See also H. Gittos, 'Is there any Evidence for the Liturgy of the Parish Churches in Late Anglo-Saxon England? The Red Book of Darley and the Status of Old English', in F. Tinti (ed.), *Pastoral Care in Late Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, 2005), pp. 63–82, esp. pp. 63–6. Gittos discusses the extent to which complex liturgical ceremonies were performed outside of major ecclesiastical centres and thus how large a proportion of layfolk would have had access to ceremonies such as Agnes' feast-day. Surviving evidence suggests that at least some local parish priests possessed sacramentaries and may well have celebrated such rites.

<sup>136</sup> R.W. Pfaff, 'Massbooks: Sacramentaries and Missals', in R.W. Pfaff (ed.), *Old English Newsletter, Subsidia 23: The Liturgical Books of Anglo-Saxon England* (Kalamazoo, MI, 1995), pp. 7–34, at pp. 11–32. Gneuss (*Handlist*) lists another thirty-three fragmentary missals and nineteen fragmentary sacramentaries.

<sup>137</sup> Pfaff, 'Massbooks', p. 9. Pfaff's descriptions of the fragments suggest that none of them contain a mass-set for Agnes.

<sup>138</sup> List taken from *Ibid.*, p. 11. The three manuscripts that do not contain a mass-set for Agnes are: CCCC 422 (Gneuss 111, s.xi med., prob. Winchester (otherwise known as 'The Red Book of Darley'), which contains no *sanctorale* at all); CCCC 41 (Gneuss 39, s.xi<sup>1</sup>, which contains a number of liturgical rites written in the margins of a copy of the Old English translation of Bede's *HE*. These rites include eight mass-sets from the *sanctorale*, but the only female included is Agatha) and Worcester, Cathedral Library, F.173 (Gneuss 764, s.xi med., Winchester, New Minster, a fragmentary missal which has lost its *sanctorale* masses). For editions of all six printed texts listed above see p. 272. London, BL, Cotton Vitellius A.xviii (marked by a \* in the list above) currently remains unedited. The dating of these manuscripts is based upon Gneuss, *Handlist*, (numbers in order given above: 585, 867, 921, 400, 522, 837, 76). NB all the manuscripts have an English origin apart from two: 585 (the Leofric Missal), whose

Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 579 (Leofric Missal), s.ix/x – s.xi ex  
 Orléans, Bm, 127 (105) (Winchcombe Sacramentary), s. x<sup>3/4</sup> / 4/4  
 Rouen, Bm, 274 (Y.6) (Missal of Robert of Jumièges), 1014x1023  
 London, BL, Cotton Vitellius A.xviii (Giso Sacramentary), s.xi<sup>2</sup> \*  
 London, Society of Antiquaries, 154 (Winton Doomsday), s. x<sup>2</sup>  
 Le Havre, Bm, 330 (Missal of New Minster, Winchester), s.xi<sup>3/4</sup> or s.xi<sup>2</sup>  
 Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 270 (Missal of St Augustine's Canterbury),  
 1091x1100

On average there are somewhere between one hundred and twenty and one hundred and sixty *sanctorale* mass-sets per sacramentary that are allocated to specific feast-days. Of this number, throughout all seven sacramentaries and missals in question, forty female saints (excluding the Virgin Mary) are allocated their own proper prayers.<sup>139</sup> A quick glance at Appendix 3.3, which catalogues the female saints honoured in each of the surviving sacramentaries, reveals Agnes' presence in all seven of the massbooks under consideration. The irregular appearance of saints such as Petronilla or Iulitta, however, indicates, as is common with all liturgical sources, that the sacramentaries differ to a certain degree over exactly who was accorded the honour of an individual mass-set.

In Agnes' case, not only are her two feast-days allocated their own individual mass-sets in each Anglo-Saxon sacramentary, but the same text is found in all seven works: the Gregorian.<sup>140</sup> Furthermore, two of the surviving manuscripts (Leofric and New Minster) are missals rather than sacramentaries and thus preserve a number of additional instructions about the use of specific chants (antiphons etc.) on 21 and 28 January. These prayers are also reported below, since the surviving Anglo-Saxon graduals and tropers do not contain any specific chants for Agnes' feasts.<sup>141</sup>

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core text was probably written in northeast France (? Arras), although English additions were added later on. 522 (the Winton Doomsday) could originate from either Brittany or England.

<sup>139</sup> See Appendix 3.3, p. 285. (At present, the eleven virgins honoured together on the same day by the Missal of St Augustine have been counted together as one group.) For example, the Leofric Missal has around 125 masses in its *sanctorale*, but the Missal of New Minster over 160. One interesting point to raise here is in relation to the Missal of St Augustine's, which contains around 140 saints' mass-sets. When the status of feasts marked on calendars was considered, two calendars in particular produced extraordinarily long lists of saints (146–9 individuals). Both texts have links to Canterbury and the question is whether the feasts from the sacramentary were marked as high status on the calendar.

<sup>140</sup> All seven manuscripts are referred to as 'Gregorian' sacramentaries, but as Pfaff points out 'by the later tenth century...the complexities of sacramentary-classification are so great as to render the entire subject in danger of collapsing into morasses of parlousness' ('Massbooks', p. 8). Many mass-sets contain elements from both of the two major forms of sacramentary: the Gelasian and the Gregorian. For example, of the two prefaces assigned to Agnes' feasts, that for the 21 is the original Gregorian blessing for the day, but that of the 28 stems from the Gelasian tradition. See further fn. 151.

<sup>141</sup> W.H. Frere (ed.), *The Winchester Troper*, HBS 8 (London, 1894). This edition prints the chants from both the Bodley and Corpus Tropers, more commonly known as the Winchester Tropers (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 775 (Gneuss 597, s.xi<sup>3/4</sup>–xii in., Winchester, Old Minster) and CCC 473

The mass-sets that follow do not comprise a full set of instructions for the rites on 21 and 28 January, since a number of prayers and responses are common to any Mass; consequently those listed comprise only the proper prayers for Agnes' two feasts. The chants and readings are, of course, all based on Scripture, but four prayers pronounced by the celebrant are non-Biblical: the collect (chanted prior to reading from the Epistles), the secret (recited silently before the opening words of the preface: *sursum corda*), the preface (which initiates the Eucharistic prayer) and the post communion (performed after the distribution of the consecrated bread and wine).<sup>142</sup> The following text is taken largely from the Missal of New Minster and major variants between all seven manuscripts are recorded in the footnotes.<sup>143</sup>

### XII KL FBR. NATALE SANCTAE AGNETIS VIRGINIS

*Antiphon:* *Me expectauerunt peccatores ut perderent me testimonia tua domine intellexi omnis consummationis uidi finem latum mandatum tuum nimis.*

*Psalms:* *Beati immaculati (Ps 118).*

*Collecta:* *Omnipotens sempiterne deus: qui infirma mundi eligis ut fortia quaeque confundas. concede propitius: ut qui beate Agnetis martyris tue sollempnia colimus. eius apud te patrocinia sentiamus.*

*Lectio:* *II Cor 10.17–18 and 11.1–2*

*Graduale.* *Diffusa est gratia in labiis tuis propterea benedixit te deus in eternum.*

*V Propter ueritatem et mansuetudinem et iustitiam et deducet te mirabiliter dextera tua.*

*Alleluia:* *Adducentur regi uirgines post ea proxime eius offerentur tibi in letitia.*

*Lectio:* *Mt 25.1–13*

*Offertorium.* *Offerentur regi uirgines proxime eius offerentur tibi in letitia et exultatione adducentur in templum regis domino.*

*Secreta:* *Hostias domine quas tibi offerimus propitius suscipe. et intercedente beata agnete martyre tuo. uincula peccatorum nostrorum absolue.*

*Praefatio:* *UD aeternae: Et diem beate Agnetis martirio consecratam sollempniter recensere: quae terrenae generositatis oblectamenta despiciens: caelestem meruit dignitatem; societatis humane uota contemnens: aeterni regis est sociata consortio; et pretiosam mortem sexus fragilitate calcata pro christi confessione suspiciens: simul est facta conformis et sempiternitatis eius et gloriae: per christum.*

(Gneuss 116, s.x/xi or xi<sup>2/4</sup>, with additions xi<sup>1</sup> and later, Winchester, Old Minster). It also prints those from the third and final surviving Anglo-Saxon troper: the Caligula Troper (London, BL, Cotton Caligula A.xiv – Gneuss 309, s.xi<sup>3/4</sup>, prob. Winchester or Worcester). See also now S. Rankin (ed.), *The Winchester Troper: Facsimile Edition and Introduction*, Early English Church Music 50 (London, 2007). Another unedited gradual also survives: the Coisin Gradual (Durham, UL, Coisin V.v.6 – Gneuss 251, s.xi<sup>4/4</sup> or xi ex., Canterbury, Christ Church), but its *sanctorale* is now incomplete and only covers 23 June to 22 August (K.D. Hartzell, 'Graduals', in R.W. Pfaff, (ed.) *Old English Newsletter, Subsidia 23: The Liturgical Books of Anglo-Saxon England* (Kalamazoo, MI, 1995), pp. 35–8).

<sup>142</sup> Harper, *Forms and Orders*, pp. 294–315.

<sup>143</sup> D.H. Turner (ed.), *The Missal of the New Minster, Winchester (Le Havre, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 330)*, HBS 93 (Leighton Buzzard, 1962), pp. 63–4 and 67.

*Communio.* *Quinque prudentes uirgines acceperunt oleum in uasis suis cum lampadibus media autem nocte clamor factus est ecce sponsus uenit exite obuiam christo domino.*

*Postcommunio:* *Refecti cibo potuque caelesti deus noster te supplices exoramus: ut in cuius haec commemoratione percepimus. eius muniamur et precibus.*<sup>144</sup>

**V KL FEBR. OCTABAS SANCTE AGNE VIRGINIS**

*Antiphon:* *Vultum tuum deprecabuntur omnes diuites plebis adducentur regi uirgines post eam proxime eius adducentur tibi in letitia et exultatione.*

*Psalm:* *Erucauit cor meum (Ps 44).*

*Collecta:* *Deus qui nos annua beate agne martyris tuae sollempnitate letificas. da quaesumus ut quam ueneramur officio: etiam pie conuersationis sequamur exemplo.*

*Lectio libri Sapientie (Sir 51.1–12)*

*Graduale.* *Specie tua et pulchritudine tua intende prospere procede et regna. V. Propter ueritatem et mansuetudinem et iustitiam et deducet te mirabiliter dextera tua.*

*Alleluia.* *Specie tua et pulchritudine tua intende prospere procede et regna.*

*Lectio:* Mt 13.44–52.

*Offertorium.* *Diffusa est gratia in labiis tuis propterea benedixit te deus in eternum et in seculum seculi.*

*Secreta:* *Super has quaesumus domine hostias benedictio copiosa descendat, quae et sanctificationem nobis clementer operetur, et de martyrum nos sollempnitate laetificet.*

*Praefatio:* *UD aeternae. Beatæ Agnetis natalicia geminantes; uere enim eius honorandus est dies: quae sic terrena generatione processit: ut ad diuinitatis consortium perueniret. per christum.*

*Communio:* *Simile est regnum caelorum homini negotiatori querenti bonas margaritas inuenta una pretiosa margarita dedit omnia sua et comparauit eam.*

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<sup>144</sup> **Antiphon:** ‘The wicked have waited for me to destroy me: but I have understood thy testimonies. I have seen an end of all perfection: thy commandment is exceedingly broad’ (Ps 118.95–6). **Psalm:** 118 ‘Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord...’ **Collect:** ‘All powerful, eternal God who chose the weak of the world so that you might confound all of the mighty (ones), grant (us your) favour so that we who honour the feasts of blessed Agnes your martyr, may experience her patronage in heaven.’ **Reading:** II Cor 10.17–18 and 11.1–2: ‘But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord / For not he who commendeth himself, is approved, but he, whom God commendeth / Would to God you could bear with some little of my folly: but do bear with me / For I am jealous of you with the jealousy of God. For I have espoused you to one husband that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.’ **Gradual:** ‘grace is poured abroad in thy lips, therefore hath God blessed thee for ever’ (Ps 44.3). **Response:** ‘Because of truth and meekness and justice, and thy right hand shall conduct thee wonderfully’ (Ps 44.5). **Alleluia:** ‘After her shall virgins be brought to the King: her neighbours shall be brought to you in joy’ (Ps 44.15). **Gospel Reading:** Mt 25.1–13 (parable of the ten virgins). **Offertory:** ‘Virgins shall be brought to the King, her neighbours shall be brought to thee, they shall be brought with gladness and rejoicing: they shall be brought into the temple of the King’ (Ps 44.15–16). **Secret:** ‘O favourable Lord receive these sacrifices which we offer to you, and with your blessed martyr Agnes interceding, release the chains of our sins.’ **Preface:** ‘Eternal God: And solemnly survey the day consecrated by the martyrdom of blessed Agnes, who despising the delights of earthly nobility, deserved heavenly merit. Scorning the vows of human society, she has been united (in marriage) as the consort of the heavenly King, and with the fragility of her sex having been trampled upon, receiving precious death through the confession of Christ: similar(ly) at the same time her glory of eternal duration was created.’ **Communion:** ‘Five wise virgins took oil in their vessels with the lamps. And at midnight there was a cry made: Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet Christ the Lord’ (extracts from Mt 25.4–6). **Post Communion:** ‘Renewed by heavenly food and drink, Our Lord we beseech you as supplicants that we might receive these things during her commemoration and be protected by her prayers.’

*Postcommunio: Sumpsimus domine celebritatis annue uotiu sacramenta. presta quaesumus. ut et temporalis nobis uite remedia prebeant et aeternae.*<sup>145</sup>

The origins of these texts lie in early Roman and Frankish liturgical rites, rather than in Anglo-Saxon England; therefore, there is little relevance in exploring whether these imported texts are in any way related to the *PSA*. A couple of interesting elements, however, are worth noting from the prayers for 28 January. The first is the use of six passages from *Ps* 44, one of whose central images is the queen of heaven dressed in gold surrounded by virgins.<sup>146</sup> The second is the line *pie conuersationis sequamur exemplo* in the collect, followed in the preface by mention of Agnes' appearance to the *terrena generatione*.<sup>147</sup> Together these images clearly recall *PSA* 184–215 where Agnes not only appears to her parents dressed in gold amidst a throng of virgins, but also initiates Constantina's conversion after healing her of leprosy. These prayers confirm that the purpose of Agnes' second feast was the commemoration of her appearance at her tomb, a fact not always apparent from other references to this celebration.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> **Antiphon:** 'All the rich amongst the people will entreat thy countenance. After her shall virgins be brought to the King, her neighbours shall be brought to thee with gladness and rejoicing' (extracts of *Ps* 44.13–16). **Psalm:** 44 'My heart hath uttered a good word...' **Collect:** 'God who gladdens us by the yearly festival of your martyr blessed Agnes, grant (us) we beseech so that as we venerate (her during this) ceremony, indeed we may follow (in) her example of pious conversion.' **Reading:** *Sir* 51.1–12 'I will give glory to thee O Lord...' **Gradual:** 'with thy comeliness and thy beauty set out, proceed prosperously and reign' (*Ps* 44.5). **Response:** 'Because of truth and meekness and justice: and thy right hand shall conduct thee wonderfully' (*Ps* 44.5). **Alleluia:** 'with thy comeliness and thy beauty set out, proceed prosperously and reign' (*Ps* 44.5). **Gospel Reading:** *Mt* 13.44–52 (Parables concerning the separation of the wicked from the just on Judgement Day). **Offertory:** 'grace is poured abroad in thy lips; therefore hath God blessed thee forever' (*Ps* 44.3). **Secret:** 'We beseech you Lord, let your abundant blessing descend over these sacrifices, which gently causes sanctification (in) us, and gladdens us concerning the festival of martyrs.' **Preface:** 'Eternal God: the twin / double birthdays of Agnes. For truly her feast-day should be honoured, who thus appeared to the earthly generation, so that they might come to the fellowship of the Godhead.' **Communion:** 'The kingdom of heaven is like to a merchant seeking good pearls. Who when he has found one pearl of great price, went his way, and sold all that he had, and bought it' (*Mt* 13.45–6). **Post Communion:** 'Lord we obtain the votive sacraments of (her) annual festival. Preserve us we beseech so that the cures of temporal life and eternity might be proffered to us.'

There are two major variants to note: a) several chants differ in order between New Minster and Leofric. 21 January: Leofric has the Alleluia used by NM for 28. 28 January: Leofric again uses a different Alleluia to NM (a passage NM uses as its Offertory on 28) and also a different Offertory (namely that used in NM for 21). b) The Gregorian secret noted above for 28 January is that used by all six texts excluding NM, which employs the Gelasian form: 'Grata sint tibi domine munera quibus sancta agne magnifica sollempnitas recensetur: sic enim ab exordio sui usque in finem beati certaminis extitit gloriosa. ut eius nec initium praeterire debeamus nec finem.' NB The Giso Sacramentary lacks a preface for both 21 and 28 January.

<sup>146</sup> The six passages occur in: the Antiphon, the Psalm, the Gradual and its Response, the Alleluia and the Offertory. These prayers have been underlined in the Latin text given above. A further four passages from *Ps* 44 are also used in the prayers for 21 January (the Gradual and its Response, the Alleluia and the Offertory).

<sup>147</sup> a) 'that we may follow (in) her example of pious conversion.' b) 'the earthly generation.'

<sup>148</sup> The calendrical evidence provides several titles for this festival, which is referred to as Agnes' octave, *natiuitas*, or even just *secunda*. Furthermore, the prayers of the Canterbury Benedictional, which heavily draws upon the *PSA* for 21 January, are very vague for 28 January merely commenting that Agnes' triumph is celebrated a second time. Presumably, the author would have continued to draw upon the *PSA* for 28 January had he realised it contained the relevant details. See pp. 175–7.

The Mass prayers provide little evidence for Anglo-Saxon liturgical adaptations of the *PSA*, however, the sacramentaries do provide an opportunity to explore the status accorded to various female saints by the English Church. The variation among the massbooks about who was given a set of proper prayers indicates that there was some freedom to choose which saints to honour. To add some perspective to this investigation, consider the fact that the number of female saints mentioned in Anglo-Saxon calendars and martyrologies equals around one hundred and forty individuals. Only forty of these women are known to have received a proper collect, secret and post communion prayer in a late Anglo-Saxon sacramentary.<sup>149</sup> Presumably, only individuals regarded as particularly important saints were honoured in such a fashion, since the sacramentaries also contain a Common of Saints. These texts form a series of generic prayers for each type of sanctity and merely require the insertion of the relevant name to transform them into proper prayers for a particular feast.

A further possible tool for distinguishing a hierarchy amongst female saints is the fact that only certain of the proper mass-sets were also equipped with their own individual preface. Appendix 3.4 surveys the female saints accorded a proper preface in the Anglo-Saxon sacramentaries and reveals that only twenty-five of the forty women noted above were also provided with their own preface.<sup>150</sup> The only three women allocated a proper preface in six out of the seven surviving sacramentaries are: Agnes, Agatha and Cecilia, the three most important female Roman martyrs.<sup>151</sup> Although the patterns of the proper prayers and prefaces found in the Anglo-Saxon works may reflect the choice of earlier Roman and Frankish liturgical compilers; nonetheless, the English benedictionals likewise single out the same three virgin martyrs.

#### 4.3.2 *Benedictionals*

The final Mass prayer that could be adapted to celebrate an individual saint is the benediction, which often circulated in a separate supplement to the sacramentary known as a benedictional. Benedictions are recited immediately prior to communion and were originally used by the fourth- and fifth-century Church as a means to signal

<sup>149</sup> See Appendices 3.2 and 3.3. Forty out of around one hundred and forty saints (approximately 29%).

<sup>150</sup> See Appendix 3.4, p. 286.

<sup>151</sup> Dom E. Moeller (ed.), *Corpus praefationum*, CCSL 161a–e (Turnhout, 1980–1). Agnes' preface for 21 January noted above (no. 260) originates from Benedict of Aniane's supplement to the Hadrianum. The preface for 28 January (no. 36) is drawn from the Gelasian tradition. Moeller notes a further 4 prefaces in use for Agnes during this period: 481 (similar to 260 and found in a number of ninth-century mixed Gelasian sacramentaries), 991 (used in the Mozarabic liturgy), 1238 (another from the Mozarabic liturgy) and 1410 (Sacramentary of Gellone).

that those worshippers who did not wish to stay to receive Mass could leave.<sup>152</sup> Under the Carolingians these prayers became reserved solely for use by bishops at Sunday Mass or important feasts and formed part of a number of liturgical adaptations aimed at reflecting the growing importance of the Episcopal office.<sup>153</sup> The exclusively Episcopal nature of benedictions means that only prestigious occasions require such texts. Consequently, benedictionals contain fewer prayers than the sacramentaries, which indicates that those saints who were included were accorded a level of importance. Precisely when the Anglo-Saxon Church adopted the Frankish custom of using benedictionals remains unclear; the earliest surviving fragments of such a work date to c. 930.<sup>154</sup> Many of the twenty-one surviving fragmentary and complete English manuscripts are also combined pontificals and benedictionals.<sup>155</sup> A number of these works are either solely pontificals or otherwise unedited; therefore, for the purposes of this chapter eight published and two unpublished texts will be considered:<sup>156</sup>

Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 579 (Leofric Missal), s.ix/x – s.xi ex

London, BL, Add. 49598 (Benedictional of Æthelwold), 971x984

Paris, BnF, lat. 10575 (Ecgbert Pontifical), s.x med, or s.x<sup>2</sup>, or s.x / xi.

London, BL, Add. 28188, s.x<sup>3/4</sup> \*

Rouen, BM, 369 (Y.7) (Benedictional of Archbishop Robert), s.x<sup>4/4</sup> (s.xi<sup>2/4</sup> ?)

London, BL, Add. 57337 (Anderson Pontifical), s.x/xi (or 1020's?) \*

London, BL, Cotton Claudius A.iii, ff. 31–86, 106–50 (Claudius I), s.x / xi

Rouen, BM, 368 (A.27) (Lanalet Pontifical), s.xi in, or xi<sup>1</sup>

London, BL, Cotton Claudius A.iii, ff. 9–18, 87–105 (Claudius II), s.xi<sup>2/4</sup>

London, BL, Harley 2892 (Canterbury Benedictional), s.xi<sup>2/4</sup>

<sup>152</sup> A. Prescott, 'The Text of the Benedictional of Æthelwold', in B. Yorke (ed.), *Bishop Æthelwold: His Career and Influence* (Woodbridge, 1988), pp. 119–47, at p. 121.

<sup>153</sup> J.L. Nelson and R.W. Pfaff, 'Pontificals and Benedictionals', in R.W. Pfaff (ed.), *Old English Newsletter, Subsidia 23: The Liturgical Books of Anglo-Saxon England* (Kalamazoo, MI, 1995), pp. 87–98, at p. 87.

<sup>154</sup> Nelson and Pfaff, 'Pontificals and Benedictionals', pp. 87–8. Technically speaking these fragments (Cambridge, Trinity College, B.1.30A and New Haven, Yale University 320 – both referenced as Gneuss 157) both come from a pontifical and it is not clear whether this work once contained benedictions as well. The earliest Insular manuscripts designated as benedictionals are the Ramsey Benedictional (Paris, BnF, lat. 987, ff. 1–84, Gneuss 880, s. x<sup>2/3</sup>, Winchester, Old Minster) and the Benedictional of Æthelwold (see below).

<sup>155</sup> See *Ibid.*, pp. 88–9 for details of these twenty-one manuscripts.

<sup>156</sup> For editions see p. 273. The two unpublished texts are: London, BL, Add. 57337 and London, BL, Add. 28188. Both manuscripts are marked by a \* in the list given above. The dates are taken from Gneuss (*Handlist*) (numbers in order given: 585, 301, 896, 286, 923, 302, 314, 922, 313 and 429). All, apart from the Leofric Missal, are of English origin. Additional unedited manuscripts of interest are: Paris, BnF, lat. 943, 'The Dunstan Pontifical' (Gneuss 879, s.x<sup>3/4</sup>, probably Canterbury, Christ Church), Paris, BnF, lat. 987, 'The Ramsey Benedictional' and CCC 146, 'The Samson Pontifical', which according to Corrêa (see p. 175, fn. 163) contains a blessing for Agnes that echoes the *PSA* (Gneuss 46, s.xi in., Winchester, Old Minster or ? Canterbury, Christ Church).

Appendix 3.5 catalogues the saints honoured in the ten manuscripts listed above and reveals that again, as with the majority of the liturgical material, there is a great deal of variety between manuscripts as to which individuals were included.<sup>157</sup> For example, the Leofric Missal contains only seven blessings for named saints (excluding Christ and Mary) and follows the format of Benedict of Aniane's original 'Gregorian' benedictional. In contrast, the Canterbury Benedictional includes blessings for sixty-one feast-days.<sup>158</sup> Furthermore, only sixty-eight percent of the feasts that appear in over half of the Benedictionals (excluding Canterbury) are also eminent calendar feasts.<sup>159</sup> A surprising number of important Biblical saints are missing, whilst other individuals, such as the martyrs Sebastian, Vincent, Agnes, Agatha and Cecilia, are included on a frequent basis.<sup>160</sup> Indeed, if the texts for Agnes' feast-days are considered (as well as those of the other two virgin martyrs) some startling facts come to light.

Five of the six edited Benedictionals that possess blessings for Agnes, along with the unpublished Anderson Pontifical, contain an identical text:<sup>161</sup>

*BENEDICTIO IN NATALE SANCTAE AGNETIS UIRGINIS ET MARTYRIS*

*BENEDICAT uobis dominus qui beatae agne uirgini concessit. et decorem uirginitatis et gloriam passionis. Amen.*

*Et cuius opitulatione illa meruit et sexus fragilitatem et persequentium rabiem deuincere. uos possitis et uestrorum corporum inlecebras. et antiqui hostis machinamenta superare. Amen.*

*Quo sicut illa sexu fragili uirile nisa est certamen adire et post certamen de hostibus triumphare. ita uos in hac mortalitate uiuentes. ualeatis et antiquum hostem deuincere et ad regna caelestia peruenire. Amen.*

*BENEDICTIO IN NATIVITATE SANCTAE AGNETIS UIRGINIS*

*BENEDICAT uobis deus nostri oris alloquio et cor uestrum sinceri amoris copulet nexu perpetuo. Amen.*

*Floreatis rerum presentium copiis iustitia acquisitis. Gaudeatis perhenniter fructibus sincerissimae caritatis. Amen.*

*Tribuat uobis deus dona perhennia interueniente beata agne uirgine sua et post tempora feliciter dilatata. percipiatis gaudia sempiterna. Amen.*<sup>162</sup>

<sup>157</sup> See Appendix 3.5, pp. 287–8.

<sup>158</sup> See Appendix 3.5.

<sup>159</sup> See Appendices 3.1 and 3.5. Seventeen out of twenty-five feasts.

<sup>160</sup> For example, saints such as Matthias, James, Simon and Jude are either overlooked or make infrequent appearances.

<sup>161</sup> The text used is taken from the Benedictional of Æthelwold: G.F. Warner and H.A. Wilson (eds.), *The Benedictional of Saint Æthelwold, Bishop of Winchester 963–984*, Roxburghe Club (Oxford, 1910), pp. 10–11.

<sup>162</sup> **21 January:** 'May the Lord bless you, He Who granted the grace of virginity and the glory of a passion to the blessed virgin Agnes, Amen. / And with Whose assistance she was worthy to conquer the fragility of (her) sex and the rage of (her) persecutors, (so that) you may be able to overcome the allurements of your bodies and the stratagems of the ancient enemy, Amen. / By whom, just as she strove to undertake the virile contest with (her) fragile sex, and to triumph after the contest concerning her enemies, thus may you be strong living in this mortal life and conquer the ancient enemy and become known to the heavenly queen. Amen.' **28 January:** 'May the Lord bless you by the exhortation of our mouth(s) and may He unite your heart (to His) with the perpetual entwining of genuine love, Amen. /

The central themes of these benedictions comprise: the notion of a double crown of virginity and martyrdom, the fragility of the female sex overcoming all odds, spiritual marriage and the achievement of eternal life. All of these concepts might have been drawn from the *Passio Sanctae Agnetis*; on the other hand, they are also commonly found in any virgin martyr's *passio* and it is impossible to determine which source(s) the author drew on for these prayers.

The opposite is true of the benedictions for Agnes' feast-days from The Canterbury Benedictional and BL Add. 28188. These prayers are all original compositions and, as Whatley has already pointed out for The Canterbury Benedictional, were clearly influenced by the *PSA*.<sup>163</sup> The Canterbury manuscript contains three sets of prayers for Agnes' feast-days:<sup>164</sup>

#### *BENEDICTIO IN NATALE SANCTAE AGNETIS UIRGINIS*

*Deus qui beatam agnetem uirginitatis et martirii decore concessit florere. decenter uos faciat lumine totius religionis fulgere. et de utriusque uitae prosperitate gaudere. Amen.*

*Et qui ei inter tormenta inconcussam dederat constantiam. uobis in omni temptatione suam largiatur gratiam. Uirtutumque uestiat nitore. qui eam per angelum suum caelesti decorauit habitu in carceris squalore. Amen.*

*Et que in medio flammaram ad astra meruit migrare. pro uobis intercedat. quatinus sancti spiritus igne ualeatis flagrare. et post hanc uitam thalamum caelestem intrare. Amen.*

#### *ITEM ALIA*

*Benedicat uos dominus qui beatum agnen gloriosae matris domini pedissequam. cuius diem festum caelebratis et palma uirginitatis decorauit. et gloria passionis coronauit. Amen.*

*Et qui illam suo subarrauit anulo. uos integritate fidei munitos ab omni defendat periculo. atque bonorum operum exhibitione redimitos. in aeternae exultationis colloct tabernaculo. Amen.*

*Agnus niue candidior christus. qui sibi eam sopitis flammaram incendiis et perfusione cruoris sponsam dedicauit ac martyrem. protectionis suae presidio uos annuat innocenter uiuere. ipsumque mundi saluatorem tota deuotione diligere. et cum sanctis omnibus in regno celorum lucidas sedes accipere. Amen.*

#### *BENEDICTIO OCTAB. SANCTAE AGNETIS UIRGINIS*

*Deus qui beatae agnetis triumphum uos fecit secundo iterare. munera misericordiae suae uobis dignetur prestare. Amen.*

May you prosper and amass the riches of present matters with righteousness, (and) may you perpetually rejoice with the fruits of the most sincere love, Amen. / With His blessed virgin Agnes interceding may the Lord grant to you perpetual gifts (so that) afterwards you may blessedly receive amplified time and eternal joy, Amen.' The Benedictional of Archbishop Robert does not contain a blessing for 28 January.

<sup>163</sup> SASLC, p. 59. Whatley also notes that in a personal correspondance to him, Alicia Corrêa pointed out that the unedited Samson Pontifical likewise has a prayer echoing the *PSA*.

<sup>164</sup> R.M. Woolley (ed.), *The Canterbury Benedictional (British Museum, Harl. MS. 2892)*, HBS 51 (London, 1917), pp. 79–80.

*Eius deprecatio a uobis omnia arceat contraria et queque adhibeat salubria. que uirgo et martyr inter astra rutilat caelestia. Amen.*

*Pectora uestra grata sint sancto spiritui hospitia. uestraque deo accepta fiant desideria. eoque uos dirigat sancta trinitas post obitum. ubi beata agnes glorianter nouum concinit canticum. Amen.*<sup>165</sup>

Not only are numerous motifs from the *PSA*, such as the wall of light, the heavenly garment and Agnes' miraculous survival on the pyre, incorporated into the Canterbury blessings, but the prayers even echo the *PSA*'s prose on a number of occasions. Two of the most prominent examples of these borrowings are:

- a) **CB:** *qui illam suo subarrauit anulo*      **PSA 20:** *anulo fidei suae subarrauit me*
- b) **CB:** *perfusione cruoris sponsam  
dedicauit ac martyrem*      **PSA 166–7:** *roseo sanguinis sui rubore  
perfusam, Christus Sibi et  
sponsam et martyrem dedicauit*

In addition to a clear dependence on the *PSA*, the Canterbury prayers may also have been influenced by Aldhelm's *De uirginitate*. For example, the use of the verb *floreo* (to flower) in the opening prayer for 21 January echoes the use of the same verb at *Cdu* 1925, where it forms part of a series of plant motifs associated with Agnes, a theme absent from the *PSA*. Furthermore, the following Canterbury prayer refers to Agnes suffering in a prison where she receives the heavenly garment:

... *qui eam per angelum suum caelesti decorauit habitu in carceris squalore.*<sup>166</sup>

The *PSA* makes no mention of Agnes undergoing any form of torture apart from her condemnation to the brothel and always refers to her place of imprisonment as a *lupanar* (house of prostitutes). On the other hand, the *Cdu* narrates that Agnes was cast

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<sup>165</sup> **21 January:** 'God, Who granted the blessed Agnes to flower with the grace of virginity and martyrdom, may he cause us to shine becomingly with the light of all religion and to rejoice with the good fortune of each manner of life, Amen. / And (He) who had given her resolute constancy amongst torments, may He bestow His grace upon you during all temptation(s) and clothe (you) with the brightness of virtues, Who, through his angel, beautified her with a heavenly garment in the squalor of a prison, Amen. / And may she, who in the middle of the flames deserved to pass over towards the stars, intercede for you, so that you may have the strength to glow with the fire of the Holy Spirit, and to enter the heavenly marriage bed after this life, Amen.' **Alternative Prayer 21 January:** 'May the Lord bless you, Who decorated blessed Agnes with the palm of virginity, the handmaid of the glorious mother of the Lord, whose feast-day you celebrate, and crowned (her) with the glory of a passion, Amen. / And (He) Who betrothed her with His ring, may He defend you, fortified with the integrity of faith and crowned with the maintenance of good works, from all danger, (and) may He establish you in the tabernacle of eternal rejoicing, Amen. / Christ the Lamb, whiter than snow, Who consecrated (Agnes) as His bride and martyr by the senseless heat of the flames and baptism of blood, may He allow you to live innocently with the aid of His protection and to love the Saviour of the world Himself with all devotion, and to receive shining seats with all the saints in the kingdom of heaven, Amen.' **28 January:** 'God, Who allows you to repeat the triumph of blessed Agnes a second time, may He deign to exhibit the gifts of his mercy to you, Amen. / May her prayer ward off all opposition from you and summon all beneficial matters, who as a virgin and a martyr glows red amongst the heavenly stars, Amen. / May your breasts be a pleasing guest-chamber for the Holy Spirit and may your petitions be acknowledged as agreeable by God. May the Holy Trinity direct you to Him after death, where blessed Agnes exultingly sings the new song, Amen.'

<sup>166</sup> '...who through his angel beautified her with a heavenly garment in the squalor of a prison.'

into a prison before her incarceration in the brothel; therefore, it is possible that here the Benedictional drew on *Cdu* 1946–7:

*Plurima quapropter patiens discrimina uirgo  
pertulit in terris insons ergastula tetra.*<sup>167</sup>

Finally, in the alternative blessing for 21 January, the second prayer refers to the *tabernaculum aeternae exultationis*.<sup>168</sup> This text's reference to heaven may have been prompted by any one of numerous sources, but it is striking that the most prominent image associated with Agnes in the *Dlu* is the Ark of the Covenant, originally housed in the tabernacle during the Exodus.<sup>169</sup> *De uirginitate* was a well-known text during the late Anglo-Saxon period and it is possible that the author of the Canterbury prayers was familiar with both Aldhelm's and the *PSA*'s accounts of Agnes' martyrdom.

BL, Add. 28188 provides only one prayer-set for the 21 January and overlooks Agnes' second feast on 28 January:

#### BENEDICTIO IN NATALE SANCTAE AGNETIS VIRGINIS

*Clementissimus Dominus uos meritis beatæ agnetis dignetur benedicere. eiusque uirginitatis et martyrii decore faciat florere. ut de utriusque uitæ uos contingat prosperitate gaudere. Amen.*

*Quique ei inter tormenta inconcussam largitus est constantiam. uobis in omni temptatione insuperabilem adhibeat tolerantiam. et felicem sibi placitæ conuersationis perseuerantiam. Amen.*

*Sic etiam uos Omnipotens uestiat choruscantibus uirtutum gemmis. ut Christo quem beata agnes tota deuotione dilexit in terris. per gratiam spiritus sancti quandoque adiungi mereamini in caelis. <Amen>.*<sup>170</sup>

These blessings clearly bear no relation to the generic prayers found in the majority of surviving English benedictionals; nevertheless, the source material on which they are based includes both The Canterbury Benedictional and the *PSA*. The two opening prayers are largely revisions of their parallel numbers in the Canterbury manuscript. For example, the last two phrases of BL, Add. 28188's opening prayer appear to be modelled on:

*Deus qui beatam agnetem uirginitatis et martirii decore concessit florere, ...faciat...de utriusque uitæ prospertitate gaudere. (CB 21 Jan 1a)*

<sup>167</sup> 'Wherefore the innocent virgin, enduring many dangers, suffered foul prisons on earth.'

<sup>168</sup> 'Tabernacle of eternal rejoicing.'

<sup>169</sup> See pp. 83–8. It is also possible that the prayer's wording was intended to recall *Ps* 18.6: 'in sole posuit tabernaculum suum...' – ('he hath set his tabernacle in the sun...').

<sup>170</sup> **21 January:** 'May the most merciful Lord deign to bless you with the rewards of the blessed Agnes and may he bring it to pass (that you) flourish with the grace of her virginity and martyrdom, and may he affect you to rejoice concerning the prosperity of each form of these lives. Amen. / He who has bestowed constant constancy to (Agnes) amidst tortures, may he bring to you insurmountable endurance during all temptation, and an abundant steadfastness of pleasing conversation to him. Amen / For thus may the Almighty clothe you with the glittering jewels of virtues so that through the grace of the Holy Spirit at some time you may be deserving to be joined to Christ in heaven, whom the blessed Agnes loved with total devotion (whilst she was) on earth. Amen.'

and the first two phrases of the second prayer with:

*Et qui ei inter tormenta inconcussam dederat constantiam. uobis in omni temptatione suam largiatur gratiam...* (CB 21 Jan 1b)

28188's final prayer, however, is based on the *PSA* and employs two direct quotations:

a) *choruscantibus... gemmis* (*PSA 23: coruscantibus gemmis*)

b) *quem beata agnes tota deuotione dilexit in terries* (*PSA 193: quem in terris posita tota deuotione dilexi*)

The Canterbury prayers also draw on the last quotation mentioned (CB 21 Jan 2c: *annuat...mundi saluatorem tota deuotione diligere*); nevertheless, it seems more likely that both texts borrowed this phrasing directly from the *PSA* rather than from each other.

There is a stark contrast between Canterbury's and BL Add. 28188's direct knowledge of the *PSA* and the absence of this text's influence on the prayers in the other five benedictionals; however, there appears to be a very good reason for this difference. The five identical sets of blessings for Agnes, in particular the prayers for 21 January, are also used elsewhere in their respective benedictionals.<sup>171</sup>

*Table 4.3.2: Blessings from Benedictionals Used on Agnes' Feast-Days*

	Leofric		Æthel.		Ecgbert		Clau. I		Clau. Ia		Lanalet		Robert	
CBP 175	-	1v	21	1v	-	1v	21	1v	21	-	21	1v	21	1v
CBP 149/169	-	-	28	1v	-	-	28	-	28	-	28	-	-	-

This table reveals that the blessing used for 21 January was also employed by six English benedictionals as the common of one virgin. In the case of the Benedictional of Æthelwold which has two common blessings for a single virgin, (one for a virgin martyr, and one for a virgin non-martyr), one of these prayers is duplicated with 21 January and the other with Agnes' second feast on 28 January.

Furthermore, it would appear that the use of CBP 175 for Agnes' feast is the secondary function of this blessing, since it was originally used as the benediction for

<sup>171</sup> Key to the Table: CBP – Dom E. Moeller (ed.), *Corpus benedictionum pontificalium*, 4 vols., CCSL 162 (Turnout, 1971–9). All information concerning numbered benedictions is taken from this source. 21 / 28 (Agnes' two respective feast-days). 1v (blessing for one virgin from common of saints). NB The Benedictional of Archbishop Robert, like the Benedictional of Æthelwold, has two common prayers for a virgin. As the table indicates the common for a virgin martyr is duplicated with Agnes' feast-day; however, the common for a virgin non-martyr ('Respice domine hanc familiam...') is not associated with Agnes by any of the Anglo-Saxon Benedictionals.

one virgin in the common of saints from the Gregorian Sacramentary.<sup>172</sup> A similar pattern also exists for CBP 149/169, which originated as an early *Temporale* blessing.<sup>173</sup> But the most surprising revelation of all is the fact that the first recorded use of these blessings for Agnes' feast is in the *Benedictional* of Æthelwold, which suggests that this practice was an Anglo-Saxon innovation.

An examination of the blessings for Agatha and Cecilia, the other two Roman virgins included in the English *benedictionals*, further corroborates this hypothesis. The blessing used for Agatha in five of the texts (CBP 1956) was originally the benediction for one virgin and martyr in the common of saints from the Gelasian sacramentary of Angoulême. Again, the first recorded use of this blessing for Agatha comes from the Anglo-Saxon texts.<sup>174</sup> Entries for Cecilia reveal a slightly different pattern, possibly because by this stage the compilers of the *Benedictionals* had run out of common prayers for one virgin, since her most frequent blessing (CBP 1948) is duplicated with that used for St Lawrence of Rome.<sup>175</sup> Once again, apart from the Spanish liturgy and the *Missale Gothicum*, the first occurrence of a specific benediction for Cecilia is found in the English *Benedictionals*.

The patterns suggest that the English sought to honour the three virgins with benedictions, but, due to the lack of extant blessings, borrowed other relevant prayers. Eventually various authors began to compose sets of original blessings for these saints, but the question remains why these three saints were singled out in this manner? The association of a number of English *Benedictionals* with the leaders of the Benedictine Reform suggests that perhaps these three women, as well as St Æthelthryth on two occasions, were promoted to aid the reformers' call for chastity amongst religious.<sup>176</sup> The likelihood that this move was inspired by theological considerations amongst those in high office is also made more probable by the fact that there is little evidence for popular devotion to these saints in late Anglo-Saxon England.

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<sup>172</sup> The earliest record of this blessing is from codex O (Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ottobianus 313) one of the earliest known manuscripts of the Gregorian Sacramentary, which forms the basis of Wilson's edition of the Gregorian Sacramentary, alongside two other codices: Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reginae 317 and Cambrai, Bm, 164. See H.A. Wilson (ed.), *The Gregorian Sacramentary Under Charles the Great Edited from Three Manuscripts of the Ninth Century*, HBS 49 (London, 1915).

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 169. *Hebdomada IV post Pentecosten* (Gregorian Sacramentary).

<sup>174</sup> The *Benedictional* of Æthelwold or *Benedictional* of Ramsey appears to have been the first to use this blessing for Agatha, but Canterbury, Robert, Lanalet and Paris 987 (Ramsey Ben.) followed suit. Agatha and Agnes both acquired earlier benedictions in the Mozarabic liturgy, but these liturgical rites had little if no influence outside of Spain.

<sup>175</sup> The one exception is the *Benedictional* of Archbishop Robert where Cecilia's blessing (CBP 1706) is that used in the other English *benedictionals* for Clement, whose feast is a day later than Cecilia's.

<sup>176</sup> Dumville, *Liturgy and the Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 66–95.

#### 4.4 The Divine Office

For those in religious orders, the Mass formed part of a daily prayer ritual, alongside the celebration of the Divine Office, whose rites for the eight canonical hours provide another opportunity to investigate the celebration of Agnes' feast. The Office rites always followed a similar format; however, many of the components for these rituals could be altered if a certain saint's feast fell on that particular day: most of the Scripturally based chants, collects, lessons and hymns. To a certain extent, surviving Anglo-Saxon manuscripts only preserve the proper rites for Agnes' feasts for the last three categories.

Following a short Bible reading, the prayer known as the Office collect concluded each hour of the day, with the exception of Nocturns.<sup>177</sup> Prime, Terce, Sext and None repeated the same collect for the day, meaning that three additional prayers were also required to complete a daily set.<sup>178</sup> Corrêa, however, points out that only the feasts of the most important saints ever merited four or more specific collects.<sup>179</sup> The majority of saints were accorded only one, which was usually based on the Mass collect for their feast.<sup>180</sup> Four Anglo-Saxon collectars (catalogues of collects) have survived, two of which provide texts for Agnes' feasts.<sup>181</sup> Agnes falls into the second group of saints provided with only one specific collect, although the Durham Collectar does supply an alternative prayer for 21 January:

- 21 a) *Omnipotens sempiterne Deus...* (see p. 169)  
 b) *Presta quesumus Domine mentibus nostris cum exaltatione profectum, ut beate Agnetis martyris tuae, cuius diem passionis annua deuotione recolimus, etiam fidei constantiam subsequamur.*<sup>182</sup>
- 28 *Deus qui nos annua...* (see p. 170)<sup>183</sup>

<sup>177</sup> A. Corrêa (ed.), *The Durham Collectar*, HBS 107 (London, 1992), p. 4.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>181</sup> The Durham Collectar (Durham, Cathedral Library, A.IV.19 – Gneuss 223), written c. 890x930, was probably copied from a continental exemplar (Corrêa, *The Durham Collectar*, pp. 76–84). For Agnes, see pp. 174–5 b) Ælfwine's Prayerbook (see fn. 42) - contains only a common of saints. c) The Leofric Collectar (London, BL, Harley 2961), written at Exeter c. 1052x1072 (Gneuss 431). E.S. Dewick (ed.), *The Leofric Collectar*, vol I HBS 45 (London, 1914). The Leofric Collectar contains no prayers for any named women beyond the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene. d) The Portiforium of St Wulfstan (CCCC 391), Worcester c. 1065 (Gneuss 104). A Hughes (ed.), *The Portiforium of St Wulfstan (Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS 391)*, HBS 89–90 (Leighton Buzzard, 1958–60). For Agnes, see pp. 118–19.

<sup>182</sup> 'Lord, we beseech (you), manifest growth (in) our minds with exaltation, so that we might imitate the constancy of faith of your blessed martyr Agnes, the day of whose passion we cherish with annual devotion.'

<sup>183</sup> All three texts are taken from the Durham Collectar (Corrêa, *The Durham Collectar*, pp. 174–5). The Portiforium of St Wulfstan provides the same collect for 21 January as The Durham Collectar; however, the additional prayer for 21 January in the Durham manuscript appears as the collect for 28 January in The Portiforium. Furthermore, between the rubrics for Agnes' octave and the start of the prayer 'Presta quesumus', the Portiforium contains the words 'deus qui... agnae...', although the rest of the prayer is

During the celebration of the Divine Office, each set time of prayer incorporated at least one short reading, apart from Matins.<sup>184</sup> This particular Office incorporated three sets of more lengthy lessons: 'the first group Scriptural, the second Patristic or hagiographical, the third from a homily on the Gospel text of the day.'<sup>185</sup> Depending on whether the institution in question followed the monastic or secular Office, each group contained either four readings or three.<sup>186</sup> No instructions about the Scriptural passages used for Agnes' feasts have survived, but the general endorsement of the use of *passiones* for readings during second nocturn by Ælfric's *Letter the Monks of Eynsham*, suggests that the *PSA* was often used in this manner:

*Omnibus uero festiuitatibus sanctorum in toto anno legimus uitas aut passiones ipsorum sanctorum siue sermones congruentes ipsi sollempnitati et responsaria propria, si habeantur. (c.73)*<sup>187</sup>

Depending on whether an institution owned a copy of the *Passio Sanctae Agnetis*, it is possible that most ecclesiastical communities listened to at least excerpts of Agnes' passion each year during the Divine Office.

#### 4.4.1 Hymns

In addition to proper collects and lessons, evidence also survives for the proper hymns used by the Anglo-Saxon Church during Matins, Lauds and Vespers.<sup>188</sup> Hymns have formed part of Christian worship since the earliest days of the Church, when liturgical songs first comprised extracts from the Psalms.<sup>189</sup> Indeed, two of the fourth-century accounts of Agnes' martyrdom are hymns. Prudentius' *Peristephanon* and his *Cathemerinon* are both collections of hymns, although it is clear from the length of these poems that they were intended for personal devotions, rather than liturgical use.<sup>190</sup> Later on, however, extracts of these works, including *Pe. xiv* which celebrates St

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missing. This same text ('deus qui annua') is also used for vespers on the feast of Cecilia (Hughes, *The Portiforium*, p. 114). A similar pattern is found in the Leofric Collectar, where Durham's text for 28 January is also assigned to other feasts: Matins for the common of one confessor (p. 333) and Second Vespers for the common of one virgin and martyr (p. 342). For further details see, Corrêa, *The Durham Collectar*, pp. 246–83.

<sup>184</sup> Harper, *Forms and Orders*, p. 81.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>187</sup> 'But on all feasts of the saints, throughout the entire year, we read lives or passions of the saints themselves, or sermons appropriate to the given solemnity, and [we sing] proper responsories, if these are to be had.' Latin and English taken from C. Jones (ed.), *Ælfric's Letter to the Monks of Eynsham*, CSASE 24 (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 146–7.

<sup>188</sup> Harper, *Forms and Orders*, p. 80.

<sup>189</sup> F.J.E. Raby, *A History of Christian-Latin Poetry: From the Beginnings to the Close of the Middle Ages*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. rev. (Oxford, 1953), p. 4.

<sup>190</sup> J. Szövérfy, *Latin Hymns*, Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental 55 (Turnhout, 1989), p. 35.

Agnes, were used to form several of the hymns included in the Mozarabic liturgy.<sup>191</sup> Ambrose of Milan also composed a number of hymns, including one in honour of Agnes, during his political campaign against his Arian rivals at Milan for control of the city's churches.<sup>192</sup>

The widespread use of hymns in the West, however, can be attributed to the rise of monasticism. In all likelihood inspired by Ambrose's hymnal, the Rules of Benedict and Caesarius and Aurelianus of Arles all stipulate the singing of hymns during the Daily Office.<sup>193</sup> Thus as monasticism spread throughout Europe, so too did the custom of singing hymns.<sup>194</sup> The first known hymnal to reach England was the late fifth-century work known as *The Old Hymnal (OH)*, which contained around fifteen hymns.<sup>195</sup> The *OH* probably arrived in England with Augustine's mission in 597 and was quickly disseminated throughout the island. Certainly two English manuscripts and references to seven of the *OH*'s hymns in Bede's *De arte metrica* testify to its early availability.<sup>196</sup>

The *OH* remained the standard English hymnal until the tenth century when it was superseded by *The New Hymnal (NH)*, a comprehensive collection of over one hundred hymns imported from the continent by the Benedictine Reformers.<sup>197</sup> Thought to have been composed in early ninth-century Francia, possibly under the direction of Benedict of Aniane, the *NH* expanded the scope of the *OH* by including a selection of

<sup>191</sup> J.P. Gilson (ed.), *The Mozarabic Psalter (MS. British Museum, Add. 30,851)*, HBS 30 (London, 1905), pp. 210–11 for 'Agnes sepulchrum est Romulea in domo.' The Hymn comprises lines 1–4, 7–9, 20, 67–8, 83–8 and 125–8 of *Pe. xiv*, plus a non-Prudentian final stanza. Interestingly, the rubrics for this hymn in BL, Add. 30851 read: 'Hymnus in diem Sanctarum Agnetis et Emerentiane', although Prudentius made no mention of Emerentiana.

<sup>192</sup> Szövérfy, *Latin Hymns*, pp. 33–5. According to J. Mearns (*Early Latin Hymnaries: An Index of Hymns in Hymnaries Before 1100* (Cambridge, 1913), p. 5), Ambrose's hymn to Agnes does not appear to have been known in England until the fourteenth century, when it first appears in a Cistercian breviary of c. 1360 (London, BL, Burney 335).

<sup>193</sup> *Regula Sancti Benedicti* c. 9, 12–13 and 17. T. Fry et al. (eds.), *RB 1980: The Rule of St Benedict in Latin and English with Notes* (Collegeville, MN, 1981), pp. 202–4 and 206–13. Caesarius of Arles, *Regula uirginum*, c. 66 and 69. A. de Vogüé and J. Courreau (eds.), *Oeuvres monastiques I, Oeuvres pour les moniales*, Sources Chrétienne 345 (Paris, 1988), pp. 35–273, at pp. 254, 260 and 264. Aurelianus's text is virtually identical to that of Caesarius.

<sup>194</sup> H. Gneuss, 'Latin Hymns in Medieval England: Future Research', in B. Rowland (ed.), *Chaucer and Middle English Studies in Honour of Rossell Hope Robbins* (London, 1974), pp. 407–24, at pp. 408–9.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 408–9 and 417–18.

<sup>196</sup> I.B. Milfull, *The Hymns of the Anglo-Saxon Church: A Study and Edition of the 'Durham Hymnal'*, CSASE 17 (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 3–4. The two manuscripts are: a) London, BL, Vespasian A.i (Gneuss, 381), an eight-century Canterbury manuscript containing three hymns and b) a lost hymnal whose contents were recorded by the fifteenth-century historian Thomas of Elmham in his *Historia Monasterii S. Augustini Cantuariensis*. Inscriptions in the manuscript claimed that it had been sent by Gregory the Great to Augustine and historians are inclined to believe that either this manuscript, or its exemplar, was of a late sixth-century date. Bede's *De arte metrica*: C.B. Kendall and M.H. King (eds.), *Beda's Venerabilis Opera, opera didascalica i*, CCSL 123A (Turnhout, 1975), pp. 60–141, at pp. 135–6 and 139.

<sup>197</sup> Milfull, *The Hymns of the Anglo-Saxon Church*, p. 8.

hymns for each of the canonical hours as well as adding hymns for numerous feasts.<sup>198</sup> The earliest English manuscript witness for the *NH* is the Bosworth Psalter (London, BL, Add. 37517), dated to c. 970.<sup>199</sup> In addition, the *Regularis concordia*, written c. 973, also stipulates the use of the *NH*, indicating that the work was widely known in England from at least the 970's onwards.<sup>200</sup>

Only a few eminent saints were ever accorded an individual hymn in either of these two hymnals. The *OH* honours merely three saints: SS Peter and Paul and John the Evangelist.<sup>201</sup> The *NH* expands this list to include Andrew, Stephen, Benedict, John the Baptist, Lawrence, Michael the archangel and Martin.<sup>202</sup> Thirteen apostles were also given an individual verse to be sung as part of the hymn *Annue Christe saeculorum domine* on their feast-day.<sup>203</sup> Unlike the *OH*, the *NH* also included generic hymns for martyrs, confessors and virgins, which could be employed for the feast-day of any saint in each genre.<sup>204</sup> Certain manuscripts of the *NH* also include hymns for Anglo-Saxon saints such as Dunstan and Edmund the Martyr.<sup>205</sup>

One interesting aspect of both the *OH* and *NH* is the complete absence of hymns for female saints (excluding the Virgin Mary and even she only appears in the *NH*). A hymn to Mary Magdalene appears in a Worcester Benedictine Psalter of c. 1064 (CCCC 391), but this work appears to have been added by an individual institution rather than forming part of the *NH* canon.<sup>206</sup> Furthermore, this dearth of hymns in honour of female saints is not representative of hymnals throughout Europe during this period, although they are by no means included in large numbers or consistently from country to country.<sup>207</sup> In the case of Agnes, three anonymous hymns in her honour circulated in Italy from c. 1000 onwards and she was also celebrated in the Mozarabic liturgy.<sup>208</sup> The

<sup>198</sup> Gneuss, 'Latin Hymns', pp. 411–12.

<sup>199</sup> Milfull, *The Hymns of the Anglo-Saxon Church*, p. 8. (Gneuss 291, s. x<sup>3/4</sup>, Canterbury, (?) Christ Church).

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.* *Regularis concordia*, c.28 (Symons, *Regularis concordia*, p. 25).

<sup>201</sup> Gneuss, 'Latin Hymns', p. 418.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 420.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>205</sup> See for example, Milfull, *The Hymns of the Anglo-Saxon Church*, pp. 317–19 and 457–8. Dunstan: Hymn 82 from Durham, Cathedral Library, B.III.32 (Gneuss 244, s. xi med, Canterbury, (probably) Christ Church). Edmund: Hymn 153 from London, BL, Cotton Vespasian D.xii (Gneuss 391, s.xi med, Canterbury, Christ Church)

<sup>206</sup> Mearns, *Early Latin Hymnaries*, p. 34.

<sup>207</sup> See *Ibid* in general.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6, 19 and 70. The three hymns are: a) 'Agnētis festum martyris' (survives in twelve Italian pre 1150 manuscripts from the areas around Rome and Naples), b) 'Christe, Patris altissimi' (survives in two late eleventh-century northern Italian manuscripts) and c) 'Quae mens recensere audeat' (survives in two Benedictine Hymnals thought to have been written at Narni around 1000).

English hymnals point yet again to the secondary status of the female virgin martyrs in Anglo-Saxon England.

The only known hymnal of Insular origin is the collection composed by Bede, which he noted in the list of his works appended to the *HE*:

*Librum hymnorum diuerso metro siue rythmo.*<sup>209</sup>

No manuscript of Bede's hymnal survives; nevertheless, its contents have been partially reconstructed by Michael Lapidge from two chief sources of evidence.<sup>210</sup> In 1556, Georg Cassander published a collection of Latin hymns, eleven of which came from a manuscript (consequently lost) that attributed their authorship to Bede.<sup>211</sup> This in itself means little; however, it would appear that the majority of these compositions were indeed known in eighth-century Northumbria.<sup>212</sup> Alcuin's *De laude Dei* contains references to nineteen hymns, eight of which correspond to those printed by Cassander.<sup>213</sup> Lapidge, therefore, argues not only on the basis of this evidence but also on stylistic grounds that all eleven of Cassander's hymns should be accepted as genuine Bedan compositions.<sup>214</sup>

One of the most striking features of Bede's collection is that ten of his hymns were written for specific feast-days: that of The Holy Innocents, St Agnes, Ascension Day, Pentecost, The Nativity of John the Baptist, SS Peter and Paul, The Decollation of John the Baptist, The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary and two for the Apostle St Andrew.<sup>215</sup> The list of names is remarkably familiar: all apart from one saint, Agnes, commonly feature on the Anglo-Saxon lists of eminent feasts.<sup>216</sup> Lapidge believes that Bede set out to compose a supplement to the *OH*, when the *OH* failed to meet the specific liturgical needs of Monkwearmouth and Jarrow.<sup>217</sup> If this is so, Agnes appears to have been held in special honour by Bede's monastery. The possibility remains, however, that Bede wrote a number of additional hymns celebrating individual virgin martyrs, which have now been lost.<sup>218</sup>

<sup>209</sup> *HE* V.24: 'A book of hymns in various metres and rhythms' (Colgrave and Mynors, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 570–1).

<sup>210</sup> M. Lapidge, 'Bede the Poet', The Jarrow Lecture 1993 (Jarrow, 1994; repr. in his *Anglo-Latin Literature, 600–899* (London, 1996), pp. 313–38).

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 325–6.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 326.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 326–8. Sadly, the hymn *Illuxit alma saeculis* for St Agnes' feast-day is not one of those excerpted by Alcuin. For further discussion of Alcuin's *De laude Dei*, see above pp. 149–51.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 327–30.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 327–8. The eleventh hymn concerns the six days of creation.

<sup>216</sup> See Appendix 3.1.

<sup>217</sup> Lapidge, 'Bede the Poet', p. 328.

<sup>218</sup> See *Ibid.*, pp. 330–1 for speculation on the size of Bede's hymnal.

Nevertheless, certain pieces of evidence suggest that Bede's Northumbrian community did indeed accord Agnes some veneration. The conversion of the English by a Roman mission provides a logical explanation for the importation of one of Rome's most venerated saints. In addition, the exceptional flow of traffic between Monkwearmouth Jarrow and the Holy City also requires consideration. Benedict Biscop was a frequent visitor to Rome and appears to have gone to great lengths in order to make sure that his monastery, as much as possible, worshipped according to Roman practice.<sup>219</sup> Not only did he bring back large quantities books, relics and other ecclesiastical items from the Holy City, but he also brought the arch-cantor John to serve as an instructor in the manner of Roman chant.<sup>220</sup> Furthermore, several of Benedict's young monks also spent time in Rome, including two future abbots: Ceolfrith and Hwætberht.<sup>221</sup> Any one of these people may have brought back knowledge of Agnes' cult, or indeed relics, to Northumbria, which had clearly reached northern England by an early date given Bede's acquaintance with the *PSA*.<sup>222</sup> In addition to the number of people travelling from Northumbria to Rome, one further piece of evidence points to a special interest in Roman saints at Bede's monastery: the dedication of the chapel of St Peter's Church at Monkwearmouth to St Lawrence of Rome.<sup>223</sup> Lawrence was always highly honoured by the western Church, but this early dedication adds weight to the suggestion that Bede's monastery had a particular interest in specifically Roman martyrs. If the Northumbrians had also sought to honour a female counterpart for Lawrence, Agnes would have been one of the most obvious candidates to focus on.

Whilst the evidence about the importance of Agnes' cult in eighth-century Northumbria remains speculative, two literary works suggest that a group of virgin martyrs, including Agnes, were indeed held in special honour by the early northern

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<sup>219</sup> Bede, *Historia abbatum*, c.1–9. C. Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Opera historica*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1896), I, 364–87, at pp. 364–73. Interestingly, Bede was also familiar with a number of funerary inscriptions from sites in Rome: in the *HE*, he reproduces the epitaphs from the tombs of Gregory the Great (II.1) and Cadwalla, King of the West Saxons (V.7). Groups of inscriptions from churches in Rome and elsewhere, including many of Pope Damasus' epigrams in honour of the Roman martyrs, are known to have circulated in early medieval Europe in collections known as *sylloges*. Some of these works were known in Anglo-Saxon England and one such Insular compendium still partially survives: that of Milred, bishop of Worcester (c. 745–774). Milred's collection does not include Damasus' verses on Agnes; nevertheless, it remains a possibility that this text was known in England in Bede's time through another such collection. Lapidge, 'Bede the Poet', pp. 314–20. P. Sims-Williams, 'Milred of Worcester's Collection of Latin Epigrams and its Continental Counterparts', *ASE* 10 (1981): 21–38.

<sup>220</sup> Bede, *HE* IV.18 and *Historia abbatum*, c.6. See above pp. 160–1.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, c.16 and 18.

<sup>222</sup> See p. 162.

<sup>223</sup> Bede, *Historia abbatum*, c.17.

Church. The first text is Bede's acrostic hymn in honour of St Æthelthryth from the *HE*, which contains one section that compares her to the celebrated virgin saints of old:

*Ignibus usta feris uirgo non cessit Agathe,  
Eulalia et perfert ignibus usta feris,  
Kasta feras superat mentis pro culmine Tecla,  
Eufemia sacras kasta feras superat,  
Laeta ridet gladios ferro robustior Agnes,  
Cecilia infestos laeta ridet gladios. (IV.20, lines 17–22)<sup>224</sup>*

Not only does Bede's list of virgins bear little resemblance to the Canon of the Mass, but it also incorporates only a few of the virgin martyrs whose *passiones* he had used for his martyrology.<sup>225</sup> It is clear from Bede's *Martyrologium* and other such contemporary works such as *The Calendar of St Willibrord* that at least twenty virgin martyrs were known in early Anglo-Saxon Northumbria.<sup>226</sup> Indeed, the evidence of Aldhelm's *De uirginitate*, composed a few decades earlier (c. 680), suggests that through this work the southern English Church also knew of a similar, if not greater number, of virgins.<sup>227</sup>

It is therefore striking that an almost identical list of virgins to that found in Bede's hymn appears in the roughly contemporary *Metrical Calendar of York*, discussed above.<sup>228</sup> Out of sixty-six feasts noted in the *MCY*, only six celebrate female saints other than the Virgin Mary: Agnes, Agatha, Juliana, Eufemia, Thecla and Cecilia. Again, as with Bede's catalogue, the most striking shared trait of the members of this group is that they are all virgin martyrs in every sense of the definition. Consequently, it remains possible that the *MCY* and *HE* hint at an elite group of virgin martyrs, including Agnes, venerated at least in the North of England during the eighth century.<sup>229</sup>

#### 4.4.2 Bede's Hymn to Agnes

In previous chapters and sections, analysis of the works of Aldhelm, Ælfric and the anonymous compiler of the *OEM* has revealed that each author interpreted and

<sup>224</sup> (letters I–L of the acrostic poem) 'In the furnace fierce stood virgin Agatha, Eulalia stands firm in the furnace fierce. Keen lions yield to Thecla's spirit high, to chaste Euphemia keen lions yield. Laughs at the sword (of finer temper she) Agnes, and Cecily laughs at the sword.' Colgrave and Mynors, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, p. 399.

<sup>225</sup> See Appendix 3.2. Bede, however, does note that this hymn was one of his earliest compositions (*HE* IV.20). Thus it may predate the composition of his martyrology.

<sup>226</sup> See Appendix 3.2.

<sup>227</sup> See Appendix 3.2.

<sup>228</sup> See pp. 156–7 for further discussion of the *MCY*.

<sup>229</sup> The earliest known English passional (Paris, BnF, lat. 10861, s. ix<sup>1/4</sup>) contains a virtually identical list of virgins to Bede and the *MCY*: Agnes, Agatha, Cecilia, Eulalia (omitted by the *MCY*), Juliana, Eufemia and Afra (omitted by the *HE* and *MCY*, who both include Thecla instead). For further details of this manuscript, see pp. 207–8.

rewrote the *PSA* in his own unique fashion. Each writer appears to have engaged with different aspects and Biblical images contained in the *PSA* in order to create a retelling that would appeal to their target audience as well as address specific concerns. Bede's *Illuxit alma saeculis* is the last of the four Insular accounts of Agnes' martyrdom to be considered in this thesis and, like all three of the versions mentioned above, it offers yet another very different and individual version of the virgin's legend. One reason for this text's distinctive narrative must lie with the nature of the community for whom it was created. The hymn's composition in Latin suggests that this work was intended initially for the appreciation and edification of Bede's learned brethren in the twin monasteries of Monkwearmouth-Jarrow, rather than eighth-century Northumbrian Christians in general. It is therefore possible that *Illuxit alma saeculis* was the only Insular account of Agnes' legend aimed primarily at a purely male monastic audience.

The following analysis of this hymn, which has received relatively little scholarly attention, falls into three sections: possible sources, the general structure of the text and, finally, Bede's Biblical interpretation of Agnes' legend.

*Illuxit alma saeculis:*

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1 <i>Illuxit alma saeculis</i><br><i>Dies beatae uirginis,</i><br><i>Qua morte uicta perpetis</i><br><i>Vitae recepit gaudia.</i>            | 7 <i>Quin Christus et forinsecus</i><br><i>Mittit poderem uirgini,</i><br><i>Hanc ueritatis intimo</i><br><i>Docens amictam linteo.</i>       |
| 2 <i>Intrauit Agnes auream</i><br><i>Poli triumphans regiam</i><br><i>Agnique iuncta dulcibus</i><br><i>Congratulatur nuptiis.</i>           | 8 <i>Inducta in aedem sordium,</i><br><i>A sorde martyr libera est,</i><br><i>Quin de loco prostibuli</i><br><i>Precum repente fit locus.</i> |
| 3 <i>Admixta castis uirginum</i><br><i>In arce caeli coetibus</i><br><i>Carmen nouum Deo Patri</i><br><i>Vnaque nato personat.</i>           | 9 <i>Illuminatur caelitus</i><br><i>Latebra quondam daemonum,</i><br><i>Pulsoque leti principe</i><br><i>Vitae minister cernitur.</i>         |
| 4 <i>Iam digna tali praemio,</i><br><i>Quae fluxa mundi prospera</i><br><i>Pompasque saeculi sordidas</i><br><i>Amore Christi spreuerat.</i> | 10 <i>Probi probant magnalia</i><br><i>Deumque honorant martyris,</i><br><i>Illusor at miraculi</i><br><i>Mox morte digna plectitur.</i>      |
| 5 <i>Pulsata nec non asperis</i><br><i>Aduersitatum spiculis,</i><br><i>Fortis fide perseuerat,</i><br><i>Christo semel quam uouerat.</i>    | 11 <i>Ab inferi quem ianuis</i><br><i>Martyr beata suscitans</i><br><i>Sic per lares ac ferreas</i><br><i>Ad astra portas praeuolat.</i>      |
| 6 <i>Hostis ferox ab artubus</i><br><i>Tulit puellae pallium,</i><br><i>Stolam sed intus pectoris</i>  | 12 <i>Qua conditoris gloriam</i><br><i>Cernit sui per saecula</i><br><i>Ciues et inter patriae</i>  |

*Aufferre nemo quiuerat.*

*Caelestis hymnos concinit.*<sup>230</sup>

Despite the fact that Bede appears to have based his hymns on those of Ambrose of Milan, it remains unlikely that he knew of Ambrose's hymn *Agnes beatae uirginis*.<sup>231</sup> Bede's acquaintance with Ambrose's hymns appears to have stemmed from his knowledge of the *OH*, which contained a number of Ambrosian compositions.<sup>232</sup> Only a select group of male saints, however, are celebrated in this hymnal.<sup>233</sup> Lapidge argues that Bede's hymns were intended as a supplement to the *OH* and thus presumably relate to saints whom the brethren at Monkwearmouth-Jarrow had not previously been able to honour in song.<sup>234</sup>

Conversely, Bede probably knew of at least three other accounts of Agnes' martyrdom. Bede's use of the *Passio Sanctae Agnetis* in his *Martyrologium* has already been commented on in an earlier section of this chapter.<sup>235</sup> Additional evidence from the *Martyrologium* suggests that Bede was also acquainted with Prudentius' version of Agnes' legend (*Pe.* xiv). In his entry for St Cassian on 13 August, Bede cites the *Peristephanon* (poem ix) as his source and it seems probable that he was familiar with the entirety of this well-known and popular work.<sup>236</sup> Finally, the fulsome praise of *De uirginitate* found in the *HE* (V.18) indicates that Bede had also encountered Aldhelm's prose and verse accounts of the virgin martyr's legend.<sup>237</sup>

<sup>230</sup> J. Fraipont (ed.), *Beda's Venerabilis Opera pars iii, opera homiletica. pars iv, opera rhythmica*, CCSL 122 (Turnhout, 1955), pp. 414–415. '(1) The propitious day of the blessed virgin dawned for the world, who after she had conquered death received the joys of perpetual life. / (2) Agnes entered the golden palace of Heaven triumphal and united in the sweet nuptials of the Lamb she rejoices. / (3) She has been joined to the pure band of virgins in the fortress of Heaven, and at the same time a new song to God the Father and the Son resounds. / (4) Already (she was) worthy for such distinction, who had scorned the transitory prosperity of the world and the filthy ostentation of the age for the love of Christ. / (5) Struck by the hopeless arrows of (her) adversaries, courageous she had persevered with (her) faith as she had once vowed to Christ. / (6) A savage enemy plundered the pallium from the girl's limbs, yet no one had been able to steal away the inner stola of her heart. / (7) Indeed, Christ publicly sends a priestly robe to the virgin, exhibiting the veiled girl (in) the most profound linen of the truth. / (8) Led into a temple of sordidness, the martyr is liberated from the filth since with respect to this house of prostitution it suddenly becomes a house of prayer. / (9) The former retreat of demons is illuminated from heaven and with the prince of death beaten the minister of life is perceived. / (10) The mighty words of the virtuous martyr prove and honour God, on the other hand the mocker of the miracle is thereupon punished with a deserved death. / (11) The blessed martyr raising him from the doors of the Lower World thus flies through the Lares and the cruel gates towards the stars. / (12) Where she perceives the glory of her Creator throughout the ages and sings hymns (of praise to Him) amongst the citizens of the heavenly fatherland.'

<sup>231</sup> Lapidge, 'Bede the Poet', p. 324.

<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 322. Lapidge points out that Bede was clearly familiar with the *OH* since he mentions several of the hymns contained in this compendium in his *De arte metrica* (see fn. 197).

<sup>233</sup> See pp. 182–3.

<sup>234</sup> Lapidge, 'Bede the Poet', p. 324.

<sup>235</sup> See p. 162.

<sup>236</sup> Quentin, *Les martyrologues*, p. 68. 'Natale sancti Cassiani, Romae... Scripsit Prudentius poeta' – ('At Rome, the feast of St Cassian... (thus) the poet Prudentius wrote').

<sup>237</sup> 'Scripsit et de uirginitate librum eximium, quem in exemplum Sedulii geminato opere et uersibus exametris et prosa composuit' – ('He (Aldhelm) also wrote a most excellent book on virginity both in

The basic narrative details preserved in *Illuxit alma saeculis* indicate that, as with the *Martyrologium*, Bede favoured the version of Agnes' legend laid down in the *PSA* over the accounts of Prudentius and Aldhelm.<sup>238</sup> Thus his hymn narrates how after she had spurned worldly delights and persevered with her faith in the face of persecution, Agnes was stripped and led to a brothel where she was miraculously clothed by the Lord. An impious man then attempted to harm her; he was consequently struck dead by the wrath of God, but later resurrected by the saint who then received her martyrdom and place in heaven. Prudentius' work does not appear to have influenced Bede's hymn at all. There are no verbal parallels or echoes and the distinctive narrative details preserved in the *Peristephanon* – there Agnes remains naked in the brothel and an impudent bystander is blinded by God after he dares to gaze on the saint's body – clearly do not correlate with Bede's account.<sup>239</sup> Another possibility that must be considered is whether *Illuxit alma saeculis* was based solely on Aldhelm's two accounts in his *De uirginitate*, which were heavily indebted to the *PSA*. Several crucial elements, however, demonstrate that this cannot be so. First, Bede draws attention to the white colour of the divine robe sent to Agnes in the brothel (*PSA* 99), while the *Dlu* omits any specific reference to the garment's appearance and the *Cdu* makes no mention of a robe at all. Second, the hymn's reference to the miraculous conversion of the brothel into a church (*PSA* 103–6) is found in neither the *Dlu* nor the *Cdu*.

No striking and conclusive verbal parallels exist between *Illuxit alma saeculis* and *De uirginitate*; nevertheless, this is not to say that Aldhelm's treatise had no influence on Bede's work at all. Three lines of Bede's hymn do share a distinct resemblance to Aldhelm's earlier work. In verse five Bede describes Agnes as:

*Pulsata nec non asperis / aduersitatem spiculis...*<sup>240</sup>

Neither Aldhelm, the *PSA* nor Prudentius make any reference to Agnes undergoing physical torture before her incarceration in the brothel; in their accounts she was merely verbally threatened. Bede's comments, therefore, presumably also refer to oral dangers and his characterisation of malicious words as arrows bears a striking similarity to one passage in the *Cdu*:

hexameter verse and in prose, producing a twofold work after the example of Sedulius'). Colgrave and Mynors, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 514–5.

<sup>238</sup> It would be interesting to know whether Bede was aware of Ambrose of Milan's alleged authorship of the *PSA* and whether this claim led him to give precedence to this particular version over others that he might also have known.

<sup>239</sup> There is a slight possibility that Prudentius' account of Agnes' soul journeying to heaven (*Pe.* xiv.91–123) inspired verses eleven and twelve of Bede's hymn, which narrate the same event. Neither of these verses, however, contains any verbal echoes of the *Pe.*

<sup>240</sup> 'Struck by the hopeless arrows of her adversaries...'

*Tunc procus aduenit... / garrula uerbosis contorquens spicula labris*  
(1957–58)<sup>241</sup>

It remains possible, nevertheless, that these two lines are not directly related but rather draw on a common Insular hagiographical convention, since this image also appears in Cynewulf's *Juliana*. In the dungeon scene, the devil describes to Juliana how he often verbally attacks weak men:

..., þonne ic ærest him  
þurh eargfare in onsende  
in breostsefan bitre geþoncas (lines 403–5)<sup>242</sup>

A second correlation between *Illuxit alma saeculis* and *De uirginitate* can be found in the hymn's ninth verse. Here Bede comments:

*Illuminatur caelitus / latebra quondam daemonum...*<sup>243</sup>

In the *PSA* (95–8) the brothel is said to shine with a celestial light that emanates from Agnes' angelic guardian. Bede's hymn does not mention the angel at all and while this line may be an oblique reference to the heavenly being, it bears a closer resemblance to the *Cdu* account:

*sed prius aspectans certantis bella puellae / Arbiter horrendas discussit carceris*  
*umbras / et clarum e caelo lumen de lumine fudit, / uirginis ut tenebras non*  
*ferrent lumina furuas* (1948–51)<sup>244</sup>

It must be said, however, that Aldhelm depicts this miracle in the prison where Agnes is held until her transfer to the brothel, whereas Bede's verse refers to events at the house of prostitution itself.

The final possible link between the two accounts of these Insular authors occurs in verse eleven of Bede's hymn:

*Ab inferi quem iamuis / martyr beata suscitans...*<sup>245</sup>

Bede's description of how the martyr herself resurrects her attacker again matches Aldhelm's version more closely than that of the *PSA*. *De uirginitate* presents two

<sup>241</sup> 'Then the suitor approached... hurling babbling arrows from his verbose lips.'

<sup>242</sup> 'Then at first through a flight of arrows, I send forth to him bitter thoughts in (his) heart... .' The Old English text is taken from G. Krapp and E. Van Kirk Dobbie (eds.), *The Exeter Book*, ASPR 3 (New York, 1936), pp. 113–33, at p. 124. See also M. Lapidge, 'Cynewulf and the *Passio S. Iulianae*', in M.C. Amodio and K. O'Brien O'Keefe (eds.), *Unlocking the Wordhoard: Anglo-Saxon Studies in Memory of Edward B. Irving Jr.* (Toronto, 2003), pp. 147–71. At pp. 156–65 Lapidge prints the text of the *Passio S. Iulianae* from Paris, BnF, lat. 10861 (the earliest English passion), which he believes was Cynewulf's Latin source (or very close to it). The devil's line about arrows of bitter thoughts does not occur in the Latin text.

<sup>243</sup> 'The former retreat of demons is illuminated from heaven... .'

<sup>244</sup> 'But first, (whilst) gazing upon the contest of the girl's struggles, the Judge shattered the prison's fearful shadows and hurled a brilliant beam of light from heaven so that the virgin's eyes did not endure the gloomy darkness.'

<sup>245</sup> 'The blessed martyr raising him from the doors of the Lower World... .'

subtly different accounts of this action: the *Dlu* attributes the miracle to the martyr's personal *uirtus* (xlv.22–26), the *Cdu* to the power of her prayers (1965–7). In contrast, the *PSA* relates how Agnes' prayers are answered by the arrival of her angelic guardian, who then raises the youth from the dead on her behalf (136–8).

Once again, Bede's description may not have been influenced by Aldhelm's treatise, since his decision to omit the appearance of the angel could have caused him to portray the miracle in these terms. Nevertheless, the three lines of the hymn together contain tantalising hints that, alongside the *PSA*, *De uirginitate* may have played a minor role in determining the precise form of Bede's composition.

One of the principal reasons why it is so hard to pinpoint exactly which account Bede drew on for a particular narrative element is the sheer lack of detail provided by the hymn. Apart from Agnes, no other character is named or described in any great depth. The entire dramatic contest between the celestial and terrestrial suitors for the saint's hand is also omitted. No mention is made of the angel's appearance, Agnes' condemnation to the pyre, nor indeed to her *post mortem* appearance at her tomb. Only the bare bones of her tale are provided and in order truly to understand the often rather obscure references to narrative events, the reader / listener requires previous knowledge of this legend.<sup>246</sup> Bede, however, clearly had an agenda in mind when he composed this work. If the overall structure of the hymn is examined, a clearer idea of Bede's approach can be deduced both in relation to why so little information is provided, as well as to a number of unique additions that he made to Agnes' tale.

The hymn itself is clearly organised into pairs of verses as the following table demonstrates:

Table 4.4.2: *The Structure of Illuxit alma saeculis*

<i>Verses</i>	<i>Function</i>
1	Introduces the feast-day of St Agnes, who now dwells in heaven
2-3	Description of Agnes' welcome into heaven
4-5	Outline of the martyr's earthly life: she spurns material wealth and maintains her faith in the face of dreadful persecution
6-7	The final three pairs of verses are each devoted to one of the miracles narrated in the <i>PSA</i> : first, the divine robe sent to Agnes
8-9	Second, the martyr's incarceration in a brothel, which then becomes a

<sup>246</sup> This fact also opens up the question of whether Bede presumed that his audience would already know Agnes' tale, which in turn sheds further possible light on the knowledge and use of the *PSA* in eighth-century Northumbria.

	place of prayer
10–11	Third, the death and resurrection of Agnes' mortal assailant
12	Agnes' life in heaven

Verses one and twelve function as a form of ring composition in the hymn, since they act as the first / final pair and thus create a circle or crown around the central tale that reminds the audience of Agnes' status as a heavenly citizen. Furthermore, a closer examination of several of the paired verses within this outer casing provides an intriguing insight into Bede's adaptation of the *PSA*.

Verses two and three form the first section of interest. Through his description of Agnes' entrance into heaven, Bede introduces a number of Biblical images into the hymn that are all taken from the book of *Apc*. Thus the reference in verse two to the nuptials of the Lamb (as opposed to Christ) recalls *Apc* 19.7. In addition, Agnes' acceptance into a heavenly band of pure virgins and the mention of a *carmen nouum* in verse three must refer to the 144,000 virgins of *Apc* 14.1–5:

*...et ecce agnus stabat supra montem Sion et cum illo centum quadraginta quattor milia...et cantabant quasi canticum nouum ante sedem...et nemo poterat discere canticum nisi illa centum quadraginta quattor milia...*<sup>247</sup>

A fourth reference to *Apc* should probably also be deduced in the description of Agnes' entrance into the golden palace of heaven, since at 21.18 the New Jerusalem is described as a golden city.

Bede's decision to evoke *Apc* is an extremely interesting one. There are a number of allusions to this particular book in the *PSA*, especially in Agnes' opening speech, yet it is by no means the predominant book of the Bible alluded to in this text. Furthermore, the surviving Mass-sets for Agnes' feast do not include any quotations from *Apc*, nor do the other Insular accounts of the virgin's martyrdom concentrate on imagery from this work.<sup>248</sup> Bede's prominent positioning of the images from *Apc* at the start of the hymn where they direct the audience to identify Agnes with one of the 144,000 virgins also indicates that they are crucial in understanding his entire narrative.

<sup>247</sup> '... and lo a lamb stood upon mount Sion, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand... and they sung as it were a new canticle, before the throne... and no man could say the canticle, but those hundred and forty-four thousand...'

<sup>248</sup> The principal Biblical passages used in the Mass-sets are taken from *Ps* 44 and the parable of the ten virgins (*Mt* 25.1–46). Aldhelm, for example, focuses on the notion of Christ as the ultimate sacrifice (*Hb* 9.1–28) in the *Dlu* and on the nature motifs surrounding the bride of *Ct* in the *Cdu*.

In his *Expositio Apocalypseos*, Bede comments on *Apc* 14.3–4 and expounds the identity of the 144,000 virgins by quoting from Augustine’s *De uirginitate* (c.27).<sup>249</sup> In Augustine’s eyes all true Christians were able to enter heaven; however, he identified those who were virgins in both body and mind with the 144,000 virgins of *Apc* and argued that these souls would enjoy greater joy and intimacy with the Lamb than other Christians.<sup>250</sup> Through his reference to Augustine, Bede states his adherence to this concept, which suggests that he viewed Agnes as a chaste role model who could reveal the path to such an exalted status to likeminded Christians. Furthermore, it is likely that Bede’s teaching on the nature of the 144,000 virgins was well known to his colleagues and students, who would then have been able to comprehend his intentions and to perceive the relevance of Agnes’ legend to their own lives.

Indeed, the following two verses (four and five), where Bede outlines the trials and sufferings that Agnes endured on earth, expand this hypothesis. Virtually no details are given beyond the statement that Agnes rejected material wealth for the love of Christ and persevered in her faith regardless of the consequences. This description could easily apply to any saint and indeed to any true Christian, which was presumably the idea. Thus the opening of Bede’s hymn reveals the heavenly reward on offer for his fellow monks who could aspire to be one of the 144,000. The following verses then outline how such glory can be achieved. By casting Agnes’ trials in very vague terms, Bede created a figure with whom all Christians could identify and whose struggles could easily be made to reflect their own earthly contests with the devil and the temptation of sin.

The way Bede appears to direct his audience to relate their own lives to that of Agnes continues in verses six and seven. This section of the hymn is devoted to the miraculous re-clothing of the virgin during her trials (*PSA* 98–103) and it appears that Bede was very taken with this miracle, since some of the hymn’s most striking language and imagery is to be found here. There are two particularly interesting elements to Bede’s version of this event. First, he breaks the chronological sequence of the *PSA*. In the late antique *passio* Agnes is stripped and led to a brothel where her continued faith causes God to bestow the celestial garment on her. Bede on the other hand states that Agnes is divinely re-clothed before she is led to the house of prostitution. Second, Bede

<sup>249</sup> R. Gryson (ed.), *Bedaes presbyteri Expositio Apocalypseos*, CCSL 121A (Turnhout, 2001), pp. 421–5.

<sup>250</sup> See for example, *Expositio Apocalypseos* (14.4): ‘Sic enim uos uidit in Apocalypsi quidam prae ceteris dilectus agno...ipse uos uidit duodecies duodena millia sanctorum citharedorum inlibatae uirginitatis in corpore, inuolatae ueritatis in corde...’ – (‘For thus a certain man beloved to the Lamb in comparison to the rest (i.e. John) saw you in *Apocalypsis*...He saw you twelve times twelve thousand sacred cithara players, of uninjured virginity in the body and inviolate integrity in the heart...’).

uses a remarkable array of vocabulary to describe the garments that Agnes wears during this scene. Her robes are referred to as: a *pallium* (verse 6), a *stola* (6), a *poderis* (7) and a *lintheum* (7). Only one of these words, *stola*, is used in any of the earlier sources and at first glance it is unclear why Bede used so many different terms.<sup>251</sup> It is of course possible that Bede was merely attempting to enliven his hymn through the use of varied vocabulary; however, all four of these words are used in the Vulgate in a number of important passages, many of which occur in *Apc*. Consequently, a thorough understanding of their Biblical significance is required in order to appreciate the theological undertones woven into Bede's hymn.

First of all, Bede refers to the garment that Agnes' persecutors tear from her limbs as a *pallium* (verse 6). Technically speaking this noun refers to a specific style of cloak or mantle that was traditionally worn in Greece and in particular by the Greek philosophers. This word occurs on a number of occasions throughout the Bible where it is used simply to refer to a person's cloak, although, presumably due to the word's association with philosophy, it is also often used to describe the mantles of the OT prophets.<sup>252</sup> One verse of particular interest, however, is found at *Ct* 5.7:

*inuenerunt me custodes qui circumeunt ciuitatem percusserunt me  
uulnerauerunt me tulerunt pallium meum mihi custodes murorum*<sup>253</sup>

In his *Expositio in Canticum Canticorum* Bede identifies the keepers of the walls as the doctors of the Church, specifically the NT authors, and interprets the wounding and uncovering of the Bride in the following manner:<sup>254</sup>

*Tollunt autem pallium suum sponsae percussae et uulneratae custodes murorum  
cum apostoli uel apostolici uiri animae cuilibet diuino amore adtactae  
retinacula transeuntium rerum auferunt, ut infimis expedita curis liberiori cursu  
faciem sui conditoris requirat*<sup>255</sup>

Thus the hymn's description of how Agnes was stripped takes on a double meaning. On the one hand it can be seen as a reference to the *PSA*'s account of how Agnes was

<sup>251</sup> Agnes' celestial garment is described as a 'stola candidissima' in the *PSA* (99). The *PSA* also refers to Agnes' robe as a: 'cyclas' (24), 'uestiarium' (101), 'indumentum' (102) and 'uestis' (187). In the *Dlu* xlv, Aldhelm refers to Agnes garment as a: 'cyclas' (9) 'uestis' (13) and 'peplum' (14).

<sup>252</sup> The noun 'pallium' is used on the following occasions in the Vulgate: *Gn* 9.23, 39.15–16 and 18, *Ex* 36.18, *Ios* 7.21 and 24, *Idc* 8.25, *Rt* 3.4, 9 and 15, *III Rg* 11.30, *IV Rg* 2.8 and 13, *I Esr* 9.3, *Prv* 25.20, *Is* 28.20, *Mic* 2.8 and *Mt* 5.40.

<sup>253</sup> 'The keepers that go about the city found me: they struck me: and wounded me: the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.'

<sup>254</sup> D. Hurst (ed.), *Beda's Venerabilis Opera pars ii, opera exegetica 2B*, CCSL 119B (Turnhout, 1983), pp. 165–375, at pp. 281–2.

<sup>255</sup> 'However, the guardians of the walls remove the pallium from the struck and wounded bride, as the Apostles or Apostolic men remove the chains of transitory matters from any soul touched by divine love, in order that, after the soul is liberated from its lowest cares, it may seek the face of its Creator by a less impeded journey.' See also Bede's comments a line later: 'Pallium...rerum terrestrium implicamenta designans' – ('the pallium, designating the entanglements of earthly matters').

paraded naked through the streets in order to humiliate her. On the other hand, through the use of Scriptural language Bede intimates that Agnes' faith, as outlined in verses four and five, has brought about the purification of her soul.

In the latter part of verse six, Bede then contrasts Agnes' loss of her *pallium* with the fact that no one can remove her *stolam...intus pectoris*.<sup>256</sup> A number of Biblical passages are alluded to by this image, but the most important is *Gal 3.27*:

*quicumque enim in Christo baptizati estis Christum induistis*<sup>257</sup>

Paul's comments characterise baptism as a process of spiritually clothing oneself and, of course, in the early Church the process of 'putting on Christ' during baptism was symbolised by the white robe bestowed on participants after their immersion.<sup>258</sup> A similar ritual is known to have been employed on occasions in the early Insular Church and Bede himself clearly connected baptism with white garments and indeed white *stolae*:<sup>259</sup>

*Amicti stolis albis et palmae in manibus eorum: Stolis baptismum, palmis triumphum crucis, insinuat, et quod saeculum in Christo uicerint, – licet claritatem quoque, quae per spiritum sanctum datur, stolae significant.*<sup>260</sup>

*Stolae albae* are mentioned on a number of occasions in *Apc* (6.11, 7.9 and 13) and always refer to the garments of those saints who gave their lives for the word of God.<sup>261</sup> Thus Bede's reference to Agnes' inner *stola* again provides his audience with a number of images to meditate on. On one level Agnes' transitory body is stripped whilst her soul remains clothed due to the spiritual robe bestowed upon it during baptism. The specific use of the word *stola* in connection with the large number of images from *Apc* already employed earlier on in this hymn also connects Agnes' purified soul to the saints of heaven whom she will shortly join. Furthermore, contemporary baptised

<sup>256</sup> '...the inner stola of her heart.' In his study of Bede's hymns, Lapidge notes that the use of 'simple contrasts' is a stylistic feature also found elsewhere in this collection ('Bede the Poet', p. 330).

<sup>257</sup> 'For as many of you as have been baptised in Christ, have put on Christ.' Bede himself quotes this passage in his commentary on *Apc* 15.6 when he explains why the seven angels bearing the seven plagues are clothed in white.

<sup>258</sup> On the use of garments during early Christian baptismal rites see J.Z. Smith, 'The Garments of Shame', *History of Religions* 5 (1965–6): 217–38; repr. in his *Map is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions*, *Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity* 23 (Leiden, 1978), pp. 1–23, at pp. 8–18.

<sup>259</sup> S. Foot, 'By Water in the Spirit': The Administration of Baptism in Early Anglo-Saxon England', in J. Blair and R. Sharpe (eds.), *Pastoral Care Before the Parish* (Leicester, 1992), pp. 171–92, at p. 178.

<sup>260</sup> *Expositio Apocalypseos* (7.9): 'Clothed with white robes and palms in their hands: it implies baptism by the *stolae*, the triumph of the cross by the palms, and because these (saints) shall have conquered this world in Christ, – the *stolae* also signify the splendour, which is given through the Holy Spirit.'

<sup>261</sup> There are a number of references to *stolae* in the OT including: *Gn* 41.42, 45.22 and 49.11, *Lev* 16.32, *I Par* 15.27 and *Is* 63.1. For the NT see passages such as: *Mc* 16.5, *Lc* 15.22 and *Apc* 6.11, 7.9, 7.13–14 and 22.14.

Christians can envision themselves as similarly equipped with a robe that foretells their eventual place in heaven.

The third reference to Agnes' garments provides one of the most interesting images of the entire hymn:

*Quin Christus et forinsecus mittit poderem uirgini (verse 7)*<sup>262</sup>

In comparison to the nouns *pallium* and *stola*, *poderis* is rarely used in the Vulgate; however, one of the three occasions on which it is employed occurs at *Apc* 1.13:<sup>263</sup>

*et in medio septem candelabrorum similem Filio hominis uestitum podere et praecinctum ad mamillas zonam auream*<sup>264</sup>

In his commentary on this verse Bede notes:

*Vestitum podere: Poderis... est uestis sacerdotalis, Christi sacerdotium ostendit, quo se pro nobis in altari crucis obtulit hostiam patri*<sup>265</sup>

The purity of Agnes' soul is now also reflected in her physical appearance and the arrival of the Lord's own *poderis* signifies how she has truly 'put on Christ' and become one with him. Agnes' achievement of true *imitatio Christi*, moreover, is characterised by a particularly masculine air through the arrival of Christ's priestly vestments. An image that was no doubt aimed to make her an attractive role model for Bede's monastic colleagues.<sup>266</sup>

A final finishing touch to Agnes' male religious demeanour is achieved by the fourth reference to her robes:

*Hanc ueritatis intimo docens amictam linteo (verse 7)*<sup>267</sup>

Due to the frequent use of imagery from *Apc* in Bede's hymn, this phrase presumably also refers to this work. The noun *lintheum* (linen cloth), however, is not used in this particular Scriptural book, which refers to white linen by a more unusual word: *byssum*.<sup>268</sup> Two passages of *Apc* employ this noun. First, the Bride of the Lamb is said

<sup>262</sup> 'Indeed, Christ publicly sends a priestly robe to the virgin.'

<sup>263</sup> The other two occasions are: *Sap* 18.24, where it refers to Aaron's priestly vestments and *Sir* 27.9, where justice is described as a robe of honour.

<sup>264</sup> 'And in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, one like to the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the feet, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.'

<sup>265</sup> 'The poderis... is a priestly vestment. It makes known the sacerdotal office of Christ, wherefore he offered himself as a sacrifice to God on the altar of the cross.'

<sup>266</sup> Bede's use of the image of Christ as the High Priest bears a distinct resemblance to Aldhelm's deployment of *imitatio Christi* in the *Dlu*, whereby Agnes is cast as the Ark of the Testament and thus also as a figure of Christ (see pp. 83–7 and *Dlu* xlv.19–21: 'ueluti Oza arcam testamenti, ubi uirga pontificalis, quae fronderat... profanis manibus contingere non metuens, ilico immaturae mortis uindictam exsoluit', which evokes both *II Sm* 6.6 and *Hb* 9.4). Both Bede and Aldhelm focus on the notion of Christ as the ultimate sacrifice, although their imagery draws on two different Scriptural works that contain the same idea: respectively, *Apc* and *Hb*.

<sup>267</sup> 'exhibiting the veiled girl with the most profound linen of the truth.'

<sup>268</sup> L&S notes two words of interest here. First, the adjective 'byssinus a um' – 'made of byssus' (i.e. sea silk) and as a substantive 'byssinum -i' – 'a garment of byssus.' Second, 'byssus -i' – 'cotton, linen.'

to clothe herself with white linen since this material is the *iustificaciones... sanctorum* (*Apc* 19.8).<sup>269</sup> Second, the heavenly armies of *Apc* 19.14 are also described as *uestiti byssinum album mundum*.<sup>270</sup> When Bede comments on these two passages, he notes that the garments of the Bride (or Church) refer to her good deeds.<sup>271</sup> Furthermore, he argues that both the Bride and the armies of heaven are clothed in the *iustificaciones sanctorum*, a phrase that he then explains by reference to *Ps* 131.9: *sacerdotes tui induentur iustitia...*<sup>272</sup> Consequently, in Bede's hymn not only is Agnes clothed in Christ's image as the High Priest, but she is also robed with justice in the likeness of the OT priests.

The four different nouns that Bede uses for Agnes' robe all relate to his hymn's central device whereby Agnes' miraculous transformation from an earthly to a celestial citizen is depicted in terms that are easily mapped onto the lives of all Christians. Just as Agnes' baptised soul remained untouched as she tore her physical body away from earthly snares in order to become one with Christ and receive a place in heaven, so too can the souls of likeminded believers. In addition, Agnes' divine transformation into a priestly representation of Christ reveals how Bede was able to utilise the figure of a female saint to edify and encourage members of the opposite sex to model their lives on hers. Finally, the depiction of Agnes' dramatic transformation in verses six and seven also provides an answer as to why Bede changed the chronological order of the *PSA*'s narrative. By using these two stanzas as both the structural and thematic hinge point of the hymn, Bede creates two large sections to his hymn. The first narrates how Agnes' faith grants her saintly status, the second, which covers the miracles she performed on earth, reveals the extent to which her faith empowered her.

Bede's hymn concludes the survey of Anglo-Saxon liturgical material and it remains now to offer some general conclusions. One important but hitherto ignored

Both words are used interchangeably in the Vulgate to refer to Egyptian cotton (or one possible occasion, silk – see the passage from *Gn*), see for example: *Gn* 41.42, *Ex* 27.9 and 39.27 and *Ez* 16.10. In terms of Bede's choice of vocabulary, it is possible that he deliberately employed a more familiar noun in order to aid comprehension. (The noun 'linteum' occurs at: *Is* 3.22, *Ez* 30.21, *Io* 13.4–5 and *Act* 10.11 and 11.5; however, none of these passages appear to have any relevance to Bede's hymn).

<sup>269</sup> 'the justifications of the saints.'

<sup>270</sup> 'clothed in fine linen, white and clean.'

<sup>271</sup> *Expositio Apocalypseos* (19.8): 'Et datum est illi, ut cooperiat se byssino splendente candido. Datum est illi factis suis indui...' – ('And it is granted to her that she might clothe herself with fine linen, glittering and white. It is granted to her that she might be clothed with her (good) deeds...').

<sup>272</sup> *Expositio Apocalypseos* (19.14): 'Vestiti byssino albo mundo. Quod ipse superius exposuit iustificaciones esse sanctorum, iuxta quod psalmus ait: Sacerdotes tui induant iustitiam' – ('Clothed in fine linen, white and clean. Because he himself related previously that (these) were the justifications of the saints, wherefore in a like manner the Psalm says: 'Let thy priests be clothed with justice').

question must also be considered: whether or not the Anglo-Saxon liturgy had any influence on the Insular authors who adapted the *PSA*.

At the start of the chapter a number of questions were posed, including whether it was possible to determine the popularity of Agnes' feast-days, or the status accorded to her, both in general amongst the saints culted by the Anglo-Saxons as well as in relation to other female saints known to the English. A query was also raised about the influence of the *PSA* on liturgical documentation composed in England. It is clear from the calendrical and martyrological evidence that Agnes' feast was known throughout the country from at least the seventh century onwards, a fact corroborated by the constant appearance of her two festivities in later sacramentaries. Whilst the calendars reveal that no virgin martyr, apart from the Blessed Virgin Mary and Æthelthryth, was ever regarded as part of the top flight of English saints, other texts suggest that Agnes was accorded a degree of honour amongst female saints as a whole. Early works such as Bede's hymn to Æthelthryth and the *MCY* hint that a small group of virgins, including Agnes, were honoured by the northern Church, a hypothesis further reinforced by the existence of Bede's hymn to Agnes. Whether this group or a more inclusive one was also honoured in the south cannot be determined at present.<sup>273</sup> Later evidence for a degree of honour accorded to Agnes from the Mass prayers of sacramentaries, may well reflect much earlier Roman or Frankish traditions inherited by the Anglo-Saxons, but the English benedictionals do point to the attempts of reformers to promote three Roman virgin martyrs: Agnes, Agatha and Cecilia.

The question of whether all levels of Anglo-Saxon society knew of Agnes' cult remains hard to answer. It is clear from texts for the Mass and Divine Office, as well as Bede and Aldhelm's works, that ecclesiastical institutions probably always celebrated her feast. Whether the same can be said for laymen is doubtful. It is possible that Mass celebrations for Agnes' feasts may have been witnessed by laymen; furthermore, the use of litanies of the saints at numerous ceremonies opens up another route by which they might have come across her name. The infrequency with which female saints appear in both medical cures and private prayers, alongside the fact that Ælfric's patrons

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<sup>273</sup> One small piece of evidence that has not yet been mentioned, however, may strengthen the case that the virgin martyrs enjoyed a degree of popularity throughout the early Anglo-Saxon period: naming practices. The preface of Aldhelm's *Dlu* addresses three nuns named Justina, Eulalia and Thecla (as well as another woman named Scholastica). The Letters of Boniface (c. 675–754) also address a nun named Thecla and the Life of Leoba (d. 779) mentions that one of the Anglo-Saxon abbesses' nuns at Bischofsheim was called Agatha. For Boniface's Letters see: M. Tangl (ed.), *Die Briefe des heiligen Bonifatius und Lullus*, MGH Epistolae Selectae I (Berlin, 1916), pp. 139–40 (*Epist.* lxvii). For the Life of Leoba see: T. Noble and T. Head (eds.), *Soldiers of Christ: Saints and Saints' Lives from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (London, 1995), pp. 255–77.

requested *Lives of the Saints* in order to learn of saints such as Agnes, however, suggests that the virgin martyrs as a whole received little Insular popular devotion.

The use of quotations from the *PSA* in private prayerbooks possibly owned by laypeople offers another possible route by which some non-religious may have encountered her cult. The fact, however, that these prayers contain little or no information about the *passiones* from which they are borrowed suggests that many might have been unaware of the origin of the texts they were using. Nevertheless, the early private prayers certainly provide evidence for the influence of the *PSA* on liturgical texts composed by the Anglo-Saxons. Indeed, the evidence of English martyrologies, prayers, hymns and blessings indicates that the authors of Insular liturgical compositions for both of Agnes' feast-days turned to the *PSA* for guidance. This in turn suggests that manuscripts of the *PSA* may have been fairly common in the Anglo-Saxon period. Overall, Agnes appears to have been a fairly popular saint amongst ecclesiastical institutions, even if she was less well known outside of such communities. Whilst she was never going to be able to rival the likes of Mary or other important Biblical saints (and may have often been eclipsed by native holy figures), amongst the early female saints honoured by the English Church she maintained a consistently high standing.

Finally, there is the question of whether an author's knowledge of the liturgy affected the direction of any of the Insular adaptations of the *PSA*. As churchmen, Aldhelm, Bede and Ælfric no doubt participated many times in the celebrations for Agnes' feast-days over the years. Since many of the prayers used in services such as the Mass were formed from passages of Scripture, it is possible that familiarity with these liturgical forms could lead an author to associate particular verses with a saint. In turn, these links may have affected the choice of images they choose to emphasise (whether deliberately or subconsciously) in their own accounts of the saint's legend, especially if allusions to these same Biblical passages were also present in the original *passio* or *uita*. One fundamental problem with this line of inquiry is that very little early Anglo-Saxon liturgical material survives; moreover, the majority of what does exist dates mainly to the tenth century and later. We can only, therefore, speculate about the texts known to Aldhelm and Bede. Ælfric, on the other hand, would probably have been familiar with a version of the material for Agnes' feast-days discussed earlier on in this chapter and it is interesting to consider Agnes' Mass-sets alongside his 'Life of Agnes.' The Biblical passages used for Agnes' two feast-days comprise:

*Ps* 44 (four prayers on 21 January and six on 28 January)

*Ps* 118 (two prayers on 21 January)

*Sir* 51.1–2 (reading on 28 January)

*Mt* 13.44–52 (Gospel reading and communion on 28 January)

*Mt* 25.1–13 (Gospel reading and communion on 21 January)

II *Cor* 10.17–18 and 11.1–2 (reading on 21 January)

Many of these verses parallel broad and generic themes found in any version of the *PSA*: the idea of spiritual marriage (*Mt* 25.1–13) or the acquisition of virtue (*Ps* 118). However, the most prominent Scriptural work associated with both of Agnes' feasts is *Ps* 44, which contains the image of the queen of Heaven clothed in gold (44.10). In Chapter Three, I argued that this psalm constituted one of the most prominent Biblical themes of Ælfric's 'Life of Agnes'. While a variety of different sources may have influenced Ælfric to emphasise Agnes' role as a golden queen, it is clear that the liturgy should be included amongst the list. There is also a slight possibility that the use of *Ps* 44 in the liturgy influenced Aldhelm's depiction of Agnes in the *Dlu* as the golden Ark of the Covenant, although this remains a highly speculative thought. Interestingly, however, it would appear that Bede and the author of the *OEM* developed their conceptions of Agnes without specific reference to the liturgy, since neither of these works alludes to *Ps* 44.

Overall, this chapter has served to emphasise the trends observed in Chapters Two and Three, that Agnes' story was malleable and could be fine-tuned and adapted to serve many needs. It remains now to offer some final conclusions and to reflect on Agnes' changing symbolism over the course of the Anglo-Saxon period.

## CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has explored the transformation of the *Passio Sanctae Agnetis* initiated by the arrival of this late antique Roman text in Anglo-Saxon England. It has revealed how the basic tale of one virgin martyr could be adapted and retold many times for many different purposes. Every Insular version of the *PSA* considered in this study is clearly modelled on the same basic narrative; nevertheless, each of these texts also possesses a marked degree of originality and uniqueness. It is clear, at least in the case of Agnes, that the sheer malleability of the figure of the virgin martyr attracted many authors to retell her martyrdom.

The first section of this dissertation explored how the virgin saints offered the perfect image for any author who wished to discuss the Christian faith. The depiction of a saint's martyrdom, which simultaneously enacts their spiritual marriage with Christ, can address both an ascetic audience, whose vow of chastity was frequently depicted as a form of death and / or marriage, as well as all the faithful. Christ urges each believer to suffer the trials of the cross daily (*Lc* 9.23) in order to perfect his or her faith and to dwell in love with God (*Mt* 22.37–8). Yet at the same time each individual can only travel to God through the guidance and the support of the Church, whose own relationship with Christ is depicted throughout the Bible as a loving marriage. Consequently, there is no Christian audience that cannot identify with the figure of the virgin martyr. Furthermore, despite the characterisation of the saint's love for Jesus in terms reminiscent of secular romance, these texts function as complex theological tracts.

Chapter One demonstrated the extent to which the author of the *PSA* incorporated a vast number of Biblical allusions into his narrative. The majority of these echoes appear to have been deliberately placed in order to allow Agnes' martyrdom to function on a number of different symbolic levels: the saint can be perceived as a figure of Christ, of the Church and of the individual soul. Various aspects of Agnes' tale could reach out to a range of different audiences; however, many of the Biblical resonances deployed by the author, alongside additional elements of the *PSA*'s prose, seem to have been directed at one particular group: consecrated virgins. This feature of the *PSA* is also reinforced by the probable date and origin of the text, which likewise suggest that the author wrote to promote Christian chastity as a viable and preferable alternative to secular marriage.

The use of Biblical allusions to create a multi-level didactic text opened up the *PSA* to a range of interpretations, which would vary according to the level of knowledge

and perceptiveness of each person who engaged with the work. In the second part of the thesis, the Anglo-Saxon adaptations of the *PSA* revealed the true potential of the virgin martyr as a figure who could speak to many diverse audiences. All four Insular authors clearly appreciated a number of the Biblical allusions found in the *PSA*, yet not one of these writers reacted in the same way to Agnes' legend. Each writer was able to manoeuvre, reshape and direct the *PSA* to address contemporary concerns and issues.

Aldhelm's dual entries for Agnes in his *De uirginitate* provide perhaps the most distinctive Insular reuse of the virgin martyr's legend, since he employed different sets of Biblical ideas in both his prose and verse accounts. In the *Dlu*, the most prominent echo that seems to have interested Aldhelm is the *PSA*'s allusion to the concept of Christ as the High Priest. Indeed, Aldhelm's depiction of Agnes as the Ark of the Covenant specifically alludes to the major Biblical passage related to this idea: *Hb* 9.<sup>1</sup> In the *Cdu*, however, Aldhelm replaces this image, as well as his masculine characterisation of Agnes in general, with nature motifs reminiscent of *Ct* and a much more feminine depiction of the maiden. Thus the single figure of the virgin martyr can be viewed as a figure of Christ in the *Dlu* and as a figure of the Church in the *Cdu*. When *De uirginitate* is read together, as Aldhelm requests, Agnes thus represents the union of Christ and the Church / soul.

The Biblical images surrounding Agnes change again in Ælfric's 'Life of Agnes.' Ælfric's text is by far and away the most faithful rendition of the *PSA* and hence retains a large number of the Biblical images from the original *passio*. However, a close analysis of this work reveals that Ælfric has subtly manipulated his source in order to direct his readers to focus on a selected number of resonances, with a distinct focus on those referring to *Ps* 44. The analysis of a number of contemporary works, as well as Ælfric's teaching in the *CH*, reveals how Agnes' casting as the queen of Heaven was designed to portray her as a figure of Mary and of the Church. Ælfric's alterations, which move away from depicting Agnes as an ascetic exemplar, are understandable since *LS* was written for both laymen and religious. It is interesting, however, to compare Ælfric's work to another account that may also have been addressed to laymen: the *OEM*. The author of this text clearly had different ideas to Ælfric and his main interest appears to have been to portray Agnes as a figure of Christ in order to emphasise the nature of her *imitatio Christi*. Through a clear allusion to *Mc* 9.2, the *OEM* directs a reader to view Agnes' miraculous robe as a re-enactment of Christ's Transfiguration. The final adaptation of the *PSA* considered, namely Bede's *Illuxit*

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 83–7.

*alma saeculis*, also employs the heavenly white robe sent to Agnes as the central image of his account, but, yet again, a completely different set of Biblical verses appears to govern Agnes' depiction. In Bede's version, the language used to describe Agnes is used to recall various passages from *Apc*, which serve to give Agnes a dual image: various descriptions of the saint allude to the 144,000 virgins of *Apc* 14.3, another set of images serves to cast Agnes as Christ the High Priest. Together they appear to be aimed at a male monastic audience to show how a virtuous life on earth can lead to a heavenly status as one of the 144,000 in the image of Christ.

I hope that this study of the *PSA* has revealed how the close analysis of various adaptations of one virgin martyr's tale can elucidate a great deal about Anglo-Saxon attitudes towards such saints and indeed towards hagiography in general. Many of the areas explored in this thesis have shown that they would be profitable areas for future investigation. For instance, it would be fascinating to investigate the similarities and differences between Insular approaches to, and interpretations of, the *uitae* of both continental virgin martyrs and native Anglo-Saxon female saints. On a more detailed level, a full-scale examination of both the prose and verse sections of *De uirginitate* together may reveal a great deal more about Aldhelm's thoughts on the topic of chastity. It would also be interesting to explore the other virgin martyr *passiones* from Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* in relation to their Latin sources, in order to see whether Ælfric controlled these texts in a similar manner to the 'Life of Agnes.' In addition, Bede's hymns, which have received very little scholarly attention so far, represent yet another profitable area of further study.

One final interesting route would be to pursue the study of English adaptations of the *PSA* into the high and late medieval periods, since Agnes' legend continued to attract the interest of authors long after the Anglo-Saxon era. For example, two thirteenth-century Latin verse accounts can be found in the works of John of Garland (c. 1195– c. 1258) and Alexander of Ashby (*fl.* 1200–20). There is also an Anglo-Norman metrical rendition of Agnes' legend, which was compiled by the Franciscan friar Nicholas Bozon (*fl.* c. 1320).<sup>2</sup> Middle English versions include the entry for Agnes in the thirteenth-century *South English Legendary* and the *Lyf of S. Anneys* found in the *Legendys of Hooly Wummen* by the Augustinian friar, Osbern Bokenham (c. 1393– c.

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<sup>2</sup> A. Saiani (ed.), *Epithalamium beate virginis Marie, Giovanni de Garlandia; testo critico, traduzione e commento*, Accademia toscana di scienze e lettere "La Colombaria", Studi 139 (Florence, 1995) – for Agnes see VII.537–48. T. Bestul, F. Morenzoni and G. Dinkova-Braun (eds.), *Alexander of Ashby, Opera Omnia*, 2 vols., CCCM 188 (Turnhout, 2004), II, 166–7 (*Liber Festiualis*). A.J. Denomy, *The Old French Lives of Saint Agnes and Other Vernacular Versions of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA, 1938), pp. 214–25.

1467).<sup>3</sup> Interest in Agnes' legend also continued far beyond the Middle Ages and even in the Victorian age the martyr continued to inspire writers, including Alfred, Lord Tennyson and John Keats, to celebrate her in their works.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, Keats' work also reveals one final and intriguing role in which the virgin martyr could be cast, namely that of a holy fortune-teller, whom nineteenth-century folklore held could reveal the identity of a maiden's future husband:

They told her how, upon St Agnes' Eve,  
 Young virgins might have visions of delight,  
 And soft adorings from their loves receive  
 Upon the honey'd middle of the night,  
 If ceremonies due they did aright;  
 As, supperless to bed they must retire,  
 And couch supine their beauties, lily white;  
 Nor look behind, nor sideways, but require  
 Of Heaven with upward eyes for all that they desire.

(Keats, *The Eve of St Agnes*, lines 46–54)<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> C. D'Evelyn and A.J. Mills (eds.), *The South English Legendary*, 3 vols., EETS os 235–6 and 244 (London, 1956 and 1959), 1, 19–25. M.S. Serjeantson (ed.), *Legendys of Hooly Wummen by Osbern Bokenham*, EETS os 206 (London, 1938), pp. 110–29. The late fourteenth-century *Scottish Legendary* also includes a Middle English account of Agnes' death: W.M. Metcalfe (ed.), *Legends of the Saints in the Scottish Dialect of the Fourteenth Century*, 6 vols., Scottish Text Society first series 13, 18, 23, 25, 35 and 37 (Edinburgh, 1888–96), IV, 346–57.

<sup>4</sup> Tennyson's poem 'St Agnes' Eve' was first published in 1836. C. Ricks (ed.), *The Poems of Tennyson* (London, 1969), pp. 552–4. 'The Eve of St Agnes' by John Keats was written in 1820. J. Stillinger (ed.), *The Poems of John Keats* (London, 1978), pp. 299–318.

<sup>5</sup> Stillinger, *The Poems of Keats*, p. 301.

APPENDIX ONE  
A New Working Edition of the *Passio Sanctae Agnetis*

### 1.1 Introduction

The most recent attempt to list the hagiographical works of both Ambrose and Pseudo-Ambrose records four hundred and twenty-seven complete and fragmentary witnesses of *BHL* 156, which predate 1500.<sup>1</sup> One hundred and two of these manuscripts are thought to predate 1100, of which only three were written in England.<sup>2</sup> The present edition of the *Passio Sanctae Agnetis* is based upon these three manuscripts (N, P and S), none of which have previously been edited. The edition aims to provide a text that might have circulated in Anglo-Saxon England and thus bears a distinct resemblance to those known by the Anglo-Saxon authors whose use and adaptations of *BHL* 156 are analysed in this thesis.

#### *Manuscripts of the Passio Sanctae Agnetis (BHL 156–7 and 2527–7a)*<sup>3</sup>

N = London, British Library, Cotton Nero E. i, part 1, folios 114r–116v (Worcester, s. xi<sup>3/4</sup>, Gneuss 344. This manuscript is part of the Cotton-Corpus Legendary)

London, British Library, Cotton Nero E i, part 1 comprises two hundred and eight folios measuring *ca.* 270mm x 400mm, which for the large part are ruled in dry-point and written in two columns (*ca.* 100mm x 320mm each) of forty-three lines. Folios 1r–54v display some variation on this format, but these texts are later accretions to the volume.<sup>4</sup> Ker dated the manuscript on palaeographical grounds to the mid eleventh century and identified its script as that of the scriptorium of Worcester Cathedral.<sup>5</sup> Two contents lists appear in the manuscript; the first written by a sixteenth-century hand on folios 1–2, the second by the original scribe on folio 55r.<sup>6</sup> The core eleventh-century text of Cotton Nero

<sup>1</sup> C. Lanéry, 'Ambroise hagiographe: Les dossiers hagiographiques ambrosiens et pseudo-ambrosiens' (unpubl. PhD dissertation, Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Paris, 2006), pp. 549–620.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Hereafter referred to as *BHL* 156 for convenience.

<sup>4</sup> P. Jackson and M. Lapidge, 'The Contents of the Cotton-Corpus Legendary', in P.E. Szarmach (ed.), *Holy Men and Holy Women: Old English Prose Saints' Lives and Their Contexts* (Albany, NY, 1996), pp. 131–46. See p. 132 for a list of these accretions.

<sup>5</sup> N. Ker, 'Membra Disiecta, Second Series', *British Museum Quarterly* 14 (1939): 79–86, at pp. 82–3. See also, M. Brett, 'The Use of Universal Chronicle at Worcester', in J.P. Genet (ed.), *L'historiographie médiévale en Europe* (Paris, 1991), pp. 277–85, at pp. 282–3 who suggests that the exemplar for the Legendary was acquired for Worcester by Bishop Ealdred (1046–61).

<sup>6</sup> Jackson and Lapidge, 'The Contents', p. 132.

E. i contains fifty *uitae* and *passiones*.<sup>7</sup> At one stage the manuscript formed part of what is now known as the Cotton-Corpus Legendary, an anthology of one hundred and sixty-five saints legends arranged *per circulum anni*.<sup>8</sup> This Legendary now exists in three parts: British Library, Cotton Nero E. i, parts 1 and 2, and Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 9. The division of the Legendary into the Cotton and Corpus volumes appears to have occurred during the late eleventh century.<sup>9</sup> At a considerably later date, the Cotton segment of the Legendary then appears to have been divided again, since only the beginning of part i and the end of part ii have acquired additional items.<sup>10</sup> Together, the Cotton and Corpus codices are not only the earliest known multi-volume legendary to have survived from Anglo-Saxon England, but also represent the earliest surviving copy of a continental two volume legendary, whose contents are transmitted exclusively in a number of English manuscripts.<sup>11</sup> Due to the inclusion of a large number of local saints from northern France, the actual text of this lost continental Legendary is believed to have been compiled in the late ninth to early tenth century in the diocese of Noyen-Tournai, part of the arch-diocese of Rheims.<sup>12</sup>

The *Passio Sanctae Agnetis* is item number seventeen of the original contents of manuscript N and commences at line thirty-two of the first column on folio 114r. The *incipit* and the date of Agnes' feast are written in red rustic capitals. Following these two items, the text of the *PSA* opens on line thirty-three with a large red initial that stretches over the height of four lines. In addition, all of the capital letters used in the opening to Agnes' legend show faint traces of silver paint, although no further decoration was attempted. A running header accompanies the *PSA* on both the verso and recto sides of every folio. It reads, with minor variations:

· CAP PASSIO SCAE AGNETIS · VIRGINIS ·

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 135–7.

<sup>8</sup> See *Ibid.*, pp. 135–44 for a contents list of all three parts of the Cotton-Corpus Legendary.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> W. Levison first drew attention to a number of manuscripts relating to the Cotton Corpus tradition in 1920 ('*Conspectus Codicum Hagiographicorum*', in B. Krusch and W. Levison (eds.), *Passiones uitaeque sanctorum aevi Merouingici et antiquorum aliquot*, MGH, *Scriptores rerum Merouingicarum* 7 (Hanover, 1920), pp. 529–706, at pp. 544–6). The remaining later manuscripts comprise: Salisbury, Cathedral Library, 221 + 222 (see below), Hereford, Cathedral Library, P.7.vi (Hereford, s. xii<sup>med</sup>), Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 354 (English, s. xii<sup>ex</sup>) and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Fell 2 (English, s. xii<sup>ex</sup>). Only Salisbury 221 now also preserves the saints lives celebrated in January.

<sup>12</sup> M. Lapidge (ed.), *The Cult of St. Swithun*, Winchester Studies 4 (Oxford, 2003), p. 578.

A number of later corrections, dated by Ker to c. 1100, can be found throughout the manuscript; however, in the case of Agnes' legend, these comprise no more than the odd spelling correction and the addition of two missing words to the opening of the text on folio 114r.<sup>13</sup> The *PSA* concludes at line two in the second column on folio 116v and is followed by an *explicit* written in black capitals. The letter colouring and format used throughout the *PSA* matches that of each of the original eleventh-century lives.

P = Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, latin 10861, folios 95v–102r (S. England, (?) Christ Church, Canterbury, s. ix<sup>1/4</sup> or ix<sup>1</sup>, Gneuss 898)

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, latin 10861 comprises one hundred and twenty-three folios measuring 255mm x 185mm, written in two columns of twenty seven lines each, by one scribe in mainly cursive minuscule script.<sup>14</sup> Michelle Brown has argued that the manuscript was most likely written at Christ Church, Canterbury during the early ninth century due to the close relationship between P's script and that of a number of charters produced at this institution between c. 805–25.<sup>15</sup> The length of the manuscript's sojourn in England, however, cannot be precisely established. Two late twelfth- to early thirteenth-century *ex libris* stamps of the library of St Peter's at Beauvais found on the manuscript's opening folio indicate that this volume had been exported to the continent by a relatively early date.<sup>16</sup>

P is the earliest known legendary to have survived from Anglo-Saxon England and contains eighteen *passiones* of apostolic and early Christian martyrs.<sup>17</sup> The collection is prefaced by a twelfth-century contents page on folio 1v, which lists nineteen works: the

<sup>13</sup> N. Ker, *English Manuscripts in the Century after the Norman Conquest* (Oxford, 1960), p. 53, who adds: 'the Worcester 'corrector' (of 1100) was not mending errors, but was making what seemed to him a better text.'

<sup>14</sup> For a detailed description and discussion of this manuscript, see M. Brown, 'Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 10861 and the Scriptorium of Christ Church, Canterbury', *ASE* 15 (1986): 119–37, in particular pp. 120–23.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 119 and 127–37. The first scholar to propose an English origin for lat. 10861 was Bernhard Bischoff, who remarked on the similarity of this work to the Book of Cerne (Cambridge, UL, Ll.1.10, Mercia, c.820x840, Gneuss 28) in a private communication to J.E. Cross. J.E. Cross, 'Saints' Lives in Old English: Latin Manuscripts and Vernacular Accounts: the *Old English Martyrology*', *Peritia* 1 (1982): 38–62, at p. 53.

<sup>16</sup> Brown, 'Paris, lat. 10861', p. 121.

<sup>17</sup> Jackson and Lapidge, 'The Contents', p. 132 and Brown, 'Paris, lat. 10861', p. 122, which also provides a catalogue of these texts. Indeed, P is one of the earliest known texts of the *Passio Sanctae Agnetis*. The two earliest witnesses date to the late eighth century (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 4554 and Turin, Bibliotheca Nazionale, D V 3). A further sixteen ninth-century manuscripts also exist (three of which possibly date to the eighth century and two to the tenth century). See Lanéry, 'Ambroise hagiographe', pp. 549–620, catalogue numbers: 27, 324, 345, 395, 546, 731, 796, 878, 896–8, 992, 1037, 1083, 1107 and 1109.

eighteen texts still contained in the manuscript and a *Vita Sancti Martini*, although this text is now lost (or was never actually added).<sup>18</sup> Michelle Brown notes, however, that the preservation of the original flyleaves indicates that the ninth-century legendary has survived intact.<sup>19</sup> The order of the various saints' lives found within the codex shows no sign of the calendrical structure usually employed in legendaries, which led Brown to hypothesise that the work was intended for 'a devotional, rather than liturgical, function.'<sup>20</sup>

The *Passio Sanctae Agnetis* comprises item fourteen of this manuscript; it opens at line fourteen of column one on folio 95v and follows the same format used for all eighteen lives in the collection.<sup>21</sup> The *incipit* is written in the same cursive minuscule as the rest of the text, although here the scribe used red (rather than the usual brown) ink and left several blank lines before, between and after the two lines of the *incipit*. Due to the faded condition of the red ink, the opening word *incipit* has later been re-inked in black, presumably to clearly indicate the start of Agnes' legend. The actual text of the *PSA* opens at line eighteen with a red and blue decorated initial covering the height of three lines. The use of coloured ink (red, blue and gold) continues throughout the *PSA*, where numerous coloured punctuation marks and filled capitals appear to have been employed to indicate divisions within the text. A tenth-century (?) English hand has added a number of corrections to the text; these include not only orthographical changes, but also Latin glosses and missing phrases on folios 96r, 97v and 99r.<sup>22</sup> The *PSA* concludes at line seventeen of column one on folio 102r. The *explicit* is then written in the same format as the *incipit*: cursive minuscule in red ink (the word *explicit* is also re-inked in black) with blank spaces left before, between and after lines nineteen and twenty-one, which contain the actual text of the *explicit*.

S = Salisbury, Cathedral Library, 221, folios 93r–97r (Salisbury, s. xi ex., Gneuss 754.5)

Formerly catalogued as Oxford, Bodleian Library, Fell 4, this manuscript is a large volume of two hundred and seventy-eight folios measuring 365 x 250mm, ruled in dry

<sup>18</sup> Brown, Paris, lat. 10861', pp. 121–2.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 122–3.

<sup>21</sup> The one exception to this format is the elaborately decorated initial and opening lines on folio 2r, see *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

point and written in one column (275 x 150mm) throughout by six hands.<sup>23</sup> The first eight quires of the work contain thirty-three lines per column, the rest of the work, thirty-six lines. Dated on palaeographical grounds to the late eleventh-century, S was identified by Ker as part of the early group of 'foundation books of Salisbury Cathedral Library.'<sup>24</sup> This collection of texts is thought to represent part of the output of the Cathedral scriptorium during the episcopacy of St. Osmund, bishop of Salisbury 1078–99, shortly after the Cathedral's foundation in 1075.<sup>25</sup>

Despite the fact that S postdates the Conquest, its relationship with British Library, Cotton Nero E i merits its inclusion in the present edition, since both manuscripts are believed to have been copied from the same exemplar of the Cotton-Corpus tradition.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, like N, S contains a number saints' lives whose feasts were celebrated in the first part of the year. The Salisbury manuscript, however, covers January to June, as opposed to January to May. As a result, the volume contains sixty-seven *uitae* and *passiones* to Cotton Nero E i's fifty.<sup>27</sup> Two contents lists preface the manuscript: the first is a fragmentary thirteenth-century list (f. 2v), which reveals the loss of two lives from the end of the volume, the second complete record dates to the seventeenth century (ff. 3–4).<sup>28</sup>

The *Passio Sanctae Agnetis* comprises item number sixteen of S, and its format reflects that of all the lives in the manuscript.<sup>29</sup> The *incipit*, which is written in red rustic capitals, opens on line twenty-seven of f. 93r, whilst the main text commences on line twenty-nine with an enlarged red opening initial stretching across the height of around four lines. The remainder of the opening word is written in black capitals, filled with red ink; the use of capitals does not extend beyond this one word. No further decoration occurs

<sup>23</sup> For a detailed description of this manuscript see N. Ker and A.J. Piper, *Medieval Manuscripts in British Libraries, vol. IV: Paisley to York* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 257–59. The manuscript was returned to Salisbury Cathedral in 1985.

<sup>24</sup> N. Ker, 'Salisbury Cathedral Manuscripts and Patrick Young's Catalogue', *The Wiltshire Magazine* 53 (1949): 153–83, at p. 155.

<sup>25</sup> N. Ker, 'The Beginnings of Salisbury Cathedral Library', in J.J.G. Alexander and M.T. Gibson (eds.), *Medieval Learning and Literature: Essays Presented to R.W. Hunt* (Oxford, 1976), pp. 23–55, at pp. 23–4 and 33–4.

<sup>26</sup> Levison, 'Conspectus', p. 545.

<sup>27</sup> See Ker and Piper, *Medieval Manuscripts*, pp. 257–9 for a detailed contents list of MS 221. Items 44 and 67 are the only later additions, and date to the early twelfth century. See also: T. Webber, *Scribes and Scholars at Salisbury Cathedral* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 154–57. The companion volume to MS 221 is Salisbury, Cathedral Library, 222 (formerly Oxford, Bodleian Library, Fell 1), which is now incomplete and only covers July to 9 October. See Ker and Piper, *Medieval Manuscripts*, pp. 259–62.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 257. The two missing lives are those of SS Getullus et Cerealis (BHL 3524) and S Basilidis Tripodis (BHL 1019).

<sup>29</sup> The one exception is the first item (*Passio S Martinae uirginis*), which opens with an illuminated initial (f.1r).

throughout the text until the *explicit* at line twenty-one of f. 97r, which duplicates the red rustic capitals format of the *incipit*. A segment of the main text in the lower part of folio 96r appears to have been rewritten by a later hand, possibly due to the original ink fading badly. Following Ker's classification of the early Salisbury scribes, the *PSA* text is thought to have been written by Scribe A, the principal scribe of the scriptorium.<sup>30</sup> A few minor contemporary corrections are attributed to Scribe C, the scriptorium's director, possibly to be equated with St Osmund himself.<sup>31</sup>

### *Previous Editions of the Passio Sanctae Agnetis*

Unsurprisingly, due to Agnes' status as one of the saints of the Canon of the Mass from the late fifth century onwards, as well as the medieval attribution of her passion to the pen of Ambrose of Milan, *BHL* 156 has been repeatedly edited and published since the fifteenth century. The majority of the early editions of Ambrose's literary corpus included *BHL* 156 and this practice continued until the seventeenth century.<sup>32</sup> The first editors officially to incorporate *BHL* 156 into an appendix of spurious Ambrosian texts were the Maurists, whose edition of Ambrose's works (1686–90) was later reprinted by Migne in his *Patrologia Latina* (1845).<sup>33</sup>

From the fifteenth to the sixteenth centuries, *BHL* 156 not only appeared in print as part of the Ambrosian corpus, but was also included in the early hagiographic compendia edited by Mombritius (c. 1480), J. Faber Stapulensis (1519) and Surius (1570–7).<sup>34</sup> In the seventeenth century, the first volume of the Bollandists' *Acta Sanctorum* (1643) reprinted Surius' edition of *BHL* 156, collated with a number of other (so far unidentifiable)

<sup>30</sup> Ker, 'The Beginnings', pp. 23 and 33–7.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>32</sup> Lanéry, 'Ambroise hagiographe', p. 320 notes that this practise continued despite the reservations of a number of editors including Erasmus (*Diui Ambrosii episcopi mediolanensis omnia opera* (Paris, 1529)) and Bandini, who, nevertheless, allowed his edition of *BHL* 156 to be referred to as an authentic Ambrosian work when it appeared in F. Peretti *et al.* (eds.), *Sancti Ambrosii Opera omnia*, 5 vols. (Rome, 1579–85).

<sup>33</sup> J. Dufrische and D.N. Le Nourry (eds.), *Ambrosius Opera, ad manuscriptos codices Vaticanos, Gallicanos, Belgicos, et necnon ad editiones ueteres emendata, studio et labore monachorum Ordinis S. Benedicti, à Congregatione S. Mauri*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1686–90). Migne, PL 17, 735–42.

<sup>34</sup> Boninus Mombritius (ed.), *Sanctuarium seu uitae sanctorum*, 2 vols. (Milan, c.1480). See now: B. Mombritius (ed.), *Sanctuarium seu uitae sanctorum, nouam hanc editionem curauerunt duo monachi Solesmenses*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1910) (Agnes: I, 40–4). J. Faber Stapulensis, *Martyrum agones antiquis ex monumentis genuine descriptos* (Paris, 1519), ff. 50<sup>v</sup>–53. Laurentius Surius, *De probatis sanctorum historiis*, 6 vols. (Cologne, 1570–7), ff. 488–92 (for the three later editions see: (1574), ff. 507–11, (1618), ff. 338–41 and (1875), ff. 525–31). One extract from Agnes' passion was also published in this period: G. Witzel, *Hagiologium seu de sanctis ecclesia dei* (Mainz, 1541), ff. xc<sup>r</sup>–xci<sup>v</sup> (*PSA* 7–12, 'tertio...recusata'). Ff. xc<sup>v</sup>–xci<sup>v</sup> print *PSA* 171–214, which includes Emerentiana's death ('Emerentiana...inuenire, Amen').

manuscripts.<sup>35</sup> Several years later in 1689, Ruinart published yet another edition of Agnes' legend.<sup>36</sup> A further three editions of *BHL* 156 were undertaken in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by Bartolini (1858), Bongiorno (1897) and Jubaru (1907).<sup>37</sup> To date, however, there is as yet no full critical edition of *BHL* 156. Indeed, to the best of my knowledge, not one of the editions listed above even provides a full list of the manuscripts consulted. The only exception to this last statement is the most recent edition of Agnes' passion: that of Fábrega Grau (1953–55), which reports the early Hispanic manuscript tradition of *BHL* 156.<sup>38</sup> In order to establish a text on which to base an investigation into the knowledge of *BHL* 156 in Anglo-Saxon England, the only course of action is to turn to the relevant manuscripts themselves.

### *Editorial Policy*

#### *Text, Apparatus Criticus and Apparatus Fontium*

The following edition is based upon the three-abovementioned manuscript witnesses: London, British Library, Cotton Nero E i, part 1 (N), Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, latin 10861 (P) and Salisbury, Cathedral Library, 221 (S). All significant variants are reported in the *apparatus criticus* in order to provide any interested reader with the means to distinguish between the two traditions of *BHL* 156 known to have circulated in Anglo-Saxon England. These two versions comprise an early ninth-century text of the *Passio Sanctae Agnetis* preserved in manuscript P, as well as an eleventh-century account recorded in manuscripts N and S. The additional lines and glosses possibly recorded in P by a tenth-century English hand are also noted, since they may shed light on Insular knowledge of Agnes' passion in the period between the composition of P (c. 805–25) and that of N and S around two hundred years later.

<sup>35</sup> J. Bollandus *et al.* (eds.), *Acta Sanctorum* (Brussels, 1643–) (Agnes: *Acta SS.* Jan II, 715–18). *Acta SS.*: II, 714, 'Acta S. Agnetis (quorum auctor esse creditur S. Ambrosius...) edidit Surius; nos cum MSS S. Martini et S. Maximini Treviris, S. Audomari, S. Mariae et Ripatorio, aliisque, non paucis, et aliquot correctioribus editionibus contulimus.'

<sup>36</sup> T. Ruinart, *Acta primorum martyrum sincera et selecta* (Paris, 1689). A further four editions of this work were published in 1713, 1731, 1802–3 and 1859.

<sup>37</sup> D. Bartolini, *Gli atti del martirio della nobilissima vergine Romana S. Agnese* (Rome, 1858), pp. 1–22; E. Bongiorno, *Le vergine et martyre Romana Sant'Agnese* (Brescia, 1897), pp. 19–47; F. Jubaru, *Sainte Agnès: Vierge et martyre de la Voie Nomentana d'après de nouvelles recherches* (Paris, 1907), pp. 358–63.

<sup>38</sup> A. Fábrega Grau (ed.), *Pasionario hispanico*, 2 vols., Monumenta Hispaniae sacra, serie litúrgica 6 (Madrid, 1953–55) (Agnes: II, 176–82). Fábrega Grau's edition is based upon two tenth-century Spanish manuscripts: London, BL, Add. 25600 (Cardeña, s. x<sup>m</sup>) and Paris, BnF, Nouv. acq. lat. 2180 (Spain, s.x).

No previous edition has ever endeavoured to provide an *apparatus fontium* for the *PSA*; therefore, a preliminary attempt accompanies the current text. Due to the time and space constraints of the current dissertation, however, a decision was made to focus solely on Scripture and the earlier accounts of Agnes' death.<sup>39</sup> (I intend to conduct a more comprehensive survey in the future). The commonly used hagiographical convention of *imitatio Christi*, whereby saints' lives were deliberately constructed to reflect aspects of Christ's ministry on earth, indicates the importance of the Bible as a source for all such works.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, since authors drew extensively on the Scriptures, it logically follows that the passages they borrowed, or alluded to, had a particular significance in relation to the theological message conveyed by their work. Consequently, the context, and, indeed frequently the exegetical interpretations, of any Biblical passages identified within a hagiographical work can provide an insight into the authorial intentions underlying the narrative, as the previous chapters have demonstrated.

#### *Chapter Divisions, Punctuation and Capitalisation*

None of the three English manuscripts contain any formal chapter divisions; therefore, the current edition reproduces the *PSA* as continuous text. To make the edition more user-friendly, however, paragraph breaks have been added. Punctuation and capitalisation have also been modernised. All such editorial changes, as far as possible, follow manuscript P, which contains what appears to be a complex scheme of dual coloured punctuation marks and capital letters to represent divisions within the text. The aim of adhering to P's system is to preserve the medieval breaks, which in turn document the dramatic pauses that the format of P would have transmitted when the manuscript was either heard or read.

#### *Orthography*

1. *The use of ae / e.* There is little agreement between the three manuscripts on this subject. Over ninety percent of feminine first declension endings in P occur as 'ae',

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<sup>39</sup> In addition, Lanéry's study of the *PSA* has identified a number of correspondences between this text and a range of Classical and Late Antique literature ('Ambroise hagiographe', pp. 330–3). Lanéry notes five Biblical correspondences with the text of the *PSA* (p. 330 fn. 7 and p. 333 fn.1); however, I believe that this list can be greatly enlarged. These five allusions are marked by an \* in the *apparatus fontium*.

<sup>40</sup> See T. Heffernan, *Sacred Biography: Saints and Their Biographers in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1988), pp. 215–222, for further details.

whereas S uses exclusively ‘e’. Both manuscripts also follow the same format for the medial use of ‘ae’ or ‘e’. N employs both forms of spelling, but distinctly favours the use of ‘e’, or often just ‘e’, in either the medial or final positions. In this edition all spelling has been standardised to ‘ae’ following the practise of the earliest manuscript P.

2. *Personal names and places.* Four of the eight names and places used in the *PSA* are spelt consistently across all three manuscripts: Ambrose, Aspasius, Constantia and the via Numentana (the modern day via Nomentana). The spelling of Agnes’ name, however, varies quite dramatically. Manuscripts N and S decline her name as if it were a group three noun, while P employs a variety of inflected endings from both groups one and three.<sup>41</sup> Consequently, the more consistent spelling scheme found in N and S is employed in Appendix 1.2. Agnes’ judge is referred to as ‘Simpronius’ in seven of the nine occasions where he is named; therefore, this spelling has been adopted for the current edition.<sup>42</sup> Due to the erratic spelling of the name of the goddess Vesta, the classical form of her name (Vesta) is used here. Since Vesta performs an important symbolic role within the *PSA*, it is vital that the reader realises precisely which pagan goddess the text refers to. Finally, the traditional spelling of Agnes’ foster-sister (Emerentiana) has also been adopted in this edition, since there is little agreement between the three manuscripts.<sup>43</sup>

### *Biblical References*

The twenty direct biblical quotations employed by the *PSA* are italicised; full references are supplied in the notes. Biblical allusions are reported in the *apparatus fontium*, but are not italicised.

<sup>41</sup> Manuscripts N and S decline Agnes’ name in the following manner: ‘Agnes’ (nominative), ‘Agnem’ (accusative – NB Technically this form should read ‘Agnetem’, since the genitive form ‘Agnētis’ is used; however, the following edition maintains N and S’s spelling), ‘Agnētis’ (genitive) and ‘Agnete’ (ablative). The dative form of Agnes’ name does not appear in either manuscript. In contrast, P uses: ‘Agnes’ (nominative), ‘Agnem’ (accusative), ‘Agnes’ OR ‘Agne’ (genitive), ‘Agne’ (dative) and ‘Agne’ (ablative).

<sup>42</sup> The two exceptions to this reading are ‘Simpronianus’ (N, f. 115r) and ‘Simphronius’ (P, f. 97r). Interestingly, the judge often appears as ‘Symphronius’ in a number of the earlier printed editions (e.g. Mombritius, Surius and the *PL*). One exception is Grau’s edition, where the Spanish manuscripts agree with the English spelling of the judge as ‘Simpronius.’

<sup>43</sup> There are four references to Emerentiana across the three texts: N, ‘Emerentiane’; P, ‘Emerentiana’ and ‘Aemerentiane’; S, ‘Emerentia.’

## 1.2 Edition and Facing Translation

Pseudo-Ambrose

*Passio Sanctae Agnetis*

Sigla

N = London, British Library, Cotton Nero E. i, part 1, folios 114r-116v

P = Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, latin 10861, folios 95v-102r

S = Salisbury, Cathedral Library, 221, folios 93r-97r

### Key to Symbols:

- (1) numbers in parentheses designate the chapter divisions used in the *Acta Sanctorum*. The *Acta Sanctorum*'s division of the *Passio Sanctae Agnetis* into three books, however, has not been noted. For reference, Book I comprises c. 1-6, II, c. 7-12, and III, c.13-17.
- <> editorial emendations.
- [[.]] deletions by the scribe. The number of dots within the brackets indicates the number of letters removed.

## INCIPIT PASSIO SANCTAE AGNETIS VIRGINIS

·XII· KALENDAS FEBRUARIAS<sup>a</sup>

## (1) Seruus Christi Ambrosius uirginibus sacris.

1 Diem festum sacratissimae uirginis celebremus. Hinc psalmi <sup>b</sup>resonant, inde concrepant<sup>b</sup>  
 5 lectiones; hinc populorum turbae <sup>c</sup>laetantur, inde subleuantur<sup>c</sup> pauperes Christi. Omnes  
 ergo gratulemur in Domino, et ad aedificationem uirginum qualiter passa sit Agnes  
 10 beatissima ad memoriam reuocemus. <sup>d</sup>Tempore illo erat quaedam uirgo Romae nobilis  
 generis orta natalibus, nomine Agnes, quae, certans contra principes et potestates  
 tenebrarum,<sup>d</sup> <sup>l</sup>tertio decimo aetatis suae anno mortem perdidit<sup>e</sup> et uitam inuenit quia<sup>f</sup> uitae  
 solum dilexit auctorem.<sup>g</sup> Infantia computabatur in annis, sed erat senectus mentis<sup>h</sup>  
 immensa: corpore quidem iuuenula, sed animo cana, pulchra facie, sed pulchrior fide.<sup>2</sup> (2)  
 15 Dum ab scholis reuerteretur, a praefecti urbis filio<sup>i</sup> adamatur, cuius parentes cum  
 requisissent coeperunt plura offerre et<sup>j</sup> plura promittere.<sup>k</sup> Denique, <sup>l</sup>detulerat secum<sup>l</sup>  
 pretiosissima ornamenta quae a beata Agnete uelut<sup>m</sup> quaedam <sup>n</sup>sunt stercora recusata.  
 Putans eam meliora uelle<sup>n</sup> accipere ornamenta, omnem lapidem pretiosum secum defert ad  
 gloriam, et per se ipsum, et per amicos, et notos et<sup>o</sup> adfines, coepit aures<sup>p</sup> uirginis<sup>q</sup>  
 20 appellare, diuitias,<sup>r</sup> domos, possessiones, familias atque omnes diuitias mundi

<sup>a-a</sup> Incipit passio beatissimae martyres Agnes *P*; INCIPIT PASSIO SANCTAE AGNETIS VIRGINIS ·XII·  
 KALENDAS FEBRUARII *N* <sup>b-b</sup> (*post corr.*) resonant, ac deinde (*post corr.*) concrepant *N*; resonaent  
 inde concrepant *S* <sup>c-c</sup> laetentur, inde subleuentur *S* <sup>d-d</sup> *om. P* <sup>e</sup> pertulit *S*  
<sup>f</sup> quid *P* <sup>g</sup> ductorem *P* <sup>h</sup> [[in]] ment[[e]] *N* <sup>i</sup> ante corr. filium *P*  
<sup>j</sup> *om. P* <sup>k</sup> unde factum est, ut iuuenis in amoris perurgeretur (*ante corr.*  
 perurgueretur) stimulo *add. S* (*transp. ex linea 18*) <sup>l-l</sup> detulerant *N*; detulit secum iuuenis *S*  
<sup>m</sup> uelut *add. ss P* <sup>n-n</sup> sunt stercora recusata. Putans (*add. ss autem*) eam meliora  
 uelle *P*; stercora sunt refutata. Putans meliora *N*; stercora sunt refutata. At ille putans eam meliora uelle *S*  
<sup>o</sup> per *add. NS* <sup>p</sup> aurem *NS* <sup>q</sup> ante corr. uirgines *P* <sup>r</sup> *om. NS*

## HERE BEGINS THE MARTYRDOM OF THE HOLY VIRGIN AGNES

ON 21 JANUARY

(1) Ambrose, servant of Christ, to the holy virgins.

Let us celebrate the feast day of the most holy virgin. On this side the Psalms resound, (and) thence the readings sound; on that side the crowds of people rejoice, (and) thence the poor of Christ are sustained. Therefore let all rejoice in the Lord, and concerning the instruction of virgins let us recall how the most blessed Agnes suffered.

In that time there was a certain virgin of Rome born from a family of noble descent, by the name of Agnes, who, contending against the leaders and powers of darkness,<sup>1</sup> in the thirteenth year of her life cast away death and found life because she loved the only Creator of life. (Her) childhood was calculated in years, but (there) was immense old age to (her) mind: indeed (she was) young in body, but old in her soul, with an attractive countenance, but a more beautiful faith.<sup>2</sup>

(2) Whilst she was returning from school, (Agnes) was deeply loved by the son of the Urban Prefect, whose parents after they had inquired (into this matter) began to offer (her) many things and to promise many more. Finally, the youth had brought with him the most precious ornaments which were rejected by the blessed Agnes as if they were some excrement. Thinking that she wished to receive superior ornaments, he (then) brought with him for (his) ambition every kind of precious jewel, and through himself, and through friends, acquaintances and kinsmen, he began to accost the ears of the virgin, (and) to promise wealth, houses, possessions, household slaves and all the riches of the world,

repromittere, si consensum suum <sup>s</sup>eius coniugio<sup>s</sup> non negaret. Vnde factum est ut iuuenis  
 maiori<sup>t</sup> perurgeretur stimulo. (3) Ad haec, beata Agnes tale<sup>u</sup> iuueni fertur dedisse  
 responsum: *'Discede a me<sup>3</sup> fomes peccati, nutrimentum facinoris, pabulum mortis.*  
*Discede a me,<sup>4</sup>* quia iam ab alio amatore praeuenta sum, qui mihi satis meliora te<sup>v</sup> obtulit  
 20 ornamenta, et anulo fidei suae subarrauit me: longe te<sup>w</sup> melior et<sup>x</sup> genere et<sup>y</sup> dignitate.  
 Ornauit inaeestimabili dextrocherio<sup>z</sup> dexteram meam, et collum meum cinxit lapidibus  
 pretiosis; tradidit<sup>aa</sup> auribus meis inaeestimabiles margaritas, et circumdedit me uernantibus  
 atque coruscantibus gemmis.<sup>5</sup> Posuit signum suum<sup>ab</sup> super faciem meam ut nullum alium  
 praeter ipsum amatorem admittam.<sup>6</sup> Induit me <sup>ac</sup>ciclade auro texta,<sup>ac</sup> et inmensis  
 25 monilibus<sup>ad</sup> ornauit<sup>ae</sup> me.<sup>7</sup> Ostendit mihi thesauros incomparabiles quos mihi se donaturum  
<sup>af</sup>promisit si in eius perseuerauero nominis confessione.<sup>af</sup> Non ergo potero <sup>ag</sup>ad  
 contumeliam<sup>ag</sup> prioris amatoris<sup>ah</sup> uel aspicere alium, et illum derelinquere, cum quo sum  
<sup>ai</sup>depicta caritate,<sup>ai</sup> cuius est<sup>aj</sup> generositas celsior, possibilitas fortior, aspectus pulchrior,  
 amor suauior et omni<sup>ak</sup> gratia elegantior. A quo <sup>al</sup>mihi iam<sup>al</sup> thalamus collocatus est,<sup>8</sup> cuius  
 30 mihi organa modulatis uocibus resonant, cuius mihi uirgines iustissimis<sup>am</sup> uocibus cantant.<sup>9</sup>  
 Iam mel et lac ex <sup>an</sup>eius ore<sup>an</sup> suscepi.<sup>10</sup> Iam amplexibus eius castis astricta sum.<sup>11</sup> Iam  
 corpus eius corpori meo sociatum est, et sanguis eius ornauit genas meas.<sup>12</sup> Cuius mater  
 uirgo est, cuius pater feminam nescit, cui angeli seruiunt,<sup>13</sup> cuius pulchritudinem

<sup>s-s</sup> eiusque coniugium NS      <sup>t</sup> in amoris NS      <sup>u</sup> talem P      <sup>v</sup> [[a]] te P; om. NS      <sup>w</sup> [[a]] te  
 N; a te S      <sup>x</sup> om. NS      <sup>y</sup> om. S      <sup>z</sup> glossa in imo folii scripta est: dextrochirium +  
 ornamentum dexteræ manus · idem est et armilla P      <sup>aa</sup> ante corr. tradit S      <sup>ab</sup> om. NS      ac-  
<sup>ac</sup> cicladem auro textam P; dominus ciclade auro texta S      <sup>ad</sup> ante corr. muneribus P  
<sup>ae</sup> honorauit P      <sup>af-af</sup> si ei perseueraue (sic perseueraui) (ante corr.  
 perseuero) repromisit P      <sup>ag-ag</sup> om. N; ad iniuriam S      <sup>ah</sup> ante corr. amatores N      al-  
<sup>ai</sup> caritate dep[[.]]ta N; caritate deuincta S      <sup>aj</sup> om. NS      <sup>ak</sup> ante corr. omne P; omnis NS      al-  
<sup>al</sup> tr. NS      <sup>am</sup> post corr. dulcissimis P      <sup>an-an</sup> tr. NS

if she would not refuse her consent to their marriage. Whereupon it happened that the youth was urged on by a greater goad.

(3) To these (entreaties), the blessed Agnes is reported to have given such a response to the youth: 'Depart from me<sup>3</sup> tinder of sin, nourishment of crime, sustenance of death. Depart from me,<sup>4</sup> since I have already been taken by another lover, who has presented me with considerably better ornaments than you, and betrothed me with the ring of his faith: a man by far more noble than you in birth and honour. He has adorned my right hand with an inestimable bracelet, and encircled my neck with precious jewels; he has delivered priceless pearls for my ears, and surrounded me with spring flowers and glittering gems.<sup>5</sup> He has placed his seal upon my face so that I may receive no other lover save him.<sup>6</sup> He has clothed me with a robe woven from gold, and adorned me with innumerable necklaces.<sup>7</sup> He has shown me incomparable treasures which he has promised that he will give to me if I should persevere in the confession of his name. Therefore, in order not to injure my first lover I am unable to either to abandon him, or to consider another, seeing as I have been embroidered with grace by him, whose nobility is greater, his power stronger, his countenance more beautiful, his love more delightful and his courtesy more elegant than all other men. By him a marriage bed has already been prepared for me,<sup>8</sup> whose instruments resound for me with musical notes, whose virgins sing to me with the most righteous voices.<sup>9</sup> Already I have received honey and milk from his mouth.<sup>10</sup> Already I have been drawn close by his pure embraces.<sup>11</sup> Already his body has been united to mine, and his blood has adorned my cheeks.<sup>12</sup> His mother is a virgin, his father knows no woman, the angels serve him,<sup>13</sup> the sun and moon

sol et luna mirantur,<sup>14</sup> cuius odore reuiuiscunt mortui,<sup>15</sup> cuius tactu confortantur infirmi,<sup>16</sup>  
 35 cuius opes numquam deficiunt, cuiusque<sup>ao</sup> diuitiae non decrescunt. Ipsi soli seruo fidem  
 meam,<sup>ap</sup> ipsi<sup>aq</sup> me tota deuotione committo: quem cum amauero casta sum, cum tetigero  
 munda sum, cum accepero uirgo sum. Nec deerunt post<sup>ar</sup> nuptias filii,<sup>17</sup> ubi<sup>as</sup> partus sine  
 dolore succedit,<sup>18</sup> et fecunditas cotidiana cumulatur.<sup>at</sup> (4) Audiens haec, insanissimus  
 iuuenis amore carpitur<sup>au</sup> caeco, et inter angustias animi et corporis anhelo cruciabatur  
 40 spiritu. Inter haec lecto prosternitur, et <sup>av</sup>per alta suspiria amor a medicis aperitur.<sup>av</sup> Fiunt  
 nota patri, quae fuerant inuenta a medicis, et eadem paterna uoce, quae fuerant iam dicta a  
 filio, ad petitionem uirginis reuoluuntur. Abnegat Agnes beatissima, et se nullo pactu  
<sup>aw</sup>asserit prioris sponsi foedera uiolare.<sup>aw</sup> Cumque pater diceret in fascibus se praefecturam  
 agere, <sup>ax</sup>idcirco quamuis etiam illustrem minime posse praeferri,<sup>ax</sup> coepit tamen uehementer  
 45 inquirere quis esset sponsus de cuius se<sup>ay</sup> Agnes potestate iactaret.<sup>az</sup> Tunc exiit quidam <sup>ba</sup>ex  
 parasitis,<sup>ba</sup> qui diceret hanc christianam esse ab infantia, et magicis artibus ita occupatam ut  
 dicat Christum <sup>bb</sup>sponsum suum<sup>bb</sup> esse. (5) Audiens haec, Praefectus laetus efficitur, et,  
 missa apparitione *cum grandi strepitu*,<sup>19</sup> suis eam tribunalibus praecepit sisti, et primum<sup>bc</sup>  
 quidem blandis eam sermonibus secretius prouocat,<sup>20</sup> deinde terroribus pulsat.<sup>21</sup> Sed  
 50 Christi uirgo nec blandimento seducitur, nec terrore concutitur; sed, eodem uultu eodem  
 animo perseuerans, et terrentem, similiter sicut et<sup>bd</sup> blandientem, animo deridebat.

<sup>ao</sup> que om. NS    <sup>ap</sup> om. NS    <sup>aq</sup> ante corr. ipse S    <sup>ar</sup> per N    <sup>as</sup> ibi NS  
<sup>at</sup> cumula[.]t S    <sup>au</sup> cor[.]ri[.]pitur N; corrumpitur S    <sup>av-av</sup> et alta  
suspiria amoris a medicis aperiuntur N    <sup>aw-aw</sup> asserit [add. posse S] prioris sponsi foedera uiolari NS  
<sup>ax-ax</sup> idcirco quamuis etiam inlustri minime posset praeferri P; et idcirco non [del. S] sibi  
quamuis etiam inlustrem minime [m[.]miine S] posset [posse[.] S] preferri NS    <sup>ay</sup> om. N  
<sup>az</sup> gloriatur N; gloriabatur S    <sup>ba-ba</sup> om. NS    <sup>bb-bb</sup> tr. NS    <sup>bc</sup> primo  
NS    <sup>bd</sup> om. NS

wonder at his beauty,<sup>14</sup> the dead are restored to life by his odour,<sup>15</sup> the infirm are strengthened by his touch:<sup>16</sup> he whose power never fails, and whose wealth never decreases. I preserve my faith for him alone, I commit myself to him with total devotion: whom when I have loved him I am pure, when I have touched him I am clean, when I have received him I am a virgin. Nor will children be wanting after the wedding,<sup>17</sup> when birth follows without pain,<sup>18</sup> and fertility is augmented daily.'

(4) Hearing these (things), the most insane youth is consumed by blind love, and through constrictions of (his) mind and body he was tormented by shortness of breath. Amidst these (afflictions) he is ruined upon (his) bed, and through (his) deep sighs love is discovered by the physicians. These findings, which had been discovered by the physicians, are told to the father, and these same words, which now had been affirmed by the son, are repeated by the paternal voice in relation to the petition of the virgin. The most blessed Agnes refuses, and declares that by no covenant would she violate the (marriage) contracts of (her) first husband. And when the father said that he held the office of Prefect under the fasces, (and) on that account by no means could (any) exceedingly well born man be preferred to him, nevertheless, he began to inquire vehemently who might be the spouse about whose power Agnes was boasting. Then a certain person came forth from (among the Prefect's) retainers, who was saying that she had been a Christian from (her) infancy, and was thus engaged in magic arts so that she said that Christ Himself was her husband.

(5) Hearing these things, the Prefect is made joyful, and, with a servant having been sent with a great noise,<sup>19</sup> he ordered her to be brought in (before) his magistrates, and indeed at first he appeals to her more secretly with flattering speeches,<sup>20</sup> then attacks with terrifying threats.<sup>21</sup> But the virgin of Christ is neither seduced by flattery



nor alarmed by fear; on the contrary, persevering with the same countenance (and) the same disposition, she was scorning the one who threatened (her), and in a like manner the one who flattered (her), with (her) heart. Therefore, the Prefect Simpronius, seeing so much constancy in the girl, addresses her parents, and, since they were nobles and he was not able to attack them with force, he alleged that they (too) were Christians.

On the following day, however, he orders Agnes to be placed before him, and, repeating again and again, he began to go over (his) speech concerning the love of the youth. And when all of his speeches were failing from futile labour, he ordered her to be brought in (before) his magistrates, and said to her: 'unless the superstition of the Christians, about whose magic arts you boast, is removed from you, you will not be able to cast aside (this) insanity of (your) body, nor to offer (your) agreement with the most composed considerations. Wherefore it is necessary that you hasten to the venerable goddess Vesta so that, if the continuance of virginity is pleasing (to you), you will devote yourself by honouring her sacrifices day and night.' (6) To these (things) the blessed Agnes replied: 'if I have refused your son, although (he is) plagued by immoderate love, (who is) yet a living man, and undoubtedly a man who is capable of reason, and who is able to hear, touch, walk and to enjoy the splendour of this light with good men, accordingly, if I am not able to respect him on account of (my) love of Christ, how can I cherish mute and deaf idols without understanding and life, and to the insult of the greatest God bow my neck to empty stones?'

Hearing these things, the Prefect Simpronius said: 'I desire (this) to be the decision of your infancy, and as yet for that reason I am deferring your blaspheming against the gods, since I perceive your years less than (your) understanding. Therefore, do not despise yourself in this manner lest you incur the anger of the gods.' The blessed Agnes replied: 'Do not despise my corporeal infancy in this way so that you judge that I

comprobat quam aetates.<sup>22</sup> Deos autem tuos, quorum me motus incurrere <sup>by</sup>non uis, <sup>by</sup>  
<sup>bz</sup>ipsis irasci permitte, ipsis loqui.<sup>bz</sup> Ipsi hoc mihi praecipiant: <sup>ca</sup>ipsi iubeant se adorari, <sup>ca</sup>  
 ipsi <sup>cb</sup>iubeant se <sup>cb</sup>coli. Verum quoniam te ad hoc uideo tendere, quod imperare<sup>cc</sup> non  
 poteris, quisquis <sup>cd</sup>tibi uidetur<sup>cd</sup> exerce.' (7) Simpronius Praefectus<sup>ce</sup> dixit: 'Vnum tibi  
 75 <sup>cf</sup>elige e duobus:<sup>cf</sup> aut cum uirginibus deae Vestae sacrificata, aut cum meretricibus  
 scortaberis in contubernio lupanari, et longe erunt a te Christiani, qui te ita magicis artibus  
 imbuerunt, ut<sup>cg</sup> hanc calamitatem intrepido animo in te perferre confidas. Vnde, ut<sup>ch</sup> dixi,  
 aut sacrificata deae Vestae ad laudem generis tui, aut ad ignominiam natalium tuorum eris  
 publicae abiectiois scortum.' Tunc beata Agnes, cum ingenti constantia, dixit: 'Si scires  
 80 quis<sup>ci</sup> est deus meus, non tu ista ex tuo ore proferres; unde, quia *ego noui uirtutem*<sup>23</sup> Domini  
 mei Iesu Christi, secunda contemno minas tuas credens<sup>cj</sup> quod <sup>ck</sup>neque sacrificem idolis tuis,  
 neque polluar sordibus alienis.<sup>ck</sup> Mecum enim habeo <sup>cl</sup>custodem corporis mei, <sup>cl</sup>Angelum  
 Domini mei.<sup>cm</sup> <sup>24</sup> Nam unigenitus Dei Filius, quem ignoras, murus mihi est inexpugnabilis,  
 et custos mihi est numquam dormiens,<sup>cn</sup> et defensor mihi est numquam deficiens.<sup>co</sup> Dii  
 85 autem tui aut aerei sunt ex quibus cucumae<sup>cp</sup> fiunt ad usus hominum, aut lapidei ex quibus  
 plateae <sup>cq</sup>ad euadendum lutum<sup>cq</sup> melius sternuntur.<sup>25</sup> Diuinitas autem non in lapidibus  
 uanis<sup>cr</sup> habitat, sed in caelis; non in aere aut in aliquo<sup>cs</sup> metallo, sed in regno superno  
 consistit. Tu autem et similes tui nisi ab istorum cultura recesseritis, similis uos poena

<sup>by-by</sup> iubes N; times S

[permittere N] ipsos loqui iube NS

<sup>ce</sup> ea add. ss. P

<sup>cj</sup> crede N

idolis tuis] P

<sup>cl-cl</sup> om. P

<sup>cp</sup> cucumeres NS

<sup>bz-bz</sup> ipsis irasci [permittere ss.] ipsos loqui P; ipsos irasci permitte

<sup>ca-ca</sup> om. NS

<sup>cb-cb</sup> tr. NS

<sup>cc</sup> impetrare S

<sup>cd-cd</sup> tr. NS

<sup>cf-cf</sup> e duobus elige NS

<sup>cg</sup> ad add. N

<sup>ch</sup> et P

<sup>ci</sup> qui P

<sup>ck-ck</sup> neque polluar sordibus alienis [add. in imo folii: neque sacrificem

<sup>cn</sup> deficiens NS

<sup>co</sup> dormiens NS

<sup>cm</sup> om. P

<sup>cr</sup> om. P

<sup>cs</sup> om. NS

wish to have you well disposed (towards me). For faith is not manifested in years, but in understanding, and Almighty God approves minds to a higher degree than years.<sup>22</sup> On the other hand, let your gods, whose anger you desire me not to incur, be angry, (and let) them speak. Let them themselves order this to me: let them command that they be revered, (and) let them command that they be worshipped. Since I see that you strive for the truth with regard to this (matter), which you will not be able to command, administer whatever (punishment) seems proper to you.'

(7) The Prefect Simpronius said: 'Choose for yourself one of two (fates): either sacrifice with the virgins of the goddess Vesta, or else you will be associated with prostitutes in a brothel, and the Christians will be far away from you, who have infected you with magic arts in this manner, so that you believe you will endure this misfortune with an intrepid spirit. Wherefore, as I have said, either sacrifice to the goddess Vesta in praise of your kind, or to the disgrace of your family you will be a prostitute of public corruption.' Then, with remarkable constancy, the blessed Agnes said: 'If you knew who my God is, you would not bring forth such (words) from your mouth; accordingly, since I have known the power of my Lord Jesus Christ,<sup>23</sup> untroubled I disdain your threats believing that I shall neither sacrifice to your idols, nor be defiled by the filth of strangers. Truly I have with me a guardian of my body, an Angel of my Lord.<sup>24</sup> For the only begotten Son of God, whom you do not know, is an impregnable wall for me, a never sleeping protector to me and a never failing defender to me. On the other hand, your gods are either copper from which cooking vessels are made for the use of men, or stone from which streets are more beneficially paved for the purpose of passing over the mud.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, divinity does not dwell in empty stones, but in the heavens; it exists not in copper or in any metal, but in the celestial kingdom. However, unless you and others like you abandon the worship of these things, a similar punishment shall

concludet.<sup>cf</sup> Sicut enim illi igne conflati sunt ut funderentur; sic, colentes eos perpetuo  
 90 incendio conflabuntur <sup>cu</sup>non ut<sup>cu</sup> fundantur, sed ut *confundantur et pereant* in aeternum.<sup>26</sup>

(8) Ad haec insanus Iudex iussit eam spoliari et nudam ad lupanar duci sub uoce  
 praeconaria<sup>cv</sup> dicens: ‘Agnem uirginem sacrilegam diis <sup>cw</sup>blasphemias inferentem scortum  
 lupanaribus datam.’<sup>cw</sup> Statim autem ut spoliata est, crine soluto,<sup>cx</sup> tantam densitatem  
 capillis eius gratia diuina concessit ut melius eorum fimbriis uideretur quam uestibus  
 95 tecta.<sup>27</sup> Ingressa igitur turpitudinis locum, angelum Domini illic <sup>cy</sup>ita paratum<sup>cy</sup> inuenit ut  
 circumdaret eam immenso lumine ita ut nullus posset<sup>cz</sup> eam prae<sup>da</sup> splendore perspicere,<sup>db</sup>  
 nec contingere, nec uidere. Fulgebat enim tota cellula illa, quasi <sup>dc</sup>sol radians<sup>dc</sup> in uirtute  
 sua,<sup>28</sup> et quanto quis curiosior<sup>dd</sup> esse uoluisset, tanto sui uisus aciem obtundebat. Cum<sup>de</sup> se  
 in oratione Domino prostrauisset, apparuit ante oculos eius stola candidissima,<sup>29</sup> et,  
 100 apprehendens eam, induit se et dixit: ‘Gratias tibi ago Domine Iesu Christe, qui, me in  
 numero<sup>df</sup> ancillarum tuarum computans, uestiarium<sup>dg</sup> mihi largiri praecepisti.’ Ita namque  
 ad mensuram corpusculi<sup>dh</sup> eius aptum erat indumentum, et nimio candore praespicum<sup>di</sup> ut  
 nullus dubitaret hoc<sup>dj</sup> nisi manibus angelicis praeparatum. (9) Interea lupanar locus  
 efficitur orationis, in quo <sup>dk</sup>omnes qui fuissent ingressi adorarent, et uenerarentur, et  
 105 darent honorem Deo pro immenso splendore, et mundiores egrederentur foras quam fuerant  
 introgressi.<sup>dk</sup> Cumque haec agerentur, Praefecti filius, qui auctor <sup>dl</sup>huius erat<sup>dl</sup> sceleris,

<sup>cf</sup> concludit N    <sup>cu-cu</sup> tr. NS    <sup>cv</sup> preconia NS    <sup>cw-cw</sup> blasphemiam inferentem his scortum lupanaribus  
 tradite NS    <sup>cx</sup> om. N; add. ss. S    <sup>cy-cy</sup> preparatum NS    <sup>cz</sup> possit PN    <sup>da</sup> pro NS  
<sup>db</sup> om. P    <sup>dc-dc</sup> tr. P    <sup>dd</sup> add. oculis NS    <sup>de</sup> add. que NS  
<sup>df</sup> numerum P    <sup>dg</sup> uestem NS    <sup>dh</sup> corporis NS    <sup>di</sup> perspicuum NS  
<sup>dj</sup> aliud NS    <sup>dk-dk</sup> omnis qui fuisset ingressus adoraret, ueneraretur et dans honorem  
 immenso lumine, mundior egrederetur foras quam fuerat intus ingressus P    <sup>dl-dl</sup> tr. NS

conclude you(r life). For just as those (objects) are consumed by fire so that they may be melted, so, the people worshipping them will be consumed by the perpetual conflagration not so that they may be smelted, but so that they may be confounded and perish forever.<sup>26</sup>

(8) To these (things), the insane Judge ordered that she be stripped and led naked to the brothel under the voice of the Public Crier declaring that: 'the impious virgin Agnes producing slanders against the gods has been given as a prostitute to the brothels.' As soon as she has been stripped, however, with (her) hair having been unbound, divine grace granted such a density to her hair that she seemed to have been clothed better by the strands (of her hair) than by (actual) garments.<sup>27</sup> Then, having entered the place of foulness, she found an angel of the Lord there prepared in such a way that he encircled her with an immense light so that no one could glimpse her on account of the brightness, nor touch or see (her). For that whole little room was shining, just as the sun shines in his power,<sup>28</sup> and the more anyone wished to be too curious, the more (the light) was weakening the sharpness of their sight.

When she had prostrated herself in prayer to the Lord, the most shining white robe appeared before (Agnes') eyes,<sup>29</sup> and, taking hold of it, she clothed herself and said: 'I give thanks to you O Lord Jesus Christ, who, reckoning me amongst the number of your handmaids, ordered that (this) clothing be bestowed upon me.' For truly in this manner the garment had been prepared (perfectly) in relation to the proportion of her little body, and (was) notable by (its) extreme whiteness so that no one doubted that it had been created only by angelic hands. (9) Meanwhile, the brothel was made a place of prayer, in which all who had entered were worshipping, revering and giving honour to God before the immense splendour, and coming forth out through the doors cleaner than (when) they had entered.

While these (events) were occurring, the son of the Prefect, who was the



author of this wicked crime, came to (this) place in order to insult the girl with his young companions, with whom he was convinced that he would be able to exercise the violence of his lust. But the violent boys raging shamefully entered before him, nevertheless, when they had come forth with immeasurable veneration and boundless admiration, he began to censure the insolent men, and to condemn them as idle, effeminate and lamentable. And scorning them,<sup>30</sup> he entered audaciously the place where the virgin was praying, and, seeing such a great light around her, he did not give honour to God, but, forcing himself into that same light, before he could touch her with (his) hand, he fell onto his face, and, having been suffocated by the devil, breathed his last.<sup>31</sup>

His companions, however, seeing that he was devising delays inside, were imagining that he was (being) occupied with impure deeds. And one of the youths, who was a more familiar acquaintance to him, entering as if he were about to congratulate (the Prefect's son's) insolent behaviour and finding him dead, cried out with a loud voice:<sup>32</sup> 'O most pious Romans hasten to (my) aid. This harlot has killed the son of the Prefect by magic arts.' (10) Suddenly there was a flocking of the people to the theatre, and (amongst) the raging people with varying shout(s) some were saying (that she was) a witch, others (that she was) innocent, and some were crying out (that she was) impious.

Now the Prefect, hearing that his son had died, came to the theatre with immense uproar and distress, and, having entered the place in which the lifeless body of his son was lying, with an immeasurable shout was saying to the most blessed virgin: 'O most cruel of all women you wished to demonstrate conclusive proof of your magic arts on my son.' Besides such (accusations) he was repeating many words of this kind, and vehemently seeking from her the causes of his (son's) death. The most blessed

125 uoluntatem uolebat perficere, ipse in eum potestatem accepit. Quare autem universi<sup>ei</sup> qui  
ad me ingressi sunt *sani sunt*?<sup>33</sup> Quia uniuersi dederunt honorem Deo, *qui mihi misit*  
*angelum Suum*,<sup>34</sup> *ej* qui et induit me<sup>ej</sup> hoc indumento<sup>ek</sup> misericordiae suae<sup>35</sup> et custodiuit  
corpus meum, quod ab ipsis cunabulis Christo consecratum est et oblatum. Videntes autem  
splendorem angelicum, adorabant omnes et abscedebant<sup>el</sup> illaesi; hic autem impudens  
130 statim, ut ingressus est, seruire coepit et fremere, cumque manum suam ad me  
contingendam aptaret,<sup>36</sup> dedit eum angelus Domini *em* in reprobam mortem.<sup>37</sup> Dicit ei  
Praefectus: 'In hoc apparebit quia non magicis artibus ista gessisti, si deprecata fueris  
ipsum angelum ut restituat mihi filium meum sanum.'<sup>en</sup> Cui beata Agnes respondit: 'Licet  
fides uestra haec impetrare non mereatur a Domino, tamen, quia tempus est ut<sup>eo</sup> uirtus  
135 Domini mei Iesu Christi manifestetur, egredimini foras<sup>ep</sup> ut solita<sup>eq</sup> me in oratione offeram.'  
Cumque uniuersi<sup>er</sup> fuissent egressi, prosternens se in faciem plana,<sup>es</sup> rogare coepit  
Dominum ut iuuenem suscitaret. *et* Orante autem illa, apparuit ei<sup>et</sup> angelus Domini, qui et  
eleuauit eam flentem, et, confortans animum eius,<sup>38</sup> iuuenem suscitauit. Qui, *egressus*  
*foras*,<sup>39</sup> *coepit* *eu* uoce publica *clamare et dicere*:<sup>eu</sup> <sup>40</sup> 'Vnus est Deus in caelo et in terra *ev* et  
140 in mari,<sup>ev</sup> qui est Deus Christianorum. Nam omnia templa uana sunt, et penitus nec sibi  
possunt, nec aliis, aliquod<sup>ew</sup> auxilium exhibere.'<sup>ex</sup> <sup>41</sup> (11) Ad hanc uocem omnes haruspices  
et templorum pontifices conturbabantur, et fit *ey* per eos<sup>ey</sup> uehementior quam fuerat seditio  
populorum, atque omnes una uoce *clamabant*: 'Tolle magam,<sup>ez</sup> tolle<sup>42</sup> maleficam quae *et*<sup>fa</sup>

<sup>ei</sup> omnes NS      <sup>ej-ej</sup> et qui me induit NS      <sup>ek</sup> indumentum P      <sup>el</sup> abscedebunt P  
<sup>em-em</sup> in reprobum sensum mortis NS      <sup>en</sup> unicum NS      <sup>eo</sup> ante  
corr. et P      <sup>ep</sup> foris P      <sup>eq</sup> solam NS      <sup>er</sup> add. foras NS      <sup>es</sup> post corr. prona P;  
pauimenti NS      <sup>et-et</sup> oranti autem illi apparauit P      <sup>eu-ev</sup> publica uoce clamare N; publica  
uoce clamare et dicere S      <sup>ev-ev</sup> om. NS      <sup>ew</sup> aliquid N; aliquo S      <sup>ex</sup> exhiberi N      <sup>ey-ey</sup> om.  
NS      <sup>ez</sup> magicam NS      <sup>fa</sup> om. NS

Agnes said to him: 'That man was intending to accomplish his desire, (and) he himself received that power against him. On the other hand why (are) all who entered towards me restored to health?<sup>33</sup> Because all gave honour to God, Who sent His angel to me,<sup>34</sup> Who has clothed me with this garment of His mercy<sup>35</sup> and guarded my body, which even from the cradle has been consecrated and pledged to Christ. Seeing the angelic splendour, however, everyone was worshipping and departing unharmed; on the other hand, this shameless man, as he entered, immediately began to be enslaved and to howl, and, when he was preparing his hand in order to touch me,<sup>36</sup> the angel of the Lord gave him into a condemned death.'<sup>37</sup>

The Prefect said to her: 'In this (matter) it will be evident that you did not accomplish these (deeds) by magic arts, if you will entreat the angel himself that he might restore my son to me alive.' Blessed Agnes replied to him: 'Although your faith is not worthy to obtain these things from the Lord, nevertheless, since it is time that the power of my Lord Jesus Christ be made manifest, may you (all) depart through the doors so that I may offer myself in (my) usual prayer.' And when everyone had departed, prostrating herself flat on (her) face, she began to ask the Lord to raise the youth from the dead. Indeed, (as) she was praying, the Angel of the Lord appeared to her, who both raised her up as she was weeping, and, comforting her spirit,<sup>38</sup> revived the youth.

The young man, (once) he had gone forth through the doors,<sup>39</sup> began to cry out and to say with a public voice:<sup>40</sup> 'There is one God in heaven, on earth and in the sea, who is the God of the Christians. For assuredly all the temples are empty, and they are utterly unable to produce any help either for themselves, or for anyone else.'<sup>41</sup> (11) All the soothsayers and temple priests were thrown into disorder after this speech, and through them the sedition of the people was made more violent than (before), and now all were crying out with one voice: 'Away with the witch, away with the evil-doer'<sup>42</sup>

mentes mutat et animos alienat.' Praefectus autem, <sup>fb</sup>uidens tanta mirabilia, <sup>fb</sup> obstipuit, sed,  
 145 ueritus <sup>fc</sup>ne contra templorum pontifices aliquid ageret<sup>fc</sup> et Agnem contra suas sententias  
 defensaret, uicarium suum<sup>fd</sup> ad seditionem populi iudicem dereliquit. Ipse autem tristis  
 abscessit, quod eam non potuit post resurrectionem<sup>fe</sup> filii sui liberare. Tunc uicarius,  
 Aspasius nomine, populi seditionem non ferens iussit *in conspectu omnium*<sup>43</sup> ignem  
 copiosum accendi, et in medio eam praecepit iactari<sup>ff</sup> flammaram. Quod, cum fuisset  
 150 impletum, statim in duas partes diuisae sunt flammae, et<sup>fg</sup> hinc atque <sup>fh</sup>illinc seditiosos  
 populos exurebat,<sup>fh</sup> ipsam penitus in nullo contingebat incendium.<sup>44</sup> <sup>fi</sup>Eo magis<sup>fi</sup> hoc non  
 uirtutibus diuinis sed maleficiis reputantes, dabant fremitus inter se populi et infinitos  
 clamores ad caelum. Tunc beata Agnes, extendens manus suas in medio ignis,<sup>fi</sup> his uerbis  
 orationem fudit ad Dominum:<sup>fk</sup> 'Omnipotens, Adorande, Tremende, Colende, Pater Domini  
 155 mei Iesu Christi *benedico Te*,<sup>45</sup> quia per Filium Tuum euasi manus<sup>fl</sup> hominum impiorum, et  
 spurcitas diaboli impolluto calle transiui. Ecce, <sup>fm</sup>et nunc per Sanctum Spiritum rore  
 caelesti perfusa <sum>,<sup>46</sup> focus iuxta me moritur,<sup>fm</sup> flamma diuiditur et ardor incendii huius  
 ad eos a quibus ministratur effunditur.<sup>fn</sup> *Benedico Te*<sup>47</sup> Pater Praedicande, qui etiam inter  
 flammam intrepidam me ad Te uenire permittis.<sup>fo</sup> Ecce, iam quod credidi uideo,<sup>48</sup> quod  
 160 <sup>fp</sup>speraui iam<sup>fp</sup> teneo, quod cupiui complector. Te confiteor labiis et corde, <sup>fq</sup>Te totis  
 uisceribus<sup>fq</sup> concupisco. Ecce, ad Te uenio uiuum et uerum Deum, qui, cum Domino

<sup>fb-fb</sup> om. P      <sup>fc-fc</sup> si contra templorum pontifices ageret P; se ut contra templorum pontifices aliquid  
 ageret N      <sup>fd</sup> autem P      <sup>fe</sup> resurrectionem NS      <sup>ff</sup> iactare N      <sup>fg</sup> om. NS  
<sup>fh-fh</sup> illic seditiosos populos exurebat P; illuc seditiosus populus exurebat N; illinc seditiosus populus  
 exurebatur S      <sup>fi-fi</sup> et magicis NS      <sup>fi</sup> igne NS      <sup>fk</sup> add. dicens NS      <sup>fl</sup> minas NS      <sup>fm</sup>  
<sup>fm</sup> nunc sancti spiritus rore caelesti perfusa sunt (post corr. sum S), ignis iuxta me resolutus est NS  
<sup>fn</sup> refunditur NS      <sup>fo</sup> permittas N      <sup>fp-fp</sup> tr. S      <sup>fq-fq</sup> totis uisceribus te S

who corrupts minds and alienates souls.’ The Prefect, however, seeing so many miracles, was astounded, but, fearing lest he spoke against the temple priests and defended Agnes against their opinions, he left behind his vicar as a judge for the sedition of the people. Moreover, he himself departed a sorrowful man, because he was not able to set her free after the raising from the dead of his son.

Then the vicar, Aspasius by name, unable to endure the sedition of the people ordered that a well supplied fire be lit in the sight of all,<sup>43</sup> and commanded that (Agnes) be cast into the middle of the flames. Which, when this had been accomplished, the flames were immediately divided into two parts, and on one side and on the other side were consuming the seditious people, (yet) the heart (of the) conflagration was touching her in no (way).<sup>44</sup> Ascribing this not to divine powers but rather to malevolent (ones), the people were producing roars and endless shouts towards heaven amongst themselves. Then the blessed Agnes, extending her hands in the middle of the fire, poured forth a prayer to the Lord with these words: ‘All powerful Father of my Lord Jesus Christ O You who must be Adored, Feared and Worshipped I bless Thee,<sup>45</sup> since through Your Son I have escaped the hands of wicked men, and passed over the filths of the devil by an unpolluted path. Behold, now through the Holy Spirit I have been bathed with heavenly dew,<sup>46</sup> the hearth beside me dies away, the flames are being divided and the heat of this fire is being poured forth on those by whom it is provided. I bless Thee Father Who must be Proclaimed,<sup>47</sup> You who also permit me to come to You undaunted amidst the flames. Behold, now I see what I have believed in,<sup>48</sup> now I hold what I have hoped (for), (and) I embrace what I have desired. I confess You with (my) lips and heart, (and) I long for You with all (my) flesh. Behold, I come to You the living and true God, You who, with our



Lord Jesus Christ Your Son and the Holy Spirit, live and reign now and forever and in all things world without end, Amen.' (12) And when she had completed (her) prayer, thus all the fire was extinguished so that indeed no warmth of the fire was left. Then Aspasius, vicar of the city of Rome, unable to endure the sedition of the people ordered that a sword be plunged into her throat, and, with this conclusion, drenched with the rosy dew of her blood, Christ consecrated her as His bride and as a martyr.

(13) Her parents truly having no sorrow at all<sup>49</sup> conveyed her body with all joy and placed it in their estate not far from the city on the road which is called Numentana. In this place, while a whole crowd of Christians were assembling, they suffered an ambush by pagans, and, seeing the armed band of infidels falling upon (them), all fled; indeed a considerable number (of them) escaped having been injured by blows.

Nevertheless, while she prays, (Agnes') foster sister Emerentiana, a most holy virgin, steadfast amid the accusations of so many (people), was standing immobile and undaunted, and was reproaching them with these words, saying: 'superfluous, wretched, transitory and most savage people you are killing those worshipping Almighty God, and murdering innocent folk for the defense of stones.' She was saying these and similar things while she was stoned to death by the raging crowds, and, praying next to the tomb of the most blessed virgin Agnes, she sent forth (her) soul. Accordingly there is no doubt that she was baptized in her (own) blood, who, whilst she was praising the Lord, steadfastly received death for the defense of righteousness. Thereupon at that same hour the most violent movement of the earth occurred,<sup>50</sup> and, whilst there was such a great clearness of the sky, so many flashes, lightning bolts and thunder claps occurred that the greatest part of the raging people perished.<sup>51</sup>

est ut nullus penitus ex eo die<sup>gn</sup> aduenientibus ad sepulchra sanctorum aliquas molestias excitaret.<sup>go</sup> Venientes autem parentes beatissimae Agnetis uirginis<sup>gp</sup> cum sacerdotibus<sup>gq</sup> nocte, abstulerunt corpus <sup>gr</sup>sanctae uirginis<sup>gr</sup> Emerentianae, et sepelierunt illud<sup>gs</sup> in confinio agelli<sup>gt</sup> beatissimae uirginis. (14) Igitur, dum parentes sanctae Agnetis assidui<sup>gu</sup> 185 pernoctationibus uigilarent ad tumulum<sup>gy</sup> eius, uident in medio noctis silentio exercitum uirginum, quae, omnes auro textis<sup>gw</sup> cycladibus indutae, cum ingenti lumine praeibant,<sup>gx</sup> inter quas <sup>gy</sup>uident etiam<sup>gy</sup> beatissimam Agnem <sup>gz</sup>simili ueste fulgentem,<sup>gz</sup> et ad dextera eius agnum stantem<sup>ha</sup> niue candidiorem.<sup>hb</sup> <sup>hc</sup>Haec itaque<sup>hc</sup> dum uiderent, parentes eius et qui simul erant quasi stupore mentis incurrunt.<sup>hd</sup> 52 Sed beata Agnes rogat<sup>he</sup> sanctas uirgines 190 <sup>hf</sup>parumper gradum figere,<sup>hf</sup> et stans parentibus suis dixit: ‘Videte, ne me quasi mortuam<sup>hg</sup> lugeatis, sed congaudete mihi<sup>hh</sup> atque congratulamini, quia cum his uirginibus lucidas sedes accepi, et illi sum iuncta in caelis quem in terris posita tota deuotione dilexi’; et his dictis pertransit.<sup>hi</sup> (15) Haec uisio publice ab omnibus qui uiderant uulgabatur,<sup>hj</sup> unde factum est ut post aliquantos annos ad Constantiam Constantini Augusti filiam hoc factum,<sup>hk</sup> ab his qui 195 uiderant, narraretur.<sup>53</sup> Erat enim ipsa Constantia uirgo prudentissima, sed ita obsessa uulneribus ut *a capite usque ad pedes*<sup>54</sup> nulla membrorum eius pars libera remaneret. <sup>hl</sup>Accepto autem consilio spe recuperandae salutis<sup>hl</sup> uenit ad tumulum<sup>hm</sup> martyris nocte, et licet pagana, tamen credula animi intentione<sup>hn</sup> preces fideliter effundebat,<sup>ho</sup> 55 quod<sup>hp</sup> dum

<sup>gn</sup> om. P	<sup>go</sup> ausus est excitare NS	<sup>gp</sup> om. P	<sup>gq</sup> sacerdote S	<sup>gr-gr</sup> om.		
NS	<sup>gs</sup> illum P	<sup>gt</sup> anguli NS	<sup>gu</sup> assiduis NS	<sup>gv</sup> sepulchrum NS	<sup>gw</sup> textae NS	<sup>gx</sup>
pergebant NS	<sup>gy-gy</sup> tr. NS	<sup>gz-gz</sup> stantem similiter fulgentem NS	<sup>ha</sup> om. P	<sup>hb</sup>		
canditior P	<sup>hc-hc</sup> et NS	<sup>hd</sup> detenti NS	<sup>he</sup> rogabat NS	<sup>hf-hf</sup> ut parumper gradum figerent NS		
ut <i>add. N</i> ; [ut] S	<sup>hg</sup> mortuum N	<sup>hh</sup> mecum NS	<sup>hi</sup> pertransiit P	<sup>hj</sup> diuulgata est NS	<sup>hk</sup>	
	<sup>hl-hl</sup> accepta autem spe recuperandi salutem NS	<sup>hm</sup> sepulchrum NS				
	<sup>hn</sup> intentionem P	<sup>ho</sup> fundebat NS	<sup>hp</sup> sed N			

Consequently, it happened that no one out of those coming to the tombs of the saints on that day aroused any trouble at all. The parents of the blessed virgin Agnes, however, coming at night with priests, removed the body of the holy virgin Emerentiana, and buried it (with)in the confine(s) of the little field of the most blessed virgin.

(14) Thereupon, whilst the parents of holy Agnes, constantly present at her tomb, were keeping a vigil with those staying all night, they saw an army of virgins in the midst of the dead of night, who, all having been clothed with garments woven from gold, were leading the way with a remarkable light, amongst whom they saw the most blessed Agnes likewise shining (in) a similar garment, and a lamb whiter than snow standing at her right hand. Consequently, whilst they were seeing these (things), her parents and those who were also there had fallen as if into a stupor of the mind.<sup>52</sup> But the blessed Agnes asks the holy virgins that they slow their pace for a short time, and standing (in front of) her parents said to them: 'Behold, do not mourn (for) me as if (I were) dead, but rejoice and wish me joy, since I have received shining thrones with these virgins, and I have been united to Him in the heavens whom I loved with all devotion (whilst I) was placed on the earth'; and with these words she passes away.

(15) This vision was divulged publicly by all who had seen it, whence it happened that after a few years this event was narrated by those who had seen it to Constantia, the daughter of the Emperor Constantine.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, Constantia herself was a most wise virgin, but was thus beset by wounds so that from her head to her feet no part of her limbs remained free (from these sores).<sup>54</sup> However, with counsel having been received, she came to the tomb of the martyr by night with the hope of recovering (her) health, and although (she was) a pagan, nevertheless with trusting intent of (her) mind she was faithfully pouring forth prayers;<sup>55</sup> while she was doing this she is



seized by the sudden sweetness of sleep, and through a vision sees the most blessed Agnes offering such counsels to her: 'Act constantly Constantia and believe that the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God is your saviour through whom you now attain the health of all your wounds which you suffer on your body.' At this voice Constantia awakes whole, and well to such an extent that no sign of any wound remained on her limbs. (16) Consequently, having returned to the palace completely sound, she rejoiced with both her father and with her imperial brothers.<sup>56</sup> The whole city is begarlanded, and joy is created for the military, citizens and all hearing (this news). The (current) infidelity of the people was confounded and the Lord's faith was rejoicing.

Meanwhile, (Constantia) asks (her) father and imperial brothers that a basilica to the blessed Agnes be constructed, and ordered that a mausoleum be erected in that place for her. Moreover, this opinion hastened to all and everyone believing (this miracle) (who) had come to her tomb were cured from whatever infirmity (by which) they had been detained; for no one doubts that Christ performs (these wonders) unto this day.<sup>57</sup> Constantia herself, the daughter of the Emperor, however, continued steadfastly in virginity through which many virgins (both) ordinary citizens and illustrious nobles received the holy veil. And because the condemned faith of death is constantly not permitted unto this day,<sup>58</sup> many virgins of Rome behold the most blessed Agnes as if she were remaining in (her) body, and, courageously imitating her example, they abide as untouched (women), believing without a doubt that (in) persevering they secure the palm of perpetual victory.<sup>59</sup>

(17) Haec ego<sup>ic</sup> Ambrosius seruus Christi, dum in uoluminibus abditis inueni<sup>id</sup> descripta, non sum passus infructuoso<sup>ie</sup> silentio tegi. Ad honorem igitur tantae martyris, sicut<sup>if</sup> gesta eius agnoui, conscripsi et<sup>ig</sup> ad aedificationem uestram, O uirgines Christi. Textum passionis eius <sup>ih</sup>credidi destinandum, obsecrans uirtutem<sup>ih</sup> Spiritus Sancti, ut labor noster ad uestram  
 220 imitationem fructum in conspectu Dei ualeat<sup>ii</sup> inuenire, <sup>ij</sup>cui est gloria<sup>ij</sup> in saecula saeculorum, Amen.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>ik</sup>EXPLICIT PASSIO SANCTAE AGNETIS VIRGINIS<sup>ik</sup>

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<sup>ic</sup> autem NS      <sup>id</sup> inuenissem P      <sup>ie</sup> infructuosa NS      <sup>if</sup> si ut N      <sup>ig</sup> om. NS  
                                  <sup>ih-ih</sup> credidistis natum obsecrans uirtute NS      <sup>ii</sup> ualeam N      <sup>ij-ij</sup> om. P  
<sup>ik-ik</sup> explicit passio sanctae agne martyr sub die xii kalendas februarium P

(17) I Ambrose, servant of Christ, whilst I found these writings in hidden rolls (of parchment), I did not permit (them) to be concealed by unfruitful silence. Therefore, for the honour of so great a martyr, just as I have understood her deeds, I have written for your edification, O virgins of Christ. Entreating the power of the Holy Spirit, I believed that (this) text of her passion should be appointed, so that our labour may find reward in your imitation (and) be worthy in the sight of God, to whom there is glory forever and ever, Amen.<sup>60</sup>

**HERE CONCLUDES THE MARTYRDOM OF THE HOLY VIRGIN AGNES**

- <sup>1</sup> Cf. *Eph* 6.12 ('...sed adversus principes et potestates aduersus mundi rectores tenebrarum harum...').
- <sup>2</sup> Cf. an antiphon from the *uelatio* ceremony found in the sixth-century *Liber Responsalis* ascribed to Gregory the Great: 'pulchra facie, sed pulchrior.' See pp. 57–8.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ps* 6.9, *Mt* 7.23, 25.41 and *Lc* 13.27.
- <sup>4</sup> See note 3.
- <sup>5</sup> Cf. *Ez* 16.11–12 ('et ornaui te ornamento et dedi armillas in manibus tuis et torquem circa collum tuum... et circulos auribus tuis...'). See also: *Mt* 7.6 and 13.45–6 (pearls as wisdom) and *Ct* 2.5 and 4.12 (for associations between the Bride and flowers / gardens).
- <sup>6</sup> Cf. *Apc* 7.3 ('...signemus seruos Dei nostri in frontibus eorum'). See also: *Dt* 6.6–8 and 11.18, *Ct* 8.6, *Ez* 9.4, *Apc* 22.4 and *IV Esr* 6.5.
- <sup>7</sup> Cf. *Ps* 44.10 ('...adstitit regina a dextris tuis in uestitu deaurato circumdata uarietate'). (See also: *Ps* 44.14 and *Ez* 16.13). This phrase echoes a second antiphon from the *uelatio* ceremony in the *Liber Responsalis* (see note 2): 'induit me Dominus cicladem in gyro textam, et inmensis monilibus ornauit me'.
- <sup>8</sup> Cf. *Ps* 18.6 ('...et ipse tamquam sponsus procedens de thalamo suo...').
- <sup>9</sup> Cf. *Apc* 14.3 ('...et nemo poterat discere canticum nisi illa centum quadraginta quatuor milia...').
- <sup>10</sup> Cf. *Ct* 4.11 ('faus distillans labia tua sponsa mel et lac sub lingua tua...'). See also: *Ex* 3.8, *Lv* 20.24 and *Ct* 5.1.
- <sup>11</sup> Cf. *Ct* 2.6 and 8.3 ('leua eius sub capite meo et dextera illius amplexabitur me').
- <sup>12</sup> Cf. *Apc* 1.5 ('...qui dilexit nos et lauit nos a peccatis nostri in sanguine suo'). See also: *Ct* 4.3.
- <sup>13</sup> Cf. *Mt* 4.11\* ('...et ecce angeli accesserunt et ministrabant ei'). See also: *Ps* 102.20, *Mc* 1.13 and *Apc* 7.11.
- <sup>14</sup> Cf. *Ps* 148.3 ('laudate eum sol et luna...') and *Ct* 6.9\*.
- <sup>15</sup> See the resurrection miracles of Christ: *Mt* 9.18–26, *Mc* 5.23–43, *Lc* 7.12–16, 8.41–56 and *Io* 11.1–45.
- <sup>16</sup> See the healing miracles of Christ: *Mt* 8.2–3, 8.14–16, 9.2–8, 9.20–2, 9.27–30, 14.35–6, 15.22–28, 17.14–17; *Mc* 1.23–27, 1.30–34, 1.40–43, 2.3–12, 3.1–5, 3.10–12, 5.2–6, 5.25–34, 7.25–37, 8.22–26, 9.16–26, 10.46–52; *Lc* 4.33–41, 5.12–15, 5.17–26, 6.6–10, 6.18–19, 7.2–10, 8.27–36, 8.43–48, 9.38–43, 11.14, 13.11–13, 14.2–4, 17.12–19, 18.35–43, and *Io* 4.36–53, 5.2–9, 9.1–7.
- <sup>17</sup> Cf. *Ps* 44.17 ('pro patribus tuis nati sunt tibi filii constitues eos principes super omnem terram')
- <sup>18</sup> Reversal of *Gn* 3.16 ('...multiplicabo aerumnas tuas et conceptus tuos in dolore paries filios...').
- <sup>19</sup> *Idt* 14.7.
- <sup>20</sup> Cf. *Prv* 29.5 ('homo qui blandis fictisque sermonibus loquitur amico suo rete expandit gressibus eius'). See also: *Prv* 11.9 and 28.23.
- <sup>21</sup> Cf. Ambrose, *De uirginibus* 1.2.9 ('Quanto terrore egit carnifex ut timeretur, quantis blanditiis ut suaderet') and Prudentius, *Pe*. xiv.15–17 ('Temptata multis nam prius artibus / nunc ore blandi iudicis inlice / nunc saeuientes carnificis minis').
- <sup>22</sup> Cf. *I Tim* 4.12 ('nemo adulescentiam tuam contemnat sed exemplum esto fidelium in uerbo in conuersatione in caritate in fide in castitate').
- <sup>23</sup> *Lc* 8.46.
- <sup>24</sup> Cf. *Idt* 13.20 ('vivit autem ipse Dominus quoniam custodiuit me angelus eius et hinc euntem et ibi commorantem et inde huc reuertentem et non permisit me ancillam suam Dominus coinquinari...'). See also: *Tb* 5.20–1.
- <sup>25</sup> Cf. *Ps* 17.43 ('...ut lutum platearum delebo eos'). See also: *II Sm* 22.43, *Is* 10.6 and *Mi* 7.10.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ps* 82.18 concerning the enemies of the Lord. For the image of the furnace as a test of faith and the destroyer of unbelievers see: *Iob* 23.10, *Ps* 30.2\*, 65.10, *Prv* 17.3 and 27.21, *Sir* 2.5, *Ez* 22.18–22, *Za* 13.9, *Mal* 3.2–3 and *Mt* 13.41–42. See also: *Ps* 11.7, 17.31 and *Prv* 30.5 for the words of the Lord as uncorrupted metal, which has been purified by fire.
- <sup>27</sup> Cf. Damasus *carmen* xxix.7–8 ('nudaque perfusos crines, et membra dedisse, / ne Domini templum facies peritura uideret'). Allusion first noted by Denomy, *Lives of Saint Agnes* (Cambridge, MA, 1938), p. 27.
- <sup>28</sup> *Apc* 1.16.\* See also: *Idc* 5.31, *Sap* 3.7 and *Mt* 13.43, 17.2.
- <sup>29</sup> Cf. *Mc* 9.2 ('et uestimenta eius facta sunt splendentia candida nimis uelut nix qualia fullo super terram non potest candida facere'). See also: *Mt* 17.2 and *Lc* 9.29.
- <sup>30</sup> Cf. *I Mcc* 7.34 ('et inridens spreuit eos...').
- <sup>31</sup> a) 'non dedit honorem Deo...exspirauit...', see *Act* 12.23. See also: *II Mcc* 9.1–28. b) 'cecidit in faciem suam...', see *Gn* 17.3, *Nm* 4.16, *II Sm* 1.2, *III Rg* 18.39, *Mt* 17.6 and *Lc* 17.16.
- <sup>32</sup> *Lc* 4.33. See also: *I Sm* 28.12, *Mc* 1.26 and 15.34.
- <sup>33</sup> *Lc* 5.31.
- <sup>34</sup> *Dn* 3.95. See also: *Dn* 6.22; *Act* 12.11 and *Apc* 22.6.
- <sup>35</sup> Cf. *Is* 61.10 ('...et exultabit anima mea in Deo meo quia induit me uestimentis salutis et indumento

iustitiae circumdedit me quasi sponsum decoratum corona et quasi sponsa ornatam monilibus suis'). See also: *2 Par* 6.41, *Ps* 131.9 and 16, *Is* 49.18, *Bar* 5.2 and *Apc* 19.8 and 21.2.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. *Idt* 11.12 ('et sancta Domini sui quae praecepit Deus non contingi...et uolunt consumere quae nec manibus deberent contingere ergo quoniam haec faciunt certum est quod in perditione dabuntur').

<sup>37</sup> See note 30.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. *Lc* 22.43 ('apparuit autem illi angelus de caelo confortans eum et factus in agonia prolixius orabat'). See also: *Idc* 6.12, *Mt* 1.20 and *Lc* 1.11.

<sup>39</sup> *Lc* 22.62.

<sup>40</sup> *Mc* 10.47. See also: *Mt* 9.27.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. *Bar* 6.49 ('quomodo ergo sentiri debeant quoniam dii sunt qui nec de bello se liberant, neque de malis se eripiunt').

<sup>42</sup> *Io* 19.15.\* See also: *Act* 21.36 and 22.22.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. *Nm* 19.3 ('...qui (i.e. sacrificial victim) eductam extra castra immolabit in conspectu omnium). See also: *Ps* 105.46, *Sir* 42.8 and *Act* 3.16 and 27.35.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. *Ex* 14.21 ('cumque extendisset Moses manum... diuisaque est aqua'), *Dn* 3.23-4 ('uiri autem ...ambulabant in medio flammae laudantes Deum...') and *Mt* 27.51 ('et ecce uelum templi scisum est in duas partes').

<sup>45</sup> *Tb* 11.17.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *Dn* 3.50 ('et fecit medium fornacis quasi uentum roris flantem...').

<sup>47</sup> See note 43.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. *Io* 11.40 ('dicit ei Iesus nonne dixi tibi quoniam si credideris uidebis gloriam Dei'). See also: *I Pt* 1.7-8.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. *Io* 16.21-2 ('mulier cum parit tristitiam habet...'). See also *II Cor* 2.3.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. *Mt* 27.51 ('...et terra mota est...'). See also: *Ps* 45.7, 67.9 and 113.7.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. *Apc* 16.18 ('et facta sunt fulgora et uoces et tonitrua et terraemotus factus est magnus qualis numquam fuit ex quo homines fuerunt super terram...').

<sup>52</sup> Cf. *Act*. 22.17 ('...et oranti in templo fieri me in stupore mentis').

<sup>53</sup> Cf. *Act* 9.27 ('...et narrauit illis quomodo in uia uidisset Dominum...'). See also: *Act* 11.13.

<sup>54</sup> *Lv* 13.12.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. *II Par* 6.19 ('...meus audias et preces quas fundit famulus tuus...'). See also: *II Par* 7.1, and *Bar* 2.19.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. *Tb* 12.3 ('me duxit et reduxit sanum...gaudium parentibus eius fecit...').

<sup>57</sup> *I Sm* 5.5. See also: *Idt* 14.6, *Sir* 47.8, *I Mcc* 13.39, *Mt* 27.8 and 28.15, *Act* 2.29, 23.1 and 26.22, *Rm* 11.8 and *II Cor* 3.14-15.

<sup>58</sup> See note 55.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. *Apc* 7.9 ('post haec uidi turbam magnam ...stantes ante thronum et in conspectu agni amicti stolas albas et palmae in manibus eorum').

<sup>60</sup> *Gal* 1.5. See also: *Rm* 16.27, *II Tim* 4.18, *Hbr* 13.21 and *I Pt* 4.11.

### 1.3 Commentary

The following commentary is intended as a guide to the non-Biblical features of the *PSA*, which shed light on issues such as the text's authorship, dating and geographical origin. Particular attention is given to the narrative's two concluding tales: the martyrdom of Emerentiana and the healing of Constantia, since these accounts are largely omitted from the remainder of this thesis. Scriptural quotations and reminiscences specifically associated with the *PSA*'s principal themes are discussed in Chapter One; however, a number of more general Biblical references are commented on below.

#### *Lines:*

(1) *Seruus Christi Ambrosius uirginibus sacris* The *PSA* opens with a traditional form of salutation found in many classical letters: *intitulatio* (*seruus Christi Ambrosius*) and *inscriptio* (*uirginibus sacris*).<sup>1</sup> The third part of this formula, namely the *salutatio* (*salutem <dicit>*), has either been omitted, as was common practice, or lost.<sup>2</sup> A number of authentic hagiographical narratives are attributed to the pen of Ambrose of Milan. Whilst these texts occur in a wide variety of works ranging from hymns to moral treatises and elegies, at least one, the *Inuentio SS Geruasii et Protasii* (*BHL* 3513), was composed as a letter.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, through the presentation of Agnes' martyrdom as an *epistula*, it is possible that the author of *BHL* 156 deliberately sought to imitate a format used by the bishop himself. Furthermore, the same epistolary layout is likewise found in a number of other pseudo-Ambrosian works including: *Passio SS Geruasii et Protasii* (*BHL* 3514), *Passio S Sebastiani* (*BHL* 7543) and *Passio SS Vitalis et Agricola* (*BHL* 8690–1).<sup>4</sup>

The plain and simple character of the *PSA*'s opening certainly reflects the bishop of Milan's style, whose ninety-one surviving letters tend to employ a similarly unadorned salutation unless addressed to an imperial recipient.<sup>5</sup> The one non-

<sup>1</sup> C.D. Lanham, *Salutatio Formulas in Latin Letters to 1200: Syntax, Style and Theory*, Münchener Beiträge zur Mediävistik und Renaissance-Forschung 22 (Munich, 1975), p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7–8.

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of these works see: C. Lanéry, 'Ambroise hagiographe: Les dossiers hagiographiques ambrosiens et pseudo-ambrosiens' (unpubl. PhD dissertation, Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Paris, 2006). See in particular pp. 317–18 on the survival of this salutation in the manuscript record for *BHL* 156.

<sup>4</sup> All three passions are printed in PL 17: Geruasius and Protasius, col. 821–25, Sebastian, col. 1113–50 and Vitalis and Agricola, col. 825–7. The first and last of these works likewise open: 'Seruus Christi Ambrosius.'

<sup>5</sup> See for example, *Epist.* I.v: 'Ambrosius Felici, salutem' and *Epist.* II.vii: 'Ambrosius Justo, salutem.' Compare to *Epist.* X.lxxii: 'Ambrosius episcopus beatissimo principi et christianissimo Imperatori

Ambrosian feature of the *PSA*'s introduction is the use of the epithet *seruus Christi*, which does not appear in any of the bishop's authentic letters. It is probable that this phrase is modelled on the more elaborate salutations of the NT epistles, where it was used by a number of writers, for example *Rm* 1.1.<sup>6</sup>

*Paulus seruus Christi Iesu uocatus apostolus...*<sup>7</sup>

(7) **Agnes' age** The *PSA* explicitly states that Agnes was thirteen years old when she was executed; however, this detail differs from the four earlier accounts of Agnes' martyrdom by Damasus, Ambrose and Prudentius.<sup>8</sup> This fact suggests that all five versions attribute a degree of significance to the martyr's age. Two of the earlier narratives remain silent about Agnes' exact age, although they clearly depict her as a young child presumably to arouse their readers' sympathy, horror and admiration for the virgin's plight:

*Fama refert.../ Nutricis gremium subito liquisse puellam*  
(Damasus, *carmen* xxxvii, lines 1–3)<sup>9</sup>

*Matura martyrio fuit / Matura nondum nuptiis*  
(Ambrose, *Agnes beatæ uirginis*, lines 5–6)<sup>10</sup>

The first and indeed only text prior to the *PSA* to supply a specific age for Agnes is Ambrose's *De uirginibus*, where he comments:

*Haec duodecim annorum martyrium fecisse traditur* (I.ii.7, line 1)<sup>11</sup>

Alongside this statement, Ambrose's narrative also makes several references to the fact that a girl of twelve was still legally regarded as a child:

*Nouum martyrii genus: nondum idonea poenae et iam matura uictoriae...*  
(I.ii.8, lines 1–2)<sup>12</sup>

*Stupere uniuersi, quod iam diuinitatis testis existeret, quae adhuc arbitra sui per aetatem esse non posset* (I.ii.8, lines 10–12)<sup>13</sup>

Valentiniano.' O. Faller and M. Zelzer (eds.), *Sancti Ambrosii Opera pars x, epistulae et acta*, 4 vols., CSEL 82 (Vienna, 1968–96), I, 35–8 and 43–66, and III, 11–20.

<sup>6</sup> S.K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Philadelphia, PA, 1986), p. 21, who notes that the NT writers employed a more elaborate and religious approach to all three parts of the classical salutation.

<sup>7</sup> 'Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle.' See also *Col* 4.12 and *II Pt* 1.1. For the use of this phrase outside of letter salutations see *I Cor* 7.22 and *Gal* 1.10.

<sup>8</sup> See pp. 17–21 for details and editions of all four earlier accounts of Agnes' death.

<sup>9</sup> 'Tradition reports... that the girl suddenly abandoned her nurse's lap.'

<sup>10</sup> 'She was of the proper age for martyrdom, (but) not yet the proper age for marriage.'

<sup>11</sup> 'It is said that she suffered martyrdom at twelve years (of age).'

<sup>12</sup> '(Was this) a new kind of martyrdom? She (was) not yet fit for punishment, (but) already the proper age for victory.'

<sup>13</sup> 'All were astonished that already she was a witness of divinity, who as yet on account of her age was not able to be a witness.' On the issue of women acting as a witness in court see A. Arjava, *Women and Law in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 233–7. Arjava notes that whilst women are known to have acted in this capacity during the fourth and fifth centuries, it is not clear that they were always permitted to. For example, she notes comments made by the fourth-century author Ambrosiaster that a woman 'nec

There is a distinct change in tone between Ambrose's hymn and *De uirginibus*, which may be related to the nature of the intended audience for each text. The hymn was composed for the bishop's general congregation at Milan and appears to focus on Agnes' tender age as a means to inspire (or shame) worshippers. If a child could demonstrate such conviction of faith, then those who were older should be equally capable of the same level of devotion. The central theme of *De uirginibus* is the promotion of female asceticism. Ambrose's sister, who had taken the veil in Rome, was the initial recipient of the treatise, although this work was no doubt also intended for circulation amongst her acquaintances.<sup>14</sup> These circumstances may explain the subtle alterations to the characterisation of Agnes. Once again the martyr is cast as a young maiden, but this time there is a new emphasis on the fact that she is on the threshold of adulthood.

Alongside its frequent use of legal vocabulary, and in contrast to Ambrose's hymn, *De uirginibus* also gives a greater prominence to the *sponsa Christi* motif so often employed in the hagiographic tales of virgin martyrs. The bishop's hymn incorporates this image into a series of comments on the virgin's demeanour and courage. *De uirginibus*, on the other hand, depicts the climax of Agnes' martyrdom as the moment when she rejects any notion of a mortal marriage in favour of a celestial union (I.ii.9). Under Roman law, the minimum age at which girls could marry was twelve.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, contemporary literary and epigraphic evidence suggests that aristocratic women were indeed often married at such an age.<sup>16</sup> It seems plausible, therefore, that Ambrose sought to add a touch of realism to his account in order to promote Agnes as a role model for contemporary young women. For adolescent girls on the brink of marriage who thought that neither their family nor society would take heed of their wishes to remain chaste, here was a tale to inspire them to succeed.

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docere enim potest nec testis esse neque fidem dicere nec iudicare... – ('for she cannot teach, nor be a witness, nor affirm a guarantee, nor be a judge...') *Quaestiones* 45.3. A. Souter (ed.), *Pseudo-Augustini Quaestiones ueteris et noui testamenti cxxvii*, CSEL 50 (Vienna, 1908), p. 83.

<sup>14</sup> N. McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital* (Berkeley, CA, 1994), pp. 60–1.

<sup>15</sup> M.K. Hopkins, 'The Age of Roman Girls at Marriage', *Population Studies* 18 (1965): 309–27, at p. 313. Hopkins notes that twelve remained the legal age at which women could marry from the reign of Augustus to around 530. In addition, he argues that Roman women in general tended to marry between the ages of twelve and fifteen (p. 319). See also B.D. Shaw, 'The Age of Roman Girls at Marriage: Some Reconsiderations', *JRS* 77 (1987): 30–46, who agrees with Hopkins' average marriage age range of twelve to fifteen for aristocratic women, but argues that this should be raised to the late teens for girls from the lower classes.

<sup>16</sup> Hopkins, 'The Age of Roman Girls', pp. 314–322.

Ambrose's depiction of the virgin martyr as a twelve year-old maiden in *De uirginibus* is entirely logical; however, neither Prudentius nor the *PSA* followed his lead. In the *Peristephanon*, Prudentius comments:

*Aiunt iugali uix habilem toro  
primis in annis forte puellulam  
Christo calentem...* (xiv.10–12)<sup>17</sup>

Whilst the Spanish poet omits any specific reference to Agnes' age, his subtle reworking of the earlier source material hints at one possible reason behind the *PSA*'s alteration of Agnes' age to thirteen. Prudentius is the first author to specifically allude to the virgin's sexual desire for Christ, which implies that she had reached puberty by the time of her martyrdom. The marriage provisions laid down by Roman law indicate that twelve was the traditional age associated with female puberty.<sup>18</sup> Comments by contemporary physicians who argued against the defloration of pre-pubescent wives, however, suggest that custom and reality did not always coincide.<sup>19</sup> It is therefore possible that the *PSA* altered Agnes' age to thirteen in line with such thinking in order to present a more realistic account of the virgin's burning desire for Christ. Agnes' rejection of an earthly marriage for a celestial union becomes far more worthy of admiration if she truly understands what she has forsaken in order to attain her goal.

The alteration of the virgin's age by merely one year may seem rather pointless; however, this hypothesis is strengthened by recourse to patristic exegesis on the subject of puberty. Ambrose himself, in his commentary *De Abraham*, noted that Ishmael was said to have been thirteen years old when he was circumcised (*cf. Gn 17.25*). He comments:

*Tertio decimo quoque anno quod circumdeditur Ishmael, ratio evidens, quia is qui incipere habet uti cognitione feminae, ante debet recidere in se ardorem libidinis, ut a superfluis abstinet commixtionibus, coniunctioni tantum se legitimae reseruet.* (II.xi.91)<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> 'They say that as a little girl in her first years, scarcely (yet) suitable for marriage and a husband, (but already) glowing (with desire) for Christ...'

<sup>18</sup> Hopkins, 'The Age of Roman Girls', p. 313.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 314.

<sup>20</sup> 'It was also in his thirteenth year that Ishmael was circumcised, the evident reason, because he who has begun to experience the perception of a women, should first cut away his ardour of lust, so that he may abstain from unnecessary mixing, (and) preserve himself for legitimate marriage alone.' C. Schenkl (ed.), *Sancti Ambrosii Opera pars i*, CSEL 32.1 (Vienna, 1896), pp. 497–638, at p. 638. NB the minimum legal age for a Roman male to marry was fourteen (Hopkins, 'The Age of Roman Girls', p. 313).

It seems perfectly plausible that the *PSA* may have deliberately followed Ambrose's teaching on the age of puberty, particularly if the author was indeed attempting to create a deliberate and well thought-out Ambrosian forgery.<sup>21</sup>

There is also one further possible scriptural allusion behind Agnes' depiction as a thirteen-year old martyr in a hagiographic narrative that often employs the convention of *imitatio Christi*. Amongst the OT figures thought to prefigure Christ is the prophet Jeremiah, who first began to preach in the thirteenth year of the reign of King Josias of Judea (*Jer* 1.2).<sup>22</sup> The Bible states that Jeremiah was still a child at the time of his first prophecy (*Jer* 1.6) and that he went on to endure fierce persecution throughout his life at the hands of his own people (e.g. *Jer* 26.8 and 38.6). According to legend, Jeremiah's outspokenness also eventually led to his martyrdom (Tertullian, *Scorpiace* c.8).<sup>23</sup> Consequently, through casting Agnes as a thirteen-year old Christian, whose forthright attempts to persuade her fellow Roman citizens to acknowledge God likewise result in her execution, the author of the *PSA* may have deliberately sought to align various aspects of her life to that of Jeremiah's.

(10) *Ab scholis reuerteretur...* The *PSA*'s use of the noun *schola* represents an intriguing puzzle. Technically speaking, the word refers to either the time or place at which one acquires knowledge.<sup>24</sup> The circumstances of its usage in this instance, however, clearly indicate that the meaning of place is required here. It is Agnes' appearance in public that provides the opportunity for the Prefect's son to fall for her beauty, a cautionary tale to remind all virgins of the benefits to remaining behind closed doors. Nevertheless, exactly where Agnes is returning home from remains a mystery. Accounts of late antique women such as Proba and Paula reveal that some aristocratic ladies received an extensive education, although it appears that the nobility tended to employ private tutors for their children, at least for the rudimentary stages of learning.<sup>25</sup> The sons of such parents, aged twelve and upwards, may well have later attended the public school of a grammaticus or rhetor, but their daughters were most likely kept at

<sup>21</sup> See pp. 18–19 on the authorship of the *PSA*.

<sup>22</sup> See for example, Jerome, *Epist.* cxxii.1. I. Hilberg (ed.), *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulae*, 3 vols., CSEL 54–56 (Vienna, 1910–18; repr. with indexes and additional notes by M. Kamptner, Vienna, 1996), III, 56–71, at pp. 56–61.

<sup>23</sup> A. Reifferscheid and G. Wissowa (eds.), *Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani Opera pars i*, CSEL 20 (Vienna, 1890), pp. 144–79, at pp. 160–2.

<sup>24</sup> L&S s.v. 'schola -ae I.'

<sup>25</sup> *OCD* s.v. 'education, Roman', pp. 509–10, at p. 509.

home for the sake of propriety.<sup>26</sup> Thus it is unlikely that the author of the *PSA* envisaged Agnes attending a school in the modern sense of the word. Perhaps the reader is supposed to infer that she was returning from a Christian gathering where she had received instruction in the Scriptures.

**(10) The prefect of Rome** Established by the Kings of Rome, the office of the prefect of Rome continued to exist after the fall of the Western empire.<sup>27</sup> During the Republic, the *praefectus urbis* deputised for a consul who was absent from Rome.<sup>28</sup> Under the emperors he became the imperial representative in charge of the city.<sup>29</sup> By the fourth century not only did the prefect head the senate, but his court was also the most influential in Rome; hence, this office was ‘regarded as the crown of a senatorial career.’<sup>30</sup> Consequently, the rank of Agnes’ judge provides few clues for the dating of the *PSA*. The depiction of the confrontation between the martyr and an official of this rank, however, allows the virgin to challenge the most senior representative of Roman power in the city.

**(10–16) Agnes’ dowry** The *PSA*’s description of the gifts both offered and promised to the virgin by the suitor and his parents appears to reflect actual late antique dowry customs. From at least the early fourth century until the sixth century and possibly beyond, not only was the bride’s father required to pay a dowry (*dos*) to the groom, but the groom himself was also expected to offer pre-nuptial gifts (*donatio ante nuptias*).<sup>31</sup> At first the *donatio* equated to only a fraction of the *dos*, but by the mid fifth century the two tended to be of an equivalent value.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, around the end of the fourth century the custom evolved whereby only a small part of the *donatio* was handed over at the official announcement of a betrothal. The remainder was then paid after the wedding.<sup>33</sup> The *PSA* appears to depict this advance payment (*arra*) in the jewels bestowed on Agnes, with the suitor’s promises clearly outlining the full *donatio* he was prepared to offer for her.

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<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 509–10. See also T. Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 25–33, who notes that whilst a vast amount of information survives about the content of the classical and late antique school ‘curriculum’, very little is known about how schools were actually run, especially those for children.

<sup>27</sup> *OCD* s.v. ‘Prefect’, p. 1239.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Arjava, *Women and Law*, pp. 52–5.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 55–6.

(43) *Fasces* The *fasces* were ‘bundles of rods, approximately 1.5 m. ( 5 ft.) long and of elm- or birchwood, and (sometimes) a single headed axe; they were held together by red thongs and carried by *lictors*.’<sup>34</sup> Whenever a magistrate appeared in public, his lictors bore these rods before him as a symbol of his authority.<sup>35</sup> The number of fasces varied depending on one’s rank: a consul was permitted twelve, but a lower ranking official, such as an imperial legate, only five.<sup>36</sup>

(59, 75 and 78) *Vesta and the Vestal Virgins* Prudentius’ *Peristephanon* is the earliest account of Agnes’ martyrdom which specifies the pagan deity to whom the martyr is ordered to sacrifice:

*Hanc in lupanar trudere publicum  
certum est, ad aram ni caput adplicat  
ac de Minerua iam ueniam rogat,  
quam uirgo pergit temnere uirginem.* (xiv.25–8)<sup>37</sup>

This passage may provide the inspiration behind Simpronius’ challenge to Agnes in the *PSA*, where he likewise commands that she either sacrifice at the pagan altars or be condemned to a brothel. The only difference between the two accounts lies in the alteration of the specified recipient of Agnes’ sacrifice – from the virgin goddess Minerva to Vesta. Three possible reasons can be adduced for this modification. First, Vesta’s main temple in the *forum Romanum* housed a sacred and continually burning flame that symbolised Rome’s existence and continued prosperity.<sup>38</sup> Thus on one level, Agnes’ refusal to sacrifice to the Roman goddess of the hearth can be interpreted as a rejection of all that pagan Rome stood for.

A second motive behind the mention of Vesta concerns her priestesses, the famed Vestal Virgins who, at first glance, appear to provide a pagan alternative to a life of Christian asceticism. Simpronius’ command that the martyr should tend Vesta’s altar both night and day (59–60) clearly indicates that he is offering Agnes the chance to become one of the Vestal Virgins who constantly attended her sacred flame.<sup>39</sup> Through alluding to Vesta and her Virgins, the author of the *PSA* heightens the drama of Agnes’ trial scene, since Simpronius mistakenly believes that he is truly offering the virgin a

<sup>34</sup> *OCD* s.v. ‘*fasces*’, pp. 587–8, at p. 587.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 587

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 588.

<sup>37</sup> ‘I am determined to thrust her into a public brothel, unless she places her head on the altar and immediately asks for forgiveness from Minerva, the virgin (goddess) whom (she, likewise a) virgin (herself), continues to despise.’

<sup>38</sup> *OCD* s.v. ‘Vesta, Vestals’, p. 1591.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

clear choice of fate: she can either preserve her chastity in a pagan temple, or have it destroyed in the brothel. However, although the Vestals dedicated a minimum of thirty years virginal service to their goddess, they were never required to take a vow of perpetual chastity and were even permitted to marry once their term in office concluded.<sup>40</sup> Consequently, in Agnes' eyes, Simpronius not only asks her to pollute her spiritual chastity through sacrificing to a pagan goddess, but also fails to provide a situation in which she can perpetually retain her physical virginity.

A third possible reason for the reference to Vesta is the continual use of fire imagery throughout the *PSA* where it acts as a narrative device to associate paganism with carnal sexuality.<sup>41</sup> Through her Vestal Virgins, Vesta was clearly connected with the idea of purity; however, various aspects of her cult were also connected with the concept of fertility. For example, Vesta's sacred flame could be interpreted as a symbol of Rome's fecundity. According to Pliny, one of the sacred objects housed in the goddess' temple was the *fascinum*, an erect phallus that warded off evil.<sup>42</sup> In addition, the Vestals also presided over a number of rites associated with fertility, including those of the *Fordicidia* and *Consualia*, as well as the festival of *Bona Dea*.<sup>43</sup> Vesta's sacred flame, which acted as a substitute for an actual image of the goddess, would also have made her the obvious choice for any Christian writer who wished to associate paganism with fire and desires of the flesh.

Finally, the reference to Vesta also casts an interesting light on the question of when the *PSA* was composed, since the goddess' cult was officially disbanded in 394. Indeed, Allard dated the *PSA* to the fifth century on the basis that this work was unlikely to refer to a cult whose relevance was unknown to its audience.<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, the mention of Vesta may be yet further proof that the author of this text was well acquainted with Ambrose's literary corpus. The bishop of Milan unfavourably compared the Vesta's priestesses to Christian virgins in both *De uirginibus* I.iv.15 and in his *Epist.* xviii.11–12.

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> For a further discussion of Vesta's symbolism in the *PSA*, see p. 44.

<sup>42</sup> M. Beard, 'Re-reading (Vestal) Virginity', in R. Hawley and B. Levick (eds.), *Women in Antiquity: New Assessments* (London, 1995), pp. 166–77, at p. 173 with reference to Pliny's *Historia naturalis* XXVIII.vii. C. Mayhoff (ed.), *C. Plini Secundi Naturalis historiae libri xxxvii*, 6 vols., Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana (Leipzig, 1875–1906), IV, 300–5.

<sup>43</sup> M. Beard, 'The Sexual Status of Vestal Virgins', *JRS* 70 (1980): 12–27, at pp. 13 and 17.

<sup>44</sup> P. Allard, 'Agnes (Sainte)', *DACL*, I, 905–18, at col. 911.

(85–6) *cucumae* According to L&S, the noun *cucuma* (cooking vessel, kettle or small private bath) was infrequently used in ancient times and is absent from the Vulgate.<sup>45</sup> The rarity of this noun may well explain why manuscripts N and S alter the declension of *cucumae* to group three: *cucumeres*. Unfortunately, this modification also changes the meaning of the noun so that the phrase then reads:

For your gods are copper from which cucumbers are made for the use of men...

Whilst it is tempting to see this change as a practical joke by a bored scribe, it is possible that familiarity with the Vulgate may underlie this alteration. Cucumbers (*Nm* 11.5) and cucumber fields (*Is* 1.8) are mentioned in the Bible and perhaps a scribe mistook *cucumae* for the misspelling of a more familiar word. Indeed, one particular passage may well lie behind N and S's use of *cucumeres*, namely *Baruch* 6.69:

*nam sicut in cucumeraria formido nihil custodit ita sunt dii illorum lignei et argentei et inaurati*<sup>46</sup>

This verse forms part of the conclusion to the warning against idolatry contained in the epistle of Jeremiah, which includes a long description of the worthlessness of stone and metal idols. It seems plausible that a scribe's memory of this passage was activated as they copied Agnes' speech on the same theme and thus initiated this alteration. On the other hand, Medieval Latin commonly changes the declension of classical nouns, which may be the case with this emendation.<sup>47</sup>

(85–6) *plateae ad euadendum lutum melius sternitur* This phrase does not echo any one specific Biblical passage, but rather draws on a common Scriptural image: to trample one's enemies underfoot like the mire of the streets is a metaphor for their total annihilation.<sup>48</sup> The lack of any direct verbal parallels to these verses may well reflect a loose reminiscence of Biblical language on the author's part, but there is also a possibility that he adapted the image of the OT dirt street to reflect the paved roads of Rome.

(167–69) S. Agnese fuori le mura The *PSA*'s claim that Constantia asked her father to build a basilica at Agnes' tomb suggests that the author was well acquainted with the topography of the complex of buildings associated with Agnes' church on the Via

<sup>45</sup> L&S s.v. 'cucuma -ae.'

<sup>46</sup> 'For as a scarecrow in a garden of cucumbers keepeth nothing, so are their gods of wood, and of silver, and laid over with gold.'

<sup>47</sup> V. Väänänen, *Introduction au latin vulgaire*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. rev. (Paris, 1981), pp. 106–8.

<sup>48</sup> See for example, *Ps* 17.43, *Is* 10.6 and *Mi* 7.10.

Nomentana (see illus. 1). The initial phase of Christian building on this site resulted in the creation of two series of catacombs.<sup>49</sup> The earliest tombs date to the second century, the second stage, to the late third and early fourth centuries.<sup>50</sup> It is these later catacombs that contain the original crypt and tomb of St Agnes.<sup>51</sup> To this day the virgin martyr's remains are believed to lie interred in her initial resting place.<sup>52</sup> The *Liber pontificalis* claims that Pope Liberius I (352–66) undertook the decoration of Agnes' tomb and his successor Damasus (366–84), of course, included Agnes amongst the Roman saints for whom he composed an epitaph.<sup>53</sup> By 400 A.D. a church is thought to have been raised over Agnes' subterranean tomb and this building was subsequently restored by Pope Symmachus I (498–514).<sup>54</sup> Around a century later, Honorius I (625–38) replaced this initial edifice with a larger structure, which still forms the vast majority of the modern day church.<sup>55</sup>

Honorius was also responsible for the surviving apse mosaic, which depicts Agnes as a Byzantine empress standing between two Popes: Symmachus and Honorius himself (see illus. 3).<sup>56</sup> It is significant to note that numerous literary works (from the *PSA* to the later Anglo-Saxon accounts of the virgin's martyrdom) frequently associate Agnes with the Queen of Heaven from Psalm 44. Although the *PSA* itself may well have influenced Honorius' decoration scheme, one might assume that it was the eyewitness accounts of Anglo-Saxon pilgrims who had visited Agnes' church that encouraged the frequent emphasis of this motif in the Insular accounts.<sup>57</sup>

Roughly fifty yards from Agnes' tomb lies the ruin of the Imperial funerary basilica built at the request of Constantine's daughter, Constantia. The princess' connection with this building is not only attested by the *PSA*, but also by the *LP* and a dedication inscription from the church itself.<sup>58</sup> Scholars, however, cannot agree whether the church was actually built as part of Constantine's Imperial building scheme

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<sup>49</sup> M. Webb, *The Churches and Catacombs of Early Christian Rome: A Comprehensive Guide* (Brighton, 2001), p. 246.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> St Agnes' head, however, is now said to be preserved in S. Agnese in Agone, Rome.

<sup>53</sup> *Liber pontificalis* c.37 and 39. L. Duchesne (ed.), *Le Liber pontificalis: Texte, introduction et commentaire*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1886–92; repr. with vol. III, containing bibliography and indexes by C. Vogel, Paris, 1955–7), I, 207–10 and 212–15. Hereafter *LP*. See pp. 18 and 20 for discussion of Damasus' epigram.

<sup>54</sup> Webb, *The Churches*, p. 247. See also *LP* c.53.

<sup>55</sup> R. Krautheimer (ed.), *Corpus basilicarum Christianorum Romae*, 5 vols. (Vatican City, 1937–77), I, 17. See also *LP* c.72 (Honorius), and c.97 for Hadrian I (772–95) who restored Honorius' church.

<sup>56</sup> Webb, *The Churches*, p. 248.

<sup>57</sup> See in particular c.3, pp. 124–35 and c.4, pp. 167–72.

<sup>58</sup> See further, pp. 259–63.

in Rome (c. 314–37), as the *PSA* and *LP* claim, or following his death (c. 337–50).<sup>59</sup> If Constantia did indeed ask her father to commission a church to St Agnes, she cannot have been more than a teenager at the time.<sup>60</sup> Consequently, some historians have felt that the later period between her two marriages constitutes a more realistic time for her display of devotion to the virgin martyr.<sup>61</sup>

Constantia's association with Agnes' cult centre also continued beyond her lifetime. The *PSA* (206–7) records that Constantia's tomb was situated in the Imperial estate on the Via Nomentana. The *Res gestae* of Ammianus Marcellinus concurs with this statement (XXI.i) and notes that her sister Helena, wife of Julian the Apostate, was also buried at this site.<sup>62</sup> For centuries, the rotunda of Santa Constanza, which lies adjacent to the Imperial basilica, was thought to be Constantia's tomb. In modern times, this structure has also been considered as a possible site for the baptistery that the *LP* claims Constantine had built at the same time as his basilica (Silvester, 314–35).<sup>63</sup> Recent archaeological evidence, however, has cast doubt on both of these views. Excavations have revealed traces of an earlier building (possibly a triconch) beneath the rotunda, which must have been built at the same time as the Imperial basilica.<sup>64</sup> Scholars have postulated that this structure may have functioned as a martyrium or the abovementioned baptistery.<sup>65</sup> Whatever purpose this original building served, it is clear that the rotunda itself postdates the Imperial basilica. The possibility remains that Santa Constanza once housed Constantia's tomb; however, a recent and convincing theory advanced by Gillian Mackie argues that the church was actually the mausoleum of Constantia's sister Helena.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>59</sup> G. Mackie, 'A New Look at the Patronage of Santa Constanza, Rome', *Byzantion* 67 (1997): 383–406, at pp. 390–1. R. Krautheimer, 'The Ecclesiastical Building Policy of Constantine', in G. Bonamente and F. Fusco (eds.), *Costantino il grande dall'antichità all'umanesimo*, 2 vols. (Macerata, 1992), II 509–552, at pp. 521 and 525. *PSA* 206–8 and *LP* c.34 (Silvester, 314–35).

<sup>60</sup> Mackie, 'A New Look', p. 391. See pp. 258–63 for further details on Constantia's life.

<sup>61</sup> Krautheimer, *Corpus basilicarum*, p. 35. F. Tolotti, 'Le basiliche cimiteriali con deambulatorio del suburbio Romano: questione ancora aperta', *Römische Mitteilungen* 89 (1982): 153–211, at p. 157.

<sup>62</sup> W. Seyfarth (ed.), *Ammiani Marcellini Rerum gestarum libri qui supersunt*, Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum: Scriptores Romani, 4 vols. (Leipzig, 1978), II, 126–30. Hereafter *RG*.

<sup>63</sup> See further, pp. 260–3.

<sup>64</sup> D.J. Stanley, 'New Discoveries at Santa Constanza', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 48 (1994): 257–61. D.J. Stanley, 'An Excavation at Santa Constanza', *Arte Medievale* 7 (1993): 103–12. See also illus. 2.

<sup>65</sup> Stanley, 'New Discoveries', p. 260 (martyrium); Mackie, 'A New Look', pp. 384–95 (baptistery).

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 395–406. See also Stanley, 'New Discoveries', p. 260, who notes that Perrotti's 1956 excavations in the imperial basilica revealed 'a unique apsed structure in the middle of the nave', which was identified 'as a tomb that appears to have been part of the foundation of the basilica.' Stanley argues that only a member of the imperial family could have been buried in such a prestigious place and that this tomb was probably Constantia's original resting place. Due to the survival of two red-porphyr sarcophagi from Santa Constanza, it would appear that at some point both Constantia and Helena were interred in the rotunda. One sarcophagus is now preserved in the Vatican Museums along with another

In contrast to manuscript P, which claims that Constantia had had a *mausoleum* built for herself at Agnes' tomb, N and S record that the building she commissioned was a *mansio* (dwelling place). If this reading is employed, Constantia's continued state of virginity, which encouraged numerous other Roman women to take the veil, could be interpreted as a claim that the princess had founded an early female ascetic assembly at this site.<sup>67</sup> Indeed, as discussed in Chapter One, the dedication of the *PSA* to a number of consecrated virgins does suggest that this hagiographic narrative was written for a female community dwelling at Agnes' tomb several centuries later.<sup>68</sup> The existence of an early convent, however, remains a contentious subject amongst scholars. Only one additional piece of evidence exists that might refer to this establishment: a sepulchral inscription for one *abbatissa Serena* (d. 514), which was unearthed during excavations in the grounds of Agnes' church.<sup>69</sup> It remains highly unlikely that Constantia actually founded such a house (see below), yet it is possible that the N and S readings reflect the original text of the *PSA* and an attempt to create a foundation history for such a community. By the ninth century a male monastic house certainly existed at the site, since the *LP* records that this establishment received a gift of silver from Leo III (795–816).<sup>70</sup> A number of tenth-century documents now preserved in the Vatican archives also refer to a Monastery of St Agnes and St Constantia on the Via Nomentana.<sup>71</sup> During the eleventh century the monks appear to have been replaced by secular priests, but under Pascal II (1099–1118) a nunnery was established at the site, which remained in existence until 1480.<sup>72</sup>

There are two further early medieval ecclesiastical sites in Rome dedicated to St Agnes. The first is the church of Sant' Agnese in Agone on the Piazza Navona, which is allegedly built on the site of the brothel where Agnes was incarcerated. The notion that the brothel was once situated in this location presumably stems from the fact that the square was built over the ruins of the Stadium of Domitian (inaugurated c. 86 and

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red-porphry coffin that contained the body of Constantine's mother Helena, the other in St Peter's. R. Holloway, *Constantine and Rome* (London, 2004), pp. 94 and 104.

<sup>67</sup> It is possible that this reading is also related to *LP* c.37, which records that Pope Liberius (352–66) dwelt with Constantia at Agnes' church following his return from exile. The dates of Liberius' reign alone reveal this entry to be a fabrication, since by 352 Constantia dwelt in the East with her second husband and died two years later. It is thought that here the *LP* has mistaken Constantia for her sister Helena. A.H.M. Jones *et al.*, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, vol. I: 260–395 (Cambridge, 1971), p. 222.

<sup>68</sup> See in particular pp. 26–7 and 49–64.

<sup>69</sup> A.P. Frutaz, *Il complesso monumentale di Sant' Agnese*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Rome, 2001), p. 93. See also, p. 27, fn. 62.

<sup>70</sup> *LP* c.98.

<sup>71</sup> Frutaz, *Il complesso monumentale*, p. 94.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

rebuilt in 227 by Alexander Severus), whose arcades were famed for the prostitutes who plied their trade there.<sup>73</sup> Little is known about the earliest church at this site. The first documentary reference to any church here dates to the eighth century, but few traces of any early buildings survive.<sup>74</sup> Today, the seventeenth-century baroque church of Rainaldi and Borromini dominates the piazza.<sup>75</sup>

Under the entry for Leo III (795–816), the *LP* records the existence of another church dedicated to Agnes:

*oratorium sanctae Agnetis qui ponitur in monasterio qui appellatur Duo Furna*<sup>76</sup>

The church or oratory of S. Agnese ad Duo Furna, however, is no longer extant and again very little is known about the site. One further brief reference to this building is found in the *LP*'s notice for Paschal I (817–24).<sup>77</sup> This entry intimates that Paschal incorporated Agnes' oratory into the monastery and church of St Praxedis, which he founded to house his relic collection.<sup>78</sup>

(171–84) St. Emerentiana (*BHL* 2527–2527a)<sup>79</sup>

Feast-Day: 23 January

Franchi de' Cavalieri once described the *passio* of St Emerentiana as possessing 'un carattere spiccatamente leggendario'; however, this virgin's late antique cult not only predates the composition of the *PSA*, but also developed entirely independently.<sup>80</sup> A fragmentary epitaph thought to date from the fourth or fifth century records that Emerentiana was originally honoured as part of a group of martyrs buried in the *cimiterium maius*, whose collective feast date was 16 September.<sup>81</sup>

XVI. KAL. OCT. MARTURORO HIC IN CIMITERU MAIORE. VICTORIS.  
FELICIS. PAPIANTIS. EMERENTIANETIS ET ALEXANDRI<sup>82</sup>

<sup>73</sup> A. Claridge, *Oxford Archaeological Guides: Rome* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 209–11.

<sup>74</sup> Krautheimer, *Corpus basilicarum*, p. 40.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> 'the oratory of St Agnes which is located in the monastery called 'Dua Furna.' *LP* c.98.

<sup>77</sup> *LP* c.100.

<sup>78</sup> G. Ferrari, *Early Roman Monasteries: Notes for the Histories of the Monasteries and Convents at Rome from the V through the X Century*, Studi di antichità cristiana 23 (Rome, 1957), pp. 4–8.

<sup>79</sup> Emerentiana's martyrdom can be found in the following Insular works: Bede's *martyrologium* (23 January) and the *OEM* (23 January). Her feast is also noted by a number of Anglo-Saxon calendars and sacramentaries (see Appendices 3.1 and 3.3).

<sup>80</sup> P. Franchi de' Cavalieri, 'S. Agnese nella tradizione e nella leggenda', *Römische Quartalschrift*, Supplementheft 10 (Rome, 1899); repr. in his *Scritti agiografici* vol. I, Studi e Testi 221 (Vatican City, 1962), pp. 293–381, at p. 343. The *PSA* contains the only surviving literary account of Emerentiana's martyrdom.

<sup>81</sup> *BSS* IV, 1161–2, which also notes that these saints are recorded on the same date by the earliest manuscript of the *MH*: Paris, BnF, lat. 10837 (Gneuss 897, s.viii in, ?England ?Echternach). See also Frutaz, *Il complesso monumentale*, p. 77.

<sup>82</sup> 'On 16 September, Victor, Felix, Papias, Emerentiana and Alexander were martyred here in the great cemetery.'

The catacombs of this cemetery, which lies approximately three hundred yards from S. Agnese fuori le mura, have also produced a second inscription that names Emerentiana, along with an early painting thought to depict the saint (but not her fellow martyrs).<sup>83</sup> Indeed, it would appear that over the centuries, perhaps due to a growing tradition that associated her with the nearby cult of St Agnes, Emerentiana gained a degree of renown beyond that of her fellow martyrs in the *cimiterium maius*. Three seventh- and eighth-century pilgrim guides record that a church dedicated to Emerentiana alone (and no longer extant) stood above the cemetery catacombs.<sup>84</sup> The *LP* also refers to this basilica, which was restored by Pope Hadrian I (772–95).<sup>85</sup>

The exact date and circumstances for the unification of the two virgin martyr cults on the Via Nomentana remains a mystery. Some light, however, can perhaps be shed on this question by the transference of Emerentiana's feast-day from 16 September to 23 January, two days after Agnes' major feast on 21 January. A number of eighth-century works, including Bede's *Martyrologium*, record Emerentiana's new feast and thus provide a *terminus ante quem* for the calendrical alteration.<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, Florian Jubaru has suggested that this adjustment was caused by Rome's adoption of the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (14 September) during the seventh century.<sup>87</sup> The addition of this new feast may have provided the perfect excuse to strengthen the association between Agnes' and Emerentiana's cults by closely aligning their two feast-days. This calendrical amendment, of course, also prevented a major ecclesiastical occasion from overshadowing Emerentiana's own celebrations.<sup>88</sup>

Overall, the archaeological and literary evidence suggests that proximity of the two virgins' tombs, as well as the common depiction of foster siblings in the fifth- and sixth-century Roman *Gesta martyrum*, soon gave rise to the tradition that the two girls were foster-sisters.<sup>89</sup> Thus it seems that over the years, after this tradition had become firmly established, various steps, perhaps including the dedication of a church to Emerentiana and the alteration her feast date, were taken to strengthen the links between

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<sup>83</sup> BSS IV, 1162–5.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 1165. The three guides are: *Notitia ecclesiarum urbis Romae, De locis sanctorum* and that found in William of Malmesbury's *Gesta regum anglorum*. See p. 67, fn. 240 for further details.

<sup>85</sup> *LP* c.97.

<sup>86</sup> BSS IV, 1162. Bede's entry for Emerentiana is cited on p. 162.

<sup>87</sup> F. Jubaru, *Sainte Agnès: Vierge et martyre de la Voie Nomentane d'après de nouvelles recherches* (Paris, 1907), p. 199, fn. 2. The *LP*'s entry for Sergius I (687–701) suggests that this feast was already known during his reign, indicating that its importation into Rome dates to around the mid-seventh century (c.86).

<sup>88</sup> Jubaru, *Sainte Agnès*, p. 199, fn. 2.

<sup>89</sup> For the depiction of foster siblings in contemporary hagiography, see Franchi de' Cavalieri, 'S. Agnese nella tradizione', pp. 343–4.

the two cult centres. It remains unclear whether the *PSA* initiated Emerentiana's depiction as Agnes' foster sister, or merely recorded an earlier tradition. By the ninth century, however, the association was so well established that Paschal I (817–24) translated Emerentiana's relics to S. Agnese fuori le mura.<sup>90</sup> Several centuries later, in 1615, Pope Paul V (1605–21) reburied the two saints together in a silver sarcophagus that remains in the church to this day.<sup>91</sup>

**(173–6) Emerentiana's death** No direct Biblical echoes are used during the narration of this saint's execution; nevertheless, the virgin's death is undoubtedly intended to recall Stephen's martyrdom in *Act*. Emerentiana's outspoken speech to her pagan executors shortly before they stone her clearly echoes *Act* 7.1–59, which narrates how the proto-martyr was stoned to death by an angry mob after his denunciation of the Jewish priests.

**(178–80) The earthquake after Emerentiana's death** Perhaps the most obvious Biblical passages recalled by the depiction of an earthquake and strange weather phenomena surrounding someone's death are the events that follow Christ's Passion (*Mt* 27.45 and 51, *Mc* 15.33 and *Lc* 23.44–45). The author of the *PSA* may well have intended this section to allude to such verses, although the narrative's actual prose primarily echoes *Apc* 16.18–19, which narrates how God will unleash his wrath on the earth to avenge the unjust slaying of his saints and prophets:

*et facta sunt fulgora et uoces et tonitrua et terraemotus factus est magnus quails numquam fuit ex quo homines fuerunt super terram talis terraemotus sic magnus / et facta est ciuitas magna in tres partes et ciuitates gentium ceciderunt...*<sup>92</sup>

Indeed, the reference to *Apc* 16 may also explain why the reading of manuscripts N and S contains a superfluous *magnus* (*fit terrae motus magnus uehementissimus...*), which brings the passage into closer alignment with the Vulgate text.

**(184–93) Agnes' post mortem appearance** Agnes' midnight appearance at her tomb when she is seen clothed in gold amidst a throng of virgins forms the dramatic confirmation that her hopes, as outlined in her opening speech (18–38), have been fulfilled. There is one particular point of interest in this scene: the appearance of the

<sup>90</sup> Frutaz, *Il complesso monumentale*, p. 77.

<sup>91</sup> BSS IV, 1165–66.

<sup>92</sup> 'And there were lightnings, and voices, and thunders, and there was a great earthquake, such a one as never had been since men were upon the earth, such an earthquake, so great. / And the great city was divided into three parts; and the cities of the Gentiles fell...'

snow-white lamb at Agnes' right hand. The brief description of the lamb and the way in which it follows, rather than precedes, Agnes suggest that the creature should not be interpreted as the *Agnus Dei*, but rather as a reference to an iconographic motif used in depictions of the virgin martyr.<sup>93</sup> Whilst several early depictions of the Saint, including those in her own church (the fourth-century altar in her crypt and Honorius' apse mosaic), do not incorporate a lamb, other contemporary depictions do. The Roman cemetery of Commodilla contains a fresco dated to c. 380 that depicts a young girl adorned with a nimbus and with a lamb at her feet, who is thought to represent Agnes.<sup>94</sup> The sixth-century mosaics of S. Apollinare Nuovo at Ravenna also depict the virgin with a lamb, although by this date it is possible that the artist had been influenced by the *PSA*.<sup>95</sup> The representations of Agnes with a lamb no doubt stem from the word play associated with her name in Latin: *agna* (ewe lamb), a fitting image for a maiden who achieves spiritual marriage with the Lamb of God.<sup>96</sup>

The association of Agnes with lambs also gave rise to an additional rite performed as part of the Pontifical Mass on 21 January, Agnes' major feast-day. To this day, two lambs are brought into the church and blessed during these celebrations.<sup>97</sup> Later on in the year after they are shorn, the wool from these lambs is used in the production of the archiepiscopal pallia.<sup>98</sup> The first written instructions for this rite date to the mid-fifteenth century; however, it seems likely that the ritual pre-dates these records, although to what extent remains unclear.<sup>99</sup>

**(193–212) St. Constantia (BHL 156–7 and 3236–42)<sup>100</sup> Feast-Day: 18 February**

Constantine's daughter Constantia, born c. 318–25, was one of six children from the emperor's second marriage to Fausta.<sup>101</sup> A brief outline of Constantia's life is found

<sup>93</sup> Franchi de' Cavalieri, 'S. Agnese nella tradizione', pp. 346–7.

<sup>94</sup> Frutaz, *Il complesso monumentale*, p. 25.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> Allard, 'Agnès', col. 905 notes that there is also word play on her name in Greek: 'Agnes est la traduction de l'adjectif grec ἀγνή, pure.'

<sup>97</sup> Frutaz, *Il complesso monumentale*, pp. 32–3.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> Constantia's legend can be found in the following Insular works: Aldhelm's *De uirginitate* (*Dlu* xlviij and *Cdu* 2050–119). Bede's *Martyrologium* also briefly mentions Constantia in its entry for 26 June (SS John and Paul, whose *passio* forms part of the *Passio Gallicani*). Only one occurrence of Constantia's name can be found amongst the surviving Anglo-Saxon liturgical and calendrical material: her inclusion in the litany of the saints contained in the Antiphonary of Bangor, London, BL, Harley 7653 (Gneuss 443, s.viii/ix or ix in., Mercia, ?Worcester).

<sup>101</sup> Jones, *Prosopography*, pp. 220–6. The *PSA*'s reference to Constantia's *fratres imperatores* presumably refers to her brothers: the emperors Constans (Caesar 333–7, Augustus 337–50) and Constantius II (Caesar 324–37, Augustus 337–61), both of whom were Fausta's sons, and Constantine II (Caesar 317–37, Augustus 337–40), who was possibly illegitimate. It is unlikely that the *PSA* refers to

in the *RG* (XIV.1) of Ammianus Marcellinus, which record that she was married on two occasions: first in 335 to Hannibalian, king of Pontus (d. 337), and again in 351 to the Caesar Gallus (d. 354), brother of Julian the Apostate. Ammianus paints an unflattering portrait of the Imperial princess. He claims that Constantia encouraged the worst excesses of Gallus' reign and even describes her as a *Megaera... mortalis*.<sup>102</sup> Indeed, the only positive comments Ammianus makes about the princess relate to her behaviour following Gallus' arrest for treason in 354 on the orders of her brother, the Emperor Constantius II (337–61). Constantia is reported to have set out for the Imperial court in order to plead for Gallus' life; however, she contracted a fever en route and died at a post station in Bithynia (XIV.11).

Despite Constantia's historically attested links with Agnes' church on the Via Nomentana, the *PSA*'s depiction of her as a saintly Imperial princess appears to be based on legend rather than fact. Contemporary historical records make no mention of Constantia's affliction with leprosy, nor of the dedication of her virginity to God. Indeed, little is known about the origins of Constantia's cult, although her appearance in two hagiographical works thought to date to the fifth or sixth centuries (the *PSA* and the *Passio Gallicani*, *BHL* 3236–42) indicates that she was honoured from an early date.<sup>103</sup> The seventh-century pilgrim guide *De locis sanctorum* notes that Constantine's daughter was buried in a church near Agnes' tomb, but the first known reference to an *ecclesia sanctae Constantiae* is that found in the *LP*'s entry for Nicholas I (858–67).<sup>104</sup> In the following centuries, Pope Innocent III (1198–1216) restored Santa Constanza and in 1256 Alexander IV (1254–61) dedicated an altar to Constantine's daughter in the Imperial basilica.<sup>105</sup> It was not until the sixteenth-century, however, that Constantia entered the Roman martyrology and was officially assigned a feast date of 18 February alongside the daughters of Gallicanus: SS Attica and Artemia.<sup>106</sup>

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Constantine's eldest son from his first marriage: Crispus (Caesar 317–26), since he was executed for treason in 326.

<sup>102</sup> See *RG* XIV.1, 7 and 11. 'A mortal fury' (*RG* XIV.1).

<sup>103</sup> For *BHL* 3236–42 see *Acta SS*. Jun VII, pp. 31–5. The *Passio Gallicani* narrates the legends of five saints, excluding Constantia. First, the life of Gallicanus, a Constantinian general engaged to Constantia, who converts to a life of asceticism following a divinely aided military victory. He is later martyred under Julian the Apostate. Second and third, the lives of SS John and Paul, Constantia's two eunuchs who accompany Gallicanus on his final campaign, instruct him in his new faith and are likewise martyred under Julian. Finally the narrative also recounts Constantia's conversion of Gallicanus' daughters Attica and Artemia. See further: H. Gregoire and P. Orgels, 'Chronique: S. Gallicanus, consul et martyr dans la passion des SS Jean et Paul, et sa vision "constantinienne" du crucifié', *Byzantion* 24 (1954): 579–605.

<sup>104</sup> Frutaz, *Il complesso monumentale*, pp. 107–8 (referencing *LP* c.107).

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>106</sup> *BSS* IV, 259.

As we have seen, the *PSA*'s claim about Constantia's involvement in the construction of the imperial basilica on the Via Nomentana is confirmed by two additional testimonies. Both of these records deserve consideration, since they illuminate the mysterious origins of the princess' cult. The first document is an acrostic dedication poem, once engraved in marble on an arch in the apse of the Imperial basilica that reads: *CONSTANTINA DEO*.<sup>107</sup> The marble slab no longer survives, but the poem is preserved in a number of manuscripts of the *Peristephanon* where, alongside Damasus' epigram to the virgin, it serves as an epilogue to Prudentius' hymn for Agnes.<sup>108</sup> Interestingly, the opening line of the dedication poem reads:

*Constantina Deum uenerans Christoque dicata...*<sup>109</sup>

The phrase *Christoque dicata* is used in early Christian literature in two circumstances: either to refer to a baptised Christian (and probably the intended meaning here), or to a consecrated virgin.<sup>110</sup> Thus the dedication poem seems to be the likely source behind the *PSA*'s claim that Constantia had vowed her virginity to Christ.<sup>111</sup>

A second and less reliable document records a third claim that associates Constantia with the basilica at Agnes' tomb: the entry for Pope Silvester (314–35) in the *LP*:

*Eodem tempore fecit basilicam sanctae martyris Agnae ex rogatu filiae suae et baptisterium in eodem loco ubi et baptizata est soror eius Constantia cum filia Augusti a Silvestrio episcopo, ubi et constituit donum hoc...*<sup>112</sup>

The earliest books of the *LP* may have been written as late as 530–40 and are notoriously unreliable.<sup>113</sup> Nevertheless, the *LP*'s tale of a double imperial baptism at Agnes' church sheds some interesting light on the *PSA*'s tale of Constantia's conversion

<sup>107</sup> Latin text: A.J. Denomy, *The Old French Lives of St Agnes and Other Vernacular Versions of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA, 1938), pp. 36–7.

<sup>108</sup> Frutaz, *Il complesso monumentale*, p. 43. At least one early manuscript (Paris, BnF, lat. 13348, s. viii–ix) contains a caption to the poem: 'super archum qui basilicam continet' (folio 78r). It would appear that the first scribe to record this note had visited Agnes' tomb (or knew someone who had), since he also recorded Damasus' epigram, which was likewise engraved on a marble slab and on display at this site. Indeed, the original carving is still preserved on the main stairwell to S. Agnese fuori le mura. Two Anglo-Saxon manuscripts of Prudentius' *Peristephanon* contain this poem, as well as Damasus' epigram as an epilogue to *Pe*. 14: CCCC 23 vol. i, folio 104r (Gneuss 38, s.x<sup>2</sup> or x ex. or xi in., Southern England) and Oxford, Oriel College 3, folio 43r (Gneuss 680, s.x ex., Canterbury, Christ Church).

<sup>109</sup> 'Constantina, venerating God and dedicated to Christ...' NB Constantine's daughter's name is more commonly recorded in the historical sources as Constantina, although she does also appear as Constantia; therefore, the poem and the *PSA* probably do refer to the same person. Jones, *Prosopography*, p. 222.

<sup>110</sup> Jubaru, *Sainte Agnès*, p. 240.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> *LP* c.34.xxiii: 'At the same time he (i.e. Constantine) built a basilica to the holy martyr Agnes, following the request of his daughter, and (likewise) a baptistery in the same place, where his sister Constantia and his daughter were baptized by Pope Silvester, and there he established these gifts...'.

<sup>113</sup> R. Davis, trans., *The Book of the Pontiffs (Liber pontificalis): the Ancient Biographies of the First Ninety Roman Bishops to AD 715*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. rev. (Liverpool, 2000), pp. xiii and xlv–xlvi.

from paganism. It is highly unlikely that the two ladies in question were ever baptised by Silvester. Indeed, despite numerous archaeological excavations of the site on the Via Nomentana, no conclusive evidence for a baptistery has ever been discovered.<sup>114</sup> The *LP*'s mention of an imperial baptism, however, is an intriguing statement especially when considered alongside two additional references discussed below. These are: the *PSA*'s account of Constantia's healing and conversion from paganism (195–203) and the *LP*'s claim that the princess' father, Constantine himself, also received divine healing which led to his conversion to Christianity and baptism by the very same Pope Silvester (c.34).

Whilst the *PSA* fails to specify the exact cause of Constantia's illness, the description of the wounds that cover her body suggests that she suffered from leprosy. The author also encourages his audience to make such a diagnosis through the use of a direct Biblical quotation at this point of the text (*Lv* 13.12).<sup>115</sup> The scriptural passage in question comes from the laws about leprosy found in *Lv* (c.13–14); they outline the various forms of this disease and the purification rituals for those who managed to overcome it. The *PSA*-author's purpose in casting Constantine's daughter as a leper may at first glance seem nothing more than an attempt to promote Agnes' tomb as a potent source of celestial healing, but at least two further explanations can be offered.

First, Agnes' healing of a leper strengthens the *imitatio Christi* motif employed throughout the *PSA* in relation to the virgin (the NT narrates that Jesus healed lepers on numerous occasions and bestowed the same power on his disciples).<sup>116</sup> The *PSA*'s tale of a pagan noblewoman cured of leprosy by a holy saint also recalls an OT figure thought to prefigure Christ: Eliseus, who healed the Syrian General Naaman of leprosy and converted him to the true faith (*II Rg* 5.1–27).

A second reason for casting Constantia as a leper lies in late antique perceptions of this malady. Due to several Biblical narratives where the Lord inflicts individuals with leprosy as a punishment for their sins, early medical handbooks taught that this disease could be contracted from immoral actions.<sup>117</sup> Two particular behavioural traits

<sup>114</sup> See Mackie, 'A New Look', pp. 384–95 who argues that the newly discovered triconch at Santa Constanza is the baptistery referred to by the *LP*; however, I do not agree with this part of her argument.

<sup>115</sup> The *Passio Gallicani*, perhaps following the *PSA*, likewise claims that Agnes cured Constantia's leprosy: (c.3) '... Constantia...sic orauit: Domine Deus omnipotens, qui me orationibus martyris tuae Agnae a lepra mundasti...' – ('Constantia thus prayed: 'O All-powerful Lord God, who cured me from leprosy through the prayers of your martyr Agnes...'). *Acta SS. Jun VII*, p. 33.

<sup>116</sup> See for example, *Mt* 8.2–4, 10.8, 11.5; *Mc* 1.40–44; *Lc* 5.12–14, 7.22 and 17.12–19.

<sup>117</sup> S.N. Brody, *The Disease of the Soul: Leprosy in Medieval Literature* (Ithaca, NY, 1974), pp. 121–134. See also *Nm* 12.10, *Dt* 28.35, *II Rg* 5.27, *II Par* 26.19–21 and *Iob* 2.7. It should be noted, however, that due to the belief that the suffering caused by leprosy purified the soul on earth and lessened its time in purgatory, late antique and medieval writers also viewed the disease in a positive light. Indeed, lepers

often occur in descriptions of this illness. The first is the frequent categorisation of leprosy as a venereal disease, which then causes its victims to burn with increasing sexual desire.<sup>118</sup> The *PSA*-author's statement that Constantia was a chaste virgin before her miraculous cure, however, suggests that it is not this particular aspect of the disease that lies behind his depiction of the princess as a leper. In fact it is far more likely that the *PSA*'s portrayal of Constantia is based on the second common form of sin associated with leprosy: heresy.<sup>119</sup> Although the *PSA* describes Constantia as a pagan rather than a heretic, her legend is not the only hagiographical tale to include the cure of a so-called 'pagan' from leprosy.

Chapter thirty-three of the *LP* claims that Pope Silvester baptised the emperor Constantine and thus cured the Emperor's leprosy. The source of the *LP*'s comments appears to be the *Vita Sylvestri* (*BHL* 7739 and 42b–f), an early hagiographic work that is thought to date to the reign of Pope Caelestinus (422–32).<sup>120</sup> In this tale, Constantine is depicted as a pagan persecutor of Christians who is struck by leprosy for his sins. On one occasion the emperor was moved to show mercy to a group of imprisoned Christians. That night SS Peter and Paul appeared to him in a dream and revealed how to cure his disease. Constantine was ordered to seek out Silvester, who baptised him in the Lateran Palace. The baptism cured the Emperor's leprosy and marked his conversion to Christianity.<sup>121</sup> Samuel Lieu notes that the fourth- and fifth-century Roman Church appears to have been eager to reinvent Constantine due to his real life connections to a number of Arian bishops.<sup>122</sup> Consequently, the aim of both the *Vita Sylvestri* and the *LP* appears to be the rehabilitation of Constantine's family as orthodox Christians, presumably to remove what had retrospectively come to be perceived as the

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were seen by some as holy figures with the power to redeem the souls of others; however, I do not believe that this interpretation of the disease is reflected in the *PSA*. C. Rawcliffe, *Leprosy in Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 2006), pp. 54–64.

<sup>118</sup> Brody, *The Disease of the Soul*, pp. 52–6.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 124–5. The Biblical precept that links leprosy with heresy is *Dt* 28.15 and 35. A number of early writers made this link including the anonymous author of the *Vita Sylvestri* (B. Mombritius (ed.), *Sanctuarium seu uitae sanctorum, nouam hanc editionem curauerunt duo monachi Solesmenses*, 2 vols., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Paris, 1910), II, 508–31) and Isidore of Seville, *Quaestiones in uetus testamentum: in leuiticum xi* (PL 83, 321–40, at col. 327–8).

<sup>120</sup> S. Lieu, 'From History to Legend and Legend to Historiography: The Medieval and Byzantine Transformation of Constantine's *Vita*', in S. Lieu and D. Montserrat (eds.), *Constantine: History, Historiography and Legend* (London, 1998), pp. 136–76 at p. 139.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 138–9.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 140–1. Indeed, the most famous account of Constantine's baptism (Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, IV.62–4) depicts the emperor as being baptised on his deathbed by the bishops of Nicomedia. F. Winkelmann, (ed.), *Über das Leben des Kaisers Konstantins*, GCS Eusebius' Werke I.1 (Berlin, 1975).

stain of heresy from the Roman basilicas built by Constantine.<sup>123</sup> These buildings, of course, included some of the city's most important churches.

The similarities between Constantine's legendary history and that of his daughter are striking. Furthermore, they raise some intriguing questions about the dating of the *PSA* itself. If fifth-century Rome was busily engaged in rewriting stories about Constantine, did the rest of his family receive a similar treatment around the same time? Due to the clear Imperial connections of S. Agnese fuori le mura, it is possible that Agnes' cult centre engaged in a fifth-century public relations campaign in order to avert the stain of Arianism from ever attaching itself either to their site, or to their saint. This hypothesis subsequently challenges Franchi de' Cavalieri's argument that the *PSA* consists of two separate parts dating to fifth and seventh centuries, since it implies that the entire passion was written in or around the fifth-century.<sup>124</sup>

(217) *Ambrosius seruus Christi* See line 1.

(221-2) *cui est gloria in saecula saeculorum, Amen* Although the reading provided by manuscripts N and S clearly echoes several NT verses (see the *apparatus fontium*), it should also be noted that P's shorter text, *in saecula saeculorum, Amen*, also resonates with several Biblical passages: *Tb* 13.23, *Ps* 83.5, *Is* 34.10 and *Apc* 7.12.

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<sup>123</sup>Lieu, 'From History to Legend', pp. 140–1.

<sup>124</sup> See p. 24.

**APPENDIX TWO**  
**Aldhelm's *De uirginitate***

**Appendix 2.1 *The Narrative Elements of the PSA and Aldhelm's De uirginitate***

This table presents an outline of all the major narrative episodes found in three versions of Agnes' martyrdom: the *PSA*, *De laude uirginitatis* and the *Carmen de uirginitate*. Reading the table from left to right, one can clearly see that, while Aldhelm omitted a number of episodes from the *PSA*, this late antique work did in fact provide the inspiration for the majority of the scenes found in his two accounts of Agnes' death. The table also reveals Aldhelm's subtle alterations to a number of the elements that he borrowed from the *PSA*, as well as drawing attention to his two new additional scenes (which are marked in bold text on the table).

**Appendix 2.2 *Aldhelm's Promotion of Two Contrasting Depictions of Female Saints: the Milites Christi versus the Sponsae Christi***

*Table 2.2.1: A Comparison of the Language and Imagery in the Dlu and Cdu*

This table provides an overview of how the contrasting images and themes revealed in Aldhelm's prose and verse accounts of Agnes' martyrdom function in the catalogues of female saints as a whole. Not all of the patterns discerned in the two versions of Agnes' legend necessarily appear in both or either of the two notices for a saint. Indeed, on some occasions certain notices differ from Agnes' two entries in their deployment of specific motifs, although this is often due to the nature of a particular text. For example, both the prose and verse notices for Eugenia use military language to describe the saint and avoid nuptial themes; however, this is perhaps unsurprising since Eugenia was one of the transvestite saints, who disguised herself as a man. Overall, the table reveals that on the majority of occasions where the contrasting images used for Agnes are also applied to other saints, these occurrences reinforce the impression that Aldhelm sought to cast the women of the *Dlu* as *milites Christi* and the virgins of the *Cdu* as *sponsae Christi*. (NB only those women who appear in both the *Dlu* and *Cdu* are included in this table).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Only two female saints appear the *Dlu* and not the *Cdu*: Dorethea and Christina. All of the women in the *Cdu* also appear in the *Dlu*.

*Guide to Symbols:**Row*

- 1 – M = saint is described in masculine, usually military terms  
     s = saint possesses a masculine aura through the power of their speech (or learning)  
     n = saint possesses a masculine aura through their power over nature
- 2 – S = the notice specifically associates the saint and Christ with nuptial imagery
- 3 – C = saint is compared to a citadel  
     N = saint is described by nature motifs
- 4 – A = saint's suitor uses force / direct action in an attempt to win the maiden  
     W = suitor relies on words in his pursuit of the saint
- 5 – M = saint's death associated with athletic or military accolades (e.g. a triumph)  
     F = saint's death is associated with feminine images (e.g. costly jewellery)
- 6 – D = Divine intervention: God, Christ or the angels are said to directly aid the saint
- The use of brackets throughout this table indicates that an image or theme is only faintly alluded to, or that a greater emphasis is placed on it in the other version of the tale.

*Table 2.2.2: A Comparison of the Opening Descriptions of the Female Saints who appear in the *Dlu* and *Cdu**

This table compares the opening words used to introduce the female saints who are assigned an entry in both the *Dlu* and *Cdu*. These quotations serve as a supplement to table 2.2.1 and illustrate again how Aldhelm appears to characterise the majority of the saints of the *Dlu* in a much more masculine and military manner to the women of the *Cdu*, who are given a more feminine air.

## APPENDIX TWO

Appendix 2.1: *The Narrative Elements of the PSA and Aldhelm's De uirginitate*

(NB Entries in bold face indicate Aldhelm's two additions to the PSA)

<i>Passio Sanctae Agnetis</i>	<i>De laude uirginitatis</i>	<i>Carmen de uirginitate</i>
Agnes is introduced as a young Roman noblewoman, who was martyred aged thirteen for her love of chastity and Christ.	Agnes is introduced as a lover of chastity and a despiser of carnal filth.	Agnes is introduced as a young thirteen-year-old girl who loved chastity and hated the filth of the world.
The account of Agnes' death begins with the son of the City Prefect attempting to win her hand in marriage by offering costly gifts.	The account of Agnes' death begins with the son of the City Prefect attempting to win her hand in marriage by offering costly gifts.	The account of Agnes' death begins with the son of the City Prefect attempting to win her hand in marriage through verbal entreaties and gifts.
Agnes rejects the suitor with a speech in which she outlines how she has been betrothed to Christ.	Agnes rejects the suitor with a speech in which she claims that she has been betrothed to Christ.	Agnes rejects the suitor with a speech in which she claims that she has been betrothed to Christ.
The suitor, devastated by Agnes' rejection, becomes ill through excessive love. On discovering the cause of his son's malady, the Prefect attempts to persuade Agnes to marry the youth, but fails.		
The Prefect's servants discover that Agnes is a Christian and so she is arrested and brought to court. The Prefect attempts to alternatively terrify and charm Agnes into marrying his son, but fails yet again to persuade the saint.		
Enraged, the Prefect orders Agnes to choose one of two fates: she must sacrifice to the pagan virgin goddess Vesta, or be cast into a brothel. Agnes then engages the Prefect in a debate on the futility of paganism.		
Finally, the Prefect orders that Agnes be stripped and led naked to a brothel.	Due to her rejection of the suitor's marriage proposal, Agnes is stripped and led naked to a brothel.	Due to her rejection of the suitor's proposal Agnes is cast into prison, where God sends a beam of light lest she be terrified in the darkness. Agnes is then cast (still fully clothed) into a brothel.

<i>Passio Sanctae Agnetis</i>	<i>De laude uirginitatis</i>	<i>Carmen de uirginitate</i>
Agnes' modesty is protected by the miraculous growth of her hair.		
At the brothel, an angel surrounds Agnes with a wall of light.	At the brothel, Agnes is protected by a wall of light and gazes upon angelic faces.	
Agnes later receives a white celestial robe.	Agnes later receives a celestial robe of unspecified colour.	
The suitor arrives at the brothel with a band of companions, intent upon defiling Agnes. He sends two friends in before him, but they are converted to Christianity and so he angrily rushes into the brothel to commit the deed himself.	The suitor arrives at the brothel with a band of companions and immediately attempts to physically assault Agnes.	The suitor arrives at the brothel with a band of companions, and immediately begins to slander Agnes.
The suitor is struck down by the wrath of God.	The suitor in struck down by the wrath of God.	The suitor is struck down by the wrath of God.
One of the suitor's companions discovers his body, and summons the citizens of Rome to view Agnes' crime.	<b>Aldhelm compares the suitor's fate to that of Uzzah in II Sm 6.6-7, who died after touching the Ark of the Testament.</b>	
The Prefect arrives and demands that Agnes prove her innocence by restoring his son to life.		
Agnes' prayers cause her guardian angel to resurrect the suitor, who, on awakening, is converted to Christianity.	Agnes restores the suitor to life.	Agnes' prayers restore the suitor to life.
However, the pagan crowd turn against Agnes and demand her death. The Prefect leaves grieving that he cannot save the saint.		
Agnes is cast upon a pyre, but the flames cannot touch her.		
Agnes is martyred by a sword blow to her throat.	Agnes is martyred (no method given)	
The martyrdom of Emerentiana at Agnes' tomb.		
Agnes' parents receive a vision of their daughter amongst a heavenly throng of virgins, while they hold a vigil at her tomb.		
Constantine's daughter, Constantia, is cured of a terrible disease at Agnes' tomb and founds a monastery at the site.	Constantine's daughter, Constantina, is cured at Agnes' tomb.	Constantine's daughter, Constantina, is cured at Agnes' tomb.

	CAECILIA	AGATHA	LUCIA	JUSTINA	EUGENIA	AGNES	THECLA	EULALIA	SCHOLASTICA	CONSTANTINA	EUSTOCHIUM	DEMETRIAS	CHIONE, IRENE AND AGAPE	RUFINA AND SECUNDA	ANATOLIA AND VICTORIA
	<i>Diu</i>	<i>Diu</i>	<i>Diu</i>	<i>Diu</i>	<i>Diu</i>	<i>Diu</i>	<i>Diu</i>								
1	-	n	(M)	(M)	M	(M)	(M)	M	(M)	-	-	-	-	(M)	M
2	S	(S)	(S)	S	(S)	(S)	(S)	(S)	(S)	S	S	S	-	(M)	(M)
3	-	C	N	-	C	-	C	N	-	-	-	-	-	-	C
4	-	-	A+W	A+W	A+W	A	A+W	A+W	-	-	-	-	A+W	A+W	-
5	-	F	M	M	F	-	M	M	-	-	-	-	M	M	M
6	(D)	D	(D)	D	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	(D)	D	D	D	D	(D)	(D)

Table 2.2.2: A Comparison of the Opening Descriptions of the Female Saints in the *Diu* and *Cdu*

	<i>Diu</i>	<i>Cdu</i>
<b>Caecilia</b>	a most holy virgin, refused the betrothal ceremonies of her suitor... and rejected them	She turned her betrothed to the teaching of Christ, scorning sweet sports of carnal excess, since she loved instead the sweet kisses of Christ
<b>Agatha</b>	the universal renown of the virgin Agatha was growing far and wide	a maiden fitting for the service of Christ... she blossomed forth in Christ...
<b>Lucia</b>	...the glories of the most chaste Lucy	a certain young virgin... who unrentingly loved Christ
<b>Justina</b>	a handmaid of justice and a heroine not to be disdained by the orthodox	I shall sing about chaste Justina, who attained the golden kingdom by her virginal purity
<b>Eugenia</b>	crowned with the garland of perpetual chastity and armed with the banner of flourishing virginity	Eugenia, born of a distinguished family, a ruby-red jewel glittering with a virgin crown, whose praises the wide world celebrates
<b>Agnes</b>	And it seems important that the glorious example of the distinguished Agnes should not be concealed...	A certain young virgin of Christ... flourished in the world
<b>Thecla</b>	...	In ancient time there lived a girl dedicated to God
<b>Eulalia</b>	...the glorious personalities of the celebrated young ladies	...blessed Eulalia... she loved nothing mortal with empty love...
<b>Scholastica</b>	under the title of confessor... lived in a manner worthy of praise among the company of faithful	A very beautiful and noble virgin... offering examples of the new life to all those who wished to live chaste...
<b>Constan- tina</b>	a heroine of most intact virtue	a young soldier of Christ
<b>Eustoc- hium</b>	(Eustochium) was renowned to such an extent through the Western empire for the brilliant quality of her book learning	let the blessed honour of the holy Demetrias be spread throughout the world by praise of these verses
<b>Demetr- ias</b>	wandering reports of fame extolled (her)... born from the stock of a noble family	three renowned sisters received splendid crowns, weaving them with purple garlands
<b>C, I and A</b>	the glorious passions of three sisters... who by the renown of their suffering and the glory of their holy virginity, triumphed...	tradition proclaims twin sisters, who had been born and raised in Rome... these illustrious maidens related their betrothal rites
<b>R and S</b>	two sisters... born from an eminent family	There arose in Rome a story of two sisters which reached all ears with excellent report
<b>A and V</b>	nor do I think that the renown of the holy virgins Anatolia and Victoria should be by-passed: their fame and the uniqueness of their miracles spread far and wide through all corners of the world	

C, I and A = Chione, Irene and Agape

R and S = Rufina and Secunda

A and V = Anatolia and Victoria

## APPENDIX THREE

### Liturgical Texts

#### **Appendix 3.1 *The Most Prominent Anglo-Saxon Feast-Days***

Appendix 3.1 lists all nineteen of the calendars printed by Frances Wormald plus the calendar of the Junius Psalter, where high status feasts are distinguished through the use of quotations from the *MCH*. Saints featured in the *Old English Menology* and Ælfric's *CH* have also been recorded for the purposes of comparison. The manuscripts of all twenty calendars employ a variety of (usually decorative) schemes to distinguish between eminent and non-eminent feasts. Furthermore, some calendars also include a ranking system amongst their most holy celebrations. On occasions up to three levels of high status feast can be discerned; therefore, a colour scheme operates within the table to indicate these ranks:

Red = the most holy celebrations of all

Yellow = second tier of important feasts

White = third tier (standard) eminent saints' days

To give an example, in CCCC 391 a number of feasts are written in black capitals to mark them as high status occasions. A select number of these celebrations are then followed by a cross, or by a cross as well as a vigil on the preceding day. For the purposes of Chapter Four, all prominent feasts (red, yellow and white) have been considered as one group and the details of the two- and three-tier system found in some calendars are included here for interest and future reference.

The saints listed in Appendix 3.1 have been divided into three groups for ease of reference. The first section comprises those individuals whose feast day is frequently classified as an eminent occasion. The second group encompasses Insular saints accorded a degree of importance by the calendars and the third, all other saints. Within these three groups, the saints are listed according to the date of their feast. The dates used in the table reflect the most common day listed in the Anglo-Saxon calendars for a particular feast, although there is a certain degree of variation between manuscripts. Please note that the feasts for Christ and the Virgin Mary have been omitted from this table on the assumption that they were always classified amongst the Church's most solemn celebrations.

#### **Appendix 3.2 *Female Saints Honoured in Anglo-Saxon Calendars and Martyrologies***

Appendix 3.2 comprises a list of all female saints mentioned in the surviving Anglo-Saxon calendars, metrical calendars, martyrologies and works such as Aldhelm's

*De uirginitate*. Areas of grey blocking indicate segments of the year that no longer survive in certain manuscripts and texts. The saints are listed in calendrical order under their modern or more common feast date; however, a number of individuals appear in a variety of locations in the Anglo-Saxon Church Calendar. On several occasions saints have been marked as present in a text and a date in brackets follows to specify the precise location where they are listed (a number on its own indicates that a saint is honoured on a different day in the same month as their more common feast-day). Dates preceded by a cross (+) are used to specify instances where saints are allocated multiple feast-days in one manuscript.

### *Notes for Appendix 3.2*

(1) *Basilissa*: There are a number of saints who bear the name Basilissa; therefore, it is not always entirely clear which particular individual is celebrated in any one calendar. The most likely figure honoured in the Anglo-Saxon calendars is Basilissa of Antioch (9 Jan), who was martyred alongside her husband Julian; however, the Roman Martyrology also honours: Basilissa and Carinice of Galatia (22 Mar), Basilissa and Anastasia (15 Apr) and Basilissa of Nicomedia (3 Sept). Another possible figure culted under the name of Basilissa, is Basilla of Rome (20 May), whom sources interchangeably name as Basilla and Basilissa.

(2) *Prisca*: Two works (Nero A.ii and the *MCH*) name Prisca twice (18 Jan and 1 Sept). The second date is possibly a misreading of an entry for Priscus of Capua (martyr).

(3) *Aquila\**: All saints marked with a \* appear solely in the *MCH*; many of these names should probably be treated with caution due to the high level of inaccuracy in this text.

(4) *Felicity of Carthage*: The Anglo-Saxon calendars list eight different feast-days for a saint named Felicitas. These dates probably refer to two individuals (although a higher number remains possible). The first saint is Felicity of Carthage (7 Mar), who was martyred alongside Perpetua. The second figure is Felicity of Rome (23 Nov), who was martyred with her seven sons (*cf.* II *Mcc* 7). Felicity was assigned her own individual feast (23 Nov), but she was also often celebrated alongside her sons on their respective feast-days. Appendix 3.2, therefore, assumes that any dates that do not fall near the beginning of March probably refer to Felicity of Rome; consequently, all such entries have been entered on the row for 23 Nov.

(5) *Eufemia*: Entered on both 13 Apr and 16 Sep, Eufemia or Euphemia often appears twice in Anglo-Saxon calendars possibly due to a confusion over the spelling of her name. Since the likelihood is that the Anglo-Saxon scribes thought they were dealing

with two separate saints, she has been entered twice on the table; however, both names probably refer to Eufemia of Chalcedon, who was honoured on 16 Sep.

(6) *Eadburg*: There are two Anglo-Saxon saints named Eadburg: a) Eadburg of Bicester (d. 650), whose feast is 18 Jul, and b) Eadburg of Winchester (d. 751), whose feast-day is 13 Dec, while her *translatio* is celebrated on 18 Jul. None of the surviving calendars list Eadburg's feast on 13 Dec; however, two rows of this table are devoted to Eadburg to draw attention the fact that two different saints are probably referred to in these texts.

(7) *Marina*: As with Eufemia, Marina and Margaret of Antioch both appear on the table, despite the fact they probably refer to the same saint. Again, due to spelling differences, the Anglo-Saxon scribes seem to have thought that these two names referred to two different saints.

(8) *Sabina*: The wide variety of dates found for Sabina's (or Savina's) feast probably stems from the fact that her feast-day (29 Aug) coincided with the Decollation of John the Baptist; therefore, it seems likely that it was often moved to avoid this clash. There is an outside chance, however, that some of these dates do not refer to the popular second century Roman martyr, but to Savina of Troyes (feast-day unknown).

(9) *Thecla of Iconium*: As with Eadburg, it is likely that the Anglo-Saxon calendars honour two different saints named Thecla: a) Thecla of Iconium (23 Sep) from the *Acts of Paul and Thecla* (who is probably the Thecla referred to by most texts) and b) Thecla of England (27 Sep and 15 Oct), one of Boniface's acquaintances. While there are no entries for a Thecla on either the 27 Sept or 15 Oct, the existence of a number of feasts for a Thecla on 17 Nov suggests the possibility that some institutions did distinguish between the two saints.

### **Appendix 3.3 *Female Saints with Proper Prayers in Anglo-Saxon sacramentaries***

#### **and 3.4 *Female Saints with Proper Prefaces in Anglo-Saxon Sacramentaries***

The sacramentaries are listed according to their approximate date, starting with the earliest text on the left hand side of the table, while the saints appear in calendrical order according to the most common date of their feasts. Again, grey blocking has been used in both tables to indicate where manuscripts are now missing certain segments of the *proprium de sanctis*. In Appendix 3.3, the Leonine, Gelasian and Gregorian sacramentaries have also been included for the purposes of comparison. Furthermore, the one eleventh-century addition to the Winton fragment is marked in Appendix 3.3 as (11th c. add.) and where the Leonine sacramentary contains two or more mass sets for one saint, this is indicated by (x no.). I have omitted a number of prayers from the

Leonine sacramentary whose rubrics name a large group of female saints, since these texts do not relate to any one particular feast-day, nor does their wording actually refer to any of the saints named in the rubric. In relation to the column for the Missal of St Augustine in Appendix 3.4, please note that a number of mass-sets at the start of the Sanctorale in this work have had a section of text erased and then new material added in. Judging by the lay out of mass-sets later on in the year, this space once contained a proper preface and is thus as such marked on the table, despite the fact that the prayer technically no longer exists.

*Bibliographic References:*

*Unpublished Material:*

The Giso Sacramentary (London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius A.xviii)

*Published Material:*

Davril, A., ed., *The Winchcombe Sacramentary (Orléans, Bibliothèque municipale, 127 [105])*, HBS 109 (London, 1995)

Feltoe, C., ed., *Sacramentarium Leonianum* (Cambridge, 1896)

Orchard, N., ed., *The Leofric Missal*, 2 vols., HBS 113-14 (London, 2002)

Rule, M., ed., *The Missal of St Augustine's Canterbury, with excerpts from the Antiphonary and Lectionary of the Same Monastery* (Cambridge, 1896)

Turner, D.H., ed., *The Missal of the New Minster, Winchester (Le Havre, Bibliothèque municipale, ms. 330)*, HBS 93 (London, 1962)

Wilson, H.A., ed., *The Gelasian Sacramentary: liber sacramentorum Romanae ecclesiae* (Oxford, 1894)

– *The Missal of Robert of Jumièges*, HBS 11 (London, 1896)

– *The Gregorian Sacramentary Under Charles the Great Edited from Three Manuscripts of the Ninth Century*, HBS 49 (London, 1915)

Wormald, F., 'Fragments of a Tenth-century Sacramentary From the Binding of the Winton Domesday', in *Winchester in the Early Middle Ages: and Edition and Discussion of the Winton Domesday*, ed. M. Biddle (Oxford, 1976), pp. 541–7

### **Appendix 3.5 Saints Honoured in Benedictionals**

The benedictionals are listed according to their approximate date, starting with the earliest text on the left hand side of the table, while the saints appear in calendrical order according to the most common date of their feasts. Several of the benedictionals contain more than one set of prayers for a particular saint; on such occasions, the number of blessings is indicated by (x2 etc.) in the table. Occasionally, an eminent saint shares their feast day with a fellow martyr or companion, who is not usually named in the

benedictionals, e.g. Sebastian and Fabian. Only if the less well-known saint is specifically mentioned in the manuscript rubrics, is their name is given in brackets on the table. A similar pattern is also used for saints' whose vigils were sometimes deemed worthy to receive their own set of benedictions: they are marked by (+ vigil) on the table. Grey blocking, as usual, indicates where certain manuscripts are incomplete. (Peter) is used on three occasions where a benedictional contains a blessing for Peter alone, rather than the customary joint blessing to SS Peter and Paul. A final word is also required on the headings Claudius I and Ia. The manuscript of the Claudius Pontificals: London, BL, Cotton Claudius A.ii, contains fragments of several different pontificals. The manuscript now contains two sets of benedictions; however, all of these prayers come from the same combined pontifical and benedictional: Claudius I (ff. 31–86 and 106–50). I have split this work into two columns to indicate that the prayers come from different sections of the text, since a number of prayers from Claudius Ia are duplicates of Claudius I.

*Bibliographic References:*

*Unpublished Material:*

London, British Library, Add. 28188

The Anderson Pontifical (London, British Library, Add. 57337)

*Published Material:* (for the Leofric Missal, see the bibliography for Table 4)

Banting, H.M.J., ed., *Two Anglo-Saxon Pontificals: the Egbert and Sidney Sussex Pontificals*, HBS 104 (London, 1989)

Doble, G.H., ed., *Pontificale lanaletense (Bibliothèque de la ville de Rouen A.27.cat.368)*, HBS 74 (London, 1937)

Turner, D.H., ed., *The Claudius Pontificals (from Cotton MS. Claudius A.iii in the British Museum)*, HBS 97 (Chichester, 1971)

Warner, G.F. and H.A. Wilson, ed., *The Benedictional of Saint Æthelwold, Bishop of Winchester 963–984*, Roxburghe Club (Oxford, 1910)

Wilson, H.A., ed., *The Benedictional of Archbishop Robert*, HBS 24 (London, 1903)

Woolley, R.M., ed., *The Canterbury Benedictional (British Museum, Harl. MS. 2892)*, HBS 51 (London, 1917)

*Abbreviations Used Across All Five Appendices:*

AB Robert	The Benedictional of Archbishop Robert
Add. 37517	London, British Library, Additional 37517
Add. 28188	London, British Library, Additional 28188
Æthelwold	The Benedictional of Æthelwold
Aldhelm's <i>Cdu</i>	Aldhelm, <i>Carmen de uirginitate</i>

Aldhelm's <i>Dlu</i>	Aldhelm, <i>De laude uirginitate</i>
Anderson	The Anderson Pontifical
Arundel 60	London, British Library, Arundel 60
Arundel 155	London, British Library, Arundel 155
Bede <i>HE</i> Hymn	Bede, <i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i> IV.20 (Hymn to St Æthelthryth)
Bede's <i>Mart.</i>	Bede's <i>Martyrologium</i>
BnF.l.7299	Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, latin 7299
BnF.l.10062	Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, latin 10062
BnF.l.10837	Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, latin 10837
Bodley 579	Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 579 ( <i>S.C.</i> 2675)
Canterbury	The Canterbury Benedictional
Catholic Homilies	Ælfric's <i>Catholic Homilies</i>
CCCC 9	Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 9
CCCC 391	Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 391
CCCC 422	Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 422
Claudius I	The Claudius Pontifical I
Claudius Ia	The Claudius Pontifical I
C.TC.R.15.32	Cambridge, Trinity College, R.15.32 (954)
C.UL.Kk.v.32	Cambridge, University Library, Kk.v.32 (2074)
Digby 63	Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 63 ( <i>S.C.</i> 1664)
Douce 296	Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce 296 ( <i>S.C.</i> 21870)
Egbert	The Egbert Pontifical
Eg.3314	London, British Library, Egerton 3314
Gelasian	The Gelasian Sacramentary
Giso	The Sacramentary of Giso
Gregorian	The Gregorian Sacramentary
Hatton 113	Oxford, Bodleian Library, Hatton 113 ( <i>S.C.</i> 5210)
Hauz.GWB	Hauzenstein near Regensburg, Gräfllich Walderdorffsche Bibliothek, <i>s.n.</i>
Junius 27	Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 27 ( <i>S.C.</i> 5139)
Lanalet	The Lanalet Pontifical
Leofric	The Leofric Missal
Leonine	The Leonine Sacramentary
<i>MCH</i>	<i>The Metrical Calendar of Hampson</i>
<i>MCR</i>	<i>The Metrical Calendar of Ramsey</i>
<i>MCY</i>	<i>The Metrical Calendar of York</i>
M.H.RS.108	Munich, Hauptstaatsarchiv, Raritäten-Selekt 108
Nero A.ii	London, British Library, Cotton Nero A.ii
New M	The Missal of New Minster
<i>OEM</i>	<i>The Old English Martyrology</i>
<i>OE Menology</i>	<i>The Old English Menology</i>
R.Bm.Y.6	Rouen, Bibliothèque municipale, Y.6 (274)
Robert	The Missal of Robert of Jumièges
Salis. 150	Salisbury, Cathedral Library, 150
St A	The Missal of St Augustine's Canterbury
Titus D.xxvii	London, British Library, Cotton Titus D.xxvii
VC.BA.CRL.12	Rome, Vatican Library, Reg. Lat. 12
Vit.A.xii	London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius A.xii
Vit.A.xviii	London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius A.xviii
Vit.E.xviii	London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius E.xviii
Winchcombe	The Winchcombe Sacramentary
Winton	The Winton Doomsday





Saints Feast Days	Manuscripts	Junius 27	Sains, 150	Bodley 579	Add. 37517	Avondell 155	C.U.L. Ms. X.32	Treas. D.xviii	C.T.C.R. 15.32	Harro A. II	Douce 296
Christopher (25th Jul)	Dpbt 63										
Felix (29th Jul)				X	X						
Simplicius (29th Jul)				X	X						
Rusticus (29th Jul)				X	X						X
Abdo (30th Jul)				X	X						X
Senis (30th Jul)				X	X						
Chains of St Peter (1st Aug)							X				
Maccabees (1st Aug)											
Stephen (2nd Aug)				X	X						X
Invention of Stephen's body (3rd Aug)				X	X						
Felicissimus (6th Aug)				X	X						
Agapitus (6th Aug)				X	X						
Cyriacus (8th Aug)				X	X						
Afra (8th Aug)				X	X						
Theodorus (11th Aug)				X	X						
Hippotus (11th Aug)				X	X						
Octava of Lawrence (17th Aug)				X	X						
Agapitus (18th Aug)				X	X						
Octava of Lawrence (17th Aug)				X	X						
Timothy (22nd Aug)				X	X						
Paul (22nd Aug)				X	X						
Patrick (24th Aug)				X	X						
Adomnus (24th Aug)				X	X						
Amstus (24th Aug)				X	X						
Amstus of Hippo (28th Aug)				X	X						
Sabina (29th Aug)				X	X						
Felix (30th Aug)				X	X						
Audactus (30th Aug)				X	X						
Adrianus (9th Sept)				X	X						
Gorgonius (9th Sept)				X	X						
Adolfus (11th Sept)				X	X						
Adolfus (11th Sept)				X	X						
Exaltatio sancte crucis (14th Sept)				X	X						
Cornelius (14th Sept)				X	X						
Cornelius (14th Sept)				X	X						
Nicomachus (15th Sept)				X	X						
Georgiana (15th Sept)				X	X						
Georgiana (15th Sept)				X	X						
Lucia (16th Sept)				X	X						
Lucia (16th Sept)				X	X						
Eufemia (16th Sept)				X	X						
Prisca (20th Sept)				X	X						
Maurice and his companions (22nd Sept)				X	X						
Conception of John the Baptist (24th Sept)				X	X						
Cornas (27th Sept)				X	X						
Damian (27th Sept)				X	X						
Marcellus (27th Sept)				X	X						
Marcus (27th Oct)				X	X						
Diomedius (8th Oct)				X	X						
Rusticus (8th Oct)				X	X						
Eleutherus (8th Oct)				X	X						
Caletus (14th Oct)				X	X						
Lucanus (14th Oct)				X	X						
Lucanus (14th Oct)				X	X						
Exaltatio of the Holy Cross (14th Oct)				X	X						
Lucas the Evangelist (18th Oct)				X	X						
Gagus (27th Oct)				X	X						
Quintinus (31st Oct)				X	X						
Eustace and his companions (2nd Nov)				X	X						
4 Crowned martyrs (6th Nov)				X	X						
Melior (11th Nov)				X	X						
Bricius (13th Nov)				X	X						
Thecla (17th Nov)				X	X						
Cecilia (22nd Nov)				X	X						
Longinus (22nd Nov)				X	X						
Felicity (24th Nov)				X	X						
Agatha (24th Nov)				X	X						
Blasidonus (24th Nov)				X	X						
Chrysantus (28th Nov)				X	X						
Darla (29th Nov)				X	X						
Nicholas (6th Dec)				X	X						
Octave of the Apostle Andrew (7th Dec)				X	X						
Lucy (13th Dec)				X	X						
Lucy (13th Dec)				X	X						
Felix (13th Dec)				X	X						
Ignatius (20th Dec)				X	X						
Anastasia (25th Dec)				X	X						
Silvester (31st Dec)				X	X						













Date	Name	Thisa D. Joviff. T.C.R.15.31	Nero A.II	Douca 296	VC.BA.RL.12	CCCC 432	CCCC 9	CCCC 391	Hinton 113	VR. B.xviii	Arundel 60	VR. A.xviii	FR. 2314	VR. A.xii	MCH	MGR
17th July	Dionna															
17th July	Secunda	X								X						
18th July	Samothracia		X (22 Jun)											X (+13)		
18th July	Edgiburga		X (13)											X		
21st July	Parthenia of Arsoch	X		X					X	X				X (+ 28 Mar)		
22nd July	Mary Magdalene	X		X					X	X				X (17)		
24th July	Christina	X	X (3 Oct)						X (5 Oct)	X (+19)				X		
29th July	Basencia (Venera)	X		X (19+5 Oct)	X (50+50)				X (19+5 Oct)					X		
2nd Aug	Theodora of Nicaea															
8th Aug	Alva															
8th Aug	Hydrna															
8th Aug	Hydrna															
8th Aug	Eufrasia															
8th Aug	Eufrasia															
11th Aug	Hadrala															
14th Aug	Concordia															
14th Aug	Susannah															
18th Aug	Helena		X (19+22May)						X	X				X		
18th Aug	Sabina (S)	X	X (28 Jan)													
18th Aug	Sabina (S)															
31st Aug	Cherwell															
31st Aug	Salustia								X							
14th Sept	Enfymia of Chalcedon	X		X					X	X				X (+ 17 Aug)		
16th Sept	Lucey (of Chalcedon)	X		X					X	X						
16th Sept	Lucey (of Chalcedon)															
20th Sept	Fulvia															
20th Sept	Fulvia															
20th Sept	Thecla of Iconium (S)			X					X	X				X (+12+11)		X
26th Sept	Therisa													X		
26th Sept	Therisa															
26th Sept	Therisa															
7th Oct	Onofri															
7th Oct	Onofri								X							
8th Oct	Benedicta															
11th Oct	Aethelburga of Berkinga								X	X				X		
11th Oct	Aethelburga of Berkinga															
17th Oct	Florence	X														
17th Oct	Florence								X	X						
17th Oct	Tyrbornia															
18th Oct	Amal															
18th Oct	Amal															
18th Oct	Amal															
21st Oct	Constance															
21st Oct	Constance															
30th Oct	Makana															
3rd Nov	Edith (Translatio)															
17th Nov	Hilda of Whitby															
20th Nov	Cecilia	X	X (30 M + 10 J)						X	X				X		X
20th Nov	Cecilia															
1st Dec	Therisa															
1st Dec	Therisa															
18th Dec	Concorda	X	X (+ 8 Mar)	X					X	X				X		X (+ 5 Dec)
2nd Dec	Vivian															
4th Dec	Barbara															
5th Dec	Eilwynth*								X	X				X		X
10th Dec	Eulalia of Merida	X		X					X	X				X		X
13th Dec	Lucey of Syracuse	X		X					X	X				X		X
23rd Dec	Agatha of Sicily		X (14)													
23rd Dec	Agatha															
31st Dec	Columba of Sens								X							

	Leofric	Winchcombe	Robert	Giso	Winton	New M	St A	Leonine	Gelasian	Gregorian
Genouefa			X				X			X
Prisca	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Mary and Martha	X		X	X					X	X
Agnes	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Emerentiana	X		X	X					X	X
Agnes (octave)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Brigid			X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Agatha	X	X	X	X	X (11th c. add.)	X	X		X	
Scholastica		X	X	X			X		X	
Sothers			X	X					X	
Eormenhilde			X	X		X	X		X	
Juliana	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	
Perpetua and Felicity			X	X			X		X	
Gertrude				X					X	
Felicia									X	
Euphemia			X	X		X	X			
Mildrith (translation)		X					X			
Potentiana				X		X				
Petronella				X			X			
Mildrith							X			
Eadburga				X		X				
Tulitta				X		X				
Aethelrhyth			X	X		X				
Sexburga						X				
Margaret of Antioch	X									
Praxedis			X	X			X			
Mary Magdalene	X			X		X	X		X	
Beatrice	X	X	X	X		X	X			X
Sabina	X	X	X	X		X	X			X
Lucy of Chalcedon	X	X	X	X		X	X	X (x2)		X
Euphemia of Chalcedon	X	X	X	X			X			
Faith							X			
11 Virgins							X			
Cecilia (vigil)		X		X		X	X	X (x4)	X	X
Cecilia	X	X	X	X		X	X	X (x3)	X	X
Felicity of Rome	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	
Daria		X		X			X			
Katherine										
Eugenia								X		
Lucy of Sicily	X	X	X	X		X	X			X
Anastasia				X				X		

	Leofric	Winchcombe	Robert	Giso	Winton	New M	St A
Genouefa		X	X			X	
Prisca						X	
Agnes	X	X	X		X	X	X
Agnes (octave)		X	X			X	
Brigid			X			X	
Agatha	X	X	X		X	X	X
Scolastica						X	
Eormenhilde			X				
Juliana						X	
Euphemia		X	X			X	
Eadburga						X	
Tulitta						X	
Æthelthryth			X				X
Mildrith (translation)							X
Mildrith							
Sexburga						X	
Margaret of Antioch	X						
Praxedis			X				
Sabina			X				
Euphemia of Chalcedon						X	
Faith							X
Cecilia (Vigil)		X					
Cecilia	X	X	X			X	X
Katherine							X
Daria		X				X	

NB The Giso Sacramentary contains very few prefaces amongst its Sanctorale Mass Sets, and these prayers are assigned solely to the top rank of saints honoured by the English Church (e.g. SS Peter and Paul, John the Baptist, the Virgin Mary etc.). The manuscript, however, does also contain a number of blessings for certain saints' feasts days in a separate section of the work (ff. 209r-219v). Again, most of the saints mentioned are the universal saints of the English Church, but a couple of slightly lower ranked saints are also included amongst whom is St Cecilia.

## Appendix 3.5: Saints Honoured in Anglo-Saxon Benedictionals

	Leofric	Aethelwold	Egbert	Add. 28188	AB Robert	Anderson	Claudius I	Claudius Ia	Lanalet	Canterbury
Stephen (protomartyr)	X	X (X2)	X	X	X	X (X2)	X		X	X (X3)
John the Evangelist	X	X (X2)	X	X	X	X (X2)	X		X	X (X3)
Holy Innocents	X	X	X	X	X	X (X2)			X	X (X2)
Silvester				X						X
Sebastian		X		X (+ Fabian)	X	X	X (+ Fabian)		X	X (+ Fabian)
Agnes		X		X	X	X	X		X	X (X2)
Vincent		X		X	X	X	X		X	X (X2)
Paul (conversion of)		X		X	X	X	X		X	X
Agnes (octave)		X		X	X	X	X		X	X
Blasius				X				X	X	X
Agatha		X		X	X	X	X		X	X
Vedast		X		X (+ Amandus)			X		X	X (+ Amandus)
Austroberta										X
Scholastica				X						X
Ambrose		X						X		
Tibertus and Valerianus		X							X	
Cathedra Petri		X			X	X	X		X	X
Matthias				X	X	X			X	X (X2)
Gregory the Great		X		X	X	X	X		X	X (X2)
Edward the Martyr				X	X	X			X	X
Cuthbert				X	X	X			X	X (X2)
Benedict				X		X			X	X (X2)
Ambrose								X		
Alexander and Eventus									X	
George				X					X	X (X2)
Ælfheah				X						X (X2)
Mark the evangelist				X						X (X2)
Discovery of the Holy Cross	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X (X2)
Phillip and James				X					X	X (X2)
Dunstan				X						X (X4+vigil)
Augustine of Canterbury				X		X				X (X2)
Ælfheah (translation)				X						X (X3)
Barnabas				X						X
Medardus								X		X
Marnus and Marcellus								X		X
Marcellinus and Peter								X		X
Gervasius and Protasius								X		X
Æthelthryth		X		X		X				X
John the Baptist	X	X (X2)	X	X (+ vigil)	X (+ vigil)	X (+ vigil)	X	X (only vigil)	X (+ vigil)	X (+ vigil)
Salutus				X						X
Peter and Paul	X	X (X2)	X	X (X2+ vigil)	X (+ vigil)	X (+ vigil)	X (Peter)	X (Peter)	X (Peter)	X (X2+ vigil)
Paul				X						X
Swithun		X		X		X				X

	Leofric	Aethelwold	Ecgbert	Add. 28188	AB Robert	Anderson	Claudius I	Claudius Ia	Lanalet	Canterbury
Peter and Paul (octave)				X						X (x2)
Benedict (translation)				X		X				X (x2)
Mildred										X
James				X						X (x2)
Chairs of St Peter				X						X
Maccabees			X			X				X
Aethelwold										X
Grimbald										X
Stephen (inventio)				X						X
Benedict		X			X					X (x2)
Laurence		X		X (+ vigill)	X		X	X	X	X
Audoenus								X	X	X (x3)
Bartholomew		X			X			X	X	X
Augustine of Hippo										X
Decoll. of John the Baptist	X				X		X	X	X	X (x2)
Protus and Iacintus		X		X	X		X	X	X	X (x2)
Exaltation of the Cross		X		X	X		X	X	X	X (x2)
Cornelius and Cyprian								X		X (x2)
Matthew the Evangelist		X		X (x2)					X	X (+ vigill)
Maurice and Companions				X						X (x3)
Michael the archangel		X		X (x2)		X (x3)	X	X (x2)	X (x3)	X (x3)
Jerome				X						X
Dionysius and Companions				X						X (x3)
Luke the Evangelist				X						X (x3)
Simon and Jude				X				X (x2)	X (x3)	X (x2+vigill)
All Saints		X		X (x2)	X	X (x2+vigill)	X	X (x2)	X (x3)	X (x2+vigill)
Hilary								X (+ Vedast)	X	
Remigus									X	
Germanus, Vedastus and Bauron									X	
Martin of Tours		X (x2)		X	X	X	X (+ trans.)		X	X (x2)
Cecilia		X		X	X	X			X	X
Clement		X		X	X	X			X	X
Chrysogonus									X	
Andrew		X (x2 + vigill)		X (+ vigill)	X (+ vigill)	X (+ vigill)	X (+ vigill)		X (+ vigill)	X (x2+vigill)
Birinus				X						X
Andrew (octave)				X						
Iudoc (deposition)					X					
Eliagus								X		
Lucy of Sicily				X						X
Nicasius								X		
Thomas		X		X			X			X (x2)

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## ILLUSTRATIONS

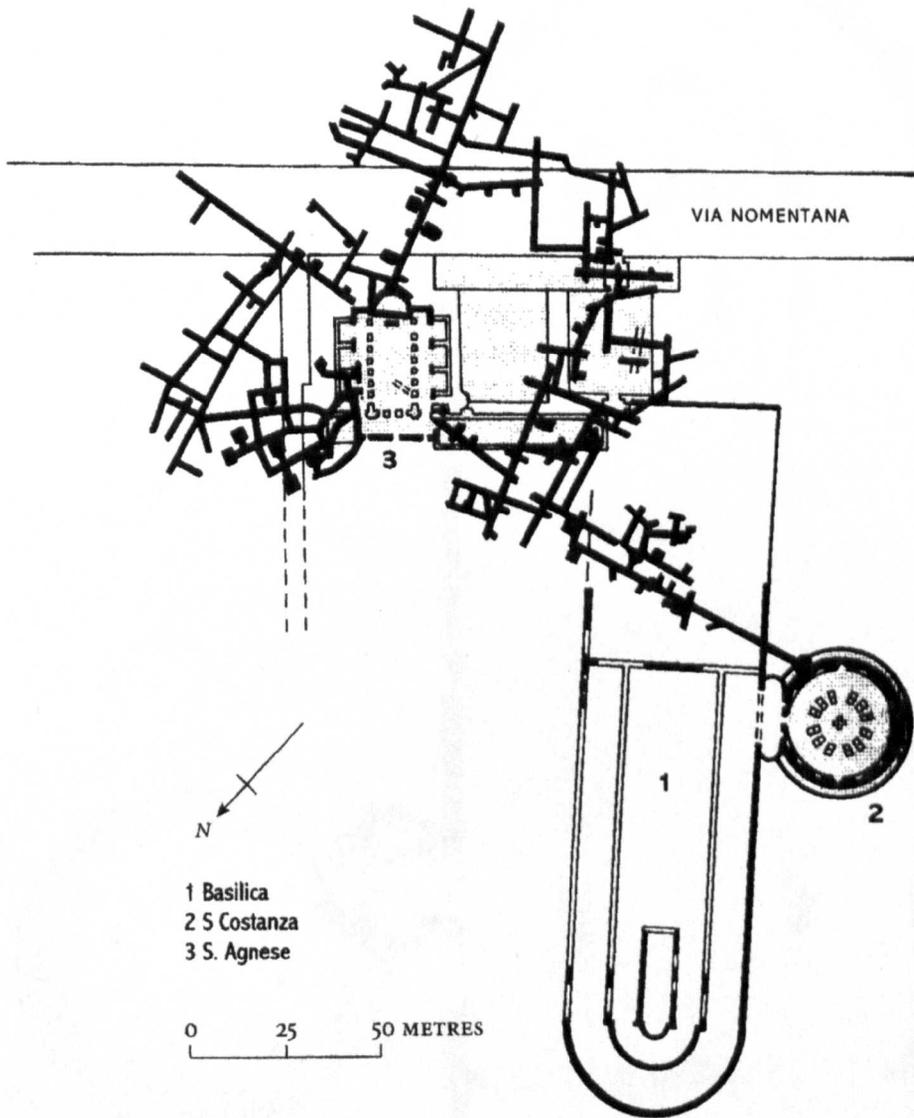


Illustration 1: Site Plan of S. Agnese fuori le mura  
 (A. Claridge, *Oxford Archaeological Guides: Rome* (Oxford, 1998), p. 374)

### Plan of Santa Costanza

- 1 TRICONCH BUILDING
  - 2 MAUSOLEUM
  - 3 FUNERARY HALL
  - 4 APSED STRUCTURE
  - 5 COLUMNS, twenty-four paired  
Roman spoils
  - 6 MOSAICS, 4<sup>th</sup> C on barrel-vaults of  
the aisle
  - 7 MOSAIC OF THE TRADITIO  
CLAVIUM, 5<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> C
  - 8 MOSAIC OF THE TRADITIO LEGIS,  
5<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> C
  - 9 SARCOPHAGUS (replica)
- A ALTAR placed here in 1256

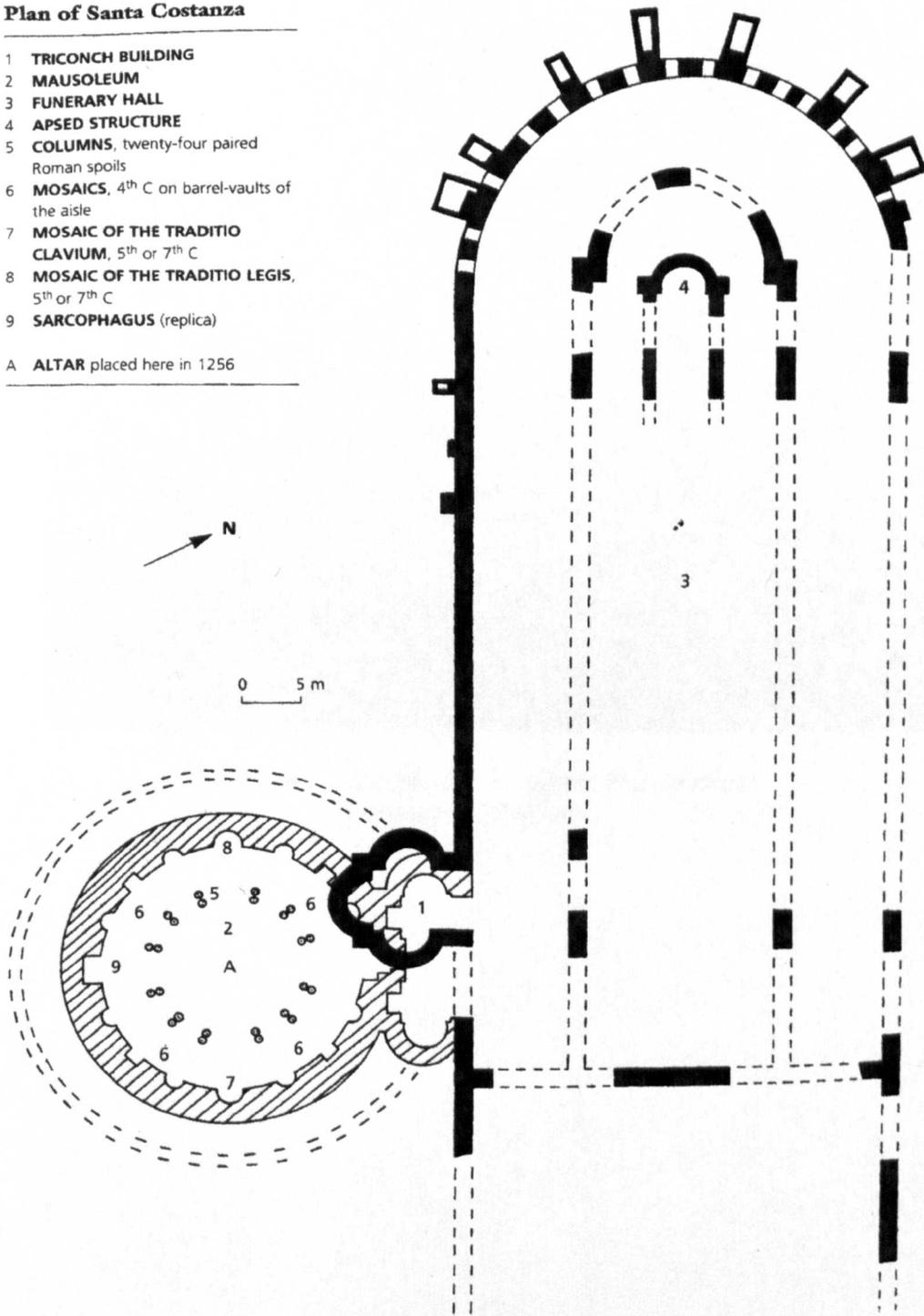


Illustration 2: New Archaeological Findings at Santa Costanza  
(M. Webb, *The Churches and Catacombs of Early Christian Rome* (Brighton, 2001), p. 256)

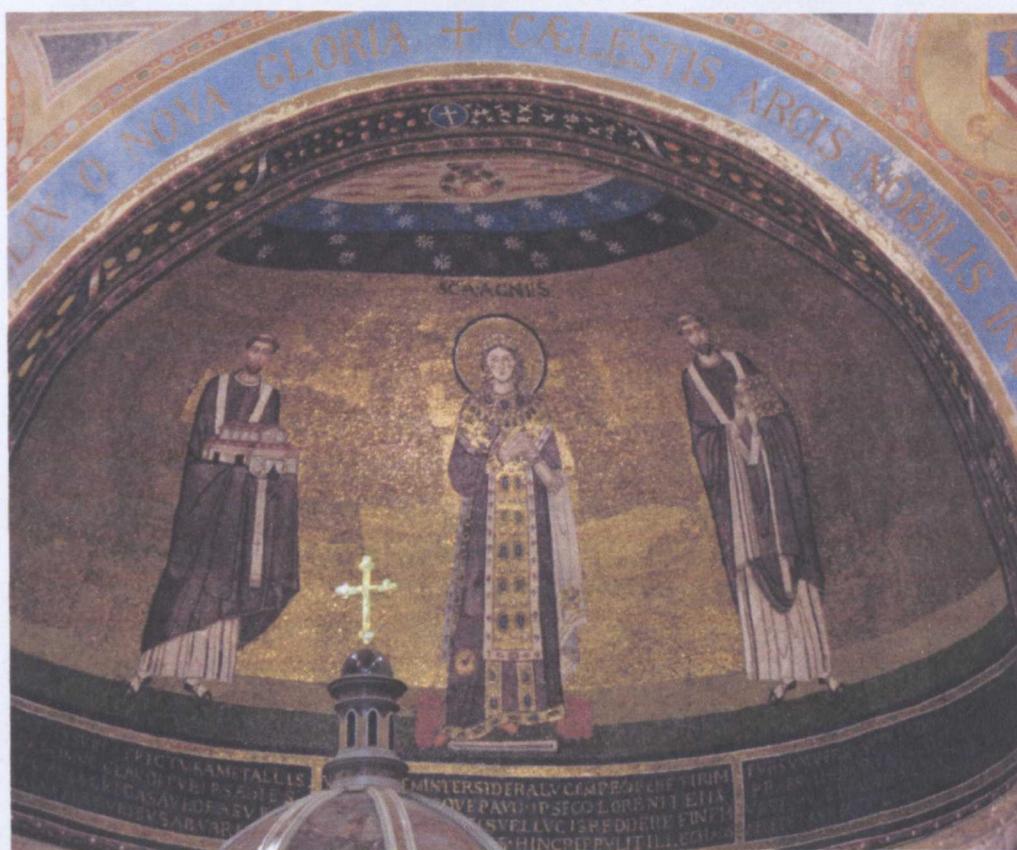


Illustration 3: Apse Mosaic, S. Agnese fuori le mura  
(Photograph: C. Phillips)