ADEST MELIORI PARTE:

A PORTRAIT OF MONASTIC FRIENDSHIP IN EXILE IN GOSCELIN'S *LIBER CONFORTATORIUS*

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November 1999

ABSTRACT

In this evaluation of Goscelin's method of instructing Eve in her life as a recluse, their relationship will be viewed from the premise of spiritual friendship. Goscelin's approach to Eve as a female addressee relates directly to the tradition in which he is writing. His approach is different from other works written for the instruction of recluses in that it presupposes an exceptionally high level of learning, and it seeks to address Eve's spiritual life rather than provide a practical guide for daily living. Goscelin gives evidence of a great respect for female religious which does not hinge on a belief that women have to behave in a masculine fashion in order to show their strength of faith, intellect or perseverance.

The *Liber confortatorius* had a cathartic effect in that, through the process of composition, Goscelin comes to terms with his grief over Eve's departure as well as with his sense of exile and alienation as a peripatetic monk. This thesis seeks to contribute a wider understanding of the text as an educational tool as well as a work with distinct literary merits.

The thesis provides a historical context through an examination of changes in religious life and the rise of eremetic movements in the time of the Gregorian reforms. Case studies will be provided to illustrate the concept of spiritual friendship in Christian history and establish the tradition to which the relationship between Goscelin and Eve belongs. Goscelin's high expectations of Eve's knowledge and abilities inform his approach to her education. His choice of positive female role models and his manipulation of known stories of female martyrs indicates his desire to focus on women's strength.

While the *Liber confortatorius* is about the education of Eve, it also explores themes of exile and pilgrimage. It is argued that Goscelin projects his own grief over the loss of his community on Eve's solitary existence, but that through his exhortations to her he learns to accept his situation and to look forward to a reunion in heaven.

Acknowledgements

Writing a thesis is not done in complete isolation and I would like to express my gratitude to all those people whose help and support I have received in the past few years. First of all I would like to thank my supervisors, the Three Wise Men, Peter Biller, Sid Bradley, and Richard Fletcher for their good advice. Edward James, who supervised my work in the year before he left for Reading, also has been very helpful.

I would like to thank Jim Binns for helping me make a start with Goscelin's Latin and for the suggestions he has made for translation. A special mention should be made of Dr Gerard Boter of the Sorghvliet Gymnasium in The Hague, who generously offered his time and grammatical expertise to help me out with the final versions of the translations which I am using in this thesis. Without his help, I am sure, none of the translations would have made much sense. I would also like to show my appreciation to his colleague Dr Chris Tazelaar and Gerard's own teacher of Latin, Professor D. den Hengst of the University of Amsterdam who made additional suggestions. It is reassuring to know that at times Goscelin's Latin could baffle even these learned people.

I received a travel grant from the Centre for Medieval Studies so that I could touch and smell the manuscript of the *Liber confortatorius* at the British Library. The CMS also made it possible for me to purchase a microfilm of the manuscript.

I received more than a little help from my friends. I would especially like to thank Sarah Mitchell for her support which came in all sorts of forms, ranging from peptalks and constructive criticism to whining and dining sessions. My thanks also go to Kelly Moore for her encouragement and help with proof reading and for putting the commas in the right place, and, not least, for her presence, which have made the last weeks of work bearable.

Most of all I would like t-o express my gratitude to my father, Hans van Rossum, who never questioned my odd choices of subjects for study and without whose generous financial help I could never even have started this project.

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my mother,
Annelize van Rossum-Gummels

1945-1987

A Note on the Text

Quotations from the *Liber confortatorius* are given in English, with the original Latin quoted in the footnotes with a reference to Talbot's edition. When a passage is quoted in the context of linguistic comparison, I have included the Latin in the main body of the text and translation in the footnotes. All translations from the *Liber confortatorius* are my own unless otherwise stated.

Other quotations from Latin sources for which adequate translations are available are given in English, unless the Latin is needed for lexical comparison. Biblical quotations are given in English and have been taken from the Douay-Rheims translation, and all references to the Psalms follow the numbering of the Vulgate.

The following abbreviations have been used in the footnotes:

CCSL	*Corpus Christianorum series latina*
CETEDOC	Library of Christian Latin Texts CLCLT-3 (version3.0) Brepols
PL	*Patrologia Latina*
AASS	*Acta Sanctorum*

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INTRODUCTION

THE *LIBER CONFORTATORIUS* AND ITS AUTHOR

Longa est fabula, uerba insulsa et eneruia, non diligens non legat, non sibi scripta propriis relinquat.[1]

Prologus, *Liber confortatorius*

In apparent distress on the unexpected departure of his dearly-beloved pupil Eve, Goscelin, an expatriate monk of the monastery of Saint-Bertin, wrote a long letter to advise and encourage her in her new life as a recluse in Angers. At the same time, this *Liber confortatorius*[2] served as a means of comfort for its author who, through the process of composition, came to terms with his sense of loss and his own status in life as a peripatetic monk.

Goscelin was a prolific and respected hagiographer of Anglo-Saxon saints, and it is for these works that he is best remembered. His contemporaries also praised him for his skills as a musician. The main primary source for Goscelin's life is the *Liber confortatorius*. In addition there are several other sources that contribute to our knowledge of his life. The most extensive biography collated from these sources is provided by Frank Barlow, and his conclusions in the second edition of *The Life of King Edward who Rests at Westminster Attributed to a Monk of Saint-Bertin* are that it is unlikely that any sources that will provide us with new information have been overlooked.[3] However, that the information given in this and earlier biographies is by no means conclusive became clear in recent

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1 The story is long, the words tedious and impaired, let him who does not esteem them not read them, let him leave what is not written for him to them forwhom they were intended.

2 The work survives in one manuscript currently held at the British Library, Sloane MS 3103. It was edited and annotated by C.H. Talbot in 'The Liber Confortatorius of Goscelin of Saint Bertin', *Studia Anselmania* (*Analecta Monastica*, Third Series) Fasc. 37 (1955): 1-117.

3 Frank Barlow, *The Life of King Edward who Rests at Westminster Attributed to a Monk of Saint-Bertin*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992) 133. The biography is included as Appendix C, and includes an overview of Goscelin's works and works that may be attributed to him.

articles which show that careful study of Goscelin's texts can provide indications on how multi-faceted his talents were.[4]

GOSCELIN - A SHORT BIOGRAPHY

It seems unnecessary to repeat here more than a general overview of significant dates and details that are essential knowledge in relation to the *Liber confortatorius*. Goscelin was born in about 1035,[5] probably in the diocese of Therouanne, and he became an oblate at the famous monastery of Saint-Bertin at Saint-Omer in what was then the Duchy of Flanders. The community at Saint-Bertin had a reputation for learning and had important cultural links with England. It was on the route for English pilgrims travelling to Rome, and some of its monks appear to have been commiss`ioned to write for the English royal family; the *Encomium Emmae* is believed to have been written there. A large donation from Cnut is evidence of high connections.[6] Not much is known about Goscelin's early years except that it seems that he started writing hagiography at Saint-Bertin. The continental *Vita Amalburgae* has been ascribed to him.[7] He met Bishop Hermann at Saint-Bertin during the latter's brief self-imposed exile from England,[8] but they may already have become acquainted about five years earlier when Hermann stayed at the monastery on his way on a mission to Rome.[9] Hermann had resigned from his see at Ramsbury after he had

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4 See for instance the articles by Gem and Sharpe which will be discussed later. Already in 1946, Wilhelm Levison remarked that a "modern edition and study of Goscelin's writings, printed and unprinted, is a desideratum of more than literary history." *England and the Continent in the Eighth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1946) 199 fn. 1.

5 Both Wilmart, 'Ève et Goscelin (II),' *Revue Bénédictine* 50 (1938): 51 and Talbot, *The Liber Confortatorius* 4-5 agree on this date, as Goscelin described himself as *adolescentulus* on arrival in England in 1058.

6 See Barlow, *The Life of King Edward*, xlvii, and Philip Grierson, 'Relations between England and Flanders before the Norman Conquest,' *Essays in Medieval History: Selected from the Transactions of the Royal Historical Society on the Occasion of Its Centenary*, R. W. Southern, ed. (London: MacMillan, 1968) 78.

7 See A. Poncelet, 'Les biographes de Ste Amelberge,' *Analecta Bollandiana* 31 (1912): 405.

8 Biographies of Hermann are usually included in studies on Goscelin.

9 An event mentioned for this year in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, G. N. Garmonsway, ed. and trans., 2nd ed. (London: Dent, 1972) 170-1. See also Barlow, *The Life of King Edward* 134 and fn. 6.

unsuccessfully tried to transfer his see to Malmesbury with the help of Queen Edith in 1055. Three years later the see of Sherborne became available and Hermann was invited back to England and Goscelin joined him there some time later.[10]

Goscelin appears to have acted as chaplain[11] for the nuns at Wilton Abbey. He was closely involved with some of the convent's residents. Goscelin was present at Hermann's dedication of the new stone church at Wilton which was donated by Queen Edith to replace the original wooden church built by Saint Edith, the abbey's patron saint.[12] From his accounts, it seems that Goscelin accompanied Hermann to court in London on several occasions and it has been suggested that the *Vita Edwardi Regi qui apud Westmonasterium requiescit*, written between 25 September 1066 and 6 January 1067, may well be by his hand.[13] He accompanied Eve and the abbess of Wilton to the dedication of the church at Westminster. Whether or not Goscelin was at Wilton for a prolonged period of time cannot be established with absolute certainty, but he wrote that he and Eve kept in touch through letters.[14] Goscelin must have visited Wilton on a regular basis as he received much of the information for his *Vita S. Edithe* from the nuns at Wilton. On the whole, however, very little is known about his time in Hermann's diocese. Around the time of Hermann's death in 1078, Goscelin finished his *Vita Wulsini*; this was followed by his *Vita S. Edithe*. Although Barlow

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10 Thomas J. Hamilton, 'Goscelin of Canterbury: A Critical Study of His Life, Works and Accomplishments,' diss., U of Virginia, 1973, 9. Hamilton states that the exact date of Goscelin's arrival in England is obscure and may be anything between 1058 (Hermann's return to England) and September 1065 (dedication of the church at Wilton). As Goscelin was a monk at Sherborne for a while it must have been before 1065. Barlow (p. 134, fn. 5) deduces from the *Liber confortatorius* that it must have been between 1061 and 1064. He bases his argument on Goscelin's use of *adolescentulus / adolescentula* and *infantula* in relation to himself and Eve.

11 See Barlow, *The Life of King Edward* 135. Hamilton says this hypothesis cannot be substantiated (p. 164). It seems clear from the evidence of both the *Liber confortatorius* and Goscelin's Life of Saint Edith that he had stayed at the abbey for more than a short visit. Barlow deduces that Goscelin's detailed knowledge of the church at Wilton shows more than a passing aquaintance with the building.

12 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 28. This event is dated 3 October 1065.

13 See Barlow, *The Life of King Edward* l-li. Barlow casts reasonable doubt over the possibility, however, and suggests that Folcard, also of Saint-Bertin, fits the bill as well. Proof either way is unfortunately lacking.

14 Talbot. *Liber confortatorius* 29.

detects a certain lack of warmth in Goscelin's references to his patron,[15] the bishop's death had some impact on the turn Goscelin's life would take. When Hermann died, he was succeeded by Osmund. This saintly bishop was renowned for his love of learning and he attracted many clerks.[16] He was described as having copied books for the library of his new cathedral at Salisbury himself.[17] Under Osmund, Salisbury would become an important centre for the dissemination of the works of the Fathers of the Church which had hitherto been unknown in the British Isles.[18] Despite their shared love of learning, there was no love lost between Osmund and Goscelin.[19] The nature of their quarrels is not known, although it has been suggested that Osmund tried to introduce the Norman way of chant and was in this opposed by Goscelin.[20] The problems between them may also be connected with the fact that Osmund set up a college of clerks who did not live according to a rule.[21] Their difference of opinion was strong enough for Goscelin to describe Osmund in the *Liber confortatorius* as "the king who did not know Joseph," whose envy and barbarity chased him away.[22] Goscelin left the diocese and embarked on what he described as a long pilgrimage. This would eventually lead him to Saint-Augustine's, Canterbury, but not before he had travelled from monastery to monastery, writing biographies of local saints. He did not find a place to settle at any of these monasteries. In his letter to Eve he frequently quotes a line from the Aeneid, *requies ea certa*

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15 Barlow, *The Life of King Edward* 135.

16 Osmund was canonised 1 January 1457.

17 William of Malmesbury, *De Gestis Pontificum Anglorum Libri Quinque,* N.E.S.A. Hamilton, ed. (London: Longman, 1870) 184.

18 Teresa Webber, *Scribes and Scholars at Salisbury Cathedral* c. *1075* - c. *1125* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992) 6.

19 Barlow, *The Life of King Edward* 140, n. 60. He referres to the dedication to an unnamed bishop (presumably Osmund) of the *Life of Saint Wulfsige.*

20 Hamilton says that they might have had "divergent views about the ecclesiastical polity of the Anglo-Saxon church," or that they might have "clashed over the new type of chanting which the Normans attempted to introduce into England" (p. 168).

21 The earliest documentary evidence to this fact is from 1089, but canons may have been established at Salisbury at an earlier date. See Webber, *Scribes and Scholars at Salisbury Cathedral* 2-3.

22 *qui ignorabat Ioseph, viperina invidia et vitricali barbarie.....*

laborum,[23] which seems to point to a soul weary of travelling. We do not know why he did not go back to Saint-Bertin. It seems that he considered England as his new homeland. He took a genuine interest in its ecclesiastical history which he believed, it seems, could only be studied *in situ*.

Whatever the reasons, his writings provide the pebbles, as it were, by which we are able to trace his wanderings fairly accurately. It is possible that he first went to Winchester. The *Vita sancti Swithuni* is linked to him and his name appears in necrologies from both Old Minster and New Minster.[24] His connections in Winchester may have secured him the hospitality of other monasteries. We know that he stayed at Peterborough in 1082 when he wrote the *Liber confortatorius*.[25] The *Liber Eliensis* provides evidence that he was at Ely for a time.[26] There he probably wrote the lives of Milburg, Werburg, and the lessons and offices of Sexburg and Ermenild. According to a passage in the *Liber Eliensis*, Goscelin also wrote a life of Æthelthryth but this has not survived.[27] In 1087 he was resident at another nunnery, Barking, and one of the nuns there provided Goscelin with the information needed to write his lives of Æthelburg, Wulfhild and Hildelith.[28] After that he was at Ramsey where he wrote the life of Saint Yvo. As we then get the series of writings connected with the archbishops of Canterbury, of which the final date of composition seems to have

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23 Virgil, *Aeneid* III 393.

24 Hamilton, 'Goscelin of Canterbury' 176, and Barlow, who provided the evidence in the necrologies, *The Life of King Edward* 140. Through the New Minster necrology, Goscelin's name also occurs in that of Durham.

25 This was at the time that Turold was abbot. Dorothy Whitelock, 'Scandinavian Personal Names in the *Liber Vitae* of Thorney Abbey,' in: *Saga-book of the Viking Society for Northern Research* XII (London, 1940) 132. Repr. in: Dorothy Whitelock, *History, Law and Literature in 10th -11th Century England* (London: Variorum, 1981).

26 *Liber Eliensis*, ed. E. O. Blake, Camden, 3rd series, vol. 92 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1962) 215-16. This was at about the time that Simeon was abbot of Ely and he introduced ten monks from Winchester there. See Barlow, *The Life of King Edward* 140-141 fn. 65.

27 *Liber Eliensis* 215.

28 Marvin L. Colker, 'Texts of Jocelyn of Canterbury which Relate to the History of Barking Abbey,' *Studia Monastica* 7 (1965): 391 (Introduction), 412 (*Life of Ethelburga*) and 418 (*Life of Wulfhild*).

been 1099, we may assume that he arrived at Saint-Augustine's in the early nineties.[29] Goscelin died in Canterbury probably at a date soon after 1107.

Goscelin was not only well-respected for his craftsmanship as a hagiographer. It seems that he was precentor at Saint Augustine's. His fellow monk at the abbey, Reginald, dedicated two poems to Goscelin and in the introduction to one of them he praised Goscelin's qualities as a musician and teacher of oratory.[30] Apart from these he ascribed to Goscelin some sympathetic character traits: kindly, cheerful, honest, impartial. Reginald saw him as the true friend of all the monks in the community. William of Malmesbury also shows great admiration for Goscelin's works, which he seems to have used to a large extent for his own writings. In his *Gesta regum Anglorum* he goes as far as to rank Goscelin second only after Bede.[31]

The Manuscript: London, British Library: Sloane MS 3103

The text of the *Liber confortatorius* has survived in only one manuscript, which is held at the British Library. The codex is fairly small, measuring 107mm by 110mm. It is written in a beautiful twelfth-century script which is continuous throughout the codex, and was most probably written by a single scribe.[32] The manuscript belonged to Saint-Sauveur-le-Vicomte in the diocese of Coutances in Normandy and was likely written there, as it contains two *ex-libris* and brief notes

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29 This summary is based on Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 8-10; however, there is also a *Life of Werburg* that is associated with Chester, and it may have been that Goscelin even ventured that far north.

30 'Gozelino monacho suo suus, amico amicus Raginaldus' and 'Gozelino de genitura vocum musicarum Raginaldus' in: F. Liebermann, 'Raginald von Canterbury.' *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere Deutsche Geschichtskunde* 13 (1888): 519-56.

31 William of Malmesbury, *Chronicle of the Kings of England from the Earliest Period to the Reign of King Stephen*, J.A. Giles, trans.(London: Bell, 1889). *De Gestis Regum Anglorum Libri Quinque*, William Stubbs, ed., vol. II (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1887) 389.

32 A description is given by Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 24-25. See Wilmart, 'Ève et Goscelin (II)' 51-55, on the wanderings of the manuscript.

relating to this house.[33] Apart from the *Liber*, which occupies 114 of the 123 folios, the codex contains a section on the martyrdom of Thomas Becket (incomplete), the end of a text on Saint Katherine, an antiphon in honour of Saint Bartholomew, a hymn on Saint Katherine, the *incipit* to a short history of William of Normandy, a list of the kings of England, and a letter by Saint Bernard. The manuscript is obviously incomplete with at least several folios missing. From this brief list of its contents it is clear that there is a certain English interest, yet the manuscript was almost certainly French. It may be that the codex belonged to an English monk at this abbey whose interest in the *Liber* stemmed from the fact that it was written for an English woman whose exemplary life had acquired her a reputation for holiness or because it was written by Goscelin, a name of some reputation at Canterbury. Perhaps it just reflects certain Norman interests. Unfortunately this is the only copy of the *Liber confortatorius* that survives, but it may have been the only copy made of the original. It is very likely that the letter which Goscelin had despatched was written on scraps of parchment of dubious quality, and the scribe of the Sloane manuscript may have made a copy because the original was falling apart. It seems that its existence was not common knowledge. Hilary of Orléans, who wrote a verse biography of Eve, was certainly not aware of its existence: he would not have ignored the fact that Eve was at Saint-Laurent before, nor would he have made such a muddle of the name of her former nunnery.[34]

Overview of Scholarship 1934-1996

Thomas Hamilton, whose own work on Goscelin will be discussed below, presents an extensive survey of past appraisal of Goscelin's work which shows that there has been a continuous but not a very large interest in his accomplishments.[35]

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33 *Ex libris* on folio 80^{v} between the incipit of *Liber Quartus* and the first title heading, and after the explicit on folio 114^{v}. It reads *Iste liber est de abbatia sancti salvatoris vicecomitis constanciensis diocesis.*

34 See below. Nicholas M. Häring, 'Die Gedichte und Mysterienspiele des Hilarius von Orléans,' *Studi Medievale*, 3rd Series 17.2 (1976): 915 - 968.

35 Of Goscelin's contemporaries and immediate successors, Reginald of Canterbury and William of Malmesbury praised his achievements; and like William, Gervase of Canterbury (*fl.* 1188), John of Tynemouth (*fl.* 1346), William Thorne (*fl.* 1397)

This interest is almost exclusively concentrated on the biographies, and the *Liber confortatorius* remained virtually unknown – except for Rivet de la Grange's short mention of the work[36] – until the twentieth-century. In this overview I will concentrate on twentieth-century studies of Goscelin's works, and particularly on those studies that have included the *Liber confortatorius*, as these are more directly relevant to this thesis.

The first studies on the *Liber confortatorius* appeared in 1934 when André Wilmart published the first of two articles entitled 'Ève et Goscelin.'[37] At this time the text was as yet unedited and unpublished. In this first article, Wilmart discusses not so much the *Liber confortatorius* as the other written evidence of Eve's life in Anjou, and that of her fellow recluse Herveus. His main source for this article was Hilary of Orléans' poem consisting of forty quatrains, based on the life of Eve, and written in after Eve's death.[38] Wilmart provides a useful study

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and Thomas Elmham (*d.* ?1440) made extensive use of his works. Hamilton also shows the ambivalent reception of Goscelin's works in the post-medieval period. His first post-medieval phase, extending from the mid-sixteenth to the mid-eighteenth century, has among others John Bale (1495-1563), who praised Goscelin's achievements; Jean Mabillon (?1632-?1707). Daniel Papebroch (?1628-*d.* 1714), whose edition of the *Life* of St Augustine of Canterbury was later published in *AASS*, was impressed by its considerable historical worth, whereas Henry Wharton (1664-1695) dismissed Goscelin as having done little more than expand on Bede and suffuse his work with meaningless verbosity. Rivet de la Grange provided a more extensive account and critical study of Goscelin's life and works. He esteemed Goscelin's scholarship but accuses him of verbosity as well. The second phase (mid-nineteenth century to the 1930s) gives evidence of a renewed interest with the publication of Thomas Duffus Hardy's *Descriptive Catalogue of Materials Relating to the History of Great Britain and Ireland to the End of the Reign of Henry VII* vols. I and II (London: Longman, Green Longman, and Roberts, 1862). Again, Goscelin was criticised for a lack of originality. Hardwick, Hardy and Horstmann consider his *vitae* useless as historical sources. His style is described as inflated, declamatory, turgid and rhetorical. Hamilton, 'Goscelin of Canterbury' 6-19.

36 Antoine Rivet de la Grange, *Histoire literaire de la France*, vol. VIII (Paris, 1747) 677.

37 Wilmart, 'Ève et Goscelin,' *Revue Bénédictine* 46 (1934): 414-38. Wilmart also published an edition of the *Vita Eadgitha*: 'La Légende de Ste Édith en Prose et Vers par le Moine Goscelin,' ed. A. Wilmart, *Analecta Bollandiana* 56 (1938): 5-101.

38 See footnote 34. The date of Eve's death and that of Herveus remains a point of contention. Wilmart suggest a date before 1125 rather than before 1120 for Eve's death, and he has found evidence that Herveus died not before the autumn of 1132. (Wilmart 'Ève et Goscelin,' 438). Häring believes dates around 1120 to be more likely. He distinguishes between Hilary the poet of the elegy and Hilary of Orleans who must still have been at the Paraclete in 1125 and who did not return to Angers until after that. His argumentation would, however, support Wilmart's

on this and other sources left to us which he uses to piece together the circumstances and whereabouts of the cells of Eve and her companion Herveus. The *Liber confortatorius* is only mentioned here to supplement Hilary's poem which has various uncertainties or inconsistencies. Other documents include three letters written to Herveus by Geoffrey of Vendôme, the first of which was also addressed to Eve.[39] Wilmart spends a considerable part of this study on the exact identity of this Herveus as there were two recluses of that name in Anjou at that time.

Wilmart's first article provides a preliminary study for the second article published four years later,[40] which consists, apart from an introduction, mainly of a synopsis of the text of the *Liber*, and a preliminary edition of the first few folios of the manuscript, as well as the last one. Wilmart observes that Goscelin has been largely neglected by modern scholarship after having been "mishandled" in the past, referring to Manitius and *L'histoire littéraire de la France*,[41] which, he says, seem primarily to represent the prejudices of the period. Wilmart notes the unexpected difference in the style Goscelin used for his letter to Eve, when compared to his turgid and solemn biographies of saints. Goscelin held back on using literary commonplaces when it comes to expressing his most intimate feelings for Eve.[42] Wilmart makes some positive value judgements and points out contemporary admiration for Goscelin such as that by William of Malmesbury. On the whole, however, Wilmart does not provide a critical analysis of the text. That the article is an excellent starting point for any further research, however, is evident from C. H. Talbot's introduction to his complete edition of the *Liber confortatorius*, published in 1955, in which he relies for a significant part on Wilmart. In addition, Talbot provides a preliminary overview of Goscelin's works, proposing a possible order in which they were written, and the places where they

later dates. Nicholas Häring, ed., 'Hilary of Orleans and His Letter Collection,' *Studi Medievali*, 3rd series, 14-II (1973): 1077-1080.

39 Epistolae XLVIII - L, Geoffrey of Vendôme, *Goffridi abbatis vindocinensis: Opera omnia*, in: *PL* 157, cols 184-188.

40 Wilmart, 'Ève et Goscelin (II)' 42-83.

41 Wilmart, 'Ève et Goscelin (II)' 43.

42 Wilmart, 'Ève et Goscelin (II)' 43.

were written. I would disagree with Talbot's belief that, with Wilmart's article, the "ground [has] been thoroughly exploited, [and so] there would seem to be little left for any further investigator to do."[43] Talbot's introduction dedicates little space to discussion of the text which was the basis for the article. Instead, he begins with a biography of Bishop Hermann of Sherborne before moving on to Goscelin and his works, specifically his hagiographical works. In the little section dedicated to the *Liber confortatorius* Talbot repeats the circumstances which caused Goscelin to write the book; he also gives a description of the manuscript in which the text survives. Talbot writes that the text gives evidence of "solid piety [which] walks hand in hand with the highest Christian humanism."[44] This edition has so far been the only one published, and is invaluable for its footnotes on Goscelin's sources.

Talbot returned to the subject of the *Liber confortatorius* in an article on Godric of Finchale and Christina of Markyate,[45] as one of two examples of treatises written especially for women seeking the life of a recluse. He remarks on Goscelin's uncompromising attitude towards the "weaker" sex. Spiritual strength does not appear to be a masculine quality in his eyes. Eve had taken the step to become a recluse; now she had to follow it through, and the *Lives* of female martyrs serve to illustrate the enormous spiritual strength that they had. Eve should keep occupied at all times by reading the important works by the Fathers and observing the hours of Christ's Passion in order to avoid weariness.

After the publication of Talbot's edition, scholarship became quiet as far as the *Liber confortatorius* was concerned. In the introduction to his edition of Goscelin's texts relating to Barking Abbey, Marvin Colker[46] does not say anything new on Goscelin or the *Liber*, and he keeps very much to the subject of the *Vitae*. Then, in 1973, a first substantial study of the works of Goscelin, which has

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43 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 1.

44 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 23.

45 C. H. Talbot, 'Godric of Finchale and Christina of Markyate,' *Pre-Reformation English Spirituality*, ed. James Walsh (Bronx, NY: Fordham UP, 1965) 39-55.

46 See above footnote 28.

unfortunately remained unpublished, was made by Thomas Hamilton.[47] Although Hamilton does not look at any individual work in great depth, he presents much of the groundwork needed for placing the individual works in their contexts. Hamilton's main aim was to establish a corpus of writings that may be attributed to Goscelin with certainty, and this numbers about twenty-five works.[48] In addition he provides a list of works also numbering twenty-five that may, with futher research, prove to be by Goscelin's hand. Hamilton provides linguistic, stylistic, lexical, and rhetorical criteria by which he is able to distinguish Goscelin's work from that of others. Further chapters provide a biography and a critical analysis of Goscelin's works for their historical value, as well as an analysis of his stylistic worth. On Goscelin's historical accuracy, Hamilton concludes that although the *vitae* were not free from factual error, Goscelin managed to attain "a high degree of accuracy" when dating historical events and in descriptions of architectural features of monastic houses.[49] Minute details which can now be verified suggest that other details may also be taken as accurate.[50] Goscelin was a hagiographer and as such steeped in hagiographical convention. Despite this, he maintained a certain objectivity towards his protagonists and did not refrain from recounting lapses from virtue. On the other hand, Goscelin would not shirk from changing allegiance when employed by different houses.[51]

Another useful research tool is provided in Hamilton's chapter on Goscelin's stylistic accomplishments. Hamilton lists words and phrases peculiar to the authenticated works. He notes, for example, Goscelin's frequent use of compound words which are evidence of his reliance on works from the patristic era,[52] and

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47 See above footnote 10.

48 Hamilton, 'Goscelin of Canterbury' 123-24.

49 Hamilton, 'Goscelin of Canterbury' 272-80. See also Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England c. 550 to c. 1307* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974) 107 - 111, who discusses Goscelin's place in Norman historiography.

50 Hamilton, 'Goscelin of Canterbury' 279-80.

51 Hamilton, 'Goscelin of Canterbury' 286 -287.

52 Hamilton, 'Goscelin of Canterbury' 283-85.

his use of diminutives.[53] Hamilton's research is primarily based on the *vitae*, and the *Liber confortatorius* is, for the most part, not taken into consideration.

Frank Barlow uses Goscelin's works for their historical worth in his two books on the English church in the eleventh century,[54] and also speculates at great length on the possiblity of Goscelin's authorship of the *Vita Eadwardi* in his edition of that text.[55] Again he uses some aspects of the *Liber confortatorius* to fill in the gaps of Goscelin's biography and he compares some of Goscelin's statements about himself to those of the author of the anonymous work. Despite the many signs in favour of Goscelin's authorship, Barlow remains sceptical about attributing the *Vita* to him because of discrepancies with authenticated works.[56] As an appendix to his book Barlow gives an excellent biography of Goscelin based largely on the *Liber confortatorius,* but supplemented by fragments of information collected from various other sources. He remarks on Goscelin's esteem for women, apparent in both the *Liber* and the *vitae.*[57] As a conclusion, Barlow presents a rather sympathetic picture of Goscelin as constructed from his works:

> Goscelin was [...] usually a reticent man. He seldom intruded himself into the narrative. Only in the *Liber confortatorius*, an extremely personal work, is there direct biographical material, and even here it is scanty. This effacement of himself went with a restrained attitude towards other men. Goscelin was not lavish with his praise. He has an air of detachment. Yet he was not a cold man. He was aware of beauty in nature and in young girls. In his love for Eve he toppled on the brink of spiritual disaster. He was a musician and an artist, in old age mellow and agreeable but, perhaps, always a little apart and self-contained.[58]

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53 Hamilton, 'Goscelin of Canterbury' 387-90.

54 Frank Barlow, *The English Church 1000-1066: A History of the Later Anglo-Saxon Church*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman,1979) and *The English Church 1066-1154* (London: Longman, 1979).

55 Barlow, *The Life of King Edward* xliv-lix and 133-149.

56 Barlow, *The Life of King Edward* l -lii.

57 Barlow, *The Life of King Edward* 138-39.

58 Barlow, *The Life of King Edward* 145.

David Rollason's book on the many sources for the legend of St Mildrith of Thanet provides an edition of Goscelin's *Vita Deo dilectae virginis Mildrethae.*[59] Rollason's approach is historical and primarily concerned with the political and monastic controversies surrounding this royal saint, up to the eleventh century. The *Life of Mildrith* and its political significance was discussed before by Colker in his introduction to Goscelin's *Libellus contra usurpatores sanctae Mildrethae,*[60] and picked up later by Richard Sharpe in his articles on the legend.[61] Susan Ridyard, too, focuses on political aspects when she discusses Goscelin's legends of Edgar's children, Edith and Edward the Martyr.[62] Her book on royal saints is especially enlightening for its discussion on the use of hagiography to promote political causes in Anglo-Saxon England.

In the 1980s scholars started using Goscelin's work as a major source of women's religious history before the twelfth century. Ann Warren's inclusion of the *Liber confortatorius* in her list of English Anchorite Rules,[63] in which it takes primary place because it is the earliest known "rule", has brought the text to the attention of scholars of later medieval treatises for women. As the *Liber confortatorius* falls outside the scope of most studies on anchoresses, it usually does not get more than a cursory mention.[64] Sharon Elkins's book *Holy Women*

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59 D. W. Rollason, *The Mildrith Legend: A Study in Early Medieval Hagiography in England* (Leicester: Leicester UP, 1982) 105-143 (Appendix C).

60 Marvin L. Colker, ed., 'A Hagiographic Polemic,' *Mediaeval Studies* 39 (1977): 60-108.

61 Richard Sharpe, 'The Date of St Mildreth's Translation from Minster-in-Thanet to Canterbury,' *Mediaeval Studies* 53 (1991): 349-354 and 'Goscelin's St Augustine and St Mildreth: Hagiography and Liturgy in Context,' *Journal of Theological Studies* 41.2 (1990): 502-16.

62 Susan Ridyard, *The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England: A Study of West Saxon and East Anglian Cults* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988) esp. 74-95 and 140-175.

63 Ann K. Warren, *Anchorites and Their Patrons in Medieval England* (Berkeley, CA: U of California P, 1985) 294-98 (Appendix 2).

64 See, for example, Patricia J. F. Rosof, 'The Anchoress in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries,' in: *Medieval Religious Women*, vol. 2 *Peaceweavers*, Lillian Thomas Shank and John A. Nichols, eds. (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1987)127.

of Twelfth-Century England[65] provides a more substantial study of the *Liber confortatorius*, but she uses it very much to draw conclusions on the circumstances under which Eve led the life of a recluse. Elkins provides a useful background to the study of the *Liber* with her sketch of the immediate post-Conquest situation for women. The emphasis is on Wilton as a house of refuge for Anglo-Saxon nobility and royalty. This situation, as it continued into the 1090s, caused the leaders of the English church considerable worries. Lanfranc and Anselm both urged women at Wilton either to take the veil or leave the convent.[66] Elkins also touches on the concept of spiritual friendships between men and women but she stays very much on the surface. She relies mostly on the *Liber*'s Book I in describing Goscelin's relationship with Eve and does not draw any conclusions from Goscelin's more indirect statements of friendship and respect.

Writing on the subject of spiritual friendship in the Middle Ages, Brian McGuire discusses the *Liber*'s extraordinary language of friendship compared to that of other letters written to women, which are usually more reticent.[67] Unfortunately he does not explore the possible reasons why Goscelin did not hold back in his language whereas, for example, Saint Anselm uses a much more subdued language of friendship in his letters to women than he does in letters to his male friends. McGuire's study on monastic friendship provides the basic premises on which I shall be basing my discussion on the relationship between Goscelin and Eve.

More recently, the *Liber confortatorius* has caught the interest of scholars looking at aspects other than that of friendship. Gopa Roy discusses the *Liber* in an article on the expectations that authors of rules for recluses had on the subject of reading. She touches on Goscelin's lack of concern for the issue of virginity and she highlights Goscelin's manipulation of a story from Ambrose's *de*

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65 Sharon Elkins, *Holy Women of Twelfth-Century England* (Chapel Hill, NC: The U of North Carolina P) 1988.

66 Elkins, *Holy Women* 3-4. See also Richard Southern's *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990) 260-62.

67 Brian Patrick McGuire, *Friendship and Community: The Monastic Experience 350-1250*, Cistercian Studies Series 95 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1988) 201 - 204.

virginitate.[68] Roy rightly observes that these are evidence of Goscelin's positive attitude towards Eve. These issues are, I believe, fundamental to our understanding of the *Liber confortatorius*. I would like to argue that there are many more examples of Goscelin's attitude to his subject, and that these manifest themselves in more ways than Roy suggests here.

Therese Latzke discusses the *Liber confortatorius* in the context of Robert of Arbrissel's eremitic movement in Anjou. She makes some interesting conjectures about Eve's monastic life from Goscelin's work, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Latzke's impressions of Goscelin's influence in Eve's life are not very favourable. She believes that the most important reason for Eve to leave England was to escape from Goscelin's suffocating influence, which she describes as, "die tyrannische Weise, mit der sich Goscelin in ihrer Seele eingenistet hatte."[69] Latzke is the only scholar so far, however, who has linked Eve with Robert of Arbrissel, which puts Eve, as a recluse, in the context of the wandering preachers, a context which I will be discussing at some length in the first chapter.

An interesting article in which the *Liber confortatorius* is used as evidence for quite a different subject was published by Teresa Webber.[70] She points out that among the works quoted and prescribed by Goscelin the presence of Saint Augustine's *Confessions* is remarkable because this provides the earliest evidence for the text's return to England after it had apparently been out of circulation for nearly two hundred years.[71]

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68 Gopa Roy, '"Sharpen your mind with the whetstone of Books": The Female Recluse as Reader in Goscelin's *Liber Confortatorius*, Aelred of Rievaulx's *De Institutione Inclusarum* and the *Ancrene Wisse*,' in: *Women, the Book and the Godly,* Lesley Smith and Jane H.M. Taylor, eds. (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1995)113-123, on the *Liber confortatorius* pages 113 - 116. Goscelin's redaction of familiar stories is one of the issues discussed in Chapter Four of this thesis.

69 Therese Latzke, 'Robert von Arbrissel, Ermengard und Eva,' *Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch: Internationale Zeitschrift für Mediävistik* 19 (1984): 140.

70 Teresa Webber, 'The Diffusion of Augustine's *Confessions* in England during the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries,' in: *The Cloister and the World: Essays in Medieval History in Honour of Barbara Harvey*, John Blair and Brian Golding, eds. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996) 29-45.

71 Webber, 'The Diffusion of Augustine's *Confessions*' 30.

Richard Sharpe has recently put forward the suggestion that all the works connected with the feast of St Mildreth - whose body had been translated to St Augustine's, Canterbury from Thanet in the 1030s, an occasion that was disputed by the canons of St Gregory's at Canterbury who had a rival claim on Saint Mildreth's relics[72] - were written by Goscelin in around 1091.[73] These works, all of which – except the *Libellus contra usurpatores* – occur in British Library MS Harley 3908, include the *Historia de S. Mildretha* with musical annotation, which could well have been composed by Goscelin. Recent scholarship has recognised the value of some of Goscelin's works in fields other than hagiography and music. Goscelin's works on Saint Augustine of Canterbury also show his keen interest in architecture. As he writes in the *Liber confortatorius*, there is nothing wrong with destroying something inferior in order to build something superior. His descriptions of the Rotunda at Saint Augustine's and of the miracles performed by Augustine to save the imported stones and the builders from the continent from shipwreck provide invaluable information about Romanesque architecture.[74]

A final article that may be mentioned here is by John Gosling who uses the *Liber confortatorius* and the *Life of Saint Edith* to identify the Lady Ælfgyva in the Bayeux Tapestry with the abbess of Wilton, who had had close connections with Queen Edith.[75] He further conjectures that Goscelin's account of the miraculous cure of her swollen eye in the *Life of Saint Edith*, and his involvement with Wilton and the royal family, may be grounds for identifying Goscelin as the person who is referred to as *unus clericus* who seems to be touching Ælfgyva's eye.[76] He even

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72 Colker, 'A Hagiographic Polemic' 60-108.

73 Richard Sharpe 'Words and Music by Goscelin of Canterbury,' *Early Music* 19.1 (1991): 97.

74 Richard Gem, 'Canterbury and the Cushion Capital: a Commentary on Passages from Goscelin's *De Miraculis Sancti Augustini*,' in: *Romanesque and Gothic: Essays for George Zarnecki*, vol. I (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1987) 83-101. See also Richard Gem, ed., *St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury* (London: Batsford/English Heritage, 1997).

75 John Gosling, 'The Identity of the Lady Ælfgyva in the Bayeux Tapestry and Some Speculation Regarding the Hagiographer Goscelin,' *Analecta Bollandiana* 108 (1990): 71-79.

76 Gosling, 'Identity of the Lady Ælfgyva' 74.

advances the possibility that Goscelin may have been on some kind of political mission to Rouen, but admits that although this may be the reason for the anonymity of the clerk in the Tapestry, his case for this conjecture is rather tenuous.

In the past few years, the *Liber confortatorius* has acquired a regular place in works on women's history. Most of these works, however, do not discuss the text beyond a general description of the contents. Eve is mentioned as an example of an early English recluse, her relationship with Goscelin as an example of male/female friendship. Works by prominent scholars of women's religious history, such as Jo Ann McNamara, Henrietta Leyser, and Jane Schulenburg, who have published general works on this subject in recent years,[77] have brought the *Liber confortatorius* to the attention of a much wider audience then had hitherto been the case. The text itself remains very inaccessible. So far it has not been translated, nor has there been any scholarly work since Wilmart's second article which has taken the *Liber confortatorius* as a starting point. With this thesis I intend to make some amends for at least the latter deficiency.

The Scope of this thesis

This thesis seeks to establish three things. First it proposes to set the *Liber confortatorius* in a meaningful context textually, historically and culturally. Secondly it intends to examine Goscelin's approach to his subjects, that is to say Eve and her education, and how this approach compares to the tradition of writings for women religious. Finally it looks at the *Liber confortatorius* as Goscelin's expression of friendship and his concept of self in his life of exile.

The historical context is examined in Chapter One. The emphasis here is less on Goscelin's immediate circumstances than on the religious developments

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77 Henrietta Leyser, *Medieval Women: A Social History of Women in England, 450 - 1500* (London: Phoenix, 1996) 208 - 209; Joan M. Ferrante, *To the Glory of Her Sex: Women's Roles in the Composition of Medieval Texts* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1997) 43-44; Jo Ann McNamara, *Sisters in Arms: Catholic Nuns through Two Millennia*, (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard UP, 1996) 236, 237 and 247; Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg, *Forgetful of Their Sex: Female Sanctity And Society, ca 500 - 1100* (Chicago, IL: The U of Chicago P, 1998) 339-42 and 391-92.

on the Continent and the eremitical tradition up to the eleventh century. In the background are the larger developments of the papal reforms which influenced to a certain extent the eremitical movements in France. It is not clear how much these developments were followed in England, but a common ideological background which gave impetus to the rise of the wandering preachers may be assumed, especially in men such as Goscelin, who seems to have been close to ecclesiastical politics through his association with Hermann. Such an ideological background, even when an author is unaware of the exact nature of the developments taking place in France and especially Anjou, may be seen as producing a parallel thread in "English" writings.

Chapter Two seeks to establish a context of male/female relationships in Christian history in which we might place the relationship of Goscelin and Eve, not only as Goscelin himself perceived it, but also as outsiders might have looked on it. I will, therefore, be looking at friendships which have been expressed through letters, and those which are reported by third parties, for example in biographies. This will mainly consist of an overview of the traditions of spiritual friendships, especially those between men and women. The subject of spiritual friendship, although mostly the friendships between men, has received quite some attention by scholars in recent years and these studies will provide a starting point for a closer comparison of spiritual friendships between men and women in late Antiquity and the Middle Ages.

In Chapter Three I will first consider the problems conected with assigning the *Liber Confortatorius* to a particular genre. This involves a comparison with similar writings for women such as Jerome's letters of instruction, and the later medieval rules for recluses. I will argue that Goscelin's work is not easily classified in the same genre as these. This will be followed by a brief discussion of whether Goscelin had a designated "plan" for his letter and whether it is possible to recognise a strategy in how he approaches his subjects. I will address the question of whether the books are haphazard collations of examples from biblical and patristic texts, or whether it is possible to discern a structure which had an intended educational function. There will be a description and analysis of Goscelin's method of instruction in order to see whether there are different levels of intended interpretation that can be distinguished; whether the text can

give us an idea of the sophistication of Eve's learning and abilities; and what it tells us about Goscelin's own learning and particular talents.

I will explore the theory that Goscelin's attitude towards women might be considered feminist. Chapter Four will consider the curious lack of some of the main concerns of other men writing for women religious. The most obvious example is the absence of constant reference to virginity. Through several short case studies I will show that Goscelin is conveying - in a subtle manner - the message that women are of equal spiritual worth in their own right. His manipulation of well-known examples appears to show that women do not have to acquire "masculine qualities" in their aspiration to spiritual perfection. This discussion will also include an analysis of Goscelin's vocabulary in the *Liber Confortatorius* to establish whether his choice of words to describe Eve's spiritual life conveys his special regard for her, and whether his approach towards the spiritual life of women in general differs from that of his contemporaries. I am thinking especially about the military language that pervades Book Two to describe the spiritual Eve as a soldier of Christ. I will put forward the suggestion that Goscelin's concern is with Eve's spiritual world rather than with her physical surroundings, and that in this we might see some of the early manifestations of twelfth-century spiritual developments in inner spirituality.

In the final chapter I will put forward the thesis that the *Liber Confortatorius* is not necessarily solely for the encouragement and consolation of Eve but that, in fact, the composition of the work had a cathartic effect on its author. This is indicated to some extent in the way in which Goscelin has structured the text, but most of all in his use of the concepts of exile and pilgrimage as *leitmotifs* on different levels of his work. Goscelin's use of the imagery and ideology of the Christian's life as a journey towards heaven and the Christian himself as a pilgrim exiled from his *patria* is at the heart of the text. I believe that the consolatory aspect of the *Liber* is directly related to the implications and associations inherent to this popular motif and that it shows that this is a work of literary merit. The writing of this extended letter to a much beloved person had a cathartic effect on the author, and the consolation and encouragement of its conclusion seems inevitably to have had an immediate influence on Goscelin himself.

CHAPTER ONE

HIGHWAYS AND BY-WAYS:

FORMS OF RELIGIOUS LIFE IN THE ELEVENTH AND EARLY TWELFTH CENTURIES

INTRODUCTION

In order to place the *Liber confortatorius* and the relationship between Goscelin and Eve in context, it is necessary to provide a brief sketch of the religious climate of their times. The eleventh and early twelfth centuries witnessed major developments in the organisation of the centralized church which are now known as the Gregorian reforms. These were in themselves of influence on the course which monasticism would follow in the twelfth century. The seeds of what Leyser[1] called "the new monasticism" were sown much earlier and new currents operating within the orthodoxy of the Church were making themselves felt in the latter part of the eleventh century, coinciding with and working within the framework of the papal reforms. The religious ideals of the *imitatio Christi* and the *vita apostolica,* and the expression of these ideals in voluntary poverty and a wandering existence brought to the fore by charismatic men such as Peter Damian and Robert of Arbrissel, inspired many men and women. These men had a profound influence on the development of eremitism and the new monastic communities. Robert of Arbrissel's sphere was Anjou and the Forest of Craôn and his influence stretched indirectly to Eve, who lived with one of his close associates for over twenty years.

The English background is no less important, however, and certainly no less subject to change in the eleventh century. The influence of the foreign bishops introduced by Edward the Confessor and William I, and the changes in English monasticism and the organisation in the English church are well documented.[2] Goscelin was in the middle of it all, although it will not be easy to pinpoint what his position and experience were from the works he has left for posterity. To a certain extent at least, his opinions and ideas must have been shaped by them. Many of his hagiographical works were written for the promotion of the saints of

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1 Henrietta Leyser, *Hermits and the New Monasticism: A Study of Religious Communities in Western Europe, 1000-1150* (London: Macmillan, 1984).

2 Barlow's *The English Church 1000-1066* and *The English Church 1066-1154* are comprehensive studies of these developments.

the English, and it has been argued that these were commissioned under the threat of Lanfranc's purge of the calendars.[3] It seems that Goscelin did not easily accept the changes brought by the newcomers. In the *Liber confortatorius* he allows his resentment of the Norman invaders to surface on several occasions.[4]

Eve must also have been affected by the Norman Conquest, although at the time she had only been a little girl. As Wilton was an important royal foundation, it was closely connected with the Anglo-Saxon royal family and political changes were felt within its convent walls. Political refugees found a safe haven at the nunnery and some of these noble women stayed there for several years.[5] The close connections which the abbey retained with the outside world were of influence on the privileges which Eve enjoyed as a young nun. Her remarkable education, and her attendance at the dedications of the new churches at Wilton and Westminster are concrete examples of this. At the same time, the worldly aspects of the nunnery may have been a great hindrance in her aspirations for a more austere, spiritual life.

In this chapter, I will discuss some of the developments in monasticism and the organisation of the Church in England, and the situation which Eve chose to leave behind. A closer look at the houses where Goscelin stayed up to the point of the composition of the *Liber confortatorius* will help to form an idea of the environments which shaped his mind. I will also look at the monastic changes that were taking place on the continent and which were a direct result of reforms which took place in the late eleventh century. This section will focus primarily on the new eremitical movements in Anjou initiated by Robert of Arbrissel. The

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3 See for example Frank Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1971) 672. That Lanfranc actively purged the calendars is disputed by Richard W. Pfaff, 'Lanfranc's Supposed Purge of the Anglo-Saxon Calendar,' in: *Warriors and Churchmen in the High Middle Ages: Essays Presented to Karl Leyser*, ed. Timothy Reuter (London: Hambledon, 1992) 95-108. He has to admit that many of the Old English saints, which "must have seemed hopelessly obscure or confused," disappeared from the calendars in the early scholastic period (p. 103). In this light it is not so strange that monastic houses commissioned the lives of their patrons to be written.

4 See for a brief discussion of this in Barlow, *The English Church, 1000-1066*, 28-9 and below Chapter Five.

5 Elkins, *Holy Women* 2-5. This was a concern for both Lanfranc and Anselm as archbishops of Canterbury. One of Anselm's letters on the subject will be discussed in the next chapter.

second part of this chapter will concentrate on the eremitic tradition of which Eve was to become part and the development of female religious experience in the high Middle Ages. Where possible in these discussions, I will refer to Goscelin's works and the other works related to Eve to show how they both fitted into the traditions.

Developments in Anglo-Norman Church Organisation and Monasticism

The best survey on the subject of the English church in the eleventh century is provided by Barlow's two volumes on the subject. Barlow begins the second by stating,

> ... it is doubtful whether the English church would have evolved all that much differently had Harold won the battle of Hastings and the Anglo-Danish dynasty remained on the throne. Most of the superficial changes after 1066 were due to the impact of French culture rather than by any local variety of it; and most of the deeper changes were part of the general transformations of Europe.[6]

Of course the Normans were responsible for some of the more direct and superficial changes such as the imposition of Norman bishops and abbots in the monasteries; but also the Gregorian reforms were eventually making themselves felt in England at the end of the century. The English church had never developed in isolation and despite its essentially English character - which made it the *ecclesia anglicana* - reciprocity with the continent was a fact of life. Here I will sketch only briefly some of the forces which shaped the post-Conquest church in England and the developments within Anglo-Norman monasticism in so far as they relate to the situation in which Goscelin and Eve found themselves.

The monastic reforms of the tenth century had put all the reformed abbeys under royal patronage, and under episcopal control.[7] Peculiarly English were the monastic cathedrals, of which there were four: Canterbury, Winchester, Worcester and Sherborne. At these four cathedrals the bishop was also the head of a monastic community. This remained so after the Conquest for three of these

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6 Barlow, *The English Church 1066-1154*, 6.

7 Barlow, *The English Church 1066-1154*, 177.

cathedrals; there were only changes at the see of Sherborne in 1078, when the transfer of the see to Salisbury made it possible for the new secular bishop Osmund to replace the monks by secular clerks.[8] It was not Rome that had a say in the appointment of bishops and abbots, but the king. Most abbeys adhered to the *Regularis concordia*, which was a mixture of traditions derived from Ghent – and therefore Cluny – and Fleury, which itself had been reformed by Gorze and Brogne.[9] The reformed houses were wealthy and renowned more for artistic pursuits than for learning and spirituality. Unlike Norman abbeys, which had felt Cluniac influence even when they were not daughter houses, English monasteries had remained relatively free of influence from Cluny. Barlow describes the English houses as generally "more outward than inward looking, neither influenced by the eremitical movements, nor sharing Cluny's preoccupation with the liturgy, and rising above the rural obscurity of most of the Norman convents."[10] Norman abbeys differed from English abbeys in that none of them were royal foundations, and although some of them were ducal, most of them were baronial and of low status. Bec had remained relatively independent from Cluny and it was during the abbacies of Lanfranc and Anselm, that it's influence became important in England. Many monks who had been trained under Lanfranc would become abbots and bishops in England after the Norman Conquest.

Some key monasteries: Saint-bertin, Sherborne, and Peterborough

Goscelin was a prolific writer, but only in the *Liber confortatorius* do we get more than a glimpse of the man behind the words. Here he allows his feelings to run freely. Although in some of the *vitae* Goscelin allows the occasional peek into the inner regions of his mind, it is necessary to remember that he was an author

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8 See Brian Golding, *Conquest and Colonisation: The Normans in Britain, 1066-1100* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1994) 159-60

9 Barlow, *The English Church 1066-1154* 177-178. See also É. de Moreau, *Histoire de l'Église en Belgique*, vol. 2. *La formation de l'Église médiévale du milieu du X^e aux débuts du XII^e siècle*, 2nd ed. (Bruxelles, 1945) 140-142, on these reform movements in Flanders.

10 Barlow. *The English Church 1066-1154* 178.

writing on commission and, as Barlow showed, he did not mind changing his allegiances when writing for specific parties.[11] On the whole, however, Goscelin was not very different from other hagiographers in that he kept to the customary practices of hagiographical writing. Goscelin was, however, a well-educated man even by the standards of his time. In the *Liber confortatorius* he refers to a great many works that were not necessarily part of the ordinary monk's curriculum. The fact that he expects Eve to have much of the knowledge that he himself has is arguably even more remarkable. It reflects the standards of the houses in which he stayed as a young man, as well as the standards of learning at Wilton. The education of Eve, and especially Goscelin's part in that, is the subject of Chapter Three. Here I will take a brief look at the monasteries which were instrumental in Goscelin's development.

Goscelin was brought up as a child oblate at the ancient abbey of Saint-Bertin and it was here that his personality was formed. I shall start therefore with an inquiry into what kind of formative influence the environment at Saint-Bertin might have had on the mind of the young monk. Saint-Omer, situated near the coast of the Duchy of Flanders, now part of northern France, had two important religious foundations. There was a college of canons as well as the ancient monastery of Saint-Bertin. Saint-Bertin had been reformed in 944 by Gerard of Brogne and in 1021 by Richard of Saint-Vannes, who had been two of the leaders of the reform movements originating in Lotharingia.[12] Their aim had been to reinstate the Rule of Saint Benedict in houses whose communities had fallen into decline. The end of the Carolingian period and the Danish invasions which followed had been detrimental to monasticism, and many monastic houses had become occupied by canons.[13] Richard of Saint-Vannes' reforms were of great influence in Flanders, where they had assured an era of prosperity in religion, literature and the arts, as well as material wealth. In the eleventh century Saint-Bertin was one of the richest abbeys in Flanders. The reforms at the monastery did not go very smoothly at the start, however. Many monks

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11 Barlow, *The Life of King Edward* lii, especially footnote 184.

12 De Moreau, *l'Église en Belgique* 140.

13 De Moreau, *l'Église en Belgique* 141-142.

opposed the changes and left the abbey, several of them going to England.[14] A series of misfortunes – a fire that destroyed the abbey and an epidemic causing the death of eleven brothers – was needed to influence the minds of the monks, and they accepted the changes. The reforms and the newly acquired wealth of the house opened up the way for an intellectual and artistic revival. Next to Saint-Amand, Saint-Bertin became the principal scriptorium in Flanders. Under Abbot Odbert (986-1007) many illuminated manuscripts were produced at Saint-Bertin, and at the end of the eleventh century Abbot Jean had numerous texts copied for the library.[15] It was not until the last decade of the eleventh century that Saint-Bertin became a Cluniac house under Lambert, following on the establishment of the first Cluniac house in Belgium in 1089.[16]

Unless the library at Saint-Bertin also fell victim to the fire, we have a fairly accurate idea of the books which were at Goscelin's disposal through an inventory dated to 1004.[17] At this time the library contained a good three hundred books and it is likely that there were more by the middle of the century. The booklist shows that there was a substantial part of Augustine's *corpus* and also that of the other Fathers of the Church available to the monks of Saint-Bertin. It is interesting to note, however, that Anglo-Saxon as well as Carolingian authors are well represented. Eight works by Bede are listed, three by Aldhelm including the *Liber de laude virginitatis*, and three by Alcuin. This richness of English sources is striking when one realises that Goscelin does not openly refer to any Anglo-Saxon writers in the *Liber confortatorius*, nor to Carolingian authorities. The monastic schools in Flanders had an extensive programme for both the *trivium* and the *quadrivium*, which included all the major works of the

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14 Barlow, *The Life of King Edward* xlvii.

15 De Moreau's discussion of the copying of books (pp. 302-303) seems rather vague.

16 De Moreau, *l'Église en Belgique* 140.

17 This inventory is alphabetical and follows the Cartulary composed by the monk Simon which survives in a twelfth-century copy, Boulogne-sur-Mer, Bibl. mun. 146B. (*Bibliothèques de manuscrit médiévaux en France: relevé des inventaires du VIII^e au XVIII^e siècle*, ed. A. -M. Genevois, J. -F. Genest, and A. Chalandon (Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1987) no 1732. For an edition of the inventory see Gustav Becker, *Catalogi Bibliothecarum Antiqui* (Bonn: Cohen, 1885) no. 77, pp. 181-184.

Church Fathers and the Christian philosophers, as well as non-Christian literature.[18]

Historically, Flanders had important political and economical links with England; also the monasteries cultivated cultural and religious bonds. Archbishop Aethelgar of Canterbury visited Saint-Bertin at the end of the tenth century and his liberality to the abbey prompted Abbot Odbert to invite his successor Sigeric over as well. Sigeric did not stay at Saint-Bertin, however, but visited Saint-Vaast at Arras instead.[19] In 1027 King Cnut stayed at Saint-Bertin on his way to Rome, an event which was recorded in the *Encomium Emmae.*[20] In the second half of the eleventh century, several Flemish hagiographers were at work in England, including Folcard and Goscelin from Saint-Bertin.

In 1058 Bishop Hermann had been invited back to England to take up the episcopal duties of the newly formed diocese of Sherborne, which then comprised the counties of Berkshire, Wiltshire and Dorset, including his former diocese of Ramsbury.[21] Sherborne was one of the four monastic cathedrals at the time of the Conquest. Unfortunately, little is known about the standards of learning at the school, or the contents of the library at the time that Goscelin was there. It appears that the see had become fairly insignificant by the time of Hermann's arrival. Devon and Somerset, which had belonged to the bishopric from its foundation in 705, had been redistributed by the early tenth century.[22] Goscelin implies that the monastery was not very rich. He comments in the *Liber confortatorius* on the poor state of the episcopal manor at Poterne, Wiltshire.[23]

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18 De Moreau *l'Église en Belgique* 211 - 218. I will return to the subject of the availability of books in Chapter Three.

19 Veronica Ortenberg, *The English Church and the Continent in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries: Cultural, Spiritual, and Artistic Exchanges* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992) 26.

20 Ortenberg, *The English Church and the Continent* 26.

21 John le Neve, *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicana 1066-1300* IV *Salisbury*, compiled by Diana E. Greenway (London: University of London: Institute of Historical Research, 1991) xxi and 1.

22 M. A. O'Donovan, *Charters of Sherborne*, Anglo-Saxon Charters 3 (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988) xiii.

23 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 102.

He also recalls how Eve had provided books for him, which might imply that those were hard to come by at his own monastery.[24] On the other hand, it seems difficult to imagine that Hermann would have been willing to take up a see which did not have decent resources. Hermann was a learned man and under royal patronage. Goscelin stayed at Sherborne for twenty years and it is unlikely that he was completely deprived of books. In 1075 the Council of London consented to the transfer of the see of Sherborne to Salisbury. It was Hermann who started the construction of the new cathedral at Salisbury but as he died in February 1078, he never saw it finished. It would take another fourteen years to be completed. Osmund established a chapter of canons at the new cathedral sometime after 1086.[25]

After his "expulsion" from the diocese, Goscelin travelled for about two years between several monasteries before arriving at Peterborough. Peterborough Abbey has been said to have been one of the last strongholds of Anglo-Saxon opposition against Norman monasticism.[26] It was here that the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle was continued until the middle of the twelfth century. In the second half of the eleventh century it had a fairly turbulent existence under abbot Turold, formerly a monk of Fécamp and abbot at Malmesbury. Turold had been transferred from Malmesbury after a revolt of the monks and allegedly had arrived at Peterborough in 1069 with a retinue of 160 armed knights.[27] He was appointed to settle several disputes with the Danes who were occupying monastic lands at Ely and Crowland.[28] Turold was to remain at Peterborough until his death in 1098 when he was replaced by an English abbot, Godric, who had been elected by his monks but was deposed by Anselm for simony after only a few years in office.[29] By the time Goscelin was at Peterborough in the early 1080's

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24 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 28.

25 Le Neve, *Salisbury* xxii.

26 Edmund King, *Peterborough Abbey 1086-1310: A Study in the Land Market* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1973) 12.

27 Ann Williams, *The English and the Norman Conquest* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1995) 47 -48.

28 Williams, *The English and the Norman Conquest* 47-48.

29 Williams, *The English and the Norman Conquest* 132 ; King, *Peterborough Abbey* 12.

things must have settled down. It seems that Peterborough could offer the monk the resources he needed for his work as a hagiographer as well as for the composition of the *Liber confortatorius*. A booklist of the eleventh or twelfth century which Michael Lapidge claims may well have come from Peterborough[30] points to a well-stocked library. Several of the works to which Goscelin refers, either implicitly or explicitly, appear on this list, as will be shown in Chapter Three. In addition, the continuation of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is evidence of an active scriptorium.

Wilton in the Eleventh Century

Although Wilton ranked about fifteen after fourteen male houses where it concerned wealth, it was the richest of the remaining abbeys for women.[31] Wilton in the eleventh century was still very much a royal foundation. Queen Edith had been educated there and she was much devoted to the abbey and her saintly namesake, patron saint of the nunnery. Queen Edith rebuilt the abbey church in stone. This church was dedicated on 3 October 1065 by Bishop Hermann of Sherborne with Eve and Goscelin in attendance. Wilton was not only a nunnery, it was also a place where young ladies whose parents could afford to send them there were educated until the time came when suitable husbands were found for them. This is not to imply that Wilton was not a serious institution: Queen Edith had a great reputation for learning which is attested not only by Goscelin, but also by Godfrey of Winchester[32] and the anonymous author of the *Life of*

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30 Michael Lapidge, 'Surviving Booklists from Anglo-Saxon England,' in: *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England*, Michael Lapidge and Helmut Gneuss, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985) 76 -82.

31 Sharon Elkins *Holy Women* 1.

32 Goscelin calls Edith "a most-learned" queen, *Vita Kenelmi* in Rosalind C. Love, ed. and trans., *Three eleventh-century Anglo-Latin saints' lives: Vita S. Birini, Vita et miracula S. Kenelmi and Vita S. Rumwoldi* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996) 52, whereas Godfrey of Winchester comments on her knowledge of numbers, music, grammar, and languages: both instances are quoted by Pauline Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith: Queenship and Women's Power in Eleventh-Century England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997) 258.

Edward.[33] The *Liber confortatorius*, as well, is evidence of the fact that standards of learning were high at Wilton. Goscelin not only expected Eve to understand his own Latin prose, but also assumed she would recognize his many biblical and patristic allusions. Furthermore, he gave her a considerable list of books to read in her cell in Angers. Eve is not the only indication that learning was high on the agenda at Wilton and that the nuns there were encouraged to write themselves. Shortly after Eve had left we hear of a woman called Muriel who has been hailed as the first English poetess. Although none of her works have survived, Baudry of Bourgueil and Serlo of Bayeux both wrote poems about her talents, and it seems from their works that she was not the only poet at the nunnery.[34]

Robert of Arbrissel and the Wandering Preachers

The early Middle Ages had been dominated by monasticism, usually referred to as Benedictine monasticism, even though it was not until after the Carolingian reforms that a more or less uniform acceptance of the Rule of Saint Benedict had taken place. The monasteries had been of great influence in the shaping of the barbaric kingdoms and they had been of prime importance in the cultural and intellectual developments of western Europe. Not only were they centres of education, they also attracted social and economic activity, and many towns sprang up around religious foundations. Furthermore, the monasteries acted as administrative centres in outposts of the Carolingian empire, and they provided the court with literate administrators.[35] After the monastic reforms of the tenth century, Benedictine monasticism was thriving in the eleventh century: urban monasticism was at its height and Cluny had its greatest expansion in the period

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33 Edith "judged no place more deserving her devoted labour and zeal than that which, she recalled, had taken pains with her education, and where above all she had learned those virtues which deservedly made her seem suitable to become queen of the English." Barlow, *The Life of King Edward* 46-7.

34 Elkins, *Holy Women* 10-11. For Muriel, see J. S. P. Tatlock, 'Muriel: the Earliest English Poetess,' *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 48 (1933): 317-21.

35 Norman F. Cantor, 'The Crisis of Western Monasticism, 1050-1130,' *American Historical Review* 66 (1960): 49-50.

between 1070 and 1110.[36] Monasticism was urban and outward-looking, and although it held on to its ideal of rejection of the world, it was firmly based in the world. The monasteries played a significant part in society, and their necrologies, customaries, cartularies and chronicles are evidence of their involvement.[37] At the same time as this prospering of the monasteries took place, however, there were many monks and ascetics who found their material wealth distasteful. In the eyes of many, Benedictine monasticism had lost its original ideal of rejection of material wealth, and they desired a return to life according to the Gospel, the *vita apostolica.* Monasticism had to go back to its roots, it needed to turn its back on society and head for the wilderness and voluntary poverty. The ensuing eremitic movements would be a concern for the established Church into the thirteenth century. They were to result in the foundation of new monastic orders and are seen now as signs that monasticism had plunged into a crisis.[38]

Despite the sporadic and disparate evidence for hermits and recluses throughout the early medieval period, they nevertheless seem to have had a continuous history. During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, however, a new type of eremitism came into existence which Leyser describes as "militant and aggressive, [which] attacked established forms of monasticism and ... thereby provoked a 'crisis of cenobitism.'"[39] Leyser rightly makes a distinction between what she terms the traditional hermits, who did not cease to exist at this time,

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36 John Van Engen, 'The "Crisis of Cenobitism" Reconsidered: Benedictine Monasticism in the Years 1050-1150,' *Speculum* 61 (1986): 284. See also Herbert Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages: The Historical Links between Heresy, the Mendicant Orders, and the Women's Religious Movement in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Century, with the Historical Foundations of German Mysticism*, Steven Rowan,trans., Robert E. Lerner, intr. (Notre Dame, IN: U of Notre Dame P, 1996).

37 Van Engen, 'The "Crisis of Cenobitism" Reconsidered' 303-4.

38 Originally recognised by Germain Morin ('Rainaud l'ermite et Ives de Chartres: Un épisode de la crise du cénobitisme au XI-XIIe siècle,' Revue bénédictine 40 (1928) 112; reference from Van Engen 271) the "crisis of monasticism" has had a lot of scholarly attention, most notably by Jean Leclercq, 'The Monastic Crisis of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries,' in: *Cluniac Monasticism in the Central Middle Ages,* ed. Noreen Hunt (London: MacMillan, 1971) 217-237, trans. from 'La crise du monachisme aux XI^{e} et XII^{e} siècles,' in: *Bullettino dell' Istituto Storico Italiano per il medio evo e Archivio Muratoriano* 70 (1958): apart from the articles by Cantor and Van Engen cited above. see also Henrietta Leyser, *Hermits and the New Monasticism.*

39 Leyser, *Hermits and the New Monasticism* 15.

and the "new" hermits, who were part of the movement which would ultimately result in the foundation of the new monastic orders in the twelfth century. These new hermits had largely the same objectives as the traditional hermits: they wanted greater ascetism away from the secular world. Unlike the traditional hermits, however, the new hermits welcomed companions in their seclusion, and they preferred to take wilderness more literally than most traditional hermits: they made their abodes in the forests far away from civilization. The new hermits turned their backs not so much on traditional eremitism as on traditional coenobitism; they were not so much trying to get away from monastic rules as trying to formulate new ones. There were many different groups, led by influential men such as Norbert of Xanten,[40] Robert of Arbrissel, and Bernard of Tiron.[41] They and their followers would establish the new houses and orders which would make their mark on the religious life of the later Middle Ages. In the context of this thesis, the very beginnings of this development are of consequence and, within that, the sphere of influence of the founder of Fontevrault, Robert of Arbrissel, which was Anjou.

Anjou saw a renewed interest in monasticism in the eleventh century under the patronage of the counts, notably Fulk Nerra (987-1040) and his successor Geoffrey Martel (1040-1060). Ancient foundations such as Saint-Aubin, Saint-Florent and Saint-Serge, which had fallen prey to the Viking invasions of the previous two centuries, were rebuilt and new Benedictine foundations such as Saint-Nicholas in 1020, Le Ronceray in 1028, and l'Evière in 1047 were established in and around the city of Angers.[42] It was a time which saw a renewed emphasis on evangelism in its purest form; that is to say, according to the letter of the Gospels. This was partly influenced by the papal reforms headed by Gregory VII, but those were not the only forces. The eremitical movements, in Anjou led by the charismatic figure of Robert of Arbrissel, were independent from the papacy but they had a very direct and very considerable

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40 Nobert of Xanten (*c.* 1080 - 1134), an itinerant preacher who had founded the order of the Premonstratensians in 1120.

41 Bernard of Tiron (*d.* 1117), preacher and founder of the order of Tiron, was originally one of Robert's disciples.

42 J.-M. Bienvenu, 'Pauvreté, Misères et Charité en Anjou aux XI^{e} et XII^{e} Siècles,' *Le Moyen Age* 73 (1967): 5.

influence on the monastic development of the age.[43] After a few years of wandering existence the leaders of these movements had to organise their followers into communities. Unlike the Cistercian order, however, the orders evolving from the eremitic movements did not originate from the established Benedictine monasteries, although they based their rules firmly on the Rule of Saint Benedict. One of the most important differences between the two traditions was the place of women in monasticism. The new orders specifically focused on a female monasticism whereas the older orders often found no place for women.[44]

Born in Brittany between 1055 and 1060, Robert studied in Paris where he was ordained as priest, and then worked in Rennes, where he eventually became archpriest.[45] He preached against simony, lay investiture and clerical marriage. For this reason he was forced to leave the diocese after the death of his patron, Bishop Silvester of Rennes, in 1093. He moved to Angers, where he continued his studies, but his urge for an ascetic life-style became so strong that he spent his days in prayer and vigils. That he was truly pious was demonstrated by André, one of his biographers, through the – hagiographic – revelation that he wore a hairshirt under his normal clothes. He became enthusiastic about the apostolic life, which had by then become very popular, and he started a wandering existence. Robert preached poverty and charity in imitation of the life of Christ, as well as the internalisation of piety. The importance of this internal piety is demonstrated in a letter he wrote to the Countess Ermengard in which he urged her to "mundum relinquere et nudus nudum Christum in cruce sequeri;"[46] he did not expect her to leave her husband and her household,

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43 See for this influence especially Leyser, *Hermits and the New Monasticism.*

44 Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages* 19-20.

45 The most comprehensive study of Robert of Arbrissel is by Von Walter and most of the discussion below is based on his work. Johannes von Walter, *Die Ersten Wanderpredigen Frankreichs*, vol. I. *Robert von Arbrissel*, Studien zur Geschichte der Theologie und der Kirche (Leipzig: Dieterich, 1903). There are two main sources for the life of Robert of Arbrissel: a *Vita* written by Baudry of Dol and the *Vita* written by André, a brother at Fontevrault. See L. Raison and R. Niderst, 'Le Mouvement Érémitique dans l'Ouest de la France à la Fin du XI^{e} Siècle et au Début du XII^{e},' *Annales de Bretagne* (1948):10.

46 Quoted by Latzke. 'Robert von Arbrissel, Ermengard und Eva' 126. footnote 57.

however.[47] Robert's example appealed to a large number of people who heard him preach and as a result he attracted a great following of people from all social strata.[48] Although Robert's movement was different from other reforms, it had the same aims. He preached against simony, lay investiture and clerical marriage. He believed that the true apostolic life was only to be found in poverty and charity, by living an active life in the service of the poor and weak, and on the work of one's own hands. This may have offended the local clergy, but it made him popular amongst the people. With an increasing number of followers, Robert settled in the forest of Craôn, making it "their Egypt" where they lived on the work of their hands. Voluntary poverty was not their goal, however; it was a *means* of attaining their goal, and their retreat in the forest was not so much seen as turning their backs on society as breaking with former ways of life. Their retreat is thus to be viewed as part of their ideal of the evangelical life according to the letter of the Gospel. It was to help them in communicating their message of the Gospel and good works.[49] In many ways they lived as hermits but they chose to stay within the bounds of monastic obedience. They slept in the open air, at least at first; they fasted, prayed and kept vigil. Their movement was not without its critics, and there is extant, for example, a letter written by Ivo of Chartres[50] expressing the concern that, because Robert had never lived in a monastic community, he would be an easy prey for demons. Another letter, supposedly written by Marbod of Rennes, reproaches him for looking ridiculous with his long dishevelled beard and threadbare clothes.[51] Nevertheless Robert persisted and soon he had a large group of followers living with him. Among them were scholars, some of whom were to become influential in their own right.[52]

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47 A cynic might say that Robert had to allow for this kind of spirituality. He could not afford the hassles if Ermengard decided to leave her obligations as a wife and countess, and follow the band of hermits into the forest.

48 Ernst Werner, *Pauperes Christi: Studien zu Sozial-Religiösen Bewegungen im Zeitalter des Reformpapsttums* (Leipzig: Koehler & Amelang, 1956) 44.

49 Bienvenu, 'Pauvreté, Misères et Charité en Anjou' 24.

50 Cited by Leyser, *Hermits and the New Monasticism* 79. She refers to letter 37, *PL* 162, col. 50.

51 Von Walter, *Die Erste Wanderprediger* 129.

52 Von Walter lists the names of those who are known by name. Unfortunately these are only men: Bernard of Tiron, Vitalis of Savigny, Radulph of la Fûtaie, Herveus

Although they lived in a group, they did not have a communal life style but lived in separate cells with separate gardens. By 1096, this colony resulted in the foundation of what is now called the monastery of La Roé, where the community lived according to the Augustinian rule. Pope Urban II, who in the same year preached the First Crusade, consecrated the monastery's church. According to Baudry of Dol, having heard of Robert's gifts as a preacher, Urban called on Robert to become a wandering preacher and use his talents on the masses. Robert preached penitence: he called for humility and poverty of mind. His ideal of piety was poverty and he called on his followers to be *pauperes Christi.* They should imitate the life of Christ by caring for the sick and the destitute.

Many women were attracted by what Robert preached and among them were women who were described as repentant prostitutes. It has been suggested that at least some of these were the rejected wives of priests, who had been left because of the renewed demand for celibate priests in this period.[53] It comes as no surprise that many church authorities perceived these syneisactic practices – religious men and women living a communal life together – as dangerous, if not immoral. There is for example the letter written by Geoffrey of Vendôme, who would later condone the living arrangements of Herveus and Eve.[54] Robert defended the fact that in his community men and women lived and worked together by pointing out that Christ had women following him and working with him. Baudry writes that at night-time the women would sleep on one side, the men on the other, whilst Robert would sleep in the middle. It was also said that to test their continence to the extreme man and woman would sleep in the same bed. As time progressed and Robert's following increased, it became necessary to make other arrangements. Probably under the pressure of Church

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of La Trinité (this is Herveus who later became the companion of Eve at Saint-Eutrope), a priest called Quintinus, another Herveus and a hermit called Peter (p.108).

53 See, for instance, Penny Schine Gold, 'Male/Female Cooperation: The Example of Fontevrault,' in: John A. Nichols and Lillian Thomas Shank, eds., *Medieval Religious Women* vol. 1 *Distant Echoes*, Cistercian Studies Series 71 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications) 1984 (151-168).

54 Geoffrey of Vendôme. *Epistolae, Liber Quartus* 48, *PL* 157, cols. 184-186.

authorities,[55] Robert founded a monastery in 1100 or 1101 at a place called Fons Evraldi, which was to become known as Fontevrault. At first Robert himself acted as the abbot of this house, which seems to have housed both men and women, but he decided that the community was to be put under the care of an abbess in around 1115. Petronille of Chemillé, a widow and mother, was chosen for this post as Robert believed that only a woman who had lived outside a monastery was up to leading such a congregation. In the rule which he supplied for the community, he stipulated that the office of abbess should be filled by an experienced woman. Virgins should dedicate themselves to the part of Mary.[56] Women seem to have greatly outnumbered the men at Fontevrault, and it might have been that the male part consisted of clergy and other men necessary for manual labour. Fontevrault was to become the mother house for many priories.

Anchorites

At the same time as these new hermits were making their mark on the religious life of their period, the traditional forms of the reclusive life were still in existence.[57] It has now been recognised, however, that no single definition can be applied to what is commonly referred to as eremitism. Studies of the lives of hermits in the period under consideration here show that there was a multitude of forms and customs that defy a single heading.[58] Keeping this in mind, it would nevertheless be useful to define the terms used to describe the different forms of the reclusive life. Ann Warren provides a brief etymology of the words hermit and

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55 Grundmann, *Religious Movements* 19. Robert attended a synod at Poitiers in 1100, where the problem of his mixed following may have been discussed. The same may be true for the foundation of La Roé, which followed a Council in Tour in 1096. See Von Walter, *Die Erste Wanderprediger* 137.

56 Gold, 'Male/Female Cooperation' 153.

57 The standard work on hermits in England is still Rotha Mary Clay, *The Hermits and Anchorites of England* (London: Methuen, 1914); a modern addition to this text is Warren, *Anchorites and Their Patrons.*

58 See especially Giles Constable, 'Eremitical Forms of Monastic Life,' *Istituzioni monastiche e istituzioni canonicali in Occidente, 1123-1215. Atti della settima Settimana internazionale di studio, (Mendola, 28 agosto - 3 settembre1977* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1980): 239 -264. Repr. in Giles Constable, *Monks, Hermits and Crusaders in Medieval Europe* (London: Variorum, 1988).

anchorite. In the early period of the Church the terms used to describe those people who retreated into the wilderness to dedicate their lives to God were interchangeable. They were either called hermits, from the word *eremus* meaning "desert," or anchorites, from the verb *anachōrein* meaning "to withdraw."[59] In the course of the Middle Ages, the word "*anachoreta*" came to be used more specifically for those recluses who were enclosed in a cell. This is also the distinction that Goscelin makes, although he seems to hold on to a definite kinship between these forms of ascetic life. He describes Eve as a *reclusa* and an *anachorita*, as he does Brithric, an anchorite near Bury St Edmunds.[60] Paul and Anthony are hermits. Eve should see herself as an anchorite in the community of Saint John the Baptist, however, and she is strongly urged to identify with the hermits of the desert.

There is a considerable gap in our knowledge about the hermits and recluses of the early medieval period as the evidence is never anything more than patchy and shows a great diversity in customs. The motives of those who decided to embark on eremitism must have been as diverse as the forms that it took.[61] From the times of the first hermits, two main objectives for total withdrawal from the world can be recognized. On the one hand, it was in imitation of Christ's withdrawal into the desert and his temptation by the devil: the solitary would aim for complete withdrawal from the world and the total subjection of the flesh to the spirit through fasting, vigils, and denial of any bodily comforts. On the other hand, the solitary life presented an opportunity for a more perfect life of contemplation. Time could be more fully dedicated to learning when the solitary was no longer required to fulfil the duties of the communal life.

The denial of the body and the contempt of the world were seen as a form of spiritual martyrdom comparable to the physical martyrdom of the persecuted Christians. The solitary, being outside a religious community and thus deprived

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59 Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons* 8.

60 The story of Brithric will be discussed in Chapter Three.

61 Leyser, *Hermits and the New Monasticism* 13, lists some of these, such as illiteracy of laymen who wanted to lead a religious life, and the need for more time for intellectual work, and for women a reason could have been unwanted marriage plans. In my discussion I will limit myself at this stage to the purely ascetic reasons, such as I believe Eve's were.

of the spiritual support of that community, was seen as an easy prey for the devil and his evil spirits, as is described graphically in Athanasius' life of Saint Anthony. Prolonged fasts and vigils added to the recluses' susceptibility to Satan's temptations, and even the strongest and most virtuous hermit did at times succumb, as many *vitae* tell us. The voluntary self-subjection to the wiles of the devil and the successful resistance to them were thus reserved for the very strong individual. It is not surprising that many authorities were worried for the reputation of the Church when unsuitable candidates retreated into the wilderness, even if the wilderness was a spiritual one and confined to a cell. Aelred's *Rule* and the thirteenth-century *Ancrene Wisse* are good examples of the Church's anxiety in their extreme concern for the anchoresses' chaste behaviour. In contrast to cenobitic life, hermits and anchorites were not strictly bound to a monastic rule and did not necessarily have to obey an abbot or abbess, although some of them did. Once the option existed to join a religious community rather than retreat untrained into the wilderness, it was frowned upon when a lay person chose the latter. The Rule of Saint Benedict describes hermits and anchorites as

> those who not in the first fervour of their conversion, but after long probation in a monastery, having learnt in association with many brethren how to fight against the devil, go out well-armed from the ranks of the community to the solitary combat of the desert.[62]

As we have seen, this is exactly the concern which Ivo of Chartres expressed in his letter to Robert of Arbrissel. The Rule of Saint Benedict goes on to describe, in no uncertain terms, the reputation of the untrained:

> [They] are as soft and yielding as lead. In their actions they still conform to the standards of the world, so that their tonsure marks them as liars before God. ... Their law is their own good pleasure: whatever they think or choose to do, that they call holy; what they like not, that they regard as unlawful.[63]

For this reason, most people wishing to pursue a religious life chose to live under a rule in a monastery. Yet it was usually considered to be the exceptional

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62 *Rule of St Benedict* c. 1, Justin McCann, ed. and trans. (London: Burns Oates, 1952) 15. All further references and translations are from this edition.

63 *Rule of Benedict*, 15.

individual, for whom the monastery could not provide the sort of ascetic life style to which they aspired, who would retreat into the wilderness, or so the biographies of these individuals tell us. The recluse would have the freedom to subject themselves to a more rigorous regime than might have been tolerated within a monastic community. It seems that Eve may have displayed a tendency to extreme ascetiscism,[64] or that Goscelin was aware of the lengths to which some ascetics would go, when he urges Eve,

> And the law of Christ is not so horrible that we have to pluck out our eyes, only that we avert them so that they will not see vanity. Nor does it command our limbs to be mutilated, but the defects themselves to be amputated, they have to be castrated, circumcised, crucified from vices and desires [cf. Col. 2:11], and what [i.e. the law of Christ] is richer than human philosophy, that his poor should be the poor in spirit [Matt.5:3], patient under the injustice of things in the most humble and the most devoted mind, expecting everything from the compassion of him alone in whom we live, move and exist, being such as the letter of the law requires us to be.[65]

The second reason for complete solitude was the wish for contemplation and complete devotion to God. For some monks, the monastery did not afford the solitude they needed. They sought complete spiritual unification with God and the monastery was still too much concerned with temporal matters. It was an accepted fact that this total rejection of the world was only reserved for a few individuals and although it was seen as a superior form of spiritual life, the ordinary monk had no need to feel inadequate for living within a community.[66] As Leyser shows, the anchorite often did not leave the monastery completely but lived in a cell on land owned by the abbey and under the care of the abbot.[67]

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64 Hilary of Orléans, Eve's biographer, writes that Eve subjected herself to such severe fasting, labour, and vigils that her weak limbs could hardly sustain it (ll. 117-120). Häring, 'Die Gedichte und Mysterienspiele des Hilarius von Orléans' 928.

65 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 74: *Nec uero lex Christi tam dira est, ut oculos nostros eruamus, sed ne uideant uanitatem auertamus. Non iubet membra nostra mutilari, sed uitia amputari, et a uitiis et concupiscentiis castrari, circumcidi, crucifigi, quodque ditius est humana philosophia, ut pauperes sui pauperes spiritu sint, mente humillima ac deuotissima patientes in rerum iniuria, prestolantes omnia de eius sola, in quo uiuimus, mouemur et sumus, misericordia, quales sua requirit sententia.*

66 Leyser, *Hermits and the New Monasticism* 15.

67 Leyser, *Hermits and the New Monasticism* 15. Leyser quotes the example of Roger, the hermit with whom Christina of Markyate lived.

According to Hilary, Eve too had lived in a cell at Wilton prior to her departure for France.[68]

Alternatively, in the late Middle Ages, anchorites are found in cells near or attached to churches and under the care of the local bishop. The recluse was in a sense still in the world, but no longer a part of it. Paradoxically, the anchorite, although considered dead to the world, came to fulfill an important function as holy person to whom people came for advise and to request prayers. Wulfric of Haselbury is a good example of a twelfth-century recluse who had an important function in the society of which he was still a part. Wulfric was also a miracle worker and therefore had his life written by John of Ford. This document, as Mayr-Harting argues,[69] shows Wulfric to be an arbitrator, a healer, a clairvoyant, and a keeper of money,[70] as well as what Mayr-Harting describes as a "hinge-man" between the local community and a wider world.[71] Of course he also had a function as a spiritual adviser.

Despite some of the misgivings about lay people undertaking the life of a recluse, at least from the twelfth century onward a greater number of lay people chose to lead a reclusive existence. There is some evidence, however, that in late Saxon England a form of lay reclusive life for women was practised, although it is unclear whether they practised ascetism to an anchoretic "standard."[72]

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68 *Sic in cella diu mansit ad dei seruicium*, l. 53: Häring, 'Die Gedichte und Mysterienspiele des Hilarius von Orléans' 926.

69 H. Mayr-Harting, 'Functions of a Twelfth-Century Recluse,' *History* 60 (1975): 337-352. In this essay Mayr-Harting applies Peter Brown's findings in 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity,' *Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971): 80-101, to Wulfric of Haselbury. Brown argues that the holy man came to fulfill a function as leader and authority in villages where secular leaders were lacking. The holy man was considered impartial and apart from society. See also Talbot, 'Godric of Finchdale and Christina of Markyate.'

70 Mayr-Harting, 'Functions of a Twelfth-Century Recluse' 341-343.

71 Mayr-Harting, 'Functions of a Twelfth-Century Recluse' 344

72 Barbara Yorke, '"Sisters under the Skin"? Anglo-Saxon Nuns and Nunneries in Southern England,' *Reading Medieval Studies* 15 (1989): 106-108. A similar suggestion was made by Sarah Foot in a paper presented at the 1997 International Medieval Congress in Leeds. The starting point in her research on houses for women religious was that the wealth of references in wills, charters, etc. to "nuns" at certain places is in direct contrast with the lack of evidence to the existence of nunneries at those places. Foot suggests that women referred to as "Nunna" in charters and wills are in fact not nuns, that is to say women who have made a

According to Æthelred's Laws of 1008, there were two classes of women dedicated to God: those who were cloistered (Old English *mynecena*) and those who were not (Old English *nunnan*);[73] this would accord with the suggestion that vowesses, widows who had taken a vow so that they did not have to remarry, were quite common in late Saxon England.[74] Some of these religious women did in fact choose to live near male monastic communities like later anchorites,[75] which is a sign that they relied on the monastery for ministers and that they did not allow themselves, or they were not allowed by others, the freedom to go out to attend mass at their parish churches.

Monastic life, especially for women, was often not open to everybody. The monastery usually required the entrant to bring a dowry which would at least be enough to provide for the nun for the remainder of her natural life. This meant that a large section of society had no hope of ever entering the (organised) religious life. Perhaps there were women who were not willing to subject themselves to a rule and an abbess after having lived a relatively high-profile life as noblemen's wives, or they felt they would not fit in because of a lack of education.[76] With the permission of the bishop, however, and if they could show

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religious profession and have taken the veil and live under a monastic rule. It appears that these women are widows who have chosen to live a life dedicated to God not in an organised institution, but on land on the family estate entailed to them for the remainder of their lives. It is not clear whether these women would have led a purely solitary life or whether they would retire with relatives and servants.

73 Information taken from Roberta Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture: The Archaeology of Religious Women* (London: Routledge, 1994) 34. Æthelred's code of 1008, 4.1 reads: "And especially God's servants - bishops and abbots, monks and nuns, priests and women devoted to God - are to submit to their duty and to live according to their rule and to intercede zealously for all Christian people." *English Historical Documents* c. *500-1042*, Dorothy Whitelock, ed. (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1968) 406.

74 Gilchrist (p. 34) refutes Yorke's suggestion that two landholding nuns (*duae nonnae*) in the Somerset entry of Domesday Book are in fact vowesses, on the assumption that vowesses did not live communally.

75 Yorke, 'Sisters under the Skin' 108.

76 Leyser, *Hermits and the New Monasticism* 13. An example of a noble woman opting for the reclusive life may be found in Saint Dunstan's spiritual mother who, when a widow, built herself a cell adjacent to the church at Glastonbury. Bruce L. Venarde, *Women's Monasticism and Medieval Society: Nunneries in France and England, 890 - 1215* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1997) 25.

that they were suitable candidates and that they had some means of providing for themselves so that they would not become a burden on the prelate, a lay person could become a recluse, as, for example, in the case of Christina of Markyate.[77]

It has usually been taken that, as a rule, the recluse lived alone in her cell. In later medieval England it seems indeed rare to find more than one recluse at a certain site. When two recluses lived together, it was usually an older with a younger woman in a mutually beneficial situation: the older woman would train the younger one in the anchoretic life; the younger woman could help the older one and after her death inherit the cell.[78] On the continent it was more common for small groups of anchorites to live together in separate cells. At the church of Saint-Laurent-de-Tertre in Angers, Eve's first retreat, a small group of recluses lived together; but also in England authorities such as Ælred and the anonymous author of the *Ancrene Wisse* assume that the recluses had servants, and there is evidence that some of the anchorholds were quite substantial dwellings with two or more rooms.[79]

Theoretically, a cell was entered for life. Once a recluse had entered her cell and the ceremony accompanying the entry was over, she could never leave it again until her death. To the outside world the recluse was no longer alive. She had entered a threshold existence and her cell was considered a tomb. Some of the extant incarceration ceremonies even include funeral masses.[80] In the case of the small group of recluses of which Eve was a part, it is very interesting to find that the church of Saint-Laurent was in fact a cemetery chapel and had no parochial function.[81] Together with the north side of churches, cemeteries were often chosen as sites for anchorholds as they provided a suitably "liminal" place

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77 *The Life of Christina of Markyate, a Twelfth-Century Recluse*, C. H. Talbot, ed.and trans. (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1997).

78 Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons* 33-34.

79 Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons* 31.

80 Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons* 98.

81 François Comte and Jean Siraudeau, *Angers: Document d'évolution du patrimoine archéologique urbain* I (Tours: Centre National D'Archéologie Urbaine, 1990) 43.

for what was considered a threshold existence.[82] The women not only symbolically lived a threshold existence in a cell which was considered a tomb, they actually did so in a graveyard. The entrant became virtually a non-person, ceasing to have either sex, status, or indeed a former life.[83] The cell was also often considered a prison, allowing for a comparison with the martyrs of the persecutions. Goscelin, for example, compares Eve's cell to Saint Perpetua's prison cell.[84] Eve's cell is also seen as a grave from which she shall rise. She should see herself as a "tree which was already in its root either dying or infertile [but which] begins to revive in many offshoots from the grave."[85] As we have seen in the case of Wulfric of Haselbury, anchorites often served a much more public role in society than they would have if they had lived in a monastery. The anchorite was a symbol for a pure form of Christian life. The sacrifice that she made by living enclosed for life was not lost on society and the anchorite must often have been believed to be able to intercede with higher powers. Prayers on behalf of the parishioners secured the alms needed for the recluse's subsistence. The tension between the purpose of the reclusive life as contemplative and the role of the anchorite as a public entity is reflected in the rules written for them. It could thus be seen as surprising that Goscelin's letter to Eve does not take this role into account. From the *Liber confortatorius*, however, we get the impression that Goscelin sees the life of the recluse as a purely inward-looking existence. From this perspective, the outside world has no part in the anchorite's life. This may be due to the fact that Goscelin had only little practical knowledge of anchorites; alternatively it shows that he may have made a conscious decision to concern himself entirely with Eve's spiritual welfare.

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82 Gilchrist, *Gender and Material Culture* 177. See also Caroline Walker Bynum, 'Women's Stories, Women's Symbols: A Critique of Victor Turner's Theory of Liminality,' in: *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York, NY: Zone, 1991) 27- 51.

83 Perhaps this is also what Goscelin alludes to when he writes to Eve that she will resent being called a nun now that she has left that life behind. Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 104.

84 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 50.

85 Talbot. *Liber confortatorius* 79: *...arbor que in sua radice iam erat uel moribunda uel infecunda, in multam propaginem reuiuiscit a sepultura.*

David Knowles writes that anchorites were rare in England before the eleventh century.[86] Only in Worcestershire and north Gloucestershire is there evidence of eremitic activity in St Dunstan's time. Three monks of Evesham, Wulfsig, Basing and Aelfwin, lived as hermits in the neighbourhood. It is from these regions that other men came who were attracted to the eremitic life and who went north to become founders of abbeys in Yorkshire. Leyser shows that many of the post-Conquest foundations in Yorkshire have eremitical roots and are indirectly descended from the eremitical movements of eleventh-century France and Italy.[87] For the eleventh century, especially pre-Conquest, there is, unfortunately, little evidence. Domesday Book does not record the existence of hermits and anchorites. This is most likely due to the fact that they were of no economic interest to the conquerors. There is, however, one piece of evidence which, although it survives in a late and probably corrupt copy, suggests that there were anchorites in eleventh-century England and that they owned property. Mantat the Anchorite left a will addressed to Cnut and Emma in which he leaves an estate at Twywell to the monastery of Thorney where he would be buried, and also an estate at Conington, Huntingdonshire to some priests and deacons who had looked after it during his life-time.[88] It seems that the anchorite had held on to his property during his life for his livelihood. This aside, it is doubtful whether there were many possibilities for men and women wanting to undertake a more austere life at this time. The sheer lack of evidence could be misleading, however. Though hermits and anchorites may not have been very common, they had nevertheless a continuous history. Goscelin does not treat the reclusive life as something completely alien. His examples may be largely drawn from the early church, yet he knows of at least one anchorite of his own time. Furthermore, he does not exactly treat Eve as an exceptional case. Goscelin writes that he would have preferred Eve to have remained a nun, but he does seem to have had a reasonably clear idea about the reclusive life. He describes

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86 David Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1941) 75.

87 Leyser, *Hermits and the New Monasticism*, Appendix II 113 - 118.

88 Dorothy Whitelock, *Anglo-Saxon Wills* (Cambridge; Cambridge UP, 1930) 66-7 and 177-8. It is interesting to note that Mantat describes himself as "the Anchorite": "Mantat ancer godes wræcca greteð Cnut cing 7 Emma hlæfdie swiðe bliþelike mid godes blisse."

his idea of a recluse's cell as if it is based on every-day reality. Despite the evidence for the existence of recluses in the eleventh century, Goscelin's frame of reference is nevertheless mostly late antiquity. He prefers to draw on examples from the pre-medieval period when he refers to hermits with which most religious of the period would have been familiar: Saints Anthony, Paul the Hermit, Mary of Egypt, and those Desert Fathers whose stories are told in the *Vitae patrum.* He is silent about medieval hermits except for the one example about whom he knows. Eilsius, a monk at Peterborough, told him the story of an anchorite and martyr whom he had known personally when he was a boy.[89]

Female Religious Expression and the Foundation of Fontevrault

For the scope of this thesis it is necessary to take a brief look at how women were encouraged and hindered in the expression of their religious needs. Women who wanted to lead a religious life have nearly always needed to rely on the help and support of men. Increasingly in the Middle Ages, Church authorities felt it necessary to curtail women's religious freedom and provide strict guidelines of behaviour. In order to support the thesis that Eve found exceptional support and respect in her wish for a more ascetic life style, and compare the aspect of chastity and virginity in the *Liber confortatorius* with other writings for religious women in a later chapter, I will briefly discuss the development of the claustration of female religious.[90]

The value of women in the early Church and in the conversion period of the barbarian West is beyond doubt. Christian queens played key roles in the conversion of whole peoples through their influence on their husbands or with the establishment of monasteries which supported the work of the missionaries. Their usefulness in providing fellow soldiers was naturally not the only *raison d'être* for communities of religious women. Indeed, nuns were first of all the

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89 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 67-68.

90 Literature on claustration includes: 'Clôture,' Émile Jombart and Marcel Viller. *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité ascétique et Mystique,* vol. II, Marcel Viller, ed.; R. Gazeau, 'La Clôture des Moniales au XII[e] Siecle en France,' *Revue Mabillon* 58 (1974): 289-308; Jean Leclercq, 'Le cloître est-il une prison?' *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* 47.4 (1971): 407-420.

Brides of Christ, who dedicated their lives entirely to serving God by prayer, meditation and, what seems to have been of the utmost concern for Church officials, by preserving their chastity. The earliest rules for nuns, notably that written by Caesarius of Arles for the community headed by his sister, specify the need for strict enclosure. Adherence to such rules of claustration was in certain cases very strict. There was not, however, a universal code of practice. This led to a situation which allowed, in one case for an abbess to be excommunicated for taking two nuns outside the convent walls, [91] and in another case for permission to be granted, albeit reluctantly, for nuns to undertake a pilgrimage to Rome.[92] As the role of women in the missionary activities diminished, it became more and more of a concern to keep nuns within the walls of the monastery in order to reduce the chance of corruption or of being led astray by temptation. In her article on strict active enclosure, Jane Schulenburg lists the measures taken by the Carolingian reformers to curtail the activities of women religious.[93] The repetitiveness of decrees stipulating the necessity of claustration may be a sign that the enclosure principle was not always closely adhered to. Full claustration meant that women who adopted the monastic life were expected to give up their secular life altogether and dedicate themselves entirely to the service of God. Ideally this meant that they would sever all relations with the outside world including their families, and never leave the confines of their monasteries again. As Schulenburg points out, the concept of "spiritual space" was an important aspect of claustration. But protection against invading barbarians, and the substantial factor of the protection of the chastity of the Brides of Christ, were

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91 Gregory of Tours, *History of the Franks*, Lewis Thorpe, trans. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974) 533.

92 Boniface's letter 27. *Die Briefe des Heiligen Bonifatius und Lullus*, Michael Tangl, ed. Monumenta Germanica Historica, Epistolae Selectae, vol. I (Berlin: Weidmann, 1955) 50-51.

93 Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg, 'Strict Active Enclosure and Its Effects on the Female Monastic Experience (ca. 500-1100),' in: *Distant Echoes* 51-81. This is an extremely useful overview of the early monastic rules which define the necessity of female claustration and the measures taken by Church authorities to ensure that nuns adhered to unbroken claustration. Active enclosure is defined as the enclosure which keeps the nuns inside the monastery; passive enclosure is the enclosure which regulates the admittance of outsiders into the enclosure of the convent.

other considerations involved.[94] Church leaders seem to have overlooked the more mundane considerations of what was needed for the nunnery to survive, and as a consequence hardship often forced nuns to go out of doors. With the imposition of the claustration principle on nuns and their abbesses, they were entirely left to the tender mercies of their bishops.[95] In a few cases, enclosure was to be so strictly maintained that the penalty for breach of enclosure was excommunication.[96] In principle, the same rules applied to monks but legislation for men allowed for greater leniency: whereas it was unseemly for nuns to go out of the monastery to buy food or conduct other business, the same was perfectly acceptable for their male counterparts, at least according to one twelfth-century monk.[97] Goscelin himself appears to be a case in point. Even before his expulsion from the diocese of Salisbury, he enjoyed frequent travel with his bishop, and he seems to have been a regular visitor at Wilton. After he left the diocese, he was for all intents and purposes homeless, yet his itinerant existence does not seem to have resulted in measures taken by the authorities, and he enjoyed a consistent respect at the monasteries where he sojourned.

It is interesting to note that those rules that were drawn up for women's communities by men who had close connections with the foundations were far more practical. Examples include Robert of Arbrissel's rule for Fontevrault, and Abelard's advice for the nuns of the Paraclete.[98] The nuns could not leave the convent confines unless they had the explicit consent of the abbess and were accompanied by a priest and a lay man. It seems that Fontevrault developed very strict claustration: sick nuns were administered the viaticum and the last rites

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94 Schulenburg, 'Strict Active Enclosure' 52 - 53.

95 See for excesses Schulenburg, 'Strict Active Enclosure' 70-76.

96 Schulenburg, 'Strict Active Enclosure' 55-6: Letter of the Seven Bishops to St Radegund.

97 Idung of Prüfening, quoted by Schulenburg (pp. 62-3) from J. Leahey and J. Perigo, trans. 'An Argument Concerning Four Questions by Idung of Prüfening,' in: *Cistercians and Cluniacs: The Case for Citeaux*, Cistercian Fathers Series 33 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1977) 143-92.

98 Gold, 'Male/Female Cooperation' 154-160; Carl Kelso, 'Women in Power: Fontevrault and the Paraclete Compared,' *Comitatus: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 22 (1991): 59-62.

in the church by a priest who was attended by a monk and a layman.[99] The rule, nevertheless, allows for nuns to leave the cloister for business purposes.[100] At Marcigny, the first Cluniac foundation for women, a much stricter code was enforced. This is illustrated by the fact that they did not have an earthly abbess. Hugh of Cluny appointed the Blessed Virgin Mary to that job.[101]

Schulenberg's conclusion is rather severe; she ascribes the developments of claustration policy to "an atmosphere of fear, suspicion, and distrust of women and their sexual weakness, and perhaps a low general esteem for women in religion."[102] But she continues that "at the same time, medieval churchmen attached the highest possible value to virginity, and to those 'fragile vessels' who had chosen to become brides of Christ and needed special protection."[103] There is, of course, more significance to claustration in itself. It was not only something that was imposed on cenobites, it was something that was inherent to the contemplative life. The paradox of claustration was that it gave freedom: freedom to pray, freedom from the world which was considered a prison.[104] This aspect is often underemphasised by modern scholars. Yet Goscelin realised that this was possibly the most important aspect of the recluse's incarceration. He compares Eve to the wild ass set free in the woods, an aspect to which I will return in Chapter Three.[105]

When we read the stories of nuns strictly adhering to their vows of claustration, preferring death over breach of claustration, and the very strict rules on active and passive enclosure imposed by Church leaders, it is hard to

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99 Viller et Jombart, 'Clôture' 995.

100 Gold, 'Male/Female Cooperation' 155. This is the more remarkable because the nuns at Fontevrault had the services of the men at the monastery available to them.

101 McNamara, *Sisters in Arms* 217-18.

102 Schulenburg, 'Strict Active Enclosure' 79.

103 Schulenburg, 'Strict Active Enclosure' 79.

104 See Leclercq, 'Le Cloître est-il une prison?' 415-416.

105 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 89: *Onager est silvestris asinus, in quo significatur anachorita. Dimittit Dominus onagrum liberum, quando animam relaxat ab exterioribus curis, vocans in libertatem sue contemplationis....*

imagine that there was any need for nuns to undertake life as a recluse. A comparison of the rules of claustration as written down in the earliest rules for nuns with later rules for anchorites shows a similar concern for religious women's safety and chastity. In *theory* there seems to be little difference, apart from the fact that nuns live a communal life whereas anchorites do not. We do not know what the actual practice was within most convent walls. Hagiography will give us only the most exemplary cases of the observance of claustration, whereas decrees are often a reaction to the negligence of observance of the cloister. There must have been considerable differences between various houses. A royal convent such as Wilton in post-Conquest England had standards that would have been different from those at the newly founded Cluniac convent of Marcigny. On the whole it seems, however, that there is a paradox between the anchorite's ideal of the rejection of the world and the reality that recluses were in a very real sense more exposed to the world than their sisters in the convent. Compared to their male counterparts, who had more dealings with the world because of the activities belonging to the monk's active life of "feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, sheltering travellers, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and prisoners, and burying the dead,"[106] female cenobites were relatively free of such cares, not least because of claustration rules. The reasons for nuns to choose to leave their convents to inhabit a cell could include a wish for greater freedom in order to live a more austere life; to fast for longer periods, to keep longer vigils, and to have more time for contemplation; and also, perhaps, to have a greater sense of leading a penitential life.

All about Eve

Eve is the first post-Conquest English nun of whom we know who decided to become a recluse. It has been suggested that the anchorhold provided an alternative for Anglo-Saxon men and women who did not want to conform to the Anglo-Norman establishment. Christina of Markyate's small community appears

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106 Giles Constables, 'The Interpretation of Mary and Martha,' in his *Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1995) 37, using the example of an eleventh-century homilist on the division of the Church into the active and the contemplative.

to have been a case in point and, as Holdsworth points out, five other *vitae* of hermits in England, who are contemporary with Christina, concern men of Anglo-Saxon or Scandinavian backgrounds.[107] This might also have been a reason for Eve to leave Wilton, as Goscelin seems to hint at this when he emphasises Eve's Englishness despite the fact that both her parents are of foreign descent: "... Britain, in which you also have been considered a foreigner among the English people, with both a Danish father and a Lotharingian mother you turned out to be an English daughter from illustrious descent."[108]

As a source for Eve's life up to the point of her departure to Angers, the *Liber confortatorius* should be considered reliable. There is no reason to believe that Goscelin had cause to be creative with the facts of Eve's life in a document that was addressed to her. For this same reason there is not all that much factual information to be found in the text. Details of Eve's life are restricted to Goscelin's recollections of their time together, but these give us some interesting insights into the religious and secular practices at Wilton. Indirectly, the *Liber* provides information on a number of other aspects, such as the spiritual life and the standards of education at the abbey at the time.[109] With Goscelin's suppositions concerning Eve's circumstances in Anjou we have to be more careful. It is more than likely that he had formed his ideas about her cell and the degree of isolation to which she was subjected, on the basis of an ideal of anchorism that had little bearing on the actual practices in eleventh century France. As I will argue, the *Liber confortatorius* is a literary work and it is important to take poetic licence into consideration. Furthermore, the *Liber* is very much a meditative piece of writing in which symbolism is given a prominent place. It is of course possible that Goscelin had heard of Eve's situation through

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107 Christopher J. Holdsworth, 'Christina of Markyate,' in: *Medieval Women*, Derek Baker, ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1978) 202-3. See also Talbot, *The Life of Christina of Markyate* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1997) 16. Barlow, *The English Church 1066-1154* 204, denies that the proliferation of English and Scandinavian names are a sign of hostility to Norman monasticism. He attributes it simply to the fact that most of the population came from an Anglo-Scandinavian background. Furthermore, he writes, "they followed an accepted alternative way of life."

108 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 41: *... Brittanniam, in qua te quoque cum Anglica gente constat fuisse aduenam sed et patre Dano et matre Lotaringa a claris natalibus filiam emersisse Anglicam.*

109 The standard of education will be more fully discussed in Chapter Three.

messengers, and although he makes no references to such knowledge, he knows the name of the church and the name of one of the recluses living at Saint-Laurent, Benedicta, of whose existence other evidence exists in Baudry of Bourgeuil's epitaph.[110] It is not unthinkable that Goscelin's concern for Eve led him to make enquiries as to her whereabouts and his connections might have made this relatively easy. Nevertheless, Goscelin makes no explicit references to having gained information about her.

The other major source of Eve's life is the poem by Hilary of Orléans, referred to several times already, which was written within a few years of her death.[111] It mainly provides information about Eve's time at Saint-Eutrope. Hilary was a wandering preacher and scholar who appears to have taught in Bologna and Paris. He was attached to Peter Abelard's school at the Paraclete and he dedicated one of his poems to him.[112] He wrote histories, mystery plays and poetry, and a collection of his letters is extant. Between 1116 and 1121 he was canon at Le Ronceray[113] and it must have been at this time that he became acquainted with the details of Eve's life. Hilary also wrote about Eve's life at Wilton, and he may have had his information from Eve herself as he knew her parents' names, but there are some irregularities that suggest insufficient factual information. The manuscript text, for instance, places the abbey in *Clintonia.* Assuming that this is a scribal error from a misreading of *Wintonia*, Hilary would

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110 Baudry of Bourgeuil, *Carmen* 171, Karlheinz Hilbert, ed. (Heidelberg, 1979) 245, reference from Latzke, 'Robert von Arbrissel, Ermengard und Eva,' 140, footnote. 124.

111 See Häring, 'Die Gedichte und Mysterienspiele des Hilarius von Orléans' 917-920, and 'Hilary of Orleans and His Letter Collection,' *Studi Medievali.* 3rd series. 14-II (1973): 1069-1122. There is a letter extant from a certain recluse called Herveus, in which he urges Hilary to return to Angers to renew the spiritual life there and to give up his wandering existence. There is some confusion as to whether this is the same Herveus as Eve's companion at Saint-Eutrope. Wilmart says there were two recluses of that name in the vicinity, whereas Häring considers them to be one and the same person.

112 D. E. Luscombe, *The School of Peter Abelard: The Influence of Abelard's Thought in the Early Scholastic Period*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought n.s. XIV (Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 1969) 52.

113 Luscombe. *Peter Abelard* 53. See also footnote 38.

nevertheless have placed her at Winchester rather than Wilton.[114] He also omits the fact that Eve stayed at Saint-Laurent-de-Tertre, where, for lack of evidence to the contrary, we must assume she had lived for almost twenty years before moving to the church of Saint-Eutrope.[115] Instead he sees her established at Saint-Eutrope from the moment she left England. What the implications of this discrepancy between the *Liber confortatorius* and Hilary's eulogy are can only be guessed at. Perhaps Eve did not live at Saint-Laurent for the entire time before she moved to Saint-Eutrope. It is not unlikely that she had heard Robert preach and, like so many others, became imbued with the spirit of the *vita apostolica.* Perhaps she even became involved with Robert of Arbrissel's movement, but this could only have been from 1096 onwards. Hilary seems to suggest that she joined a group of solitaries living in a forest after she had arrived in Angers.[116] This would help to explain her close friendship with Herveus and the fact that they are found at Saint-Eutrope together at roughly the same time as Robert organises his followers in the new monastic community of Fontevrault. Having already been a nun and a recluse, Eve would perhaps not have wanted to become, once more, a member of a monastic community. Hilary does not provide any evidence of Eve's whereabouts before she joined Herveus and there is, therefore, a significant gap in our knowledge. It is possible that Hilary's information came from Eve's niece Ravenissa, who had apparently joined her at Saint-Eutrope at some point. Their autographs were discovered by Penelope Johnson in a manuscript once belonging to the abbey of La Trinité de Vendôme. The inscription in the margin of a Gospel book reads:

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114 *Locum bonum et famosum cui nomen Clintonia.* Häring, 'Geschichte und Mysterienspiele' 926, see also page 919 footnote 47.

115 Wilmart, 'Ève et Goscelin' 437. Wilmart places Saint-Eutrope in Lévière, a suburb of Angers. He argues successfully that attempts to identify Eve's companion with another recluse Herveus in Chalonnes who died before 1120 and who founded a small community of monks there are incompatible with the evidence. Penelope D. Johnson *Prayer, Patronage, and Power: The Abbey of la Trinité, Vendôme, 1032-1187* (New York, NY: NewYork UP, 1981) 163, describes Saint-Eutrope as a cell attached to the priory of l'Evière.

116 Häring, 'Gedichte und Mysterienspiele' 927 ll. 73 - 78: *Ipsa mare pertransiuit satis forti pectore,/ Licet semper tempestatem persentiret afore./ Andegauim tandem uenit, fatigato corpore,/ Sed mens erat in supernis omni firma tempore // Quia uero requirebat locum solitarium/ Ut uacare plene posset ad dei seruitium.*

> *hoc signum crucis istius fecit Eva reclusa ob memoriam stabilitatis suae et istud Ravenissa neptas* [sic] *eius.*[117]

It may have been the case that Ravenissa was also educated at Wilton and had told Hilary of Eve's reputation there. It is unlikely that Eve would have told Hilary or Herveus herself.[118]

Our sources for Eve's life provide us with the following biographical information. Eve was born in England in or around 1058, the year that Goscelin arrived in England. Her mother was from Lotharingia and Hilary informs us that her name was Oliva. Her father, Ape or Api, was a Dane. From the fact that Api is mentioned in Domesday Book[119] but is otherwise unknown, Wilmart infers that he was probably of minor nobility.[120] The fact that Eve's parents were able to send her to be educated at the royal foundation of Wilton at a very young age seems to point to an altogether grander status in society. Latzke suggests that it was Goscelin's influence and connections with Wilton which made Eve's entrance into the prestigious nunnery possible.[121] Another clue may be Oliva's origin. Like Bishop Hermann she came from Lotharingia and perhaps they were connected by familial bonds. It may then have been Hermann's authority which had secured Eve a place at the convent, in addition to Goscelin's special

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117 The manuscript is Vendôme B. M. MS 2, fol. 1[r]. See Johnson, *Prayer, Patronage, and Power* 164, 168 footnote 58.

118 But if Hilary was indeed a good friend of Herveus, it is of course possible that he received his information from him. The poem was written during Herveus's life time and perhaps at his wish.

119 "Gunfrid also holds WHITLEY Ape held it before 1066; it paid tax for 1 hide. Land for 2 ploughs, which are there, in lordship, with 1 slave; 6 smallholders. Meadow, 8 acres, woodland 3 furlongs long and 1 furlong wide. The value was 40s; now 50s." 53-2 *Domesday Book* vol. 6: *Wiltshire,* Caroline and Frank Thorne, eds. (Chichester: Phillimore, 1979). "William holds Timsbury from the Bishop [of Coutances]. Ape held it before 1066; it paid tax for 3 hides. Land for 3 ploughs. In lordship 1 plough; 2 slaves; (1½ hides); 2 villages and 1 smallholder with 1 plough (and 1½ hides) 2 parts of a mill which pay 3s; meadow, 26 acres; pasture, 2s much (1 cob; 9 cattle; 14 pigs; 60 sheep.) The value was 26s; now50s." 5-15: *Domesday Book* vol. 8: *Somerset*, Caroline and Frank Thorne, eds. (Chichester: Phillimore, 1980).

120 Wilmart, 'Ève et Goscelin' 423.

121 Latzke, 'Robert von Arbrissel, Ermengard und Eva' 137. She bases this assumption on the passage: *Hoc equidem semper optavi, et ad hoc peperi te ac dilexi, ut in Christi transires viscera, ac tota Christi fieres victima; sed hoc alibi quam hic at alia cupiebam via, ut scilicet sancte viveres et utile vas esses in domo Domini. ... Et quare? Ut nos minus desolationem plangeremus, te proxima.* (p.36).

attention. It is unclear whether Eve was offered to the nunnery to be educated or to fulfill the religious ambitions of her parents. Keeping in mind some parents' less pious motives for sending their daughters to convents, Latzke reads in Goscelin's narrative that Eve might have been considered unsuitable for a marriage alliance.

> Auch Eva dürfte aus ähnlichen Gründen von ihren Eltern zur Nonne bestimmt worden sein. Die folgende Worte Goscelins, welche gleichzeitig die schwüle Atmosphäre der Begegnung zwischen dem Priester und dem Mädchen nicht verhehlen können, weisen auf Evas Häßlichkeit oder sonstige Behindering hin. Nachdem er ihr die Herrlichkeit einer Brautschaft mit Christus mit dem Wortschatz des 'Hohen Liedes' dargelegt hatte, forderte er sie auf:
>
> *Tam amabilem* (scil. *Christum*) *unice diligendo concipe, parturi, gigne, enutri. A parvo nasci et in plenitudinem caritatis crescere dignetur tibi. Si humiliter in eius pulchritudine deformitatem tuam erubescis, diligendo pulcherrimum decoraberis.*[122]

Hilary, too, suggests that Eve's entry into convent life was of a permanent rather than a temporary nature. He writes that her parents dedicated her to God and that God himself had destined her for this life.[123]

Goscelin recalls two important moments in Eve's young life which both occurred in 1065: the dedication of the new stone church at Wilton; and the dedication of the church at Westminster which had a banquet afterwards. Eve cannot have been much older than seven at the time, yet she was allowed to be present at both occasions, which suggests that she was very privileged. Goscelin recalls how he turned these occasions into learning experiences for Eve by explaining the symbolism of the dedication ceremony and that of the fish served at the banquet following the solemnities. He also calls to mind the ceremony of Eve's consecration, in which she stood out among the fourteen virgins presented at the altar. Eve appears to have been an extremely privileged child and this might have been either due to her exceptional piety even at a very young age, or Goscelin's patronage. Either way it seems that Eve enjoyed considerable freedom.

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122 Talbot. *Liber confortatorius* 107.

123 Häring. 'Die Gedichte und Mysterienspiele des Hilarius von Orléans' 925. l. 25 and 926 ll. 37 - 48.

Taking inevitable hagiographical verbosity into account, we may conclude from Hilary that Eve was looked upon as a model resident. Her virtue amazed the abbess and the whole community admired her.[124] Goscelin also writes that she stood out from the other girls,

> Indeed, when among fourteen virgins, with the candles sparkling like the stars and lights of heaven, you had come to our lord's marriage, trembling and second last, and, the large congregation expecting you solemnly, you dressed yourself with the vow of divine faith along with the sacred garment; that humble habit, that trembling approach and blushing countenance as if you were fearing wisely the fiery throne of God seated over the cherubim struck me more deeply in my heart with that epithalamic song of wonderful grace: *I am betrothed to him whom the angels serve, and he has pledged me with his wing.* I was touched by the dew of heaven and I wept with refreshing fervour. Also by your continuing silence, your careful continence, your frequent psalm-singing, the pious testimonies of your mistress, all these things have kindled my prayers for you. [125]

It has been suggested that Eve's privileged position might have roused suspicion and jealousy among the other young girls, and that this in turn may have been one of the reasons why Eve chose to leave the nunnery.[126] Whether or not this is the case, at the age of twenty Eve no longer found what she was looking for at Wilton, and desiring a stricter and more austere life than a nunnery

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124 Häring, 'Die Gedichte und Mysterienspiele des Hilarius von Orléans' 926-27, ll. 53-66. *Sic in cella diu mansit ad dei servicium/Multis modis carnem domans et devitans vicium./ Ecce vite puellaris quam bonum inicium./Et quid mirum? Ipsa Christum expectabat precium.//Aurem suam refrenavit ne audiret turpia./Declinavit visum suum ab omni lascivia,/Lingua sua recusavit rixas et litigia./Fere semper creatori vacans in psalmodia.//Manus eius semper fugit inmunda contingere./Non consueuit pes ipsius ad nociva tendere/Sensus omnis intendebat in bonis expendere:/Ipsos enim diligenter flectebat a scelere.//Obstupebat abatissa, mirabantur socie,/Quod preferre tanta posset etas puericie.*

125 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 28: *Ubi uero inter quattuordecim uirgines, coruscantibus cereis tanquam syderibus et lampadibus supernis, ad dominicas nuptias trepida et penultima accessisti ac, populosa caterua sollemniter expectante, pignus fidei diuine cum sacrata ueste induisti, ille humilis habitus, ille tremebundus accessus, ille suffusus uultus, tanquam ab igneo throno Dei sedentis super cherubim, sapienter metuentis, altius uiscera me percussere cum hoc epithalamico carmine admirabilis gratie: «Ipsi sum desponsata, cui angeli seruiunt, et an(n)ulo suo subarrauit me.» Tactus sum rore celesti et feruore irriguo fleui. Continuata quoque silentia tua, sollicita continentia, frequens psalmodia, pia magistre testimonia, magis accenderunt uota mea.*

126 Latzke, 'Robert von Arbrissel, Ermengard und Eva' 139.

such as Wilton could offer, she left her native England and crossed over to France where, according to Goscelin, she settled first at Saint-Laurent-de-Tertre.

We do not know what it was that made Eve decide that her destiny lay in France rather than England, but there are a few conjectures we can make. It might have been that the original standards at Wilton Abbey had fallen after the Norman Conquest. As Elkins has shown, the nunnery had become a refuge for English noble women at the time of the Conquest, and many of these stayed there without having the intention of taking up the veil. This was in spite of Lanfranc's efforts to persuade these women to make a choice either way and to act on it.[127] It might be suggested that Eve's parents had intended her to marry, but unless Eve had failed to make profession or had somehow been prevented from doing so, at the age of twenty she should have been a professed nun for at least several years. Neither Goscelin nor Hilary mention any dramatic reason for Eve's flight, although of course neither was in a position to know what exactly might have been going on. According to Hilary, she left because of the sins of the women she lived with.[128] It seems likely that Eve found that she could not live an ascetic life at Wilton and that she longed for a solitary existence. This alone would not seem enough reason for her to choose to cross the channel and take up abode in Angers, but reports from central France about the revival of monasticism there might have been a persuasive factor. It seems that some form of eastern ascetism had made its way to France, and evidence exists that anchorites with Greek names had settled in some regions in western France.[129] It is likely that a combination of factors, which we can only conjecture, played a part in her decision.

Lack of evidence as to the numbers of women embarking on the austere life of a recluse may lead us to believe that Eve's decision was as drastic as it may

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127 Elkins, *Holy Women* 2-3.

128 Häring, 'Die Gedichte und Mysterienspiele des Hilarius von Orléans' 927 ll. 71 - 72: *Quod abhorrens Eua multum uelud noxam criminis/ Quibus primo conuiuebat secessit a feminis.*

129 Leyser, *Hermits and the New Monasticism* 24-25. On the influence of Eastern anachoretism on developments in the West, see Christian Lohmer, *Heremi conversatio: Studien zu den Monastischen Vorschriften des Peter Damiani* (Münster, Aschendorff, 1991) 1-21. and Dorothy de F. Abrahamse, 'Byzantine Asceticism and Women's Monasteries in Early Medieval Italy,' in: *Distant Echoes* 31-49.

have been dramatic. Her decision could be described as a flight, a secret act of defiance of other people's wishes. Certainly Goscelin perceived it as such,[130] but his point of view could perhaps be explained by his own exile and isolation from Wilton. It is also possible that he saw Eve's decision as a spiritual flight from the world. For Latzke's assumption that Eve's "Flucht fällt außerhalb der Klostermauern niemandem auf,"[131] I do not find evidence in the *Liber confortatorius*. I would suggest that the evidence, circumstantial though it is, points to a rational and planned departure. I base this on the fact that Goscelin, at the time of writing the *Liber confortatorius*, knew some specific details of Eve's new life. He knew the name of the church in Angers and the name of one of the other recluses at the site. His description of her eight-foot cell might be put down to convention or imagination, but it might also be based on factual information. Eve either travelled with a woman called Benedicta to Angers or joined her there. Eve's life up to the time of her departure had been very protected as she had lived within the nunnery walls ever since she was a little girl. Unless Eve's motives were as dramatic as Christina of Markyate's – which is unlikely, since the evidence points to the fact that Eve was already a professed nun – there seems to be no reason for her to organise a secret escape. Hilary makes no mention of any dramatic flight from Wilton. Such an interesting twist to Eve's story would have greatly enhanced his narrative, and would certainly have been brought to his attention in some form or other. Furthermore, at some point, although at a very late stage, Eve's niece joined her at Saint-Eutrope. The financial arrangements needed for the upkeep of the recluse are not clear, but the fact that her niece joined the aging Eve suggests that the family had a financial stake in Eve's undertaking. This does not seem to be too far-fetched an idea considering the considerable expense for a family of having a relative in a nunnery. Anchoritism has traditionally been seen as the only alternative for the less wealthy person with religious aspirations, but this implied the willingness of a bishop to meet expenses.

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130 Goscelin feels slighted because he was not consulted in the matter, which he experienced as betrayal by his spiritual daughter. She left the country before he could meet up with her.

131 Latzke, 'Robert von Arbrissel, Ermengard und Eva' 140-141.

Another point that might be made is that Saint-Laurent-de-Tertre was dependent on the famous nunnery of Le Ronceray. Further research may perhaps find connections between high status houses in England and France, such as Wilton and Le Ronceray. There certainly were connections of English religious houses with Angers. Veronica Ortenberg mentions Spalding and Tywardreath as having been given as dependencies to the monasteries of Saint Nicholas and Saints Sergius and Bacchus in 1074 and *c.* 1088 respectively.[132] Both of these Angevin houses had been founded by Fulk Nerra, as was Le Ronceray. A small community of recluses was already established at the cemetery. In the *Life of Girard*, a hermit and local hero in Anjou, mention is made of Petronilla, a nun of Le Ronceray, who lived in a cell attached to the church of Saint-Laurent.[133] It is not inconceivable that this community of recluses had a reputation which had reached England. If this is the case, it might have offered the ideal opportunity for a nun from Wilton who had ascetic aspirations.

Eve became a recluse at what Leclercq describes as the time in which monastic seclusion seems to have reached its peak.[134] Yet, as we have seen, very little is known about individual cases at that time, especially in England. Many questions will remain unanswered and we can only guess why it was necessary for Eve to become a recluse in Anjou. As in many other areas we only have the writings of other people to provide us with clues about Eve's life, and these were mostly written from a biased point of view. Goscelin's treatise should be considered an idealisation of Eve's life at the very beginning of her undertaking. Hilary's poem was written to celebrate her life after her death. Neither of them provides us with real information which might enable us to reconstruct her life with any certainty. The inconsistencies in the two texts noted above are clear signs of this. But there are a few other sources that might help us form an impression of Eve's life. One of these is the archaeological evidence at the sites of the churches of Saint-Laurent and Saint-Eutrope.

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132 Ortenberg, *The English Church and the Continent* 239.

133 Bienvenu, 'Pauvreté, Misères et Charité en Anjou' 19. Bienvenue writes that Petronilla was Girard's contemporary. Girard died 1124.

134 Leclercq, 'Solitude and Solidarity' 70.

The church of Saint-Laurent-de-Tertre was founded in 1073 but was in reality little more than a cemetery chapel dependent on the abbey of Le Ronceray.[135] It was situated on the west bank of the Maine, across from the city of Angers. The cemetery of Saint-Laurent is described as one of those rare cases which are at a considerable distance from its parish church.[136] A smaller chapel at the site, of which mention is first made in the twelfth century, is Chapelle Notre-Dame-de-Pitié, and it has recently been interpreted as a "lanterne des morts".[137] Saint-Laurent never had a parochial function but it apparently housed more than one recluse. At the end of the eleventh-century, a recluse named Petronilla died at Saint-Laurent-de-Tertre.[138] This must have been at about the time that Eve arrived in Angers. Saint-Eutrope, Eve's later home, was a chapel near, and dependent on, L'Evière, a priory of Trinité de Vendôme, which had been founded by Count Geoffrey Martel around the middle of the eleventh century.[139]

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135 Comte and Siraudeau, *Angers* 43. Le Ronceray was a house for women established in 1028 as Sainte-Marie-de-la-Charité by Count Fulk Nerra and Countess Hildegard on the right bank of the Maine. It was one of several new foundations in Angers in the eleventh century. See J.-M. Bienvenue 'Renouveau de l'église Angevine (An Mil- 1148)' in *Le Diocèse d'Angers*, François Lebrun, ed., Histoire des Diocèses de France 13 (Paris, Beauchesne, 1981) 24 and by the same, 'Pauvreté, Misère et Charité' 6. It is unclear whether there was any link between Le Ronceray and Wilton in the eleventh century. The houses seem to have had much in common: both mostly aristocratic foundations where learning was considered of great importance. They can both boast poets according to Baudri de Bourgueil, who wrote a poem about Muriel of Wilton as well as about a certain Constance at Le Ronceray. See Jean Verdon, 'Les Moniales dans la France de l'Ouest aux XI^{e} et XII^{e} Siècles: Étude d'Histoire Sociale,' *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale X^{e} - XII^{e} Siècles* 19 (1976): 261-2.

136 Comte, *Angers* 44.

137 Comte, *Angers* 43.

138 *Vita S. Girardi* § 15, *AASS* Nov. II, 1894, p.497 E. Cited by Wilmart Ève et Goscelin' II 57 and Bienvenu 'Pauvreté, Misère et Charité' 19: *Andegavis apud Sanctum Laurentium erat quaedam reclusa nomine Petronilla ex multo tempore ibi deo vivens.* A nun of this name appears in a charter of Le Ronceray dated 1073 concerning the election of Richilde as abbess. It is possible that this is the same person, although a certain Pétronille is recorded as having been "doyenne" for the period of 1120-45 and cellerar for around 1143-45. Verdon does not link the Petronilla of the 1073 charter with the recluse, however. See Verdon, 'Les Moniales dans la France de l'Ouest' 247 and 256-7.

139 Comte, *Angers* 41.

Elkins describes Eve as a prototype for twelfth-century recluses[140] and this may not be such an exaggerated idea if we can conclude that the twelfth-century recluse was decidedly different from her predecessors. Goscelin, however, does not treat Eve as an exceptional case. Hilary describes her as having lived in a cell even at Wilton Abbey. If he was right about this, Eve might actually have started to live a more reclusive lifestyle there. Let us consider this possibility. However high the standards of education at the nunnery, as a royal foundation it stood firmly in the world. If this was so before the Conquest, it became even more so afterwards when the abbey became a refuge for many women who often stayed for a considerable time without the intention of making a profession. Despite the efforts of Lanfranc and Anselm to resolve this situation, the presence of these women, and the links which the nunnery retained with the world outside its walls, may have made Wilton too secular in the eyes of a woman such as Eve who was very serious about her vocation. Perhaps it was made possible for her to retreat to a cell where she could dedicate her time to contemplation and prayer. If this is so it would have been a step towards further reclusion. It would have prepared her for her anchorite's cell in Anjou. This would also mean that her decision to leave Wilton was not so rash as Goscelin would have us believe. It would have shown the people who were to support her in her undertaking that she was serious about what she wanted. Eve must, after all, have had spiritual and financial support for her move to France. It would have made it possible to organise the transfer.

Conclusion

The second half of the eleventh century saw many changes prepatory to what is now called the twelfth-century renaissance. New and more individual forms of religious life started to make a mark on traditional Benedictine monasticism. The *Liber confortatorius* was written at this time for a woman who embarked on the solitary life at a place where these new movements were coming into existence. I have given little attention to the influences of the Gregorian reforms on the perception of religious women so far. In a later chapter, I will look more closely

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140 Elkins, *Holy Women* 27.

at the consequences for religious women of the enforcement of clerical celibacy. As we have seen, men such as Robert of Arbrissel took up the 'Frauenfrage', at a time when Cluniac monasticism and papal reforms created little room for women within monasticism. In the following chapter I will look at friendships of religious men and women, and the ways in which religious men encouraged women in their lives as nuns and recluses.

Chapter Two

The Nature of Friendship: Towards a definition of relationships between religious men and women

In the first place, I think we should discuss the nature of friendship
so as not to appear to be painting in emptiness
Aelred of Rievaulx *Spiritual Friendship* 1:10

Introduction

I will argue in this thesis that Goscelin shows a favourable attitude towards the female sex in general and Eve in particular: to do this, it will be necessary to consider what kind of relationship there was between them. The term "friendship" has been narrowly defined by ancient and modern philosophers alike. True friendship, in their eyes, could only exist when certain conditions were met. In actual practice, the concept is, and was, applied to a much broader range of relationships than philosophers such as Aristotle and Cicero had allowed for. Especially in Christianity, friendship or fellowship was accommodated in a large network of relationships that included at the same time close acquaintances and complete strangers. The interpretation of the concept of friendship, however, differed from individual to individual, and this makes it difficult to come to a single definition. The word friendship will be used here, too, as encompassing many different kinds of relationships. To distinguish between relationships that differ in merely a few aspects from each other would make things unnecessarily complicated. It will, however, be impossible to study the relationship between Goscelin and Eve, as Goscelin perceived it, without, in Aelred's words, discussing the nature of friendship.

The subject of spiritual friendship, although mainly concerning the friendship between men, has received some attention by scholars in recent years, and these studies will provide a good starting point for a closer comparison of spiritual friendships between men and women in late Antiquity and the Middle Ages. This requires an initial discussion on the classical works of friendship and their influence on later writers in order to arrive at a preliminary establishment of the terminology needed for the study of specific friendships. I will be concentrating on specific or exclusive friendships as well as other kinds of

relationships to see if we might conclude that the friendship between Eve and Goscelin fits into a well-established tradition, and whether in fact Goscelin might have modelled his relationship with Eve on such a tradition. I will study some of these relationships and the theological justifications for the notion of (spiritual) equality that must necessarily exist between the friends. Medieval theories about relationships, such as those of Anselm and Aelred, will be discussed here. I will also consider conceptual friendships, or perceived friendship: that is to say, those conceptual relationships which were used by Boethius in his relationship with philosophy and that of Gregory of Nyssa with his sister as the Teacher in the treatise *On the Soul and the Resurrection.*

The *Liber confortatorius* would not have been written had there not existed a special kind of friendship between Goscelin and Eve, a friendship which cannot be considered outside a long-standing tradition of spiritual relationships between persons who had dedicated their lives to God. Throughout the history of Christianity, friendship has played an integral part in the lives and minds of all Christians. It has been regarded as one of the most important means of attaining spiritual perfection and the beatific vision, and it has found many means of expression. Especially at the beginning of Christianity, there was a strong sense of belonging to a group, a universal family of Christians. As a result many friendships among men and women who professed the faith in God were formed and we find evidence of these friendships in their legacy of letters, treatises and biographies. We know of the friendships of Saints Augustine, Jerome, Radegund, Cuthbert, Leoba, Alcuin, Anselm, Aelred and many others who have, in some way, left their mark in history.[1] Without this sense of kinship in God or spiritual friendship, Christianity would not have gained the foothold it needed. It has been

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[1] There has been no shortage of studies of monastic friendship in general, and of specific cases. See for instance general works such as McGuire, *Friendship and Community*; Peter Dronke, *Medieval Latin and the Rise of the European Love Lyric,* Vol. I *Problems and Interpretations,* 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968); F. C. Gardiner, *The Pilgrimage of Desire: A Study of Theme and Genre in Medieval Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1971); Jean Leclercq, *Monks and Love in Twelfth-Century France: Psycho-Historical Essays* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979). Works on specific writers include: Elkins, *Holy Women*; A. Fiske, 'Saint Anselm and Friendship', *Studia Monastica* 3 (1961): 259-90, and 'St. Augustine and Friendship'. *Monastic Studies* 2 (1964): 127-135; Colin Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual 1050-1200.* Church History Outlines 5. (London: SPCK, 1972); Peter Dale Scott, 'Alcuin's *Versus de Cuculo*: The Vision of Pastoral Friendship'. *Studies in Philology* 62 (1965): 510-530; Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape.*

a common effort in which the assertion of love for fellow Christians and the bonds of friendship were of the utmost importance, especially at times when there were many forces opposing the cause. Jerome's letters show his concern for his friends' souls in a society that was still largely concerned with earthly matters. Boniface would not have made any progress in establishing the Church in Germany without the practical and spiritual support of religious men and women at home in England and in Germany.

Even within the monastic community the need for friendship is expressed, especially when the friends are separated in body. Alcuin wrote many letters expressing his love and friendship for bishops and kings alike.[2] Three centuries later Anselm, too, was writing passionate letters to his fellow monks. In the twelfth century, Aelred was much concerned with the subject and wrote two important works, *The Mirror of Charity* and *On Spiritual Friendship*. However, as friendship is not a phenomenon which the New Testament explicitly discusses, Christian writers had to rely on such works as were written by the non-Christian philosophers and which had come down to them mainly through Cicero's *De Amicitia*. They also had to rely on the interpretations of Scripture by the early Fathers. Cicero was not a Christian and his works reflect very much the society from which he came. In spite of this, the *De Amicitia* enjoyed a sustained popularity throughout the Middle Ages, only to be adapted for Christian usage by Aelred of Rievaulx in *On Spiritual Friendship* in the twelfth century. It is necessary therefore to start any discussion on monastic friendships in the earlier Middle Ages with a brief overview of what the ancient philosophers had to say on the subject. In addition, I will look at works by modern anthropologists and philosophers in order to see how much their perception of friendship differs from those of the ancient philosophers. The classic discussion[3] came from Aristotle, whose influence is seen in later classical works but whose works were not known to the writers of the early Middle Ages. Since his idea of friendship is fundamental to our modern views of friendship, I will, however, give a brief outline of his philosophy.

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2 McGuire, *Friendship and Community* 117-127.

3 Plato's *Lysis* and *Symposium* are also works on friendship and love, but as they are not directly relevant to the present discussion, I have left them out.

Defining Friendship

For Aristotle,[4] there are three objects of love: utility, pleasure and virtue, but complete or perfect friendship can only exist between "good people similar in virtue". Friendship is "*reciprocated* goodwill", which exists among equals. When superiority is involved the friendship is of a different nature. A friend is another self and one can only have one complete friendship. Friendship of father to son is different from that of son to father and the same goes for the friendship of man to woman and vice versa, "for each of these friends has a different function, and there are different causes of love." The love in these kinds of friendship has to be proportional to the friend's worth. Aristotle, therefore, does not believe in the possibility of equality in friendship between a man and a woman.

Medieval authors developed their ideas on the subject mainly from Cicero's *Laelius: On Friendship.* Cicero could not fail to appeal to medieval writers. Although he came from a pagan background, much of what he writes on the subject can easily be accommodated within a Christian context. He defines friendship as "a complete identity of feeling about all things in heaven and earth: an identity which is strengthened by mutual goodwill and affection."[5] Friendship is only possible when it concerns good men. It is stronger than kinship because kinship can exist without goodwill (*benevolentia*) whereas it is an essential part in real friendship. For Cicero, friendship is one of the prime necessities of life. "It is unique because of the bright rays of hope it projects into the future: it never allows the spirit to falter or fall. When a man thinks of a friend, he is looking at himself in a mirror. Even when a friend is absent, he is present all the same." (7, 23) Cicero does not conclude that friends should be of equal status, but "the superior must place himself on an equality with his inferior...he is also under an obligation to do everything he can to lift his friend to his own level." (20, 72) Mutual respect is an essential feature of friendship, as well as the giving and

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4 Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics* Books VIII and IX, trans. Terence Irwin, in: *Other Selves: Philosophers on Friendship*, Michael Pakaluk, ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991) 30-69.

5 5.19. Cicero, *Laelius: On Friendship*, in: *On the Good Life*, Michael Grant, trans. (Harmondsworth: Penguin. 1971) 186.

receiving of advice. "The significance of friendship is that it unites human hearts".

To compare these classical concepts with modern views on friendship I would like to make a brief excursion into twentieth-century anthropology. A relatively recent article on friendship recognizes nearly the same distinctions for modern-day friendships,[6] so that we might say that the characteristics of friendship as laid down by the ancient philosophers are universal. To summarize what these are for our present discussion, I will restrict myself to the categories of "exclusive" and "close" friends based on the analysis of Cora Du Bois. The first of these comes closest to Christian notions of spiritual friendship. Exclusive friendship is dyadic, that is to say, it exists between the self and one other person. The friend is loved for what he is ("prized for himself in his perceived totality"[7]); one can only have one exclusive friend at a time. Such a friendship is voluntary and preferential, it is not institutionalized or prescribed and is therefore non-marital; it can not exist between close kin such as siblings. It presupposes the greatest degree of intimacy, and, perhaps for this reason, it is considered only possible between members of the same sex. In addition, it usually requires equality of social status and age. Exclusive friendship is considered to be for life.

When we apply this definition to a medieval monastic environment, this kind of friendship seems to defy the philosophy behind the communal life. For our purpose it will, therefore, be necessary to compare the exclusive friendship with the "close" friendship. Like the former, close friendship is also dyadic, but it is possible to have more than one close friend. The friend is not prized for his entire character, but for his virtues or talents, which means that it is not an unconditional love. Friendship may exist between kin but it has to be additional to the bond of kinship. Du Bois concedes that, depending on the pattern of sex relations within the society that the friends come from, close friendship may exist

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6 Cora Du Bois, 'The Gratuitous Act: An Introduction to the Comparative Study of Friendship Patterns,' in : *The Compact: Selected Dimensions of Friendship*, Elliott Leyton, ed. (Memorial U of Newfoundland, 1974) 15-32.

7 Du Bois, 'The Gratuitous Act' 19.

between members of the opposite sex, but that it is rare and usually characterised by a great age difference.

Elizabeth Telfer provides a discussion which carefully defines the nature of friendship, and modifies, in some ways, Aristotle's theory of friendship.[8] In Telfer's work, friendship becomes somewhat less of an ideal and something more relevant to everyday life. I will, therefore, conclude this section with a brief discussion of her theory of friendship. Telfer argues that there are three types of activity: reciprocal services, mutual contact, and joint pursuits. These may be grouped under the heading of "shared activity", which is the first necessary condition of friendship. This condition cannot, however, stand by itself as constituting friendship. Telfer therefore formulates "reasons" as a second necessary condition. These are a set of long-term *desires* "which motivate and explain actions done out of friendship."[9] The first is affection, which may be defined as "a desire for another's welfare and happiness *as a particular individual*" and which should be distinguished from goodwill and sense of duty. The second is a desire to be in each other's company. To distinguish this from the same desire felt by people who are in love, Telfer would classify this as a *rational* desire. It is rational because one likes the other person, because there is a bond between them. She rejects the notion shared by Aristotle and Cicero that we can only be friends with people whom we regard as being good. We can like a person for many reasons, despite characteristics that we find undesirable, because liking is "a reaction to an individual, not a type (...) an individual whose uniqueness defies complete qualification."[10] As a third necessary condition, she names the acknowledgement of the first two conditions, which is to say that one chooses to act on the first two conditions, and commits oneself to this friendship.

Having thus established the nature of friendship, Telfer moves on to discuss the duties – and rights – to which friendship gives rise. She rejects the notion that one has no duties towards one's friends, but she concedes that, because

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8 Elizabeth Telfer, 'Friendship,' *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society for 1970*, 1970, rpt in: *Other Selves* 250-267.

9 Telfer, 'Friendship' 251.

10 Telfer, 'Friendship' 255.

friendship – as opposed to marriage, for example – is a natural relationship, its duties are not defined. She would suggest, however, that "the general welfare is best served by our regarding friends as having a special claim on us."[11] As a final point, Telfer discusses the *value* we can put on friendship. Although she would reject classical notions that friendship is a prime necessity of life – there are, after all, people who do not have an inclination towards friendship – she views friendship as "life-enhancing". It makes us "more [because] it makes us feel more."[12] It enhances our activities and it enlarges our knowledge,

> Through friendship we can know what it is like to feel or do certain things which we do not feel, think, or do ourselves. And our knowledge is not merely knowledge by description, but knowledge by acquaintance, derived from our sympathetic sharing of [another's] experience.[13]

One of the most important characteristics in all these discussions on friendship – a characteristic that seems to be still prevalent in sociological and anthropological studies of different cultures today – is the notion that friendship exists only, or at least primarily, between men. This is especially true for what the philosophers refer to as real (exclusive or complete) friendship. Women are not considered in these discussions and it is clear that they are not included by implication by these philosophers, with the possible exception of Telfer, who seems to take a more universal viewpoint. In the study of relationships between monastic men and women we have, therefore, a basic problem. It seems impossible to call some of these relationships friendship, even if they do appear to have all the characteristics of a friendship, simply because there did not exist a frame of reference or even a vocabulary for such a relationship. For this reason, it be assumed, we do not often find the appellation *amica* in letters from men to women. Women are often addressed by men in terms that are applicable in other relationships besides friendship, such as *karissima*, sister, daughter, etc.

To be able to work with such a complex concept as friendship, it is necessary to come to a working definition of friendship or love in a Christian spiritual context. This will allow us to compare the different types of

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11 Telfer, 'Friendship' 262.

12 Telfer, 'Friendship' 266.

13 Telfer, 'Friendship' 266.

relationships within a monastic environment, and compare single sex relationships with those between the sexes. This is especially necessary when dealing with letters. I will be using, to a certain extent at least, the definition that Brian McGuire gives in his comprehensive study of monastic friendships.[14] McGuire uses the term *custos animi* to describe a spiritual friend. This term seems to have been coined by Gregory the Great and was included in the *Etymologiae* by Isidore of Seville. The guardian of one's soul has to meet the following criteria: he has to accept the responsibility for his friend's personal well-being and ultimate salvation; he needs to have a knowledge of his or her inner life, and the friendship must have a spiritual dimension. This does not, however, imply equality or even mutuality within the relationship,[15] a concept which Aristotle believed to be a prerequisite for true friendship. This definition also differs in one major aspect to that of Telfer which claims that in true friendship duties are not defined.

I have found it necessary at this point in time, not to make a distinction between *amicitia* (friendship) and *dilectio* (love, affection, especially in a Christian context), as the actual words for friend or friendship are seldom used in the texts that I have been looking at so far. This is especially true when the object of *dilectio* is a woman. In doing this, I believe there will be room to explore the subtlety of the question of equality and the degrees of intimacy, without getting entangled in a maze of interpretations of the two concepts. It also avoids for the time being the problems of friendship among kin and between the sexes. By excluding mutuality as an essential feature of friendship, we can consider letters which express friendship without having to speculate whether the friendship was "complete" according to Aristotle's and Cicero's definitions. The silence of the addressees in most of the cases under consideration makes it impossible to come to an objective judgement about mutuality in these friendships. I include in the following sections family relationships. In theory, the Christian bond between

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14 McGuire, *Friendship and Community* xiv-xv. This book is an excellent study of monastic friendships, although it concentrates primarily on the friendship between men. The introductory chapter, especially, provides a very useful framework for the study of friendship in the ages following the patristic era.

15 McGuire, *Friendship and Community* xv.

people transcended the bonds of kinship, as it did the differences between the sexes, but in practice it was difficult to pass over the earthly relationship.

Another fundamental principle, I believe, is this: we cannot impose our personal understandings of friendship on any individual friendship in the Middle Ages. We need to base our conclusions on what is in the text and on what we know about the context in which these friendships existed. Our modern conceptions of friendship may be closer to those of Aristotle than those of Jerome, Anselm or Aelred. Furthermore, we need to keep in mind that within a monastic context celibacy is taken for granted: it is the starting point which touches all aspects of the religious life and it does not need a renewed emphasis in the expression of spiritual friendship.[16] This is not to say that in rare individual cases the author might not have had something less spiritual in mind than he would like us to believe; but in general, it should be considered as not being an issue in friendship. Another aspect which needs to be taken into consideration is that the letters that have come down to us are, most of the time, part of letter collections; and many of these letters were in fact written with a larger audience than merely the addressee in mind. It follows, therefore, that any expressions of love, however passionate they may seem to us now, should always be considered as purely spiritual, and within the context of the poetry of the Song of Songs.

For our purposes we should also distinguish between two kinds of Christian friendship or love. The first is the love which all Christians feel, or rather ought to feel, towards their fellow human beings. This is the love that Christ commands of all Christians for His sake. The second type of love is that which a Christian might feel for another person for that person's sake but which is, all the same, a love that is founded in Christ and of which Christ is an essential part. It is this second type of friendship with which I will be primarily occupied in this discussion.

By setting out these characteristics and limitations of spiritual friendship, I hope I will not appear to be painting in emptiness when I look at the following expressions of spiritual love towards women and examples of spiritual

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16 See also McGuire, *Friendship and Community* xv.

friendships between men and women of which we know. I include a survey of different kinds of friendship relations between a woman and a man, because we cannot study the relationship between Goscelin and Eve in isolation and make the claim that their relationship stands out from other male-female friendships in a religious context. The examples given below vary greatly in character, but what I hope to show is that there is a common ground on which these friendships are founded. At the same time a diverse array of friendships was allowed to flourish and to leave testimony for later generations .

We are obviously rather restricted in the sources that have come down to us. The examples below were chosen with two criteria in mind: firstly, examples with which we can be fairly sure Goscelin was acquainted; secondly, such examples as, I believe, are in some way part of Goscelin's – but also Eve's – cultural make-up. With this I mean to say the relationship should not be considered as non-typical. A relationship might appear special to us because we view it in historical isolation, but it would not have stood out as extraordinary to more contemporary viewers. I will, therefore, be looking primarily at examples of friendship from the patristic period and from the early medieval west, in order to establish a background against which we may regard Goscelin's affections for Eve. In most cases we do not, unfortunately, have first-hand accounts and expressions of the friendship. It will be necessary, therefore, to distinguish between friendships as they have been reported in biographies, which are friendships as they are perceived by outsiders, and friendships which have been expressed in letters and poems. Both types of sources have their disadvantages, however. Letters may be first-hand, yet they can nevertheless be deceptive because they are one-sided and usually highly rhetorical despite disclaimers to this fact. *Vitae*, on the other hand, are deceptive because of the very nature of hagiography[17] and because they are often written many years after the death of the saints in question.

From the very beginnings of the Christian life, the problem of individual friendships has been discussed: friendships have been regarded either as being

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17 See for discussions on the limitations of hagiography as historical writing Hippolyte Delehaye. *The Legends of the Saints*, Donald Attwater, trans. (London: Chapman, 1962). Peter Brown. *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (London: SCM, 1981).

suspicious, especially in eastern monasticism, or as essential in the achievement of spiritual perfection. One of the reasons for this is the existence of apparent Scriptural ambiguities. On the one side Christ said that one should love one's enemies, *For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye?*[18] Worldly friendship was thought of as turning one's back to God, and in order to be a friend of Jesus one even has to turn away from one's father and mother.[19] On the other hand Jesus himself had preferential friendships according to the evangelists. Jesus is said to have considered Lazarus his friend, and John was his favourite disciple. Also Mary Magdalen may be considered to have taken a special place among his followers. So, mankind was commanded to love God and one another as oneself, which implies no preferential friendships, yet Jesus himself was shown to have preferential friendships. Many early writers struggled with this problem. The Eastern Fathers show an abhorrence of preferential friendships and aimed for a purely solitary life with God as the only object of their love.[20] Other Church Fathers tried to stay clear of personal friendship bonds and saw friendship as a collective good within a monastic environment. Many of these, like Augustine, had to concede, however, that friends form a vital part of the religious life, as long as the friendship included God, going by Christ's saying *Wherever two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them.*

What is remarkable is the number of intimate friendships that have existed throughout the history of Christianity between members of the opposite sex. In a culture in which women have usually been regarded as having suspicious morals and therefore as being dangerous for man's spiritual welfare, it is significant to note that among much misogynistic writing the occasional positive picture of woman emerges. In classical writings especially, friendship was something that primarily existed between men. Early Christian society was in many ways a continuation of pagan Rome and the ideals of friendship were

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18 Matt. 5:46 *si enim diligitis eos qui vos diligunt, quam mercedem habebitis?*

19 cf Jas. 4:4 and Matt. 10:35.

20 Examples are found in the *Lives of the Desert Fathers.*

largely based on the writings of Aristotle and Cicero.[21] Monastic men and women would, however, look first to Scriptural sources for their ideals of friendship and patristic expositions on, for example, David's love for Jonathan, the Book of Proverbs on friends, and Jesus's friendships for John and Lazarus and, more interesting in this case, for Mary Magdalen and Martha and Mary.[22] Also, writings of authors such as Gregory of Nyssa helped to promulgate a more positive picture of women.[23] Gregory, who throughout *On the Soul and the Resurrection* refers to his holy sister Macrina as "the Teacher", believed that men and women who are living an ascetic life on earth have already started to transcend the limitations of their physical bodies. They have, as it were, died to this world and are living a kind of spiritual life foreshadowing the celestial life in which the sex of the body is no longer of importance.[24] A similar suggestion is made by Jerome in his letter to Rusticus in which he explicitly states that "souls are of no sex".[25] This notion provides, to a certain extent, a situation in which men and women could, theoretically at least, freely express their spiritual love for one another as if the physical difference between them, which has kept them intellectually and emotionally apart for such a long time, did not exist. Here was an opportunity for men and women to be regarded as equals. In reality, many monastic writers could not get around the issue of sex in their relations with women, not in the least because of apprehensions of possible accusations. This

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21 *A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* 165.

22 A discussion of the significance of the visit of Jesus to the house of Martha and Mary in connection with the *Liber Confortatorius* will be discussed below. See Giles Constable, *Three Studies* 1-142.

23 See the *Life of Macrina* and *On the Soul and the Resurrection.* Both in *Ascetical Works,* Virginia Woods Callahan, trans. (Washington: Catholic U of America P, 1967).

24 See also on this subject Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336* (New York: Columbia UP. 1995) 84.

25 Letter CXXII. *Letters and Selected Works,* W. H. Fremantle, trans. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church 6 (Oxford: Parker, 1893).

is clearly illustrated by Jerome in a letter to Asella[26] which he wrote to disprove accusations concerning his intimacy with Paula and Eustochium:

> It often happened that I found myself surrounded with virgins, and to some of these I expounded the divine books as best I could. Our studies brought about constant intercourse, this soon ripened into intimacy, and this, in turn, produced mutual confidence. If they have ever seen anything in my conduct unbecoming a Christian let them say so. Have I taken any one's money? Have I not disdained all gifts? Has the chink of any one's coin been heard in my hand? Has my language been equivocal, or my eye wanton? No; my sex is my one crime, and even on this score I am not assailed, save when there is talk of Paula going to Jerusalem.[27]

Of necessity, and because of less sympathetic writings about women, many writers held back in their relationships with religious women. In the early medieval period, when Christianity was only in its infancy in western Europe, the role of women in the conversion of the largely pagan population was of paramount importance, and church leaders could not but work in close proximity with women religious.[28] This generated many close relationships which are well documented. Some of these will be described below. There is thus a long tradition of friendships between men and women, and since these are preserved

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26 Asella belonged to Marcella's group of religious women. She had dedicated herself to virginity at the age of twelve and was at the time that Jerome knew her living as an recluse in a cell. See J. N. D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings and Controversies* (London: Duckworth, 1975) 93.

27 Letter XLV.

28 See for example Lina Eckenstein, *Woman Under Monasticism: Chapters on Saint-Lore and Convent Life Between A.D. 500 and A.D. 1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1896); John Godfrey, 'The Place of the Double Monastery in the Anglo-Saxon Minster System,' *Famulus Christi: Essays in Commemoration of the Thirteenth Centenary of the Birth of the Venerable Bede*, Gerald Bonner, ed. (London: SPCK, 1976) 344-350; J.T. Schulenburg, 'Female Sanctity: Public and Private Roles, ca 500-1100,' *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski, eds. (Athens, GA: The U of Georgia P, 1988) 102-133; and 'Women's Monastic Communities, 500-1100: Patterns of Expansion and Decline,' *Sisters and Workers in the Middle Ages*, Judith M. Bennett *et.al.*, eds. (Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 1976) 208-239; Suzanne F. Wemple, 'Sanctity and Power: The Dual Pursuit of Early Medieval Women,' *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, Renate Bridenthal, Claudia Koonz, Susan Stuard, eds. (Boston: Houghton, 1987) and *Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the Cloister 500 to 1100* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1981). For the role of women in Late Antiquity see for example. Gillian Cloke, *This Female Man of God: Women and Spiritual Power in the Patristic Age, AD 350-450* (London: Routledge, 1995) and Jo Ann McNamara, 'Matres Patriae/Matres Ecclesiae: Women of the Roman Empire,' *Becoming Visible: Women in European History* 107-130.

in the letters and *lives* of exemplary persons, they create a precedent for later relationships, such as that between Goscelin and Eve.

REPORTED FRIENDSHIPS

- *Augustine and Monica*[29]

By starting with Augustine's relationship with his mother Monica, we immediately run into the problem of kinship relations and the question of whether it is possible to say that true spiritual friendship transcends the bonds of family or kinship. Theoretically, this should be the case. But can we say that when, for example, Monica weeps and prays for Augustine's soul, she is merely driven by her motherly instincts and not by Christian love? It is impossible to distinguish where motherly love ends and Christian love begins unless we know Monica was equally concerned for the soul of some one to whom she was not related. But although spiritual friendship ought, in theory, to transcend the bonds of the family, its language is taken exactly from these bonds. One calls one's friends brothers, sisters, father or mother: the relationships we find back within the monastic community. These terms are not restricted to age, status or even sex. In the spiritual sense a man might call himself a younger man's son, or compare himself to a mother. David, for example, describes his love for Jonathan as the kind of love a mother feels for her son.[30]

Augustine, for his part, does not regard his mother as a friend. Monica was undeniably of great influence in his ultimate conversion and may certainly be described as the guardian of his soul but she was not his friend, she was his mother. After his conversion, they would talk about Christian subjects, such as the eternal life of the saints;[31] but although Augustine would regard talking about

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29 Although this section is based for a large part on Augustine's *Confessions*, an autobiographical work, I include it here because it is intended to be read by a larger public, and is not written to a specific friend, other than God, that is.

30 On the use of female imagery by men, see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1982).

31 Book ix, 10. *Confessions*, R. S. Pine-Coffin, trans. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961) 197.

such subjects as part of Christian friendship in connection with men,[32] he would not rank Monica amongst his friends. Augustine describes Monica as having "the weak body of a woman but the strong faith of a man, the composure of her years, a mother's love for her son, and the devotion of a Christian."[33] She is all of these things, yet she is not a friend or companion. Even in relation to his friends, Augustine makes her stand apart when he writes that she "had talked in a motherly way to some of [his] friends and had spoken to them of the contempt of this life and the blessings of death."[34] Despite Monica's holiness and wisdom she cannot be considered to be on equal terms with Augustine or his friends because she is first and foremost his mother, and that is what he calls her throughout the *Confessions*. In Augustine's perecption of his mother, she loves him because that is a mother's duty.

Later in his life, Augustine recognised the need for friendship as imperative to obtaining the highest good,[35] and he found this friendship in monastic communities among all brothers, but he would not preclude individual friendships. There were two key instances in his life that made him come to this conclusion. The first was his devastation on the death of the friend from his youth, whom he later realises could not have been a true friend because their friendship was not in God.[36] The second was the moment of his conversion when he heard the story of the two Roman officials who, after reading about the life of Saint Anthony, fled from the world and political alliances to a purely spiritual friendship. Augustine realised that the latter is the only kind of friendship that will last: one cannot lose a friend who is loved in God.[37] Augustine's ideals of friendship seem nevertheless to have been rooted in Roman ideals. This means that only those men which Augustine considered his intellectual and social

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32 See McGuire, *Friendship and Community* 50, where he refers to Augustine's *Soliloquies* I, 20-22.

33 Book ix, 4. *Confessions* 186.

34 Book ix, 11. *Confessions* 200.

35 McGuire, *Friendship and Community* 49.

36 Book iv, 4. *Confessions* 75.

37 Book viii, 6. *Confessions* 166-168.

equals could be regarded as friends; that is, those men with whom he could converse on Christian issues and who had the same ideals in common. Friendship would ideally be within a philosophical realm rather than be based on emotions.[38] McGuire points out, however, that for Augustine, one's real friends did not need to be called friends: in his addresses to them his friendship would always be implied. In letters to men with whom Augustine felt more insecure or with whom he only became acquainted through correspondence, he is far more explicit in expressing his friendship and love.[39]

- *Cuthbert and Ælfflaed*

In all three *Lives* of Saint Cuthbert (*c.* 634-87), two of which were written by Bede, who used as his main source the *Life* by the anonymous monk of Lindisfarne, Ælfflaed (653-714), abbess of Whitby, plays a significant part. Although neither author mentions a special kind of friendship between Cuthbert and the abbess, it seems clear that the holy man held her in some esteem. Ælfflaed, Bede writes, "always had a great affection for the man of God."[40] Once, when she was seriously ill and feared for her life, she was thinking about Cuthbert and exclaimed that she wished that she had something belonging to him: "*haberem aliquid de rebus* Cuthberti mei!"[41] Whether or not she actually referred to him as "her" Cuthbert, this exclamation seems to imply that their relationship was something more than a casual connection, at least in the eyes of Bede. Miraculously, Cuthbert came to know her wish and after some time, a linen girdle belonging to Cuthbert arrived at the monastery and healed not only the abbess but also another ailing nun.[42] Another time, Ælfflaed asked Cuthbert to meet her in order to talk about matters of some importance. Cuthbert

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38 McGuire, *Friendship and Community* 50. Augustine's discussion on friendship is found in his *Soliloquies* I. 20-22.

39 McGuire, *Friendship and Community* 52.

40 Bertram Colgrave, ed. and trans. *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1940) 230-1: *multo virum Dei semper excolebat amore.*

41 Colgrave, *Two Lives* 233, emphasis added.

42 Colgrave, *Two Lives* 233.

complied and met her at Coquet island. Although Ælfflaed asked questions he did not really like to answer, probably because they were questions about the future of the "kingdom of the English", he gave her the answers she wanted to know in confidence. He also shared prophesies concerning his own future with her, but made it clear that she was not to tell anybody about them. In the third episode, Bede tells us that Cuthbert travelled to an estate belonging to Ælfflaed's monastery so that "he might see and have conversation with her and dedicate a church".[43] Although it was at the request of the abbess that Cuthbert made the journey, Cuthbert valued her enough to undertake it, even though he longed to retire as he felt his death approaching. It could, of course, be argued that Cuthbert's apparent willingness to meet Ælffled's wish arose from a sense of episcopal duty rather than friendship. However, Cuthbert was under no obligation to share his prophesies with her if he had not felt inclined to do so. The evidence that we have, therefore, is that she was held in sufficient regard by Cuthbert and his biographers to be so prominently present in his life and the acount of his miracles. This stands in sharp contrast with the much later (eleventh or twelfth-century) myths current at Durham claiming that Cuthbert was wary of contact with women, which resulted in a ban on women approaching his shrine in the Cathedral.[44]

Stephanie Hollis accuses Bede of playing down the friendship between Ælffled and Cuthbert.[45] She provides a close reading of the Anonymous *Life of Saint Cuthbert* and Bede's rewriting of it, which, she states, distorts the relationship between Cuthbert and the royal abbess. I do not believe, however that Bede's interpretation of the relationship – and Hollis's (over-) interpretation of Bede's attitude towards the abbess arising from this account – significantly alter the impressions we get from Ælffled's prominent presence in the two *Lives*, and Cuthbert's compliance with many of her wishes. It might even be argued, in

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43 Colgrave, *Two Lives* 262-3, *quatinus ibidem et ipsam videre atque alloqui et aecclesiam dedicare deberet.*

44 See David Rollason, 'Symeon of Durham and the Community of Durham in the Eleventh Century.' *England in the Eleventh Century: Proceedings of the 1990 Harlaxton Symposium*. ed. Carola Hicks (Stamford, Watkins, 1992) 183-198.

45 Stephanie Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church: Sharing a Common Fate.* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1992) 179- 207.

contrast to Hollis's thesis, that the very boldness displayed by Ælffled might be seen as a sign that their relationship allowed a certain amount of frankness. Ælffled's questions regarding her worldly concerns about the future of the kingdom and Cuthbert's own future as bishop, and Cuthbert's reluctant but nevertheless granted answers, are an example of this directness.

- *Boniface and Leoba*

Between Boniface (†754) and Leoba, abbess of Bischofsheim who died in 782, a friendship existed to which we are witnesses through letters, but mostly through the account of Rudolf of Fulda in his *Life of Saint Leoba.* Their lifelong friendship seems to have been initiated by Leoba when she was a young nun at Wimborne. She wrote a letter to her kinsman Boniface (Wynfrith), who by that time had earned some renown as a missionary in Germany. In her letter, Leoba reminds Boniface of his friendship with her father, who is now dead, and his kinship with her mother. She expresses the hope that she may regard him as her brother as he is the only kinsman in whom she has full confidence. She hopes that their "bond of true affection [may] be knit ever more closely for all time."[46] She also asks him to correct her Latin for her, a question which may be seen as a means of securing a reply.

There must have been at least a few replies to letters from Leoba, but unfortunately none of these survive. From Rudolf's *Life* we know that Boniface wrote to abbess Tetta of Wimborne, to ask her to send Leoba to Germany so that she could aid him with the organisation of monastic life there. This should be seen as a sign that Boniface had great confidence in Leoba's learning and organisational skills as well as her dedication to the missionary ideal. He may have ascertained this through her correspondence with him. Rudolf tells us that Boniface held her "in great affection, not so much because she was related to him on his mother's side as because he knew that by her holiness and wisdom she

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46 Letter 29, *The Letters of Saint Boniface*, Ephraim Emerton , trans. (New York: Norton, 1940): M. Tangl, *Die Briefe des Heiligen Bonifatius und Lullus.* Monumenta Germanica Historica, Espistolae Selectae I (Berlin: Weidmann, 1955): *quin immo vere dilectionis ligatura reliquum nodetur in evum.*

would confer many benefits by her word and example."[47] Leoba left England for Germany where she became abbess of Bischofsheim, and she played an important part in the foundation and organisation of monastic houses, besides gaining a reputation for great wisdom and holiness. From this period we have one letter from Boniface to Leoba, in which he addresses her in a rather formal way: it appears to be a business rather than a personal communication. It is very unfortunate that no other correspondence between them survives; however, from Leoba's *Life* we must conclude that their relationship was a very close one. Before Boniface left on his fatal last journey to Frisia, foreseeing his death, he asked his fellow monks to return his body to Fulda and he requested that Leoba's bones be interred in his tomb after her death so that they may "await the day of resurrection together."[48] He then summoned Leoba to him and gave her a speech of encouragement. He urged her never to give up her good work in Germany, but to remain there and not let any hardship or her own weaknesses discourage her from the spiritual life.[49]

After Boniface's martyrdom, Leoba was the only woman who was allowed to enter the monastery at Fulda in order to pray at the holy man's tomb because of the affection he had felt for her during his life. After her death many years later, Leoba was duly buried in the church at Fulda, albeit not next to Boniface in his tomb. Rudolf explains that the monks did not dare to open the saint's tomb, but it seems more likely that the monks were uncomfortable with such an arrangement. Willibald's *Life of Saint Boniface* does not, unfortunately, make any mention of Leoba at all. This might lead us to believe that Rudolf was exaggerating their closeness in an attempt to boost Leoba's importance. Whether this was the case is not really important in this discussion. The *Life* gives us at least the idea that even in the mind of a monk there was nothing scandalous in a close friendship between a holy man and a holy woman.

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47 C. H. Talbot, *The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1954) 214.

48 Talbot. *Anglo-Saxon Missionaries* 222.

49 Talbot. *Anglo-Saxon Missionaries* 221-22.

FRIENDSHIPS IN LETTERS AND POEMS

- *Jerome and Marcella, Paula and Eustochium*

Jerome, like Anselm many centuries later, based his friendships on ideals. In his letters he often expressed love for people he did not know, but he had friendships with people he knew personally and for whom he could feel a genuine love on an individual basis. Some of Jerome's most notable friendships were with women such as Marcella, Paula and her daughter Eustochium. The letters he wrote to these friends are not purely private communications, however. More often than not they seem to be written for the common good, that is, for the communities of Christians to which the recipients of the letters belonged. One cannot help but feel that Jerome was always speaking to the people beyond the addressee, and the letters are usually very rhetorical. Yet, at the same time, there are instances in these letters which imply genuine friendship and respect, as, for example, in a letter to Marcella in which Jerome defends himself against some public accusation:

> I know that as you read these words you will knit your brows, and fear that my freedom of speech is sowing the seeds of fresh quarrels; and that, if you could, you would gladly put your finger on my mouth to prevent me from even speaking of these things which others do not blush to do.[50]

J.N.D. Kelly notes that in two letters to Marcella Jerome shows some friendly playfulness, when he calls her his "task-mistress" and "slave-driver".[51] His harshness in a letter to Paula after her daughter Blesilla's death is, on the other hand, a sign that Jerome sometimes took his ascetic principles a little bit too far, and thus lost sight of the fact that people still have to deal with their human emotions.[52]

Jerome's relationship with the much younger Eustochium is important to note in relation to this study of the friendship between Goscelin and Eve. Like Eve, Eustochium came from an aristocratic background and had dedicated her

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50 Jerome, *Letters and Selected Works*, Letter XVII. Incidentally, Goscelin refers to section one of this letter; see notes in Talbot.

51 Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies* 28 and 29.

52 Letter XXXIX and Kelly *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies* 99.

life to virginity at a very early age. She appears to have been "an entirely natural girl, happy in her religion."[53] Jerome's rather pedantic treatment of her gifts in honour of a martyr's feast day in one of his letters to her shows him, I think, to be too detached from human expression to accept her as a friend.[54] The fact that he does not consider her a friend might be illustrated by a passage from his famous letter on virginity addressed to her, where he refers to her as,

> my Eustochium, daughter, lady, fellow-servant, sister – these names refer the first to your age, the second to your rank, the third to your religious vocation, the last to the place which you hold in my affection.[55]

Jerome's letters were influential throughout the Middle Ages and his friendships with women must have provided an important model for friendships between religious men and women. Goscelin refers to several of Jerome's letters in the *Liber confortatorius* and he shows an awareness of Jerome's relationship with Paula, Marcella and Eustochium.[56]

- *Radegund of Poitiers and Venantius Fortunatus*

Venantius Fortunatus († *c.* 609) is known through a great number of poems which he wrote for many of the most important persons of his age in Merovingian Gaul. Some seventy-two of these were poems written for noble women.[57] Judith W. George, in her book on the poet, observes that on the whole, there are more similarities than differences between the poems written for men and those written for women. She explains that this reflects the "scope for the exercise of power and initiative" that was available to the women of Merovingian Gaul. Fortunatus also wrote poems for Radegund, formerly wife of Clotaire but by then a nun at Poitiers, and for her adopted daughter and abbess Agnes. That his relationship

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53 Kelly *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies* 100.

54 Letter XXXI and Kelly *Jerome: His Life, Writings, and Controversies* 100.

55 Letter XXII.

56 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 31-32, 35, and indirectly on p. 80.

57 Judith W. George, *Venantius Fortunatus: A Latin Poet in Merovingian Gaul* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992) 153.

with these women was of a very personal nature is reflected in some of his so-called occasional poems which he wrote for them and which he was not willing to publish during their lifetimes. George says that these poems "depict an intimacy and fondness for which love is a more accurate description than fellowship."[58] Wemple notices that in the poems in which he discusses virginity and the disadvantages of wedlock, Fortunatus shows a better understanding of "feminine psychology than the western Fathers", and she attributes the sensitivity with which he approaches these issues to his close friendship with Radegund and her nuns.[59]

There are several poems dedicated to Radegund which reflect Fortunatus's love for this holy woman, and which, as George remarks, are in stark contrast with his formal *Vita* which he wrote after the death of the saint. The poem *Ad Radegundem cum rediit*, for instance, written on the occasion of Radegund's return after her lent retreat, closely resembles a poem of romantic love:

> Vnde mihi rediit radianti lumine vultus?
> quae nimis absentem te tenuere morae?
> abstuleras tecum, revocas mea gaudia tecum,
> paschalem facis bis celebrare diem.[60]

Even if we should not take this as a serious declaration of love to show a complete dependence on the beloved's presence, and even if the poem is a tongue-in-cheek token of friendship, it shows, nevertheless, that there existed between them an intimacy in which there was room for jest every now and then. Fortunatus's close friendship with Agnes apparently also gave rise to gossip and,

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58 George, *Venantius Fortunatus: A Latin Poet* 153. I am also relying in this discussion on sources such as already cited and Jo Ann McNamara and John E. Halborg, with E Gordon Whatley, eds. and trans., *Sainted women of the Dark Ages* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1992) and Suzanne Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society: Marriage and the Cloister 500 to 1100* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1981).

59 Wemple, *Women in Frankish Society* 151.

60 ll 1-4. poem 8. 10. "Whence has this countenance returned to me with its radiant light? What delays held you, too long absent? You had taken away my happiness with you, with your return you restore it, and you make Easter doubly a day for celebration." Text and translation from George, *Venantius Fortunatus: A Latin Poet* 196-7.

like Jerome, he had to defend the honour of both of them.[61] Radegund and Agnes are nearly always referred to as his mother and sister. It is as if Fortunatus felt the need to emphasise the innocent nature of their relationship even in those poems that were considered personal. Fortunatus might have had the possibility of posthumous publication in mind. He feels nevertheless uninhibited when he writes about Radegund that "She is dearer to my soul, though he [Germanus, whom he has earlier referred to as "father"] may be more renowned with holy rank, she is dearer than my soul."[62]

- *Saint Anselm and Gunhilda*

Before I look at the two letters written by Anselm to Gunhilda, I will include a short discussion on Anselm's male friends, and his outlook on friendship. This, I hope, will prove useful when considering the *Liber confortatorius*, as Anselm was not only a prolific letter writer, who wrote many of his letters for the sake of friendship, but also Goscelin's contemporary. There is even a chance that they knew each other personally at the close of the eleventh century. Whether or not Goscelin was acquainted with Anselm's early works at the time that he wrote the *Liber* is not of immediate importance, however. Anselm's letters cannot stand in pure isolation either, and we must consider that they reflect, in some ways at least, the intellectual and philosophical climate of that age.[63]

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61 In poem 11. 6, Fortunatus declares he has always regarded Agnes as a sister and Radegund as a mother to the both of them. (George, *Venantius Fortunatus: A Latin Poet* 173) A translation of this poem is published in *Venantius Fortunatus: Personal and Political Poems*, Judith George, trans. (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 1995) 103. "Mother to me in honour, sister sweetly loved, whom I esteem with devotion, faith, heart and soul, with heavenly affection, and not with any bodily sin; I love, not in the flesh, but what the spirit yearns for (...) Alas, I bewail my danger, the fear lest by a slight whisper malicious words thwart my feelings: (15) but yet it is my intent to live with the same hopes, if you wish me to be cherished with sweet love."

62 Poem 8.2.

63 Works on this aspect of Anselm's life include: A. Fiske, 'Saint Anselm and Friendship' 259-90: Brian Patrick McGuire, 'Love, Friendship and Sex in the Eleventh Century: The Experience of Anselm' *Studia Theologica* 28 (1974): 111-152; R. W. Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990).

Saint Anselm did have particular friends but there were many. The early letters, which were written before he became prior of Bec, show ardent declarations of friendship to Gundulf, Henry and Robert, all of whom were monks at Canterbury but were formerly from Bec. To these men, and others as well, Anselm writes that they are of one soul, or rather, they are all his other selves. These letters are written from one monk to another, but even when Gundulf and Henry had been promoted to higher functions, Anselm claims to be equal to them because of their love and friendship. Most of these letters are written purely for the sake of the expression of friendship and they serve no other immediate purpose. Anselm usually makes it clear that the messenger carrying the letters will give them news about Bec or himself.[64] He obviously did not write the letters for that purpose. There is no doubt that Anselm's feelings here are genuine – many other letters are far more formal – yet it is difficult to establish how personal these friendships were. Despite their passionate language, the letters do not reveal any other token of personal affection. It seems that Anselm's notion of friendship is based on an ideal. One of the first letters that appears in the collection (which numbers well over four hundred letters), is to the monk Robert. Anselm declares his unworthiness as a friend to Robert but he also asks him to recommend him to Anastasius, a holy man at Robert's monastery, so that he may be considered Anselm's friend as well.[65] What Anselm seems to ask for in this friendship is the other man's goodwill or benevolence and to secure the prayers of his friend for his soul. This apparent incongruity with the definition of true friendship according to the ancient philosophers is explained by Richard Southern as being integral to what he calls Anselm's *theology* of friendship, in which the fusion of souls in worship is an essential vehicle in the ascent to a complete union with God.[66] Anselm uses the imagery of the fusion of the soul, and the intense language associated with it, in many of his letters. The recipients of these could be his former pupils or fellow monks at Bec, religious lay people whom he knew, or complete strangers whom he knew only by report. He

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64 See also. for example. Letter 167, To Ida, Countess of Boulogne.

65 Letter 3. S. Anselm, *Opera Omnia*, vol III, Franciscus Salesius Schmitt, ed. (Edinburgh: Nelson, 1946).

66 Southern, *A Portrait* 156.

expresses his sincere friendship to them all, and it is only very rarely that we can tell by some phrase that the recipient possibly held a more special place in his heart. At the same time it is clear that Anselm would not indiscriminately write to people about this fusion of souls. In letters to people such as Lanfranc he is far more reserved and so we must assume that the expression of his ideal of friendship might not be appropriate in writing to his ecclesiastical superiors.

Anselm's mode of expression of love towards his fellow monks has been interpreted as a sign of homosexuality by John Boswell,[67] but this interpretation has been convincingly refuted by Southern.[68] Anselm's language is, at times, unusually passionate. It is not so surprising when it is seen in the light of his theology, in which it represents an ideal of Christian love which was extended to almost all who had fully dedicated their lives to God and those that lived a secular life of Christian charity.[69] It is even less so when one takes into consideration the erotic language of the Song of Songs, the interpretation of which as the mystical union of the soul with God was so very important in the theology of the Middle Ages.

Southern writes that Anselm had a close relationship with Gunhilda, daughter of King Harold, who had been living at Wilton for several years as a refugee. She had never taken monastic vows despite wearing the veil and eventually she left Wilton to marry Count Alan Rufus. Whether she formally married him is not clear, but she lived with him for a short time until his death in 1093. Anselm's two letters are the only sources we have of this affair.[70] These letters were written to urge Gunhilda to return to the nunnery which he believed she never should have left in the first place. In Anselm's view, Gunhilda was never eligible for marriage despite the fact that she never took religious vows:

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67 John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1980) 215 and 218-220.

68 Southern, *A Portrait* 148-154.

69 For a study on the words used by Anselm to describe his feelings towards his friends, see A. Fiske. 'Saint Anselm and Friendship.'

70 Southern, *A Portrait* 262.

wearing the veil was a vow in itself. If, as Southern suggests,[71] Gunhilda managed to establish a close personal friendship with Anselm, one which prompted him to express such acute concerns for her spiritual well-being, how is this expressed in the two letters that are known to us? In letter 168, Anselm commences by stating why he is writing to her.

> I would most gladly speak to you if I could, sister of mine truly beloved in God, since the charity by which I wish all men to be saved and the office laid upon me require me to love you with fraternal and paternal affection and to show solicitude for the salvation of your soul because of that very love.[72]

Anselm's love here is based on his duty as a Christian, and although there are many references to the Song of Songs in this letter, these are not used in the same way as in his letters to his male friends. They only describe her duty to her heavenly spouse. The language of the Song is not used as an expression of Anselm's love for her. In the second letter that Anselm wrote to Gunhilda, however, he explicitly calls her his "friend in God and in true friendship" and exhorts her to reply to her "true friend and spiritual father by letter."[73] Although the title of friend seems to be the climax of a rhetorical row of appellations - my beloved ... my sister ... my friend – the very fact that Anselm chooses to call her his friend raises an interesting problem. Is it a sign of true friendship or is it a device in the final attempt to convince her to return to Wilton? I believe that one specific line in this letter is a sign that Gunhilda was regarded in the same way as he regarded many of the other men and women:

> you should know that I advise, beg, beseech and command you by the authority which permits and obliges me to do so, to resume the habit of monastic life which you have cast off and return to the grace of God which you have spurned, (...)[74]

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71 Southern, *A Portrait* 263.

72 Walter Fröhlich, trans., *The Letters of Saint Anselm* vol. 2 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1993) 64. Fröhlich, page 69 note 5, writes that Gunhilda seems to have returned to Wilton as she was remembered there in honour according to William of Malmesbury's *Vita Wulfstani.*

73 Fröhlich, *The Letters of Saint Anselm* 73.

74 Fröhlich, *The Letters of Saint Anselm* 73.

From this we have to assume that it was primarily his episcopal duty that motivated Anselm to write these letters. When Anselm refers to himself as the addressee's true friend, it seems to mean true friend because he is a friend in God.

"Friendship of Philosophy"

Under this heading I would like to consider a completely different kind of relationship from those which have been discussed so far. The qualities of a friend as have been established earlier, sometimes come in the form not of a human friend, but in the form of theology or philosophy, and indirectly, therefore, from God. Consolation and fellowship are found in words of wisdom rather than in a friend. The ideas can nevertheless manifest themselves in personified form. There are two works in which this phenomenon can be seen. The earlier one is Gregory of Nyssa's account of his sister Macrina's teachings on the soul and the resurrection. Gregory has come to her in his grief over the death of their brother Saint Basil. In this dialogue, Macrina admonishes him for showing too much grief and goes on to give an exposition on the resurrection. Although Macrina is his sister, Gregory transforms her into an abstract figure by referring her as "the Teacher" throughout the work. Kevin Corrigan believes that Gregory modelled Macrina here on Socrates in Plato's *Symposium* and Thekla in Methodius of Olympus' *Symposion*, who herself was modelled on Socrates.[75] Gregory, then, made Macrina the embodiment of Wisdom and the source of consolation.

A similar relationship is found in the more famous *Consolation of Philosophy* by Boethius which was widely known in the medieval West. The dialogue between Philosophy and the author presents a relationship without which at least one party is hopelessly lost.[76] Boethius finds consolation and new meaning in his life through the gentle admonitions and teachings of Lady Philosophy. She really

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75 Kevin Corrigan, 'Saint Macrina: The Hidden Face Behind the Tradition,' in: *On Pilgrimage: The Best of Ten Years of Vox benedictina, 1984-1993*, Elspeth Durie and Dewey Kramer, comp. and Margot King, ed.(Toronto: Peregrina, 1994) 106.

76 That the relationship is at least partially mutual may be read in the condition of Philosophy's dress. which although of great splendour, was dusty from neglect, and tattered and torn by the abuse of thieves (Bk I,i).

is the "guardian of his soul", and so fulfils the most important role of a friend. In the case of both Gregory and Boethius, the friend is presented as a messenger of divine Wisdom. In both cases she is a woman. I include this form of spiritual friendship here because in Chapter Five of this thesis I intend to explore the possiblity that Goscelin used the composition of the *Liber confortatorius* as a means of consolation, gaining strength from the act of writing it.

Goscelin and Eve

It seems appropriate at this point to touch briefly upon the friendship between Eve and Goscelin to see how it relates to the relationships discussed above. In the chapter *Partus Dilectionis* in Book One, Goscelin establishes the origins of their relationship; he recalls that when Eve was a little girl, they had spent a lot of time together. Goscelin reminds her that he taught her eloquence and encouraged her in her studies; and that she returned the favour with kindness and books. She used to praise Saint Bertin, which had pleased him because Bertin was the patron saint of his home monastery. Goscelin reminisces about the important occasions which they had shared, such as the dedication ceremonies of the new churches at Westminster and Wilton, and their common grief over Bishop Hermann's death. These occasions had established a bond between them.

It is remarkable how Goscelin seems to take the innocence and purity of his relationship with Eve for granted, as far as explicit defence of the expressed intimacy is concerned. In the main body of the text, he does not touch upon the possibility of people misconstruing the nature of their relationship. Only in the Prologue does he express a wish that the letter will not be subject to vicious rumours.[77] This is, however, the only indication that Goscelin is aware of the fact that there are people who might misinterpret his intentions. It is clear in his mind that they have nothing to worry about. Their love is firmly based in Christ and Christ is a fundamental part of it. It could therefore not be anything but pure. Goscelin emphasises this fact in the "public" announcement of the Prologue,

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77 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 26: *Absint a puro susurrio sibilantes insidie, nequam oculus, vafer digitus, ventilator et cachinnator impurus.*

where he states that "the mystery between the two is blessed (*signatum*) by the second person, Christ, as the duty of virginal and spotless love."[78] For Goscelin, the times they had shared were very important and he greatly resented the fact that he was forced to leave the diocese after the accession of the new bishop.

Eve's apparently sudden decision to become a recluse in France, without consulting Goscelin, was an even bigger blow. Although the beginning of the *Liber* is a lament about her departure, Goscelin repeatedly expresses his affection for Eve and the conviction that they will be reunited in heaven.

> O soul more beloved than light, your Goscelin is present with you with the inseparable presence of the soul, he is near in his better part, with that part with which he was able to love you, with the indivisible part from which no distances of the world can cut off; he greets you in Christ with eternal salvation. Behold, while he judges and governs all things in wisdom, He has touched us with his hand, and separating us for some time, He has taught [us] deeper thoughts, namely that we should pant and hurry to be united in that homeland where we can never ever be separated. For the further He separates us in body, the more inseparably He will reunite that one soul of ours hereafter.[79]

The image of one soul shared by the two of them is distinctly reminiscent of Anselm's imagery of the "fusion of souls", the belief that monastic friends have a joint soul, of which Southern writes that it is "dedicated to the practice of the religious life, which can be murdered, but if once dissolved cannot be reconstituted as two souls ... it is a spiritual entity in the scale of being which (as we have seen in the *Proslogion*) ascends from the lowest and most shadowy existences to the being of God." Nevertheless it seems that Goscelin felt that the reason why he was so upset by Eve's departure was an attachment between them which relied too much on worldly happiness. He writes that their separation teaches deeper thoughts about eternity, but it appears that he had not realised

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78 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 26: *Archanum duorum est Christo medio signatum, uirginee simplicitatis et candide dilectionis prelibans officium. "Signatum"* may be translated as "marked with the sign of the cross".

79 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 27: *O luce dilectior anima, adest tibi Goscelinus tuus, inseparabili anime presentia; adest meliori parte, ea qua te diligere potuit, indiuidua, qua nulla excludant terrarum interstitia; salutat te in Christo salute sempiterna. Ecce tetigit nos manu sua, illa omnia discernens et dispensans sapientia, et ad tempus separans docuit altiora consilia, ut scilicet in illa patria anhelemus et festinemus coniungi, ubi numquam perpetuo possimus seiungi. Quo autem longius corpore remouit, eo inseparabilius unicam aliquando duorum animam resolidabit.*

then that his focus has been on earthly rather than spiritual togetherness. At this early stage of writing, Goscelin is obviously in a state of emotional turmoil in which rhetoric and the expression of actual feelings become hopelessly confused. He "knows" that their separation is a blessing from above yet this does not stop him from bitterly remarking later on in this first book that she has acted to him like a murderer rather than a daughter.[80] In his eyes, Eve has betrayed their relationship – if not their friendship – by not consulting him in the matter. Goscelin is tossed between this feeling of betrayal and the need to believe that there is a divine reason for their temporary separation. To bridge this gap he conceives it his duty to encourage her in her brave new venture and to give her the spiritual advice he thinks she will need. The book that he writes for her is written to encourage and console himself as much as Eve, and he shares many of his own memories and insecurities with her. Chapter Five of this thesis will explore in greater detail how Goscelin deals with these feelings of loss and hope.

Goscelin had a rich tradition on which to build his own relationships with people, and glancing through the list of authors he quotes or to which he refers indirectly, we immediately recognise some of the major writers on the subject of friendship, such as Augustine and Jerome. In the first book of the *Liber confortatorius*, a great many instances of friendship, but also of other kinds of relationship, are referred to. These could point us towards Goscelin's own perception of his relationship with Eve but if this is so, it is a very complex relationship. Goscelin quotes examples of friendship between mother and son, in which he identifies either with the mother or with the son. His grief over the loss of Eve is tentatively compared with the grief of the Virgin at the crucifixion. Goscelin realises that nothing could ever compare to her grief, but the chief purpose in the comparison is that Jesus at least took pity on his mother and his disciples by forewarning them.[81] He identifies with the son when he expresses the hope that Eve's prayers and tears will be directed towards his salvation, referring to Monica's tears for Augustine.[82] He identifies with fathers for the loss of their children when he realises he compares unfavourably to biblical fathers

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80 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 30: *Parricida ei facta es pro filia.*

81 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 30 and 31.

82 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 33.

such as Tobias, Jephta and David who lost their children, or Abraham who would have sacrificed his only child. These fathers coped with their grief because it had been the will of God, and Goscelin has to admit that he finds this difficult.[83] There are also examples of people who had strong bonds who were not in a parent-child relationship. Strong bonds may be seen in siblings, such as Sabinus and Sabina who were parted in this world but reunited by martyrdom,[84] but also by complete strangers who are united by their faith and holiness. To show how strong such a spiritual bond can be, Goscelin gives the example of Saint Nicholas, who, when still alive and living in remote regions, was summoned by the invocations of sailors in need. Nicholas appeared to them and subdued the tempest that was putting their lives in danger.[85] A bond like that even existed between saints in heaven and their devotees still in their mortal bodies, as the example of the seventh-century abbess Modesta and Saint Gertrude serves to show.[86] Goscelin shows a great admiration for the friendships shown by the saints to mortal men. He gives several more examples and concludes with the friendship that Saint Edith had shown to her community at Wilton and the sadness that she must have felt that Eve had departed from it.

More traditional examples of friendship are also part of Goscelin's exposition of the subject. David and Jonathan are notable, as is the relationship of the disciples of Christ with each other, and the friendship of Saints Peter and Paul. If anything, Goscelin's choice of examples shows that in his mind Christian friendship is not limited by traditional definitions, which, as we have seen, only provide for perfect friendship between peers. He gives evidence of the diversity in the manifestations of friendship in Christ, and he seems comfortable in applying all these to his own relationship with Eve.

We would expect that the relationship would lean towards a father and daughter dynamic suitable to the difference in age and their stations in life, as

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83 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 32 and 63. Other examples of parent-child relationships include the pagan fathers of Perpetua and Sabinus and Sabina; both fathers are shown to have been converted by their children's conviction of faith.

84 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 43.

85 Talbot. *Liber confortatorius* 44-45.

86 Talbot. *Liber confortatorius* 43.

indeed McGuire believes it to be.[87] This had probably been the case for a long time, especially when Eve was only a child and Goscelin her teacher and confessor who had felt a human attachment to her. The accusation of *parricida* expressed earlier is evidence of this, but his approach to her suggests another level of experience. In the *Liber confortatorius* Goscelin seldom addresses her directly as his daughter. There are single occasions where he calls her *pignus meum dulce* and *pignus anime mee dulcissimum* and *pusilanimes*, but when he uses the word *filia*, he refers not to her relationship to him – spiritual or quasi-familial – but to the soul's relation to God. Far more frequent is the use of *dulcissima* and *anima mi* and combinations of this, as well as *karissima* and *dilectissima*.[88] Once he calls her *domina mea*, when he implores her to save his soul with her prayers. Here her status as enclosed seems to be the justification of the appellation.[89] He does not once refer to her as his sister. On the whole Goscelin uses language reminiscent of the Song of Songs and the letters of Saint Anselm to his friends. In those letters, which are all addressed to men, Anselm used similar modes of address to Goscelin in the *Liber confortatorius*. In letters to women such as Queen Matilda, Countess Ida, and Abbess Matilda written when he was archbishop, but also in an early letter to Frodelina when he was still a monk at Bec, Anselm uses the words *carissima* and *dilectissima* as well, but these are always modified by words describing the relationship between the author and the addressee: *soror dilectissima*; *dominae et matri et filiae carissimae*; *domina carissima – et ideo domina et carissima, quia vitae meritis valde praestantior.*[90] The relationship thus established, justifies the use of these words: these are used as brother to sister, son to mother, or servant (*servus*) to lady. The intensity that the words have when they are used in isolation is diminished by the safety net of the familial relationship of the monastic environment, or the

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87 McGuire, *Friendship and Community* 201.

88 See the table in Appendix A which shows the occurrences of these direct appellations.

89 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 33: *Nos autem reuou precibus, qui non tuam salutem, sed nostram desolationem plangimus. Immo imploro te, o domina mea, si unquam paruitatem nostram dilexisti, meos luctus cum tuis lacrimis offer altissimi benignitati, per ipsum cui te soli inclusisti.*

90 Respectively from letters 268, 244, and 45. *S. Anselmi Opera Omnia* vols. III and IV, Schmitt. ed.

unequal relationship of lady and subject. Goscelin's modes of address, on the other hand, allow for an interpretation similar to that of Anselm's relations with his monastic friends. Whenever he modifies the adjectives by using its subject, it is almost always with *anima*. He addresses her as one soul to another. Just as the poetry of the Song should be interpreted as the love between God and the soul, so should Goscelin's love be interpreted as the love of one individual soul to another.

The equality expressed here could be seen as an early manifestation of what Ann Clark Bartlett has termed, a "discourse of familiarity". She defines this as a discourse which "adapt[s] several conventions drawn from a long-standing tradition of spiritual friendship between men. These include effusively humble addresses to readers, characterizations of female audiences as "sisters", the representation of sexual equality, and direct refutations of misogynistic commonplaces."[91] Bartlett coins this term in connection with Middle English devotional texts for women from the late-fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. She notices in these "a further challenge to the conventional spiritual hierarchy of God, man, and woman, and [...] an alternative to the ascetic antifeminism of earlier devotional literature."[92]

In the following chapters, I will be studying the ways in which Goscelin provides further evidence of a belief of sexual equality in spiritual matters. Goscelin does not make any overt statements to this effect. His belief may have been in the back of his mind, but the way he advances it suggests a subconscious conviction. The warm memories of his time at Wilton point to the fact that frequent and prolonged contact with monastic women has provided him with a respect and admiration for the sex. This respect naturally finds expression in the work he wrote for the woman on whom his affections were focused.

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91 Ann Clark Bartlett, *Male Authors, Female Readers: Representation and subjectivity in Middle English Devotional Literature* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1995) 91.

92 Bartlett, *Male Authors, Female Readers* 91.

CHAPTER THREE

ENCOURAGEMENT AND EDUCATION

Education is an admirable thing but it is well to remember from time to time that nothing worth knowing can be taught.

Oscar Wilde

INTRODUCTION

Looking after the spiritual welfare of a friend is one of the duties of friendship, as we have seen in the previous chapter. Goscelin, like so many religious authors, saw it as one of his specific duties to encourage and teach Eve. To call the *Liber confortatorius* a rule for a recluse, however, is both to give it more weight than it deserves in a tradition of rules for religious living, and to neglect the work as a personal statement with literary qualities. Goscelin intended his letter to be a guide for Eve in her undertaking, an encouragement written as a testimony, perhaps a final one, by the man who had considered himself her teacher and her spiritual father. When we approach the *Liber*, there are some special factors that have to be taken into consideration. Perhaps the most important one is that the text is very much a product of its time. By the eleventh century there was already a vast tradition of writing, firmly rooted in the classical trivium of rhetoric, grammar, and dialectic, which was adapted for the written medium by numerous medieval scholars and which from the twelfth century onwards would evolve into the much-practised *artes dictaminis*. It is this reliance on rhetoric which greatly hinders the modern scholar who wants to get to the person behind the words. Some kind of evaluation of the concept of rhetoric in medieval writing as well as the use of rhetorical language for expressing genuine sentiments is therefore a prerequisite for the study of medieval texts.

To do justice to Goscelin's texts, I believe that his style, which earlier critics have referred to as convoluted and verbose,[1] should be re-evaluated from the viewpoint of his intent, and also as part of a tradition in which later generations of authors would praise his literary qualities. It could be suggested that a simple,

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1 See footnote 35 of the Introduction.

straightforward style would not, in Goscelin's mind, have done justice to the sublime nature of his subject matter, whether these were the *Lives* of Anglo-Saxon saints or his feelings for and relationship to Eve. Monastic education was, of course, steeped in rhetorical tradition. The rhetorical arts were the vehicles by which the monks learned to read and write; as a result, rhetorical commonplaces occur as frequently as allusions to the Bible. Goscelin's work is no exception, and to accuse him of a lack of originality which, as mentioned in the Introduction, some of his post-medieval critics have, is not only unfair, but also not entirely true. Goscelin is merely expressing himself in the phrases by which he learned his second language. A modern learner of English who only had access to the complete works of Chaucer in Chaucer's English would not have been able to express his feelings in any more individual form than many of the monastic authors of the Middle Ages. Despite this, Goscelin managed to bring to his work a certain authenticity through his approach in encouraging Eve in her undertaking.

This chapter will be concerned with the educational functions of the *Liber*, and this will entail a discussion as to what kind of text it is and how it compares to other works written for female religious. The discussion in this chapter will focus on the purely educational approach of the text, which will be supported by a few case studies. Chapter Four will also examine particular educational functions; this chapter is therefore not an exhaustive discussion of the *Liber* as a book of instruction. First I will consider whom Goscelin envisaged as his audience when he addressed his book to Eve, and whether it is possible to place the *Liber confortatorius* in a particular genre. This will be followed by an examination of whether Goscelin had a designated "plan" for his letter, that is to say, whether it is possible to recognise a strategy in Goscelin's approach to his subjects: are the books haphazard collations of examples from biblical and patristic texts, or is it possible to discern an educational purpose? I will address the questions of what the implications of such a framework are, and whether it is possible to distinguish conventional educational tools. This will be followed by a study of how Goscelin approached the subjects he discussed and how he used his sources to put his views across. I will also examine the ways in which the text provides us with an idea of the sophistication of Eve's learning and abilities, as well as the extent of Goscelin's learning and talents.

Audience and Genre

Before looking at the educational contents of the *Liber confortatorius*, a consideration of the enscripted audience as well as a consideration of the genre to which the work belongs is needed. A key question that needs to be answered is whom Goscelin had in mind as the reader of his work. Obviously the work is addressed to Eve, but it was common practice in the tradition in which Goscelin was writing to address a treatise to one specific person, while intending it for a much larger readership. This is especially true in the tradition of the epistolary genre. A letter may have been written for the benefit of the general public, but rather than addressing it to the anonymous readers, the author would address it to one particular person who was often a public figure. Often these letters were written to provide an answer to a real concern in society.[2] The author might have been asked to provide a treatise on a given subject by the addressee, who would then make sure that the letter was copied and circulated.

A good example of this practice in relation to advice given to religious women are Jerome's letters. When we read, for example, Letter 22 addressed to Eustochium, which should be classed as a treatise on virginity, we know that he was not just writing for Eustochium, but for all the unnamed individuals of the Christian community to whom this letter would have been read out.[3] The same applies to Letter 130 addressed to Demetrias, a Roman ascetic who had fled to North Africa with her mother after the fall of Rome.[4] Here, Jerome may actually be seen as addressing all virgins by addressing one particular ascetic whom he knew only by the reputation of her family. He starts the letter by explaining why it does not matter that he did not know his addressee personally:

> Let disparagement stand aloof and envy depart; let no charge of self-seeking be brought against me. I write as a stranger to a stranger, at least as far as the personal appearance is concerned. For the inner person finds himself well-known by that knowledge whereby the apostle Paul

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2 Jean Leclercq, 'Le genre épistolaire au Moyen Age,' *Revue du Moyen Age Latin* 2 (1946) 64.

3 See above Chapter Two, p. 86.

4 Joan M. Petersen, trans. and ed., *Handmaids of the Lord: Contemporary Descriptions of Feminine Asceticism in the First Six Christian Centuries*, Cistercian Studies Series 143 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1996) 219.

> knew the Colossians and many other believers, whom he had not previously seen.[5]

The proviso with which this passage starts is a public announcement and this letter should therefore not be considered a personal letter *per se*. Jerome did not write it as a stranger to a stranger, but as a Christian to a Christian, and not in the least as a church authority to a woman. In the first part of the letter, Jerome refers to Demetrias in the third person, and he praises the ideal of virginity. He then announced that the latter part of the letter was to be addressed to the virgin herself,[6] but throughout it really remains a public exhortation. Further on in the letter he writes,

> I hesitate about what I am going to say, but, as often happens, whether I like it or not, it must be said – not that I have reason to fear anything of the kind in your case, for probably you know nothing of such things and have never heard of them – but in advising you, I may warn others.[7]

An author would insert, at different points of the discourse, direct addresses to the recipient of the letter. These could take the form of personal anecdotes involving the two of them or of a personal address which often established the relationship between the writer and the addressee.[8] These devices help to draw the intended audience into this personal relationship. The advice may thus be given sincerity (and authenticity), appearing to come as a part of a caring and loving relationship.

Aelred in his treatise *Rule of Life for a Recluse* never pretended to be writing for his sister's needs alone. By the time of writing, she had in fact already been leading a reclusive life for several years, as is clear from the address.[9] She must

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5 Petersen, *Handmaids of the Lord*, 'Letter130 *To Demetrias*' 221.

6 Petersen, *Handmaids of the Lord* 'Letter130 *To Demetrias*' 229.

7 Petersen, *Handmaids of the Lord* 'Letter 22 *To Demetrias*' 241-242.

8 See, for instance, the quotation given in Chapter One: "my Eustochium, daughter, lady, fellow-servant, sister - these names refer the first to your age, the second to your rank, the third to your religious vocation, the last to the place which you hold in my affection."

9 Aelred of Rievaulx, *A Rule of Life for a Recluse,* Mary Paul Macperson, trans., in: *Treatises and the Pastoral Prayer* Cistercian Fathers Series 2 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1971) 43.

have managed quite well on her own good sense, for as her brother's treatise shows, the smallest trespass leads to eternal damnation. The fact that he addressed his advice to his sister should be seen as a means of honouring her choice and of helping her in guiding the other recluses living near her. Aelred, after having gone through a list of things which are inappropriate for a recluse, writes,

> You, my sister, have never needed, thank God, to be reminded of these things. Yet I decided to include them since it was not for yourself alone that you wished me to write this rule, but also for the young girls who, on your advice, are eager to embrace a life like yours.[10]

Aelred does not use his sister's given name, but prefers the more generic "my sister" which is a shift towards making the letter already a more public communication. By doing this he ensures that women who are not his blood relatives could interpret the letter as addressed to, and therefore could identify themselves with, a sister in monastic profession. This process of the reader's identification through appellation or "hailing" in the text by a generic term such as "dear friend" or "dear sister in God" is considered by reader-response theorists as a means of recruiting the individual reader as the subject or as transforming the individual reader into the subject of the narrative, and making it at the same time applicable to all intended readers.[11] Goscelin, too, made use of such addresses but he never called Eve "sister", nor did he use the term daughter when he addressed her directly. He also refrained from using the name Eve in the main body of the text, preferring to call her "anima mea" and "karissima"; he uses these personal appellations very frequently.

Obviously, an author would like to reach a wide audience, especially if the work is applicable to a whole group of people. Aelred's *Rule* and the *Ancrene Wisse* are notable examples of this. There is, nevertheless, a basic problem in where the line should be drawn between what is a personal communication and what is (semi-) public. A similar difficulty may perhaps be found in the personal

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10 Aelred, *Rule* 52.

11 See Bartlett, *Male Authors, Female Readers* 19, quoting Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes toward an Investigation),' in: *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, Ben Brewster, trans. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971): 174.

letters of Abelard and Heloise, and perhaps even in Anselm's letters of friendship to some of his close friends. The problem with Anselm's letters is that many of them are rather short letters which were written to establish a bond of friendship but do not contain any edifying advice on practical or doctrinal matters. They were nevertheless in the public domain, as their inclusion in letter collections – some of them started by Anselm himself – shows. Although there can be no doubt that there was such a thing as a purely private letter, with the letters that have survived we can often be fairly sure that the writers were constantly aware that their messages could be of interest to people other than the original recipient. An author, therefore, must have always been careful with what he wrote, to avoid it being misconstrued.

The question here is whether the *Liber confortatorius* was also written with the intention of reaching a larger audience. The fact that the only copy of the *Liber confortatorius* survives in a manuscript dated nearly a century later suggests that its contents were found interesting to people other than Eve, especially since the manuscript belonged to an abbey in Normandy and not to one of the monasteries near the hermitages where she had lived.[12] The length of the work could be another indication. The manuscript in which the text survives is well over one hundred folios long. This might point to the fact that Goscelin had a patron who allowed him to use much valuable writing material and may further indicate that he was commissioned to write this work for a larger audience.

The question needs to be asked, however, what Goscelin's intentions may have been. Goscelin was well aware that letters were often public communications. He gave evidence of being familiar with Jerome's letters, referring to the ones to Paula and Eustochium on two separate occasions. Rhetoric aside, however, it seems indisputable that in the first instance the *Liber* was written solely for Eve. The Prologue, which is a statement to a larger public, is explicit in stating that this work is intended only for her to whom it was written. Although this could be put down to rhetorical convention, such a

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12 Closer study of the English interest in the other texts of the manuscript may suggest that this copy or its exemplar came from Canterbury rather than Anjou. If this were so, we may speculate that the *Liber confortatorius* was never actually dispatched to Eve.

stipulation would be superfluous if letters were considered private rather than semi-public communications. The fact that there was a need for the Prologue at all is an indication of Goscelin's awareness of possible exposure to other readers. Furthermore, Goscelin was not a great church authority like Jerome. He does not write from those premises. Although he did not exclude the possibility that other people might read it, I will argue that it was not written for a larger audience. In the main body of the text, there is no indication at any point that Goscelin had other readers in mind, nor did he employ Aelred's strategy of giving advice which he had to admit his addressee did not need. Neither did he repeatedly impart information about Eve's virtues in order to make her an example for other readers, as Jerome did in his address to Demetrias. Furthemore, the nature of some of his expressions is such that it could have caused him – or Eve for that matter – embarrassment if the letter had fallen into the wrong hands. For example, although he does not mention him by name, Goscelin referred to Bishop Osmund of Salisbury, who was to be canonised a few centuries later, as viperous.[13] Throughout, Goscelin specifically addressed Eve. There is an intimacy in his recollections of their time together that seems to leave no room for others except Christ. His pain at her departure and the harsh accusation of what he perceived to be her sin against charity were really not intended for other people's eyes. It was his grief over their separation and the hope of their eventual reunion in heaven that prompted the composition of the *Liber confortatorius*.

Yet, the significance of the name Eve forces us to consider the possibility that Goscelin did have a larger audience in mind. It could be argued that Goscelin may have used Eve to write to "Everywoman" or even the entire *Ecclesia*. However, the *Liber confortatorius* shows little evidence that this was the case. If it were, Goscelin surely would have made much more of the name Eve and the associations which accompany it. Instead, Goscelin makes minimal use of the significance of the name in both Christian and biblical history. His attitude towards the name Eve comes to light in a recollection of Hermann playfully teasing Eve about her name.

> As often as our bishop called you to his paternal bosom and summoned in such a voice: « Eve mother of the living », I said, alluding to the name:

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13 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 29.

> «she was the mother of the living, but this woman will be the daughter of the living.»[14]

Alluding to the name, Goscelin agreed that it is the name of the mother of the living, but, sensitive to the associations of the sinful woman who had caused the downfall of all mankind, Goscelin corrected the bishop, saying that Eve will be the daughter of the living. She would be an inhabitant of the "land of the living", that is, the heavenly Jerusalem.[15] This is not necessarily the "Jerusalem to come" but can also signify the "Jerusalem in waiting" which are the Christians who have dedicated their lives to God and who are anticipating the heavenly city in their monasteries.[16] In recalling this episode, Goscelin achieved two things. He reminded Eve of the home and spiritual kin she had left behind at Wilton. Yet he must also have realised that he had foreseen the course which Eve's life would take, even if this is not exactly what he had had in mind. This little episode is the most explicit reference Goscelin made to Eve's name, and by including it early on in his discourse he invalidated any association of this Eve with the original Eve.[17]

I would argue, therefore, that Goscelin was not writing for "Everywoman". There are other factors which would support this. For example, Goscelin cannot have had literally every woman in mind, only nuns and recluses. There is no doubt about the fact that he is addressing issues concerned specifically with the reclusive life. He must have been writing, therefore, to the "new Eve", that is to say, the woman who helped redeem mankind through the second Adam, the

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14 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 29. *Quotiens te pontifex noster paterno sinu et uoce tali excipiebat: "Eua mater uiuentium", ego alludens ad nomen: "illa", inquam, "mater uiuentium, hec erit filia uiuentium".*

15 See Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: a Study of Monastic Culture,* Catharine Mishrahi, trans., 3rd ed. (New York, NY: Fordham UP, 1982) 56.

16 Leclercq, *Love of Learning* 56. These thoughts were expressed by Saint Bernard, who saw Clairvaux as "a Jerusalem associated with the heavenly one through the heart's complete devotion, through the imitation of its life, and through real spiritual kinship." (Saint Bernard, *Epistolae* 64 (PL 182.169), quoted by Leclerq, *Love of Learning* 55-56).

17 It is not clear from the *Liber confortatorius* whether the name Eve was given to her at birth, or whether she assumed the name as a nun. The anecdote quoted above seems to point to a name given at birth.

Virgin Mary, who is the example for all nuns. Goscelin's general silence about the original Eve's sin which was considered to be perpetuated in all women (a point which most other authors did not fail to pick up) is a forceful argument that Goscelin did not intend to use the appellation "Eve" as applicable to all women. Any obvious references to Eve's name are restricted. When referring to the Fall of Man, he wrote that it was Adam who lost Paradise for mankind: "The enemy had conquered the first Adam with gluttony, vainglory, avarice (...) The serpent seduced a man with malignant cleverness, and God with benign wisdom supplanted the seducer through a man."[18] It would not have taken much imagination for Goscelin to link the two Eves, and, true to tradition, to make his Eve stand, as it were, for all the daughters of Eve by exploiting the name. All he would have had to do is substitute Eve for Adam, and the Virgin for Christ, as indeed Jerome did in his letter to Eustochium: "Death came through Eve, life through Mary. And therefore a richer gift of virginity has flowed upon women, because it began with a woman."[19] Using a name which is inextricably bound to the source of all Christian misogyny in order to invite identification by a wider audience does not fit in with Goscelin's pro-feminist ideology.[20] Furthermore, by referring to Christ as the second Adam, the name Eve lost something of its stigma as it is thus immediately related to the second Eve, the Virgin Mary.

In addition to these arguments, I would add that the Eve to whom he addressed his work was a very real and individual person whose existence is testified by other sources. She was a person with whom Goscelin had been closely associated for nearly twenty years. If this Eve had been a passing acquaintance, it might have been argued that Goscelin took up the opportunity to write a general work for all religious women addressed to a woman called Eve. Considering the closeness between the two which Goscelin suggests existed, I think it must be assumed that this work was primarily written for Eve. This does not mean that it was written for her to the exclusion of all other people. Goscelin

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18 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 53: *Uicerat hostis primum Adam gula, uana gloria, auaritia (...) SERPENS maligna calliditate hominem seduxit, et Deus benigna sapientia seductorem per hominem subplantauit.*

19 Petersen, *Handmaids of the Lord* 'Letter 22 *To Eustochium*' 187.

20 See Chapter Four.

must have been aware that his communication to Eve might be read by more people than just Eve, but it seems clear that it was written primarily for Eve's benefit, and only on a secondary level for other readers, recluses or otherwise. It could be argued that the passage quoted above shows a conscious, but implicit, shift from the common association of the name Eve with all women (as the *mater viventium*) to this particular Eve, the intended recipient of his letter.

The position that Eve was the only intended audience of the *Liber confortatorius* could be reinforced by establishing the genre to which the text may be considered to belong. The form and the instructive contents make it difficult to classify the work under any one heading.[21] The *Liber confortatorius* is not a "rule". It does not compare easily to prescriptive forms of living, such as those written by the Church Fathers, or later rules for recluses. If the *Liber confortatorius* is considered as a treatise written for a woman, the number of possible classifications is restricted. A comparison with other works written specifically for women seems to be inevitable. For the immediate context of the *Liber* - those texts that could have functioned as sources and those that were its near contemporaries - we are limited to the treatises on virginity, and Aelred's *Rule* and the *Ancrene Wisse*, which expand on the subject of virginity. Earlier treatises on virginity, such as those written by Ambrose[22] and Jerome, may be considered as rules for life for women living in a community; and although they were not written specifically for recluses, the concerns raised by the authors have much in common with later writings for women leading a solitary religious life. Jerome, for example, had only a few major concerns in his letter to Eustochium. Despite the fact that he stated at the beginning of his text that he was not going to write in praise of virginity or about the sorrows of motherhood, his major concern was the preservation of virginity and the disadvantages of the married life. Much of the advice that he had to offer to the women of Eustochium's community concerned the preservation of bodily and spiritual virginity. This

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21 Warren, for one, considers the *Liber confortatorius* the first English anchorite rule. Warren, *Anchorites and their Patrons* 294.

22 Ambrose wrote two treatises on the subject; one is addressed to his sister as a letter, and so is a treatise that has an explicit adressee. The other starts with the assumption that it is addressed to all Christians, but it soon seems to turn exclusively to female virginity.

advice usually took the form of warnings against the dangers of wine and food, and association with married women. Jerome especially stressed that the true virgins of Christ need to beware of so-called virgins who may be so in body but lack all Christian modesty and purity of mind.[23] In his letter to Demetrias he pronounced his objections to women taking up the solitary life in no uncertain terms:

> Still for men, there is always the risk that, being withdrawn from the society of their fellows, they may become exposed to unclean and ungodly ideas, and in the fulness of their arrogance and disdain, may look down on everyone but themselves .... Now if all this is true of men, how much more does it apply to women, whose fickle and vacillating minds, if left to their own devices, soon slide down to something worse.[24]

Jerome's concerns were primarily about the need to instruct women in keeping their bodily chastity, and in this he fits into a long tradition of authors writing for women, such as Tertullian, Saint Cyprian and Saint Ambrose, on the subject of virginity.[25] The concerns raised in these early writings for women echo through the centuries and were to have a lasting effect on how women are perceived.[26]

In a number of key issues, the *Liber confortatorius* is very different from these treatises and rules written for women which pre- and post-date it. In comparison to Aelred's rule,[27] for example, the *Liber* provides very little practical advice for everyday life. Goscelin does not tell Eve in any explicit manner what she should and should not eat or how she should behave to and communicate

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23 Petersen, *Handmaids of the Lord* 'Letter 22 *To Eustochium*' 174.

24 Petersen, *Handmaids of the Lord* 'Letter 130 *To Demetrias*' 240.

25 One of Ambrose's treatises on virginity, the letter addressed to his sister, was known to Goscelin, who referred to it in the *Liber*, a copy appears on the Peterborough book list, and it is perhaps the closest of all these writings for women to the *Liber confortatorius*.

26 A study of how the *Liber*'s message differs from its forebears is part of the following chapter. I will restrict myself here to thematic differences.

27 Aelred's *De institutione inclusarum*, by rights the first English anchorite rule of which we know, shares many of the Church Fathers' concerns but it is specifically written for recluses and is thus tailored to what Aelred perceived as their specific needs. The Rule is set out with three clear subjects in mind: a rule for the outer man which covered the practicalities of every-day life: a rule for the inner man, purity of heart and mind, yet still showing a major concern with "outer" things; and a threefold meditation on the past, present and future.

with other people. Whereas Aelred refers to servants, gossips, confessors, and people coming for advice, Goscelin only mentions on one occasion Eve's one companion of whom he knew, and he only makes one implicit reference to a priest when he advises Eve to take the *viaticum* daily. It may have been that Goscelin did not feel he had the knowledge or authority to prescribe the details of a recluse's life. He knew that Eve had moved to a place where there was at least one other recluse who could have taught her about the day-to-day routine of her new vocation. Goscelin's concern was almost exclusively with Eve's spiritual welfare and he taught her by giving examples. Examples of saints and ancient philosophers, for instance, serve to show that they lived on a simple diet. Rather than making an outright command to do or leave certain things, Goscelin wanted Eve to look at the examples of the saints, and even those of the pagan philosophers, to guide her in her undertaking. It is as if he did not think it was up to him to tell her what she could and could not do. He points her towards the examples of Horace, Boethius, Socrates, Diogenes,[28] John the Baptist, Mary of Egypt, and Genovefa, but allows her to extricate the meaning herself. This does not mean that the *Liber confortatorius* is wholly devoid of direct advice, but it is far less explicit than in other writings of the kind. The most obvious reason for this has to be that Eve had already been trained as a nun before becoming a recluse. Goscelin assumed, or more likely knew, that Eve had a thorough knowledge of the Rule of Saint Benedict. He refers to the Rule many times in the *Liber*, and it is absent from the reading list which he provides for her.

The fact that Eve was a professed nun made, I believe, an important difference in Goscelin's attitude towards her. Although she was many years his junior, and his longer experience of life may have been the reason for his greater knowledge, Goscelin did not feel he had to reiterate rules of behaviour that were as important to a cenobite - male or female - as they were to a female anchorite. The practical advice that Goscelin *did* give her, then, was more specific to her new situation as he envisaged it. It is unlikely that Goscelin knew the exact details of Eve's new situation. It could be argued that his idea of it was based more on an idealistic concept than on reality. It is, then, on his *idea* of her situation that Goscelin based his advice for her. The reading list which he

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28 Following Jerome in *Against Jovinian* Bk IV.

provided and which I shall discuss below, could be seen as an example of this. It is perfectly possible that Eve did not have access to such a collection as this list presupposes.

On the whole, therefore, I would say that the *Liber confortatorius* shows little resemblance to what are generally described as rules of life. It simply lacks the practical as well as the prescriptive nature of rules. Nevertheless, it was written to provide advice and spiritual exhortation. In one respect it is a *florilegium*, a book of abbreviated texts and quotations selected from the Bible and the writings of the Fathers, often used in the *lectio divina*. As such it could have been intended as an aid for Eve in her meditations. Goscelin himself showed the meditative effects of what he was writing down for Eve. He wrote that he had exceeded his intention after his meditation on the Virgin's grief at the Crucifixion and the bond between the three virgins (Christ, Mary and John);[29] this could be interpreted either that as a genuine digression from his original plan or as a subtle incentive to Eve to meditate on such things while reading. The wide-ranging scope of authors and *exempla* – which he left mostly for Eve to interpret – would correspond with such a function. Goscelin addressed Eve's inner life and he was writing at a time which saw the beginnings of a new, more individual and inward-looking spirituality.[30] Goscelin handed out the material for Eve's prayers, meditations and studies. He directed her on the course which some of the meditations could take by drawing on his own experience, but he did not provide a step-by-step guide as Aelred did.

Barbara Newman uses the term "literature of formation" in the context of Abelard's letters to the nuns of the Paraclete,[31] and other works of spiritual

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29 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 31.

30 On this subject see Giles Constable, 'The Ideal of Inner Solitude in the Twelfth Century,' in: *Horizons Marins: Itinéraire Spirituels* Mélanges Michel Mollat, vol. I: Mentalités et Sociétés, Henri Dubois, Jean-Claude Hocquet and André Vauchez, eds. (Paris, 1987)27-34, repr. *Culture and Spirituality in Medieval Europe*. See also Colin Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual 1050-1200*, Church History Outlines 5 (London: SPCK, 1972).

31 Barbara Newman, 'Flaws in the Golden Bowl: Gender and Spiritual Formation in the Twelfth Century,' *Traditio* 45 (1989-90): 111-146. Newman lists the *Liber confortatorius* in the appendix as one of the texts studied for her article. She does not discuss the *Liber* as part of her argument.

guidance. This provides a better, although rather general, category description for the *Liber confortatorius*. This would only be a preliminary categorization as it only describes one aspect of the text. In the course of the following chapters I will look at how the *Liber confortatorius* differs from many other works for women religious, and look at further characteristics which will show the work's individual merits and originality within the genres.

Textual and Thematic Structure

There is evidence that Goscelin set out to write the *Liber confortatorius* with a structure in mind. A simple look at the manuscript gives the following information. The text is divided into four books which are of more or less equal length; each book is divided into sections or chapters which have titles giving brief, at times almost poetic, descriptions of the chapter contents. In the second half of Book IV there are, however, no titles, and sections are not self-evident in the manuscript. Separate sections are distinguished by both Wilmart (5 more sections)[32] and Talbot (3 more sections).[33] If Goscelin gave titles to his chapters himself, it is most likely that there were titles for these final sections originally. Throughout, the section headings herald a shift in focus and act as signposts for the reader. As such, they may have functioned as subject markers for different devotional exercises. Eve may thus have been expected to use the *Liber* as a book to which she could return again and again. As we are dealing with a later copy of the text, it is impossible to say whether the twelfth-century copyist just never finished his rubrication or whether there never were titles for these sections. It may be remarked that the section headings are nearly always on the same line as the last words of the previous section, whereas the actual text of a new section always starts on a new line. This makes it more difficult to establish whether these sections have been left open on purpose to be filled in later. I

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32 Wilmart, *Eve et Goscelin* (II) 78-83.

33 I have included a list of all the chapter headings and unmarked sections in Appendix B. The sections distinguished by Wilmart and Talbot are obviously text-based and not based on sign-posting in the manuscript. The large initials in the manuscript vary greatly in size, decoration and colour.

would suggest that this was probably not the case, as the initials do continue throughout the text.

Goscelin explained that he divided the text into four books because he realised that it exceeds the bounds of an exhortatory letter.[34] Despite its length and its divisions, the work has all the attributes of a letter.[35] There is a salutation which is followed by an *exordium* or public statement of the letter's intent, which is in effect the rest of the Prologue. Then there is the narration consisting of the first chapters of Book I which set the scene, as it were, in its description of Eve and Goscelin's common past, their spiritual relationship, and the new paths that they both had to follow. This is followed by the exhortation and encouragement to which the title refers. At the letter's conclusion, Goscelin describes his eventual reunion with Eve in heaven. To this point Goscelin is firmly within the bounds of the classical rules of rhetoric except for the length of the text, but as this passage shows, Goscelin was fully aware of this aberration. As a letter of instruction, the length of the text was not out of the ordinary. The limits set by classical rhetoric would not be valid for Goscelin's subject matter. Authors, such as Jerome and later Abelard to name but two, wrote lengthy treatises in the form of letters. Goscelin's apology should therefore be seen as rhetorical convention rather than an admission of having violated the rules of the art of letter-writing.

A quatrain preceeds the text and summarises the subjects of the four books,

Primus agit questus et consolamina thomus.
Bella cum demonibus mouet euincitque secundus.
Tertius ignitis pellit fastidia uotis.
Edictis sumptis quartus petit astra quadrigis.[36]

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34 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 26. *Sed hec ex<h>ortatoria epistola modum excrescens, in quattuor libellos ubi cursitans respiret stadiatur.*

35 See Alberic of Monte Cassino, *The Flowers of Rhetoric*, Joseph M. Miller, trans., in: *Readings in Medieval Rhetoric*, Joseph M. Miller, *et.al* eds. (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1974) 131-161.

36 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 26. The Talbot edition has a misprint: *Bella* is printed with initial P.
"The first book makes complaints and consolations./ The second stirs up and attains the victory in the wars with demons./ In the third book the prides are driven out with prayers of fire./ The fourth seeks the stars with a four-in-hand of lessons taken to heart."

These lines give a more poetic than accurate description of the contents of the four books, but they are evidence of an attempt to structure the work. This attempt is continued in the opening lines of each book: these establish again what the subject matter of the exhortation is, although Goscelin does not make unequivocal statements on this. Books II, III and IV each start with a biblical quotation or event to introduce the subject, but Book I starts on a very personal note which I will quote again:

> O soul more beloved than light, your Goscelin is present with you with the inseparable presence of the soul, he is near in his better part, with that part with which he was able to love you, with the indivisible part from which no distances of the world can cut off; he greets you in Christ with eternal salvation. Behold, while he judges and governs all things in wisdom, He has touched us with his hand, and separating us for some time, He has taught [us] deeper thoughts, namely that we should pant and hurry to be united in that homeland where we can never ever be separated. For the further He separates us in body, the more inseparably He will reunite that one soul of ours hereafter.[37]

This is a passionate salutation, reminiscent of the letters of friendship between monks. It is the affirmation of their friendship and *dilectio*, and sets the tenor for Book I: Goscelin loves Eve as his own soul; she is not there any more but space cannot separate what Christ has forged together. Goscelin was not, however, ready to accept this condition whole-heartedly. Conditioned, no doubt, by rhetorical hyperbole, he describes how he was overcome by grief even at that moment. The first chapters are about the times that Goscelin and Eve had spent together. He presents the happy memories and the sad ones. Book I is dedicated to love (*dilectio*); it is also about separation and people who loved each other and can no longer be near each other. The first chapters lament Eve's decision to

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Exact translation of this last line especially is, to say the least, troublesome. I have taken it to mean that the four books (and perhaps on a further level, the four levels of biblical interpretation) and the lessons they contain, will eventually lead to heaven.

37 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 27: *O luce dilectior anima, adest tibi Goscelinus tuus, inseparabili anime presentia; adest meliori parte, ea qua te diligere potuit, indiuidua, qua nulla excludant terrarum interstitia; salutat te in Christo salute sempiterna. Ecce tetigit nos manu sua, illa omnia discernens et dispensans sapientia, et ad tempus separans docuit altiora consilia, ut scilicet in illa patria anhelemus et festinemus coniungi, ubi numquam perpetuo possimus seiungi. Quo autem longius corpore remouit, eo inseparabilius unicam aliquando duorum animam resolidabit.*

leave. They constitute a rather harsh accusation that Eve had sinned against charity, causing unbearable grief to the ones she had left behind. Goscelin makes it clear that he was deeply affected by her departure and that he wants Eve to know this. Although they had already been separated for several years prior to her departure, Eve should nevertheless have consulted her spiritual mentor before leaving the country. Goscelin makes no secret of the fact that he had other plans for Eve. Although he applauds her resolution to be a soldier of Christ, and although he would encourage her on her chosen path – he likens himself to an army trumpeter or poet who supported soldiers by way of encouragement – he would have preferred her to have reached her goal as a monastic rather than a solitary.

Half-way through Book I, Goscelin begins to accept her decision. Their separation, like everything else in this life, is of a transitory nature and they will be reunited in heaven. Having compared Eve's voluntary decision to leave England for God to the migrations of people for worldly gains, Goscelin realises that there is a time for everything. Scripture and the Lives of the Fathers are full of examples of souls who loved each other and who could not be together, and Goscelin gave the examples of David and Jonathan, the apostles, Saint John and the Blessed Virgin Mary. To sum up Book I, then, Goscelin moves from a state of intense grief over their physical separation to the acknowledgement of the sublime nature of spiritual love. Nevertheless, Book I is, inevitably, greatly concerned with their earthly lives and emotions.

In Book II the tone changes, as was promised in the verse:

> The voice of the Lord in virtue, the voice of the Lord shaking the desert [Ps. 28:8], and, wakening from a sleep of torpor, sounding with prophetic and apostolic trumpet: Awaken, you strong ones, for the Lord is coming with salvation. Stand fast in the faith, act manfully [*viriliter*] all you who hope in the Lord [I Cor. 16:13; Ps. 30:25]. Put upon yourselves the armour of God, the breast-plate of faith, the helmet of hope, the weapons and shields of a soul trusting in the Lord.[38]

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38 Talbot. *Liber confortatorius* 47: *Vox Domini in uirtute, vox Domini concutiens desertum, et excitantis a somno torporis, prophetica et apostolica tuba concrepantis: Expergiscimini fortes, quia uenit Dominus cum salute. State in fide, uiriliter agite, omnes qui speratis in Domino. Induite uos armaturam Dei, loricam fidei, galeam spei, arma et scutum in Domino confidentis animi.*

Without relating the start of this book directly to Eve's situation until several pages later, Goscelin uses quotations from biblical, Christian, and pagan sources to introduce the battle of the soul against evil. Eve is urged to arm herself against evil with spiritual weapons and to take notice of the examples which Goscelin puts before her. Both the pagan sages and the Christian Fathers were aware of one important truth: one has to toil before resting, but rest will be all the sweeter because of hard work. Using examples both from his own experience and from the experiences of people he knew, Goscelin demonstrates that if you are in fear of your earthly life, your strength increases manifold; if this is true of earthly life, how much more so if you are in fear of your eternal life.

Book III is dedicated to learning and the importance of attaining wisdom through study and meditation. Again the theme is indicated by the opening paragraphs. The beauty and wonder of the Tabernacle is invoked as a symbol of God's law and wisdom, which Eve should do well to contemplate and use as her source of divine consolation:

> Moses, prefiguring [Christ], built a tabernacle commanded and designated by the Lord in majesty, where divinity gave him the laws for the people and friendly answers [for himself]. The tent was like the largest temple with purple walls, spaciously set up with golden columns and doors. Until then, the glory of the earth knew nothing more splendid, nothing more laborious, nothing more artful. I hardly believe that today any of the kings could equal such an instrument of dignity. ... From heaven a column of light favoured the tabernacle, from the desert a rich vision did the same.
>
> Therefore you, o my sweet child, if you have not yet entered the hereditary region of the living with the strength of your mind, if, forgetful of the longed-for homeland, you sometimes become weary of solitude, captivity and enclosure, build yourself a column of faith, a tent of hope, and from thence, as in a tabernacle painted with all the colours, delight in the law of the Lord, practising and meditating on it day and night with the versatile beauty of the examples of the saints.[39]

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39 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 69: *Tabernaculum typicus Moyses iussu et dictatu Domini maiestatis parauerat, ubi ei diuinitas mandata ad populum et amica responsa ferebat. Tentorium erat instar amplissimi templi parietibus pu<r>pureis, columnis ac postibus late intensum aureis. Nil speciosius, nil operosius, nil artificiosius terrarum gloria eotenus nouerat. Vix crediderim hodie quemquam regum tale dignitatis instrumentum equipare posse. ... De celo lucis columna, de terra deserta species fauebat argumentosa.*
Sic tu igitur, o pignus meum dulce, si nec dum hereditariam uiuorum regionem mentis intrasti uigore, si oblitam petite patrie tedeat aliquando solitudinis, captiuitatis et clausule, erige tibi columnam fidei, tentorium spei, et quasi inde picto omni colore tabernaculo in lege Domini oblectare, exercitando et meditando in ea die ac nocte, cum

Eve should always be alert and avoid tedium at all cost. Man is an inconstant creature. At one moment he is full of hope, the next he is despairing. Eve has rightly chosen the part of Mary. Even the pagan philosophers knew that it is better to flee from the crowds and worldly concerns in order to dedicate their minds to philosophy. In this part Goscelin exhorts Eve to prayer and meditation and he gives her the means to do it.

Book IV has two main subjects and both are introduced in the first paragraph: the virtue of *humilitas* and the vision of the heavenly Jerusalem.

> *Your streets, Jerusalem, will be strewn with pure gold and transparent glass* [Rev. 21:21] according to the theology of John, the leader of mysteries. The pure gold, tested in the furnace of poverty and patience, and the transparant glass of the pure mind, adorn the streets along which humility, having trampled Egypt and the wildernesses and the enemies underfoot, must follow the way of God's laws, and must ascend to the city of heavenly peace with an enlarged heart, where both golden walls and jewelled towers from a humble foundation surpass the stars. To this place, O my special soul, over the pavement of humility I would want you to be led and although I know that you study humility with devoted conscience on your own accord, and that you say suppliantly: *My soul hath cleaved to the pavement, quicken thou me according to thy word,O Lord* [Ps. 118, 25,] yet I take pains to make you the guard against the trap of human shallowness.[40]

After the love of one's neighbour, spiritual battle and learning, Goscelin turned to a fourth vital aspect in the attainment of eternal life: humility. His teaching on this subject is strict. Even pride in her achievements as an anchorite could lead to Eve's downfall. Human nature is to err, but humility is the guardian of the virtues. Again Goscelin illustrates his teachings by using biblical examples such as the daughters of Zion who were humbled because of the pride they took in their virginal souls, and the humiliation of David and the destruction of

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sanctorum exemplorum multimodo decore.

40 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 91: «*Platee tue, Iherusalem, sternentur auro mundo et uitro perlucido.*» *Sic ait mysteriarche Iohannis theologia. Aurum mundum in fornace paupertatis et patientie probatum, perlucidumque uitrum pure mentis, stratas plateas illustrat, qua humilitas, post Egyptum et solitudines ac hostes calcatos, uiam mandatorum Dei excurrat, et ad superne pacis urbem dilatato corde ascendat, ubi et muri aurei, et turres gemmee ab humili fundamento sydera superant. Huc te, o specialis anima, per strata humilitatis uelim deduci, et quanquam sciam te deuota conscientia ultro studere paruitati, et suppliciter dicere: « Adhesit pauimento anima mea, uiuifica me secundum uerbum tuum, Domine,» tamen cautam te contra humane leuitatis casum curo reddere.*

Solomon's temple. He presents the examples of hermits who thought themselves more holy than any one else and were therefore proven wrong by God. These warnings are not part of an attempt to create an atmosphere of shame and fear of God's wrath. On the contrary, Goscelin saw the humilation of the proud as a means for God's grace to work on the soul and he gives the examples of Jesus's friendship with Mary Magdalene, and the *Lives* of the virgin martyrs.

Finally, all the efforts of the good Christian will be rewarded on the day of Judgement. Goscelin describes the resurrection for Eve and shows his confidence that he and Eve will find themselves on the right hand of God. He then describes the joys of Paradise and Eve's reunion with her sisters from Wilton and Saint Edith and all the saints with Christ. He concludes his work by asking Eve once more to pray for him and to have mercy on him for his bereavement.[41]

The opening paragraphs give a good indication of how Goscelin approached his subject. Book I stands apart but Books II-IV start in a very similar way: Goscelin first gives a vivid picture of a biblical event and then briefly states its relevance to Eve. Broadly speaking, the four books deal with distinct themes which may be classed as spiritual love, spiritual battle, contemplation and humility respectively, but there are other underlying thematic structures to be recognised.

This overview serves to show that there was a certain design for the *Liber confortatorius*, although the first chapter of Book I may also be seen as a spontaneous outpouring of grief. The thematic structure is not a rigorous harness, however, and there is no clinical division between the four books. An important factor in the composition seems to have been that of association: one example brings to mind another example, or a thought or idea associated with it. Spontaneous thoughts and personal insights are woven into the fabric of more orthodox teachings and these contribute significantly to the interest of the *Liber confortatorius* as a tool for learning as well as for meditation. Goscelin's examples require a fair amount of active interpretation on the part of his reader and it is

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41 The pairing of the virtue of humility with the vision of heaven in Book IV gives this virtue, and its opposite, pride, great prominence. At the same time, Goscelin's exhortation on the subject of humility is pervaded with the gift of God's grace and forgiveness. I shall return to Goscelin's treatment of this subject, and the possible implications of his emphasis on the grace of God on the fallen in Chapter Five.

at times not entirely clear what purpose certain examples were meant to serve. It is clear from his approach to the *Liber* and his ideas of the reclusive life that Goscelin was addressing issues on a spiritual level as well as on a literal level.

Goscelin himself was aware that, when giving examples, he sometimes digressed from his original intention, but another sign that Goscelin varied from his intended structure may be seen in Book II. Here he quoted at length and with great enthusiasm from Origen's commentary on Joshua. This book was in the library at Peterborough Abbey and Goscelin may have been reading the work at the time of writing the *Liber.*[42] He also copied large parts from other books for his exhortations in Book II. In the other three parts of the *Liber confortatorius*, Goscelin was much more autonomous in his exhortations, relying less directly on his sources than in Book II. This could be construed as a sign that the *Liber* was not written in one continuous stretch of time. The discrepancy between the time that Eve was supposed to have left England and the date of the *Liber confortatorius* has been noted already. Eve probably left England in 1080 or soon after that. The reference to the marriage of Canute of Denmark and the daughter of the Duke of Flanders in Book II suggests a date of composition closer to 1082.[43] If there were two years between Eve's departure and the moment that Goscelin first put quill to parchment, it seems a long time for Goscelin to have felt his grief as intensely as expressed in the first pages. It may then be speculated that the composition of the *Liber confortatorius* was not an uninterrupted exercise. The differing approaches to the material he used could thus be interpreted as an indication of this.

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42 Goscelin ascribes these homilies to Jerome rather than Origen, a common mistake in the early Middle Ages and one evident from the booklist at Peterborough: the manuscript here is also catalogued as being by Jerome. See Lapidge, 'Surviving Booklists' XIII, no. 10 (pp. 77 and 79).

43 The dates concerning Goscelin's movements between the death of Hermann and the translation of Saint Augustine are too uncertain for fruitful speculation surrounding the exact date of the *Liber confortatorius*. Knowledge of the exact date is, at least in the context of this thesis, of passing interest only, and I am satisfied with an approximate dating between 1080 and 1083.

Encouragement and Education

One of the aims of the *Liber confortatorius* was the continuation of Eve's education. It can be assumed that Eve already had a considerable intellectual background. Goscelin, as one of her main teachers at Wilton,[44] was well aware of this and he dispensed with basic doctrinal issues. He only stated his sources, for example, when quoting more obscure texts, such as those of classical authors, with whom Eve would have been less familiar. Goscelin's teaching methods could be said to be orthodox and he relied heavily on quotations and allusions from the Bible in support of his arguments.[45] The Psalms and Isaiah are quoted frequently and the Gospels of Matthew and John are among his favourite sources from the New Testament. His allusions to works by the Church Fathers show familiar writings such as Jerome's *Letters* and *Against Jovinian*, Gregory the Great's *Dialogues* and the *Moralia in Job*. There are many references to the works of Augustine and although not explicit in the text, it is clear that he relied greatly on Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*. These and other works he used were widely read throughout the Middle Ages and we find most of them on the Peterborough booklist.[46] Apart from these Christian sources Goscelin gives evidence of having been acquainted with works by pagan authors such as Horace and Virgil, and these could well have been part of his education at Saint-Bertin. Classical works were represented in the curriculum of monastic and cathedral schools in the Low Countries. Liège stands out in this respect,[47] but also the catalogue of manuscripts at Saint-Bertin shows a considerable number of books by pagan authors.[48] Hamilton concludes from his study of Goscelin's style and

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44 Goscelin saw himself as having had a very great influence when he drew a parallel with Christ teaching Mary when he explained one of Eve's dreams. See below p. 130.

45 I rely mostly on Talbot's annotations to the *Liber confortatorius* here.

46 The Peterborough list in its entirety should not, however, be taken as representative for works available in Anglo-Saxon England. Many of the works on this list, as well as the list of books donated by Sæwold to Saint-Vaast, Arras, and the books collected by Leofric of Exeter (numbers VIII and X) are not found on other lists. Michael Lapidge, 'Surviving Booklists' 33-89. See also Webber, *Scribes and Scholars at Salisbury Cathedral* 33, fn. 7.

47 De Moreau, *Histoire de l'Église en Belgique* 160-162 and 213-216.

48 For example, Juvenal, Virgil, Macrobius, Priscian, Donatus. See Becker, *Catalogi Bibliothecarum Antiqui* 181 - 184.

his mastery of poetic metre in his *Vitae* that he would not have learned this from an ordinary monastic education. Goscelin was probably an exceptionally well-read man who could have obtained his knowledge "only through intensive study of a wide range of poetry written during the classical age of Latin literature."[49] Goscelin may also have been one of the first people in eleventh-century England to have read Augustine's *Confessions* either before or after its re-introduction into England.[50] Despite this evidence of his erudition, Goscelin managed to give his work a personal touch. He relied on authorities but the use he made of them shows that he chose those passages that supported his own ideas on the kind of encouragement Eve required. In the next chapter I will show how Goscelin chose his examples of the saints to provide positive role models only; here I will discuss Goscelin's didactic scheme on a more general level.

Goscelin's teaching was based on one solid belief: that heaven is to be reached by faith and learning, which should lead to the attainment of divine understanding. His emphasis was, therefore, on spiritual matters rather than practical advice on every-day living. One of the most important aspects of Goscelin's didactic scheme is the confidence he displays in Eve's intelligence and her knowledge. He trusted her to read the major works of Christian tradition which would help her and occupy her in her solitude:

> Weariness will be put to flight with these exercises and they will make the days appear short, and your solitude will delight you, and now, being satisfied, you will despise these stupid exhortations. Do not give up if at any moment you do not see the meaning of a passage, but keep at it, go back over it in thought, reread it until you completely understand it, for there is nothing so difficult that it cannot be explained by searching, and unrelenting toil conquers everything, and the Lord will open up to you who

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49 Hamilton, 'Goscelin of Canterbury' 498. See also Barlow, *The Life of King Edward* 143.

50 Webber, 'The Diffusion of Augustine's *Confessions*' 30. The *Confessions* are believed to have been re-introduced into England in the second half of the eleventh century. Webber believed the extant copies of the late eleventh and twelfth centuries, which circulated mainly in the south of England, to have been derived from two exemplars both of which are thought to have been produced in Flanders. One of these surviving manuscripts, Boulogne-sur-Mer, Bibliothèque Municipale MS 46, dated to the mid-eleventh century, may have been produced at Saint-Bertin as it has a twelfth-century provenance history from there (see pages 36 and 40).

> searches and knocks, and the benevolent spirit of wisdom shall come to you.[51]

It is clear that Goscelin expected Eve to study very hard, but also that all she needed were her books, persistence, and the help of Christ in her undertaking. Goscelin merely hands out the tools with which Eve has to work. He would, for example, write that Saint Benedict gave twelve degrees of humility and then move on to the next subject without going into what these degrees involved.[52] Eve could look up the passage for herself if she did not know it by heart already. The autonomy Goscelin presupposes in her studies may be contrasted with Jerome's advice to Eustochium in a similar case. Jerome urges his reader to find the help of "someone whose life commends him, whose age places him above suspicion, [and] whose reputation does not belie him." If such a person could not be found, Jerome warns, "it is better to be safe and ignorant than to expose yourself to danger in learning."[53] To Goscelin, salvation was very much a case of mind, as much as faith, over matter. It explains, for example, why he discouraged forms of extreme asceticism such as self-mutilation and severe fasting. He encourages Eve to take up the examples he presents to her according to her strength, not more and not less, as God tests everyone according to their strength. He encourages her, therefore, to persist and always to remember that the greater the temptation, the greater God's support.[54] Goscelin shows a realistic attitude towards religious fervour: he simply did not believe that extreme fasting and hardship were more effective than spiritual enlightenment.

Goscelin intended that Eve should read the *Liber confortatorius* the way he wanted her to read the Scriptures and the writings of the Fathers: reading into his allusions, and specifically into the examples given, a metaphorical meaning

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51 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 81: *His exercitiis terga dabunt tedia, et brevia uidebuntur tempora, et delectabit te solitudo tua, iamque plena nausiabis insulsa hec hortamenta. Nec uero refugias sicubi sensu hereas, sed occupa, reuolue, relege, donec affatim capias, quia nil tam dif<f>icile est quin possit querendo inueniri, et labor omnia uincit improbus, et querenti et pulsanti aperiet Dominus, et intrabit ad te benignus sapientie spiritus.*

52 Talbot. *Liber confortatorius* 93.

53 Petersen, *Handmaids of the Lord*. 'Letter 22 *To Eustochium*' 195.

54 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 64.

and lessons to be learned. There are occasional reminders for Eve to interpret biblical tropes in certain ways. A good instance of this is found when Goscelin explains that the tropes "daughter of Zion" and "daughter of Jerusalem" have the generic meaning of the soul.[55] In this indirect way he makes the example inclusive of men and women and it also ensures a correct interpretation of the biblical text to which the example refers. In the light of other instances in which Goscelin showed an awareness of the influence of anti-feminist interpretation of biblical texts in some authors, this should be seen as a conscious attempt to ensure this interpretation. Even if this is in accordance with standard exegesis, it is one example of Goscelin's insistence that the experience for men and women in the religious life does not significantly differ. Thus, Goscelin prevents Eve from reading this solely as a comment on the role and nature of women, either as Brides of Christ as in Book One, or as creatures especially prone to sin, as in the quotation from Isaiah in Book Four.[56]

On the whole, however, Goscelin refrains from explaining the several layers of meaning in every biblical quotation. His elucidations are just frequent enough to make his reader aware that he is using biblical tropes and that these should be interpreted as such. Furthermore, his explanations seem to occur only when the tropes could be interpreted in more than one accepted way. A case in point is his comparison of the recluse to "a wild ass set free in the woods":

> *Who*, says Job, *has sent out the wild ass free?* [Job 39, 5] The wild ass is the ass of the woods, in which the anchorite is signified. The Lord sends out the wild ass free, when he frees the soul from external cares, calling it into the liberty of contemplation of Him, saying to his freed men: *Be still and know that I am your God* [Ps 45, 11].[57]

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55 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 95 and 96.

56 See Chapter Four. It is interesting to note at this point that at the very start of letter 22, Jerome explains that "daughter" in Scripture is meant to be the human soul. In his exhortations, however, he seems to prefer the use of "daugther of Babylon" whereas Goscelin prefers to see the soul as "daughter of Zion."

57 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 89: «*Quis,*» *inquit Iob,* «*dimisit onagrum liberum?*» *Onager est silvestris asinus, in quo significatur anachorita. Dimittit Dominus onagrum liberum, quando animam relaxat ab exterioribus curis, vocans in libertatem sue contemplationis, dicens libertis suis:* «*Vacate et videte quoniam ego sum Deus.*»

Although some bestiaries would describe the *onager* as signifying the devil,[58] the humble ass was usually associated with the humility of Christ. Yet the idea of it being set free may conjure up images of it running wild because it is no longer being controlled. Goscelin drew a parallel between the anchorite and the wild ass in order to make quite a different point. Setting the wild ass free is giving the soul freedom from worldly cares and allowing the mind freedom to meditate on the things of God.

Goscelin's reminders of symbolic meaning, then, are just frequent enough to show that the lesson is to be found in the underlying meanings of a text. His explanations are never intrusive and it is clear that Eve was expected to read the exact interpretation of the texts herself, as, for example, when he gives the story of Solomon's wealth. Although he does not give an exposition on the different senses of Scripture – Eve can be expected to have known about these by then – he points out that the riches of Solomon are not about royal ambition, but *propter admirabile sacramentum caritatis Christi et ecclesie.*[59] In this chapter of Book I, Goscelin singles out the books of Wisdom attributed to Solomon (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon) of which Augustine had said that these required "laborious discussion" in order to prove that they are at all "relevant to Christ and his Church."[60] Goscelin briefly states how they should be approached and leaves it at that:

> The first sets out the discipline of fear of the Lord and the principle of living honestly: the second subjects everything to vanity in the congregation of diverse desires, so that it may take us to the third degree, to the Song of Songs, by the desire for eternity, where the mind in contemplation persists in the peace of the Creator, liberated from the servitude of vanity.[61]

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58 Franz Unterkircher, *Bestiarum: Die Texte der Handschrift MS. Ashmole 1511 der Bodleian Library Oxford in der Lateinischer und Deutscher Sprache* (Graz: Akademische Druck -u. Verlagsanstalt, 1986) 62.

59 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 39.

60 Saint Augustine, *City of God*, Bk XVII, 20 (p. 755).

61 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 39: *Primus disciplinam timoris Domini et recte uiuendi regulam ponit; secundus in concione diuersorum desideriorum uanitati omnia subicit, ut ad tertium gradum in Cantica Canticorum eternitatis appetitu nos rapiat, ubi a seruitute uanitatis libera, in pace conditoris mens contemplatiua pertendat* (Origen, *Prol. in Cant.* (PG 13. 74a).

He continues with a description of Solomon's riches strongly reminiscent of the biblical description of the temple. Eve had already been reminded that these should not be taken as worldly wealth. Also with the visit of the Queen of Sheba, Goscelin reminds Eve that she is a symbol for the Church. He is not explicit in his reason for expanding on this subject except to note that it serves as a lesson that all worldly things are vain, and he singles out worldly friendship as a case in point. This example, given early on in the *Liber*, also shows Goscelin's fascination with learning and the attainment of wisdom, and it features a strong positive female role model in Sheba.

Despite the assumption that the examples of the saints and the writings of the Fathers render the advice of others unnecessary, Goscelin gives a few pieces of direct advice to Eve. It is interspersed in the stories he relates and it is for the most part unobtrusive. In one of the most explicit instances of advice, he gives Eve a list of essential books to read:

> Read the expositions of the holy fathers Jerome, Augustine, Gregory and other teachers of virtue, and put your heart to the knowledge of the Scriptures, which contain the mystery of both the church and of the spiritual wars in varying riddles. I would wish that the window of your cell is spacious enough to admit such a large library, or that you are able to read through the window if (the books) were placed outside it. Read out aloud the *Lives* and various writings of the Fathers, indeed read the *Life* of the blessed Anthony, which may fortify you against the arguments of the devil, and which may teach you how weak his whole army is against those who believe in Christ.
>
> Do not esteem any book among the rest more than the Confession of Augustine, which may instill in you more deeply divine affection. May you love indeed the tripartite book of ecclesiastical history [by Cassiodorus] as well as the history of Eusebius which both sing to you about the struggles of the saints and the victory of the faith established through Christ and invincible against all the temptations. Take note of Augustine's *The City of God*, Orosius's *The History of the World*, Boethius's *The Consolation of Philosophy*, so that you may understand that there is nothing more miserable than the whirlpool of this world, and nothing happier than the peace of Christ.[62]

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62 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 80-81: *Lege expositiones sanctorum patrum Ieronimi, Augustini, Gregorii ceterorumque uirtutis doctorum, et pone cor tuum ad intelligentiam scripturarum, que et ecclesie spiritualiumque bellorum in uariis enigmatibus continent misterium. Ipsa quoque ut possit admittere bibliotecam tam capacem, in longum esse uelim huius celle fenestram, aut per fenestram te legere posse a foris ap<p>ositam. Recita uitas ac diuersa documenta patrum, uitam uero beati Antonii, que te contra diaboli argumenta muniat, et quam infirmus contra credentes in Christum sit omnis*

This, and the passage where he exhorts to prayer and gives an example of how Eve should divide her day between reading and prayer, are the longest passages of direct advice. It concerns purely spiritual advice, and this might be the only kind of direct advice Goscelin felt he was able to give her. Strictly speaking, the list of authors he wanted her to read is only an indirect exhortation. He really left it up to Eve to learn from the writings of the Fathers. The *Liber confortatorius* could, in fact, be seen as an entrance to these works in which Goscelin gives pointers as to how Eve might approach them.

"What does it matter from what source , either by words or by examples, you are kindled [i.e. exhorted] to virtue?" Goscelin exclaims after having given the examples of Perpetua and Felicitas.[63] But it is not only by the example of strength (or virtue) that lessons are to be learned. It was Goscelin's belief that even every-day experiences or secular events could convey a message to the Christian who was perceptive to it. Throughout the work, Goscelin provides examples from the Bible and from the *Lives* of the saints. These examples embrace all Christian centuries and regions.[64] In addition, Goscelin manages to provide a positive twist to many of the examples, rather than looking for the negative aspects to warn Eve, as will be the subject of later discussion. He also explained that the examples of the martyrs could still be followed even after the era of the persecutions, because when Christians are no longer persecuted in body, they are persecuted in spirit. The martyrdom and tortures suffered by the early Christians were only a different manifestation of the forces of evil against the kingdom of heaven.[65] This spiritualisation of the martyrs' experience is

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eius exercitus erudiat. Nec librum inter cetera postponas Augustini confessionum, qui tibi diuinum altius instillet affectum. Ames etiam librum tripartitum ecclesiastice historie cum historia Eusebii, que tibi et sanctorum certamina, et fidei uictoriam canant in Christo fundate et cunctis tempestatibus inuicte. Respice Augustinum De Ciuitate Dei, Orosium De Ormesta Mundi, Boetium De Consolatione Philosophie, et intelliges nil miserabilius seculi gurgite, nil felicius Christi pace.

63 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 51: *Quid autem refert undecunque uel uerbis uel exemplis uirtutum accendaris?*

64 It is surprising that in the broad range of examples from the saints there are so few from Eve's native England. Only Saint Edith of Wilton has any prominence among them. It is interesting to note, however, that he does not refer to Edith's reputation for learning.

65 Talbot. *Liber confortatorius* 51. passage below, page 133.

typical of Goscelin's approach to Eve's education. He reminds her that the ancient wars (those in the Old Testament) were fought with the sword, but that the new wars are fought with zeal.[66] The physical sufferings of the martyrs are not to be taken as incentives to self-mutilation,[67] but as the physical manifestation of the spiritual evil which attacks all Christian souls. Bodily imagery and exhortation to subject the body to the will are kept to a minimum,[68] and Goscelin's examples are to be taken as spiritual guidance.

The *Liber* and Goscelin's hagiographic writings give the impression that he was a good listener. For the *Lives* of those saints whose legends had not been written yet, Goscelin proved to be a deft researcher, and one of his methods was collecting stories about the saints from those nuns who had known the saints or had heard about them from people who had known them. The *Liber* also contains stories about ordinary people and lesser-known saints, either his own or from other people he knew. Interesting are the stories Goscelin heard from the Danish monk at Peterborough and from Eilsius, who had personally known the martyred English hermit Brithric. Goscelin listened to these stories and invariably saw their spiritual and didactic significance. For Goscelin, everything happened for a reason, and he had a strong belief that God conveys His wisdom through everything. The story told by the Dane is especially interesting in this respect and deserves closer consideration as an example of how Goscelin teaches Eve to find spiritual meaning in everything around her.

At Peterborough, Goscelin writes, a Danish monk who had only recently been converted to Christianity had told him about the trial of a thief which he had witnessed. The man had been convicted by a judge, leaning on a two-edged sword, who had pronounced the death sentence. The doomed man had been so terrified of death that he managed to break free. The Dane had described the convict as having been surrounded by a thick cordon of men. With superhuman

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66 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 51: *Si non est ferrum occisionis, sit pro ferro zelus fortitudinis.* Noua bella elegit Dominus. *Vetera bella sunt iram gladio uindicare, homines tyrannice subiugare, et uitiis colla submittere; noua vero bella hostibus benignitatem et dilectionem rependere, omni patientie manus dare, omnia uitia omni hostilitate expugnare.*

67 Talbot. *Liber confortatorius* 74. See quotation in Chapter One, page 44.

68 See Chapter Four.

strength he had nevertheless broken through it, killing the judge in the process with his own instrument of judgement.[69] Goscelin was clearly impressed by this example of audacity and it was by his special didactic gift that he could turn this example of death-defying fear in a pagan and a sinner into an encouragement for Christian living. He tells Eve,

> In that way courage is brought on, and so fortitude is enlarged by the fear of death. Thus you are strengthened by faith by way of courage, you will thrust out to the crowds of enemies. See yourself as a heifer locked up with demonic dogs. Their teeth are sharp with jealousy, but they are without strength; you, on the contrary, are armed with the dreadful horns of the holy cross; with your forehead distinguished by these horns you trample, full of devotion, the entire attacking enemy under your feet.[70]

He teaches Eve that fear for her eternal life would make her stronger and braver but that her faith in Christ would invoke his help and make her invincible against her demonic enemies. Despite some of the imagery, such as here, he never envisages Eve as a helpless victim. She had everything she needed in her struggles as long as she had faith and virtue. It is just this strength in weakness which Goscelin loves to exploit, and he saw Christ as the prime example.

Goscelin's own memories, too, serve as examples that had provided him with spiritual insights. Goscelin had frequently travelled to London by Thames and occasionally the currents of the river had caused potentially life-threatening situations. It would take the crew all they had in them to keep the vessel afloat in the torrents caused by storms:

> Whenever we sailed along the Thames with the bishop to London, when we came to the channel, teeming with fish, in which the narrower stream rushes more violently, the sailors, shouting, struggled as if for their lives. Some hauled with long ropes along the river banks, some drove the boat along with short or frequent strokes of the oars, struggling with the choppy water, because if their arms had slackened or they had not acted boldly, the power of the river would have driven back the boat and sunk it to the bottom. Then the deliberation of my heart would tell me that in the same

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69 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 49.

70 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 49: *Sic prosperatur audacia, sic fortitudo dilatatur ab angustia. Sic tu fide roborata pro audacia, procul exturbabis hostium examina. Aspice te ut uitulam cum canibus demoniacis inclusam. Illi sunt acri inuidia, sed sine uiribus dentati; tu e contra metuendis cornibus sancte crucis armata. His insignita frontem attentius omnem hostilem impetum allides sub pedibus.*

> way anyone who travels the road of heaven must either reach his destination by strength or fall.[71]

In such ways Goscelin had always taught Eve; meaning could be found in everything, especially, of course, in the liturgy, and Goscelin recalls instances when he had had occasion to teach her on that, too. When Eve was a little girl, he had explained to her the significance of the incense burnt in a gold burner at Mass: it signified the vows and sighs of numerous pious minds offered to God, and brought up to God by an angelic hand.[72] The dried fish eaten at the banquet after the dedication of the church had been a reminder of Christ's sufferings.[73] He had also explained to her the meaning of her dream in which he had fed Eve pieces of bread when she had found lumps of gold in her mouth which, he told her, she should make into an eternal necklace. This bread of life, he elucidated, is the word of the Lord, and Eve should compare this to what the Lord had told Mary.[74] These examples taken from his own experience make the lessons they convey immediately relevant to the Christian life. Doing this, Goscelin balances out the illustrious but distant examples of the desert saints and martyred Christian heroes. In such a way, the divergent experiences of Christians of all centuries and countries are brought together, and even the wisdom of the pagans should be seen as conveying the eternal wisdom of God. At the same time, Goscelin encourages Eve to meditate on these every-day experiences and learn from them. Although he exhorts Eve several times to learn from the examples of

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71 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 49: *Quotiens nauigabamus per Tamesum cum episcopo Lundoniam, ubi uentum est ad piscosas fauces, quo angustior unda uiolentiori impetu exestuat, tunc clamore naute quasi pro uita certabant. Alii longis cordis per ripas trahebant, alii curtis uel crebris remorum ictibus cum unda pugnantes nauim inpellebant, quia, si brachia remisissent nec uiriliter egissent, uis fluminis repulsam nauim in profundum precipitasset. Tunc dicebat mihi cordis ratiocinatio: Sic qui uia celi grassatur, aut ui erumpet, aut decidet.*

72 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 28: *Hinc angelo habenti thuribulum aureum data sunt incensa multa, id est innumera piarum mentium uota et suspiria, que angelica manu oblata ascendunt ad Dominum ut fumus aromatum, ab estu et ebullitione lacrimarum.*

73 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 28: *Cumque ex affectu patris interesses epulis cum matre, mittens piscem tibi, tali elogyo carnis mortificationem mandaui: « Piscis assus: Christus passus».*

74 Talbot. *Liber confortatorius* 29: *Recolisne quod te a me cibatam pane candidissimo ante nostrum spiritum somniaueras, tibique inter edendum massas aureas in ore repertas, quas sensim in gremium colligebas? Respice panem uite et uerbum Domini super aurum desiderabile, ac de hoc auro eternum monile tibi labore confice, omnia uerba hec Domini cum Maria conseruando et conferendo in corde tuo.*

the saints, it is clear that Christian meaning can be found in everything around her.

On the whole, three methods of instruction in the *Liber confortatorius* can be distinguished: by *exempla*, by exegesis, and by direct advice. Goscelin uses these three methods to expound his theology of learning to find God. I will, for the moment, concentrate on Books II and III as I believe that these convey a central principle in the *Liber confortatorius*. It was Goscelin's conviction that knowledge and learning were major vehicles on the road to salvation. He strongly accused people who condemned education of being ignorant and unfaithful.[75] He sees the act of learning as a vehicle for prayer, however, and he exhorts Eve to prayer and contemplation.

Although Goscelin knew Eve's cell to be attached to a church, he is completely silent about any form of public worship to which she might have had access. He presents Eve's life as being completely internalised. Her cell was her tomb; it was also to be seen as a metaphor for her body which housed her soul. She herself was to be the priest who had to keep the fire on the altar burning:

> After the due offering [*libamina*] of prayers, the spirits fail through weariness, refresh [yourself] with divine reading; sharpen the blunted mind on the whetstone of books, take from that the fuel if the fire diminishes. The Lord said: *And the fire on my altar shall always burn, and the priest shall feed it*, whilst he adds wood and other fuel to it [Lev. 6, 12]. Be yourself that priest to God, while sacrificing yourself, and let the fire of divine love always burn upon the altar of your heart, which you feed with the documents and the works of the saints, by which you let rise the vapours to the Lord with the ointment of holy desires. Hence the Seraphim, therefore, because they are more ardently inflamed with the love of God the closer they are bound to Him, they are correctly called burning. Let there be no gatherings of distractions, protect your ears with thornbushes in fearful custody. May the windows of the cell, the tongue and of the ears be locked against stories and idle talk or, indeed, malicious talk.[76]

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75 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 82.

76 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 80: *Post debita orationum libamina, post deficientia lassitudine pectora, sancta lectione reficere, hebetatam mentem cote librorum exacue, decidentem flamme materiem inde adhibe. Ignis, ait Dominus, in altari meo semper ardebit, quem nutriet sacerdos subiciens ligna et cetera fomenta.(Levit. 6, 12) Ipsa Deo sacerdos esto, te ipsam sacrificando, et ignis amoris diuini semper ardeat in altari cordis tui, quem nutries alimentis sanctorum documentorum et operum, unde uapores Domino sanctorum odoramenta desideriorum. Hinc Seraphim, quia eo ardentius Dei*

Goscelin's basic advice is to learn, to read, to obtain knowledge of God through the Scriptures, the examples of the saints and the writings of the Fathers, and to meditate on these examples for enlightenment. Learning holds the key to Eve's salvation. Attacking those who forbade or feared education and learning, Goscelin firmly subscribed to the belief that learning is an essential tool towards true humility and the fear of God.[77] He condemns bombastic knowledge because *the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom* [Ps. 110, 10], and only the truly humble in faith will receive this wisdom.[78] He teaches Eve that

> I have instilled these things into you, if you recollect, very often, both orally when I was present and in written form when I was absent, as if giving you a key to understanding. There you will find the treasure and the pearl which you will gain when you have sold all the desires of the world.[79]

The understanding of these enigmas or riddles of Scripture is a step towards the understanding of divine wisdom, towards seeing the face of God. But it is not until Book III that Goscelin seriously discusses the importance of contemplation and study. The reason why he tackles the issue of the spiritual battle before prayer and learning must be found in the idea that the mind has to be cleansed before it can begin to attain higher understanding. In this, Goscelin followed Saint Augustine's teaching of the purification of the mind.[80] Augustine, like Origen,[81] believed that it is beneficial to read even when what is read is at first obscure. Reading sacred words helps to purify the mind. But he also states that obscurities are there to keep the soul hungry for enlightenment; they will become clearer when the mind is pure. Augustine warns the reader that:

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caritate inflammantur quo uicinius iunguntur, ardentes proprie nuncupantur. Absint detrahentium conciliabula, sepi aurem tuam spinis in custodia timorata. Celle, lingue et aurium fenestre a fabulis et uaniloquiis, immo maliloquiis, sint obserate.

77 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 82.

78 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 81-82.

79 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 80: *Hec tibi, si recolis, tanquam clavim dans intelligendi, frequentius et presens verbis, et absens scriptis inculcavi. Illic thesaurum et margaritam inuenies, quem, uenditis omnibus mundi cupiditatibus, compares.*

80 Saint Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, D.W. Robertson, trans., The Library of Liberal Arts (New York: Macmillan, 1958) *Bk* II, vii, 9-11 (p. 38-40), in which Augustine describes seven steps of purifying the mind.

81 See below.

> many and varied obscurities and ambiguities deceive those who read casually, understanding one thing instead of another; indeed, in certain places they do not find anything to interpret erroneously, so obscurely are certain sayings covered with a most dense mist. I do not doubt that this situation was provided by God to conquer pride by work and to combat disdain in our minds, to which those things which are easily discovered seem frequently to become worthless.[82]

It is in this light that the spiritual battle of Book II should be read. Book II has two related messages: one, we have to toil before we rest, and two, we have to fight for our lives. Sin clouds the mind and Eve has to rid herself of sin. Goscelin's perception of sin in the *Liber confortatorius* is that of a tangible enemy; he portrays evil as an outside force waging war on the soul. The soul has to fight back using spiritual weapons, and these are provided by God. In his exhortation in Book II, Goscelin makes use of a great deal of military imagery. Words such as *bellum*, *pugnare*, *certamen*, *miles*, *armare*, and *fortes*, pervade the text;[83] and the imagery connects the examples he presents to Eve. Goscelin describes how the soul has to deal with evil as follows:

> Even though he may not be a gladiator, a persecutor will not be lacking as a means for victory, 'And all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution.' [II Tim. 3:12]. If the battles are not physical, then they are spiritual. The former are external, the latter are internal. Under persecution one has to lay down one's life; in peace, which persecutes what is within [the inner man], to the army of corruptions wars are to be declared, carnal desires are to be tamed, the heads of the vices are to be cut off, the troops of thoughts and temptations are to be dashed against a rock, [cf. Ps. 136:9]; with the arms of prayers and the defenses of watchfulness we are to be vigilant against all the machinations of plots; by the steps of humility we need to climb towards the citadel of the virtues.[84]

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82 Saint Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* bk II, vi, 7 (37).

83 Forms of *fortes*: 19 times (in Book I, 5 in III, 6 in IV); *fortitudo*: 11 times (5 in I, 3 in III, 3 in IV); *miles*: 14 times (0 in I, 3 in III, 7 in IV); *arma*: 13 times (6 in I, 2 in III. 3 in IV); *Prelium*: 8 times (1 in I, 1 in III, 0 in IV); *pugno*: 11 times (1 in I, 0 in III, 1 in IV); *bellum* 25 times (4 in I, 6 in III, 2 in IV); *certamen*: 8 times (0 in I, 2 in III, 1 in IV).

84 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 51: *Quanquam non sit gladiator, non deerit materies uictorie persecutor, et omnes qui pie uolunt uiuere in Christo persecutionem patientur. Si non sunt corporalia certamina, sunt spiritualia. Illa exteriora, ista sunt intestina. In persecutione ponenda est anima, in pace que intus persequitur indicenda sunt nequitiarum exercitui bella, edomanda carnalia desideria, excidenda uitiorum capita, allidenda ad petram cogitationum et temptationum agmina, uigilandum in armis orationum et munimentis custodiarum contra omnia argumenta insidiarum, enitendum humilitatis gradibus ad arcem uirtutum.*

All of the violence is nevertheless interspersed with the meekness and peace of Christ. With his cross, Christ helps the besieged soul to defeat her enemies. Goscelin exploits the dichotomy between Christ as a helpless victim and as a victorious warrior to the full; in much the same way he refers to Eve as a little girl and as a soldier.

Goscelin's call to arms echoes the Prologue of the Rule of Saint Benedict, where the spiritual weapons are those of obedience. More importantly, he seems to have been influenced to a great extent by Origen's homilies on Joshua in Rufinus' translation. In this work, and especially the passages quoted by Goscelin, Origen discussed the nature of evil and its manifestation as a multitude of demonic spirits which mount constant attacks on the soul. Together with Goscelin's emphatic advice that Eve read the *Life of Saint Anthony*, "which may fortify you against the arguments of the devil, who may teach you that every army of his is weak against those who believe in Christ,"[85] and the dominance of military language, this lengthy discussion adds to the warlike tone of his exhortations.

But like Augustine, Goscelin clearly delighted in the apparent contradictions of strength and meekness. New wars, he says, are to purchase goodwill and love from the enemies. Evil is conquered only by humility. Christ conquered evil not by coming down from Heaven in his divinity but in the weakness of human flesh. He was offered as a sacrifice in order to be triumphant.

> Go therefore with all desire and all exultation to that dance, which the victory of such a great king made accessible to all His soldiers. This victory of one restored the universal world with triumphs and crowns above the stars. Such countless camps of martyrs, such numberless banners of confessors, such innumerable armies of virgins follow the Lord of strength to the stars. In Christ, the palm is refused to no sex, no age, no condition of life. Those born on the earth and the children of men, together the rich and the poor man, kings and princes, young men and maidens, the old with the young, [cf. Ps. 148:12] boys, girls, also the unweaned and the crying, they are crowned because they are martyrs or

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85 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 80: ... *contra diaboli argumenta muniat, et quam infirmus contra credentes in Christum sit omnis eius exercitus erudiat.*

> virgins or chaste; our Solomon is arrayed with roses and lilies and violets, what the earthly Solomon in all his glory could not be [Matt. 6:29]. [86]

Quoting extensively from Origen's homilies on Joshua, Goscelin subscribed to the idea of sin as manifesting itself in countless evil spirits, all listening to one master of sin, and waging war against every Christian soul. Reminiscent of Saint Anthony's struggles with evil spirits, sin and evil are thus presented as very real phenomena. At the same time, they are presented as something not inherent in the Christian soul but as an outside force. This is an important point of view in the *Liber confortatorius*. Sin itself is, therefore, presented as not so much coming from within but as an external power. The emphasis on sin as a manifestation of the flesh, common in many treatises for women, is thus changed to sin as brought on by an external force which affects the unsuspecting and clouded mind and, through the mind, the soul. This did not exclude the revelation of sin through the body, but in the *Liber confortatorius* Goscelin was careful not to stigmatise women as especially susceptible to the sins of the flesh. God allows this evil to test the Christian soul but never beyond the soul's capabilities and Christ is always there to help those who have put their faith in him. When quoting from the homilies on Joshua, Goscelin comments occasionally on what Origen wrote, and he illustrates the argument by giving the example of Sara from the *Vitae Patrum*. Significantly, he chooses the example of another strong woman as a role model.

To counter-balance this passage from Origen which deals entirely with the manifestation of evil spirits, Goscelin again quotes at length from the same set of homilies in order to explain that even with such an opposition of evil we must always remember "that there are more with us than against us."[87] It is likely that

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86 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 55: *Uade ergo toto desiderio totaque exultatione ad illa tripudia, que tanti regis uictoria cunctis suis militibus dedit accessibilia. Illa unius uictoria uniuersum mundum triumphis et coronis repleuit supra sidera. Tam incomputabilia martirum castra, tam irrecensibilia confessorum uexilla, tam innumerabilia uirginum agmina Dominum uirtutum ad astra secuntur. Nulli sexui, nulli etati, nulli conditioni negatur in Christo palma. Quique terrigene et filii hominum, simul in unum diues et pauper, reges et principes, iuuenes et uirgines, senes cum iunioribus,* [Ps.148,12.] *pueri, puelle, lactentes quoque et uagientes, uel martyrio uel uirginitate uel continentia coronantur, et rosis et liliis et uiolis noster Salomon, quod terrenus in omni gloria sua non potuit, cooperitur.*

87 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 59.

Goscelin had only read these for the first time at Peterborough and was enthusiastic about their discussion of evil spirits, their rhetoric, and their insights into how Origen thought evil is best fought. In Origen's homilies, too, learning and study of the Scriptures are presented as the most important weapon against evil. The good spirits which fight against evil on the side of the Christian feed on the Scriptures, and even if the reader does not understand what he is reading, the act of reading itself is beneficial for the salvation of his soul.[88] It is by reading, hearing, or pronouncing the words of the Scriptures, by chanting the psalms and by listening to sermons that evil is averted. It does not matter if you do not quite understand the meaning of the words, they are healing in themselves.[89] Goscelin would modify this statement in Book III. *Understanding* the Scriptures is the next step and, as has been shown, he encouraged Eve to go over every passage she did not understand again and again. Goscelin's belief in the enormous power of words is exemplified by Christ's victory on the cross where he overthrew his enemies with "one" word:

> How strongly he fought with invincible patience, how mightily did he overthrow the army of the enemy with a single utterance. How shall the one who was "unbearable" when he was to be judged, be bearable when he will judge? Against a single utterance of the one who was to be crucified, *I am he*, [John 18:6] the armed troops could not stand, ... [90]

Two more examples included at the end of Book II stand as evidence of this belief in the power of the word as an expression of perfect faith. The first is Goscelin's rendition of the martyrdom of Blandina from Eusebius' *History of the Church*. Having described how under torture Blandina seemed to be gaining strength whilst her torturers became exhausted, he explained where her strength came from: "Thrown among the torments was one utterance: *I am a Christian.*

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88 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 61.

89 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 60.

90 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 53: *Ut fortis inuicta patientia certauit, ut potens omnem hostium exercitum solo uerbo prostrauit. Quomodo feretur iudicaturus, qui non potuit ferri iudicandus? Ad unum crucifigendi uerbum: Ego sum, non poterant stare armate acies,...*

However, she told the stupefied Christians that, every time she exclaimed: *I am a Christian*, she was revived by new strength."[91]

Also the account of the martyrdom of the hermit Brithric near Bury St Edmunds serves to show that even a very limited knowledge of the Scriptures, if it is accompanied by a great faith in God, may hold the devil at bay. The hermit only knew the Lord's prayer and the first line of Psalm 50. As these were the only words he knew with which to worship God, he chanted them continually.[92] When he was tempted at night by the devil in the disguise of a human voice, challenging him to stop praying his simple prayer and get some sleep, he complied at first. Convinced the next night that he had been deceived, however, he refuted the devil by ardent prayer. Soon after this had happened, the site of the castle and church where Brithric resided were raided by pirates. The hermit refused to flee, saying that if Christ suffered undeserved death, he was not going to run away either. Awaiting death with his arms spread out in the shape of the cross he duly suffered martyrdom. His holiness became clear the next day when they found his scorched body emitting a sweet perfume.[93]

It is this example that may seem somewhat ambiguous in the context of Goscelin's great emphasis on learning in Book III. On the one hand he quoted Origen, who wrote that it is sufficient to read the holy Scriptures even when we do not understand them because they are beneficial in themselves, as is illustrated by the example of Brithric. On the other hand, in the book following this one, Goscelin insists on Eve's study of the meaning of Scripture when he encourages her not to give up until she understands everything. It accords, however, with the belief that the mind should be purified with sacred reading; only then it will be ready to come to divine understanding. Furthermore, this example illustrates Goscelin's belief that everybody serves God to his or her ability. In the same way as God tests each soul to his strength, as he pointed out

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91 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 64: *Una uox: Christiana sum, inter cruciamenta iactabatur. Referebat autem Christianis obstupescentibus, quotiens clamasset: Christiana sum, totiens nouis uiribus se reparatam esse.*

92 Talbot. *Liber confortatorius* 67. The "first" line would probably have been *Miserere mei, Deus, secundum, magnam misericordiam tuam; et secundum multitudinem miserationum tuarum dele iniquitatem meam.* Psalm 50:3

93 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 68.

earlier, so does each soul serve God to its ability. Brithric suffered, or perhaps was rewarded with, a martyr's death, because of his great faith. He had withstood the arguments of the devil with the little learning he knew. Eve, however, had to serve God in a different way. Her talent was to learn and study God's word, and she is urged to dedicate her intellect to God in order to come to divine understanding. This does not mean that the importance of faith takes secondary place. Goscelin makes sure to emphasise that prayer should always come before learning. Eve's studies were seen, however, as an integral part of her service to God. Eve had the intellectual capacity to struggle with the words of God until she understood them.[94] The enigmas and mysteries of Scripture were there for her to discover.

The reading list which Goscelin recommends thus shows a great faith in Eve's intellectual worth, as many modern scholars have remarked. It calls into question, however, Goscelin's awareness of a recluse's actual resources. Even if Eve managed to borrow and read during her life-time all the books he prescribed, it should probably still be seen as an unusual feat. It should be pointed out that the general availability of the books Goscelin envisaged Eve to keep in her cell should not be overestimated. Biblical commentaries by Augustine, Jerome and Gregory the Great were a logical and popular part of the *lectio divina* and these occur frequently on monastic lists. Extant manuscripts from the eleventh century give evidence to this as well. A look at the surviving manuscripts from the area where Eve lived, for example, shows, apart from liturgical works, mostly exegetical books by these three Fathers. Gregory's *Moralia in Job* seem to have been particularly popular.[95] A similar situation existed in England.[96] Most monasteries at the middle of the eleventh century would, however, not have had an extensive collection of works. Only by the end of the century is there evidence of a significant increase in the production of books. Evidence from surviving

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94 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 28: *Luctare cum Domino donec superes: uim fac regno celorum ut intres*. This was one of the early lessons in Eve's life, which Goscelin recalls at the beginning of Book I.

95 *Catalogue des Manuscrits en Écriture Latine Portant des Indications de Date, de Lieu et de Copiste*, vol. VII *Ouest de la France et Pays de Loire*, Charles Samaran et Robert Marichal, eds. (Paris: Éditions du CNRS, 1984).

96 Helmut Gneuss, 'A Preliminary List of Manuscripts Written or Owned in England up to 1100,' *Anglo-Saxon England* 9 (1981): 1-60.

books and the extant booklist from Angers, for instance, show that book production only started seriously in the late eleventh century. Geoffrey of Vendôme's efforts are specifically noteworthy. At the time of his abbacy (1093-1132) a great many patristic works, especially the works of Augustine, were copied at his monastery.[97] Works by the other authors appear to have been significantly rarer and it should, therefore, not be assumed that Eve would have had the opportunity to read all of them. Goscelin's recommendations are thus remarkable, to say the least.

This begs the question, then, of what Goscelin meant by giving Eve a list of books to read rather than directing her to a teacher. Could it be that he was being somewhat pretentious, showing off his erudition by recommending Eve to read those books, or was he simply naïve in thinking that the books to which he had had access in his career would be readily available to a female recluse? The answer may perhaps be found in the choice of works he put before her. Cassiodorus' Tripartite History is an ecclesiastical history which M. L. W. Laistner shows to have been used from the ninth century onwards for its reports on synods and in questions concerning ideal government.[98] In the eleventh century it had proved to be a useful source in the issues brought up by the Gregorian reformers; it was also used by hagiographers and at least once used in an exhortatory letter to a nun.[99] The other works on the reading lists are, strictly speaking, Church histories as well, and as Goscelin pointed out in the passage quoted above, he recommends them for that reason. These books are sources from which the reader could benefit in many ways. Apart from providing historical information on the Church and its dogmas, a book such as *The City of God* could serve meditational purposes. It gives examples for imitation as well as spiritual insights. Together with Augustine's *Confessions*, Boethius's

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97 Monique-Cécile Garand in the Introduction to *Catalogue des Manuscrits en Écriture Latine*, vol. VII *Ouest de la France et Pays de Loire*, xxviii (Angers) and xxxiv-xxxvi (Vendôme). A list from 1119 of all the works of Augustine produced at La Trinité survives.

98 M. L. W. Laistner, 'The Value and Influence of Cassiodorus' Ecclesiastical History,' in: *The Intellectual Heritage of the Early Middle Ages: Selected Essays by M.L.W. Laistner*, Chester G. Starr. ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1957) 30-31.

99 Laistner. 'Cassiodorus' Ecclesiastical History' 32-33.

Consolation, and the other books Goscelin recommended, these provide the sources for a well-rounded intellectual and spiritual education.

The question remains whether Goscelin believed in the possiblity of Eve's of having access to these books or whether his recommendations served a dual purpose. It is clear from the text that he believed reading to be a vital part of Eve's daily routine. Placed in a context in which he referred to Eve's mind as the altar of the soul, her cell as her grave, books as her banquet and reading the oil with which she should keep the lamp of her mind burning,[100] it may be necessary to interpret his reference to the window of her cell in a similar vein. The eyes have more than occasionally been described as the windows to the soul. Ambrose, for example, used the analogy quite specifically:

> What is your window if not that through which we see the actions of Christ – namely, the eye of the soul and the gaze of the mind? And so, O virgin, let Christ come in through your window, let Christ put his hand in through the window, let the love, not of the body, but of the Word come to you. And if the Word puts his hand through your window, note how you should prepare your window, note how you should wipe them clean from all the grime of your sins. (...)[101]

Jerome saw the eyes as the windows through which evil corrupts the soul.[102] Goscelin, too, used the analogy of eyes as windows in the *Liber confortatorius.*[103] If this analogy is followed through, it may be possible to interpret the books, for

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100 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 80.

101 Chapter XIII, 79, Saint Ambrose, *On Virginity*, Daniel Callam, trans. (Toronto: Peregina, 1996) 36-37.

102 Jerome in *Against Jovinian* II, 8: Through the five senses, as through open windows, vice has access to the soul. The metropolis and citadel of the mind cannot be taken unless the enemy have previously entered by its doors. The soul is distressed by the disorder they produce, and is led captive by sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch. If any one delights in the sports of the circus, or the struggles of athletes, the versatility of actors, the figure of women, in splendid jewels, dress, silver and gold, and other things of the kind, the liberty of the soul is lost through the windows of the eyes, and the prophet's words are fulfilled: [3]"Death is come up into our windows." Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Church, vol. 6 at http://ccel.wheaton. edu/fathers2. Last updated 11 November 1999.

103 Goscelin, too, places special emphasis on blindness as a means to secure some purity of mind when he refers to the blind Saint Omer [Audomare] whose sight was returned to him by Saint Vedast [Vaast] on the latter's translation. Omer asked to have his blindness back because *mors ingrediatur per fenestras nostras* (page 77).

which her windows should be large enough, on a less literal level as well. I have already suggested that Goscelin through the *Liber confortatorius*, addresses Eve's inner life, as the subjects for Books II and III show. He saw Eve, in her reclusive life, as a self-sufficient being who had no need for the help of others except Christ. The imagery used to describe her as safe from the whirlpool of the world, of her cell as the ark on a turbulent sea, of her having reached a safe haven and her cell as a strong house built on a rock, is the imagery used by many medieval authors to describe the virtue of monastic solitude. Fom the mid-eleventh century onwards a renewed emphasis on the need for repose and inner peace became more dominant. Under the influence of the new religious movements which sought to create a spiritual desert by leaving traditional monasticism, the emphasis of the monastic life as an essentially communal experience with a wider significance to the outside world shifted towards a more individual relationship with God. The belief that solitude of the heart and mind was more important than the complete withdrawal from the world could thus be seen as the monastic reaction against the more extreme forms of eremitism.[104] Goscelin may have felt this too. He preferred the communal life and he told Eve outright that he had wanted her to remain a monastic dove (*columba*) rather than a solitary dove (*turtur*).[105] Yet Goscelin was aware of the need of physical solitude in order to attain inner peace. He gave voice to his own wish for a cell where he, too, could dedicate himself more fully to the work of God. He also related to Eve a story from the *Verba seniorum*, in which three men decided to dedicate their lives in three different ways. Two of them chose to work in the world: one attended to the weak and the sick in society and the other chose to live among men and help them to resolve their quarrels. The third turned his back on the world and chose the contemplative life. When the other two were tired of the ministry of Martha they turned for advice to the one who had chosen the better part of Mary.[106] He showed them a little jar of water and they could see nothing in the troubled

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104 Constable, 'The Ideal of Inner Solitude' 28.

105 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 36: *cenobialis columba, non turtur solitaria.* His choice of words could be significant. *Columba* echoes the Song of Songs, especially verse 2.14, which Constable shows to have been used to for the solitary life ('The Ideal of Inner Solitude' 29).

106 Goscelin praises Eve for having chosen the better part of Mary too, on page 89.

surface; but when the water settled they could see their faces. The man who had been leading the contemplative life explained that only in the mirror of divine peace could they see their own deformity.[107]

I have already quoted the passage where Goscelin compared the solitary to the wild ass set free in the woods and there are several other instances where Goscelin alluded to the need for peace or repose as the basis for contemplation. The basis for this need for *quies* is found in the command "*Vacate et videte quoniam ego sum deus*,"[108] which Goscelin quotes in the context of the wild ass. This idea of interior liberty gained momentum in the twelfth century and was seen as a gift by the Lord.[109] Opposed to *otiositas* (idleness) which is the enemy of the soul,[110] came to stand *otium*, tranquillity or peace: the leisure required for the labour of God which consisted of prayer, fasts and vigils. Leclercq notes the closeness of the etymology of the words *otium* and *studia* was recognised by Rabanus Maurus: one needs leisure in order to read and write.[111]

Although Goscelin appeared to subscribe to the idea of *otia monastica*, it seems that he was unfamiliar with the vocabulary. When advising Eve against sloth he wrote,

> Iam fuge otia; otia enim generant fastidia, et, teste beato Benedicto, *otiositas anime est inimica*; et: *Otiosus in desideriis est:* [cf Prov. 21:25] *Diuturna quies uitiis alimenta ministrat.* [Cato, *Disticha* I, 2].[112]

Instead, he used the word *quies* to convey the same idea:[113]

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107 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 72-73; *Verba Seniorum* II (*De Quite*).

108 Ps. 45:11.

109 Jean Leclercq, *Otia Monastica*, Studia Anselmiana 51 (Rome, 1963) 74.

110 *Rule of St Benedict* Chapter 48.

111 Rabanus Maurus, *Epist.*, 6, Quoted by Leclercq, *Otia Monastica* 71-72.

112 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 79: "Now flee from idleness; idleness indeed produces weariness and as the blessed Benedict writes, *idleness is the enemy of the soul*, and *he who is idle is in desires; continuous idleness offers food for vices.*

113 Leclercq found the use of the words of *quies*, *vacatio*, *otium*, and *sabbatum* to describe the different kinds of divine leisure in authors from late antiquity onwards.

> *Ipsi etiam seculi sapientes qui nec Dominum uirtutum nec retributorem meritorum nouerunt, solius quietis appetitu uel amore exercitande sapientie turbam fugitant, damnant luxuriam, emulantur continentiam, et in mediocritate rerum posuerunt uitam tam beatam quam securam.* (...) *Et quam mercedem feret hec Babilonicarum fuga deliciarum? Quietem animi et corporis, scilicet temporalem.*[114]

Taking this into account, Goscelin should be seen as addressing Eve's inner world even, perhaps, when he is prescribing her books. There is no doubt that he saw the books he prescribed as valuable companions in her solitude. They stand, however, also for what they convey in general: the shared history of Christians of all centuries, the teachings of the Bible and the Fathers. They convey in full what Goscelin relates to her within the limited pages of the *Liber confortatorius*.

The books become symbols for the teachings on which he would like Eve to meditate. Goscelin's wording when he recommends the more sizeable books may indicate this too. He chose the word *respice*, a term which involves less effort than, for example, *lege* or *recita*, and which might show that she has to have an awareness of the contents and message of these works rather than that she should study the books in detail. In the same way, the advice that "the windows of [her] cell, the tongue and of the ears be locked against stories and idle talk or rumours," and that she would "let no cats, no birds, no little beasts, nor any irrational creature be a companion to [her] soul, nor exhaust [her] temporal flight"[115] so that she might be alone with God, could be interpreted as distracting thoughts invading her meditations. The scarcity of other advice relating to her physical existence invites the posibility, at least, of such an interpretation.

Eve's studies alone were not going to be sufficient in the attainment of the beatic vision. Quoting from Jerome's letters, Goscelin had already written that

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114 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 73: "Even the wise men of the world who did not know the Lord of Strength nor the Rewarder of services flee from the crowds because they long for rest or because they love to exercise wisdom, they condemn luxury, they emulate continence, and they saw the happy and carefree life in moderation. (...) And what reward will this flight from Babylonian pleasures bring? The quiet of the spirit and body, that is, in this world.

115 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 80: *Celle, lingue et aurium fenestre a fabulis et uaniloquiis, immo maliloquiis, sint obserate. Non cata, non altilia, non bestiola, non omnis irrationabilis anima sit tibi condomestica, nec tua exinaniant tempora auolantia. Sola sis cum Domino solitaria.*

the fear of God is the beginning of all wisdom.[116] In Book IV he continued his exhortation that only through humility and the grace which God bestows on the humble will the good Christian see the face of God. The first half of Book IV is only concerned with the fall of the proud; and the examples include some of the greatest saints. The love of Christ for those he causes to fall and his meekness and humility in his passion serve to show what is owed him. Goscelin's prime example of humility rewarded is Mary Magdalene. He eulogises her humility and her exalted position among the followers of Jesus. He finishes with an enumeration of the rewards for her love and humilty:

> Behold what was once the abyss of the seven evil spirits, and the shelter of as many capital sins with their troops, after the demons were expelled, has become a shrine for the sevenfold graces filled with the spirit of wisdom, of intellect, of prudence, of strength, of knowledge, of piety, and fear of the Lord. In the dens where dragons dwelt before, rises up the verdure of the reed and the bulrush, so that after the devil is expelled, the law of the Lord may be written with the divine reed-pen in the cleansed heart, ...[117]

The sense of her own insignificance as well as the glorious examples of the saints should then lead Eve to the compunction of her soul. Only with the tears of compunction could she build herself an aqueduct by which she would be baptised and be made pure; then she will see God (*videntis Deum*).[118]

Goscelin's approach to writing a letter of instruction combined traditional teaching methods with signs of an acute awareness of new ideas, as well as original and personal insights. The idea of *vacare Deo* is, I believe, at the heart of Goscelin's teaching. The reclusive life should by definition be dedicated completely to meditation and the knowledge of God. If it is not, then there would be no reason for a person to choose the reclusive life. For someone like Eve, who had first been a nun, this is especially so. This fact may be a crucial distinction

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116 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 82.

117 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 102: *Ecce que erat septem demoniorum baratrum, totidemque principalium uitiorum cum suis agminibus receptaculum, eiectis demoniis facta est septiformis gratie sacrarium, spiritu sapientie, intellectus, consilii, fortitudinis, scientie, pietatis et timoris Domini repletum. In cubilibus in quibus prius dracones habitabant, exoritur uiror calami et iunci, ut expulso diabolo, calamo diuino scribatur lex Domini in corde mundato, ...*

118 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 106.

between Goscelin's intent, and that of, for example, the author of the *Ancrene Wisse*, whose work is much more prescriptive. Goscelin quotes examples of the diets of the saints but appears to leave it up to Eve to draw her conclusions from those examples. It is not the food for the sustenance of her physical well-being that needs to be dictated by him. It is that for her spiritual well-being which Goscelin is eager to hand out to her. It is the food for thought that she should hunger after: it is the only food that he permits, indeed even encourages, her to be greedy and hungry for. The only direct practical advice that he appeared to give her is that she should not keep any animals and that she should shut out gossip and libel from her cell, but even these could have a metaphoric meaning as well. Goscelin does not spend more than three sentences on these subjects, and even here he does not resist the temptation to liken her body to her cell, and her eyes and ears to the windows that ought to be shut. Goscelin may therefore be seen as internalising Eve's reclusive experience. In her mind and heart she is all alone and has only God for a companion, even though in reality she was near other recluses. His lack of concern for her bodily chastity is, perhaps, also a sign that he is really treating only her inner life. Goscelin hardly touches upon virginity and the daily dangers facing the recluse's chastity, subjects which are major concerns of most other writers when addressing women. This lack of "interest" in this subject will be studied in more detail in the following chapter, but it is necessary to emphasise here that Goscelin's exhortation is about fighting a spiritual battle against all the temptations of the devil and the flesh; he does not single out virginity because he is writing for a woman.

CHAPTER FOUR

MILES CHRISTI OR *SPONSA AGNI*:

GOSCELIN'S PHILOSOPHY OF SPIRITUAL EQUALITY

A woman who strives to be like a man lacks ambition.

Graffito, New York, 1982

INTRODUCTION

Hec arma et hec fortitudo quibus prouocaris, non sunt sexuum, non etatum, non membrorum, sed magnanimitatis, sed constantie, sed animi ad omnia uincenda inuicti.[1]

Goscelin's call to arms leaves no doubt that in the conscription to the army of Christ no one is exempted on account of those weaknesses traditionally associated with women, old age, or bodily defects. Echoing Saint Paul´s claim that all are one in Christ,[2] Goscelin shows that he intends to make no exception for Eve in his exhortations on account of her being a woman. In itself this was not such a remarkable stance as, in theory at least, all Christians faced similar spiritual struggles. Throughout Christian history, however, the application of this principle was seen as problematic: the Church Fathers, and especially those whose influence was felt throughout the Middle Ages, could not divorce women's disadvantage in terms of physical strength from their mental and spiritual capabilities.[3] This tendency to see women as spiritually as well as physically inferior is nowhere more apparent than in writings especially addressed to them. It is my intention in this chapter to show that Goscelin gave evidence of an original attitude towards female spirituality which found expression in a number of ways. It needs to be stressed here that Goscelin did not write a polemic or a

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1 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 36: These arms and this courage by which you are called forth do not belong to sex, or age, or the limbs, but to magnanimity, but to perseverance, but to the spirit invincible in defeating all things.

2 Gal. 3.28: "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."

3 This quite apart from the general notion of women as inherently sinful, as the original cause of the Fall of Man, and as continuing to be the cause of the fall of men. I will not repeat here the roots of all (medieval) misogyny but will discuss those aspects that are directly relevant in relation to my argument.

treatise on a single subject: it was clearly not his intention to write a vindication of the equality or even superiority of spiritual strength in women, as Abelard was to do in one of his letters of instruction for the nuns of the Paraclete.[4] Nevertheless, there is a sustained tendency to acknowledge woman's equality in spiritual matters that is not, as I shall argue, necessarily dependent on women manifesting "masculine" attributes. This does not imply that Goscelin strove towards a discourse in which the feminine triumphed over a traditionally masculine bias in Christian spirituality. On the contrary, Goscelin's discourse shows many of the commonplaces used to describe the Christian life. It is, however, to Goscelin's merit that he managed to strike a balance between masculine and feminine virtue in his encouragements for Eve, which implied a conviction that spiritual strength was universal.

Goscelin's approach to female spirituality manifests itself in different ways. There are several direct statements in the *Liber confortatorius*, like the one quoted above, which included men and women as fighting side by side in the spiritual battle. His examples from the *Lives* of the saints highlighted the spiritual strength of women and, as shall be shown below, he carefully avoided exploiting the idea that female strength was uncharacteristic of the sex and that for that reason it was more admirable than male strength. It seems, moreover, that he purposely avoided the exploitation of the subject of virginity. Although the subject is not completely absent, Goscelin's seeming lack of concern with Eve's chastity is remarkable, especially considering the tradition in which he was working. The concern with physical chastity is omni-present in works of direction and the *Lives* of many female saints, and it forms the basis on which all other virtues stand or fall. Goscelin's treatment of virginity is much less on the surface of his argument and I will show that it is a natural part of his perception of the Christian life which does not need to dominate the other virtues.

Goscelin shows a consistent awareness of gender-biased[5] aspects of religious exhortation, but he was not the only author who had a favourable view

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4 Peter Abelard, *Epist.* 7, 'On the Origin of Nuns,' *PL* 178 (Paris. 1885).

5 I am distinguishing the terms "sex" and "gender", using the term "sex" to denote the physical characteristics, and "gender" to denote non-physical characteristics which are attributed to a person's sex.

of female religious experience. Men such as Jerome, Bede and Aldhelm should also be accredited with a positive attitude towards women in religious and biblical history. The *Liber confortatorius* should, however, be evaluated also in the perspective of the times in which it was written. Goscelin wrote at a time which saw the beginnings of the effects of the Gregorian Reforms of the eleventh century, and a necessary but very brief look at the influence of these reforms on the religious outlook of the late eleventh and the twelfth century will be part of the discussion in this chapter.

The Gregrorian Reforms of the Eleventh Century

It was a topos in patristic and medieval literature to heap on to womankind the massive burden of original sin and never to let woman forget that. Warnings against the weakness of her flesh and the destructive influence which her sexuality has on men abound in writings for men and women alike and take all kinds of different shapes. Although blatant and openly aggressive misogyny, such as that shown by Tertullian in the second century, may make up a relatively small portion of moral treatises, an element of blame and warning is usually present. A resurgence of open attack on women could be seen in the eleventh and twelfth centuries in the writings of monks,[6] but more subtle changes in religious men's attitude towards women are also evident. These have been ascribed to what are now called the Gregorian Reforms of the eleventh century, which were the cause of profound changes in monasticism and spirituality.

The Gregorian reformers[7] aimed to reduce the influence of secular powers on the medieval church. In western Europe, kings had come to control the Church to such an extent that Rome had little left to say in the appointment of bishops and abbots. Appointments were often made for political reasons, and in

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6 In 'Flaws in the Golden Bowl,' Barbara Newman provides a florilegium of examples by Osbert of Clare and Idung of Prüfening, among others.

7 Works consulted on this topic include: Frank Barlow's two works on the English Church; Cantor, 'The Crisis of Western Monasticism' 47-67; Colin Morris, *The Papal Monarchy: The Western Church from 1050-1250* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989); Gerd Tellenbach, *The Church in Western Europe from the Tenth to the Early Twelfth Century,* Timothy Reuter, trans.(Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993).

England, for example, a great number of secular clerks were made bishops under Edward the Confessor. But the Church, too, needed her bishops to be good administrators, not only in spiritual matters but also as estate managers; furthermore, many bishops held private property and had retinues to equal any earl.[8] The wealth of the monasteries and the secular concerns attached to that wealth had made the Church become more and more secular. This development coincided with the lay powers becoming increasingly more ecclesiastical. Secular leaders such as Edward the Confessor and Henry II of Germany whose religious fervour was to make them saints, began to encroach on spiritual leadership. It was the aim of pope Leo IX (1048-54) and his successors – most notably Gregory VII (1073-85) – to limit the secular influence in the Church and to subject the kings and Church officials to the Papacy. In order to re-establish the distinction between spiritual leaders and secular leaders, and to establish the supremacy of Rome in the world, spiritual leaders had to become more distinct and show a "heightened religious fervour".[9] Religious leaders, be they parish priests or archbishops, had to go back to their apostolic roots, they had to become once again living examples of piety for the faithful. The first measure to be taken was to clear the Church of simoniacs; the second, following from the first, was to enforce clerical celibacy.

The efforts of the reformers ultimately failed to achieve papal supremacy in the world, but they did bring about what Cantor has described as a world revolution.[10] The papal reforms of the late eleventh and early twelfth century caused the shake-up of traditional monasticism and paved the way for the new monastic orders. The crisis of monasticism – if we are justified in calling it that[11] – was taking place during the period between 1050 and 1130, an era which is marked by important changes in the Church under the papal reform movement.

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8 Barlow, *The English Church, 1000-1066* 96-7.

9 Cantor, 'Crisis of Western Monasticism' 55.

10 Cantor, 'Crisis of Western Monasticism' 55.

11 That there was a crisis is challenged by Van Engen. He writes that, considering the fact that Benedictine monasticism was still vital in the early twelfth century, the new eremitic movement cannot just be interpreted as a rebellion against "decadence". Rather, he writes, it was a response to the Benedictines' prosperity. See 'The "Crisis of Cenobitism" Reconsidered' 303-4.

Jo Ann McNamara also links these changes with a broader social movement which was "complicated by the ideological struggle between celibate and married men for leadership of the Christian world, [and which] precipitated a masculine identity crisis."[12] In summary, McNamara argues that this identity crisis was brought on by two factors. On the one hand, the enforcement of celibacy among the clergy triggered a (renewed) suspicion of women as destroyers of men. On the other hand, a ruling ecclesiastical elite, whose power did not have to rely on sexual domination of women, came into existence at a time when new social structures and the rise of a professional class for which it was necessary "to prove women's incapacity to carry out public professional responsibilities",[13] were making themselves felt.

I am not concerned here with the second of these developments in the twelfth century. What is of interest, however, is the connection that is made between the papal reforms and a resurgence of anti-feminism in clerical and monastic writings, together with a renewed concern about the claustration of female religious which reached a peak between 1050 and 1150.[14] It has been thought that the concern with chastity, and the resulting stricter claustration of monastic women, was a direct result of the enforcement of a celibate clergy. It is certain that a greater emphasis on the virginity of nuns, almost to the exclusion of other spiritual matters, starts to become common from the twelfth century onwards. It is true that the bridal imagery used to describe the relationship between the virginal soul and God which became so popular in the twelfth century was used for monks and nuns alike and was greatly influenced by Saint Bernard's sermons on the Song of Songs. The interplay between this new emphasis on the soul's feminine role in relation to Christ and the concern with religious women as sexual beings resulted in a literature of female

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12 This is what she dubbed the *Herrenfrage* in 'The *Herrenfrage*: The Restructuring of the Gender System, 1050-1150,' in: *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages*, Clare E Lees, ed. Medieval Cultures 7 (Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota P, 1994) 3.

13 McNamara, 'The *Herrenfrage*' 4.

14 McNamara, 'The *Herrenfrage*' 4.

spirituality in which the focus was almost entirely on the preservation of virginity.[15]

As has already been seen in Chapter One, at this same time, keen supporters of women who wished to pursue an ascetic life, men such as Robert of Arbrissel, were making themselves heard. Peter Abelard's letter to Heloise on the origins of nuns extolled the position of women in Christianity and emphasised the special grace which Christ himself bestowed on them.[16] This letter should be seen as proof that, at the time when Abelard was writing it, there was a need for some kind of recognition of the positive role for women in Christendom. Goscelin, too, should be seen as a supporter and a witness of women's equality with men in spiritual matters, but he was writing at a time when the effects of the reforms may only just have started to be felt. It is unlikely that he was writing in immediate defence of women as a reaction to anti-feminist tendencies already evolving from the reforms. An awareness of these tendencies may, however, have influenced the subtle enforcement of a pro-feminist attitude in his work for Eve. Goscelin was writing in the same tradition as Abelard, and future work involving a closer comparison of Abelard's works for the nuns of the Paraclete with the *Liber confortatorius* may well show remarkable similarities.[17]

VIRGINITY AND WOMEN'S SPIRITUALITY

There is one important aspect of texts that could be classified as literature of formation in relation to the *Liber confortatorius* that has been given little attention here so far: the subject of virginity. Goscelin's approach to this subject

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15 See Barbara Newman, 'Flaws in the Golden Bowl'. Newman has studied a wide variety of texts written between 1075 and1225 which she describes as literature of formation and which includes texts written for men as well as for women. She includes the *Liber confortatorius* among these texts (p. 144) but does not discuss it in her article.

16 Mary Martin McLaughlin, 'Peter Abelard and the Dignity of Women: Twelfth Century «Feminism» in Theory and Practice' in: *Pierre Abélard - Pierre le Vénérable: Les Courants Philosophiques, Littéraires et Artistique en Occident au Milieu du XII^e Siècle* (Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1975) 295-296.

17 I base this on McLaughlin's observations on pages 298 -305.

constitutes an essential difference in attitude towards the direction of a religious woman. As will become clear in the discussion in the second part of this chapter, Goscelin was little inclined to make a distinction between monastic men and monastic women in his encouragements for the life of perfection. On no occasion did he suggest that the religious life – both physically and spiritually – is in any way different for women. As I have pointed out in Chapter Three, Goscelin's encouragements are, on the whole, lacking in explicit pieces of advice and do not follow the example of earlier writings for women. I have already touched upon the fact that Goscelin did not make the issue of female virginity an explicit focus point in his discourse: he did not treat it as a matter of prime importance in the life of a nun or recluse. The fact that it is an important topic and major concern for so many authors, however, makes its absence in the *Liber confortatorius* quite remarkable. Since there appears to be no reason to assume that Eve was not in fact a virgin, this absence may perhaps be explained by the reasoning that Eve, as a professed nun, was well acquainted with the ideal of virginity for religious women. As such there would be no reason to repeat all the commonplaces associated with the subject. Eve's physical state was an accepted fact as she had been in a convent since she was a little girl. Furthermore, as I have shown in the previous chapter, Goscelin's encouragements transcend the physical level of her being and his concern with the ideal of virginity seems to be restricted to the spiritual life as well.

The ideal of virginity underlies Goscelin's arguments as much as it does most other monastic works. It is, however, through the imagery and ideas associated with it that the ideal of virginity, as a prerequisite of the angelic life which all monastics aimed to imitate, finds expression.[18] Extant primary sources as well as sources of monastic scholarship appear to make a distinction between writings about monasticism, which are primarily aimed at or about monks, and those works that are aimed at women and which are almost exclusively studied as sources about the religious life of women in the Middle Ages. Any overlap between the two is often not taken into consideration. Such highly illuminating

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18 See on this subject John Bugge, *Virginitas: An Essay in the History of a Medieval Ideal* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1975) 30-58 and Jean Leclercq, *The Life of Perfection: Points of View on the Essence of the Religious State*. Leonard J. Doyle, trans. (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1961).

works on medieval spirituality as those written by Jean Leclercq and Giles Constable[19] focus on a spirituality that appears to be exclusive to monks because the sources on which these studies are based were written by and for monks and because these have come down to us in greater abundance. It seems highly likely, however, that the experience of nuns was founded on the same ideals, especially at a time that their houses were more closely connected with those of monks. One only has to think of the example of Hilda of Whitby as an educator of future bishops,[20] the austerity of life and the courage of early medieval nuns,[21] and the writings of Hrotswitha of Gandersheim and Hildegard of Bingen to realise that their spirituality had a common ground. Perhaps under the influence of late medieval directives and such early rules for nuns as that written by Cæsarius of Arles, the lack of actual works of spirituality specifically addressed to women may lead us to believe that nuns should be more concerned with their physical intactness and their outward modesty solely because, as women, they are more prone to sexual transgression. Monks, on the other hand, considered virginity a sexless state which aimed to imitate the life of the angels and which was a prerequisite of spiritual power against sin and the devil.[22] This was an essential element in eastern monasticism: because angels were sexless figures – and human sexuality a direct result of the Fall – monks saw celibacy as one of the prerequisites in the attainment of the angelic life. They saw the monastic life as the imitation of the life of the angels in this world. This concept was adopted in western monasticism but its application became more gender-specific. Under the influence of Origen's commentary on the Song of Songs, in which the poem's secular contents were explained as an allegory of the human soul's relationship with Christ, bridal imagery inevitably came to be used for female religious in particular. In this way physical virginity became the focal point of pastoral care directed at nuns, sometimes to the exclusion of other concerns.

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19 I am thinking in particular of Leclercq's *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God* and *Otia Monastica*, and Constable's 'The Ideal of Inner Solitude in the Twelfth Century.'

20 Bk IV. 23, Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Leo Sherley-Price, trans., rev. ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990) 244.

21 For instances of this, see of this Schulenburg, *Forgetful of their Sex*, especially pp. 127-175.

22 See Bugge, *Virginitas* 47-58.

The spiritual equality of men and women leading a celibate life and the syneisaktic ideal that this equality sometimes involved in the early years of Christianity was to make way for a more segregated life style. The ideal of living as a *miles Christi* became a male prerogative and as such it was given voice by Sulpicius Severus' *Dialogues*. In these it is read that a hermit who had formerly been a soldier had wanted to serve in Christ's army together with his female companion. Saint Martin objected to this and asked the man whether he had ever seen a woman fight in the front lines. The hermit had to admit that he had not, to which Martin replied that:

> A woman should not come near the men's lines. The fighting formations should be kept quite separate and the women should live in their own quarters, far away. It makes an army ridiculous if a troop of women invades the men's battalions. A soldier's place is fighting in the line and on the battle-field; a woman should keep behind the fortifications. She can win glory too, by living chastely while her husband is away. For her, the first virtue and the crowning victory is that she should not be seen.[23]

The message is clear: women should not be encouraged to live an eremitic life. Their place was at home where they should guard their chastity or they should live in a convent guarded over by a bishop. The influence of Sulpicius' work on other authors in the early Middle Ages was significant.[24] This does not mean that women were never considered to be *milites Christi*, but it is significant that they were primarily *sponsae Christi*. Bugge remarks in this context that

> The native form of English Benedictinism ... had never used the *sponsa Christi* motif in reference to male virgins....the ecclesiological approach to the bridal metaphor remained in force in early English thought through the writings of Bede, Alcuin, and Aelfric. And perhaps the more popular interpretation, indebted to Aldhelm's *De laudibus virginitatis*, was the one that restricted the meaning to the female religious, and specifically to the large number of nuns and professed holy women Anglo-Saxon Christianity produced.[25]

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23 Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogues*, in: *The Western Fathers being the lives of SS. Martin of Tours, Ambrose, Augustine of Hippo, Honoratus of Arles and Germanus of Auxerre*, F. R. Hoare, trans. & ed. (London: Sheed and Ward, 1954) 116-7.

24 See below p. 163.

25 Bugge, *Virginitas* 94.

The ideal that caused women to play an important part in the establishment of the Church in the early years was suppressed by the male hierarchy once the Church gained a stronger foothold.[26] To a great extent this was achieved by emphasising virginity as a female prerogative and consecrated virgins as the brides of Christ.[27] So, although the souls of both men and women were considered to be espoused to Christ, it was this emphasis on female virginity that reduced women to their traditional, subject position in patriarchal society. Treatises on female virginity were prescriptive and restrictive of virgins' movements and spirituality and they sought to suppress women's full spiritual potential. It seems almost needless to say that even so women made their voices heard and in a few cases at least, such as the examples of Monica and Macrina,[28] we know them to have influenced important men. Women often tried to lead ascetic lifestyles and the number of directives that they should be kept veiled and indoors could well be a sign that some men were concerned about this situation. However, stories abound about women who had retreated into the desert and who had led lives that were just as ascetic as those of their fellow hermits.

The meaning of virginity for women became thus increasingly a matter of physical intactness. It was a symbol of moral purity, upheld for outward appearances, rather than an essential tool of strength in the spiritual battle against evil, which it had remained for monks well into the Middle Ages. Ambrose, for example, had seen in virgins an earthly manifestion of the life of the angels such as was lost in Paradise. His treatise *De institutione virginis* is about virginity as a state of the soul, and it may or may not have been written especially for women.[29] It could easily be interpreted as such as his frame of reference is

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26 McNamara, *Sisters in Arms* 42. McNamara remarks in this context: 'Theologians were already struggling with the question of whether or not a priest's sacramental virtue depended on his personal morality. If manhood itself depended on spiritual and moral values, however they might be defined, then the priesthood must be open to 'men' of either sex. This question underlies many of the doctrinal quarrels of the third and fourth centuries, which ultimately led the Church to seal the soul into its gendered casing eternally with the doctrine of the resurrection of the body."

27 McNamara, *Sisters in Arms* 44.

28 See below p. 161.

29 St Ambrose. *De institutione virginis* 17.104: *Nunc ad te, decursis omnibus, pater gloriae, uota conuerto, cuius pietati inexcusabiles gratias agimus, quod in uirginibus sacris angelorum uitam uidemus in terris, quam in paradiso quondam amiseramus.*

almost entirely female; yet Ambrose did not refer to female virgins *per se* on this occasion. He discussed the soul and he speculated about the reason why the word, and therefore the imagery needed when speaking about it is feminine. In one of his treatises on virginity, for example, he used feminine imagery throughout in relation to the soul, and here it cannot be seen as a derogation when he writes: "the soul has no gender in itself, but perhaps it is a feminine noun *[anima]* because, when the turbulence of the body acts violently upon it, the soul softens these bodily assaults by its gentle love and a certain persuasive rationality."[30] Yet Ambrose's writings are good examples of the ambiguous interpretation of feminine characteristics. A less subtle gender distinction in relation to faith and strength of mind was made when he wrote that:

> Anyone who does not believe is a woman and should be designated by the name of that sex, whereas one who believes progresses to perfect manhood, to the measure of adulthood in Christ, freed of that name in the world, of the sex of the body, of the seductiveness of youth and the garrulousness of old age.[31]

The issue of virginity is a complex one and although born from the same concept, it often came to have a different meaning for men than it had in connection with women. This difference may be illustrated by examples taken from Saint Anselm's writings. Saint Anselm's Meditation II on the loss of his virginity should, I believe, be read as a lament on the loss of innocence, the virginity not of the body but of the mind or the soul. Benedicta Ward argues that it could be read in both ways as she compares it to Anselm's letter to Gunhilda in which he scolds her for having left the monastic life for an earthly husband who was, at that point, already dead.[32] Although I would agree with the possibility of reading this loss in a literal sense, I believe that there is a crucial

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CETEDOC. This treatise is not to be confused with his *De virginibus*, which Ambrose addressed to his sister, and which is a document aimed at female virgins.

30 Chapter XV, 93, Saint Ambrose, *On Virginity* 42.

31 *quae non credit mulier est et adhuc corporei sexus appellatione signatur; nam quae credit occurrit in uirum perfectum, in mensuram aetatis plenitudinis christi carens iam nomine saeculi, corporis sexu, lubrico iuuentutis, multiloquio senectutis.* Ambrosius Mediolanensis, *Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam* libr 10, CETEDOC (line1525). Translation based on that by McNamara, *Sisters in Arms* 63.

32 Introduction to *The Prayers and Meditations of Saint Anselm with the Proslogion*, Benedicta Ward, trans. (London: Penguin, 1973) 74 -75.

distinction between the two texts. Gunhilda's adultery with Alan Rufus was perceived as a physical sin, and the language Anselm used in the letter conveys – at times rather gruesome – bodily imagery:

> You loved Count Alan Rufus and he you; where is he now? What has become of the lover you loved? Go and lie now with him in the bed where he lies; gather his worms in your bosom; embrace his corpse; kiss his bare teeth from which the flesh has fallen.[33]

The adultery which Anselm describes in the Meditation is, I believe, of a different kind. Both may result in damnation, but the adultery here is of the mind and this is how Anselm presented it throughout: "For, O my soul, you are unfaithful to God, an adulterer from Christ", "Demented mind, mindless of defilement, defiled by sin, what have you done?" and "Let my mind descend into 'the land of darkness and the shadows of death', and consider what there awaits my sinful soul.'"[34] Whereas the adultery committed by Gunhilda leaves no room for ambiguity, the fornication in the Meditation seems to refer to a mental sin rather than to the physical expression of it. This mental fornication could encompass all sins. To Anselm, as to many other authors, virginity was a state of the soul as well as the body. Loss of the former constituted a falling away of the soul from God and could be caused by a multitude of sinful thoughts, not just lust, and it was thus far more likely to happen.

Aelred's Rule concentrates on the preservation of virginity, and although he does admit that the beginning of all sin is pride,[35] he appeared less concerned with this sin and the other sins to which it could lead than with the sin of lust. He encouraged his sister: "Let the whole object of her striving and of her thoughts

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33 Trans. Benedicta Ward 75. *Vade nunc, soror, colloca te cum eo in lecto < in > quo nunc iacet; collige vermes eius in sinu tuo; amplectere cadaver eius; osculare stricte nudos dentes eius, nam labia iam putredina consumpta sunt. Certe non curat nunc amorem tuum quo vivens delectabatur, et tu horres putridam carnem eius qua uti desiderabas. Epist.* 169 , *S. Anselmi Opera Omnia.* IV, Schmitt, ed. 37-48.

34 Ward, *Prayers and Meditations* 226-227. *Tu namque, anima mea perfida deo, periura dei, adultera Christi, ...; Quid fecisti, o mentis amentia, amens spurcitia, spurca nequitia, quid fecisti?; ... descendat «ad terram tenebrosam et opertam mortis caligine» mens mea, et consideret quae ibi expectent scelerosam anima meam.* Meditatio II 'Deploratio virginitatis male amissae,' *S. Anselmi Opera Omnia*, vol. III Schmitt, 81-82

35 Aelred, *Rule for a Recluse* 23.

be the preservation of virginity."[36] On the whole, the recluse (and virgin) was given a passive role. She was continually exhorted to be on her guard. She was not encouraged to stand up in arms against evil spirits; at the most she should take up the arms of her tears.[37] Whereas Eve was encouraged to identify with Moses' troops against the Egyptians, Aelred told his sister:

> Beware of your weakness and like the timid dove go often to the streams of water where as in a mirror you may see the reflection of the hawk as he hovers overhead and be on your guard.[38]

Virginity, in the sense that it stood for abstention from sexual intercourse, was seen by the Fathers as a source of strength. The strength of the angels in their combat against the forces of evil was seen as coming from their sexless state.[39] Bugge writes that "in Christian gnosis virginity was regarded ... as a means of preserving the potency of the soul in combat with the forces of evil."[40] The *milites Christi* were essentially virgins. Ambrose, for example, described (consecrated) virgins as "a brilliant militia waging war for the kingdom of heaven."[41]

Goscelin's treatment of the subject of virginity in the *Liber confortatorius* suggests that he, too, saw it as a given in the monastic life. He praises virginity and treats it as an important tool in spiritual battle. In his examples he rarely uses virginity as the one and only tool of spiritual power, however. Few of his examples feature people famed for their virginity. The prominence of Perpetua and Felicitas, both mothers, show that he was not concerned with holding up a *speculum virginum* for Eve. His examples include women and men of all ranks and stations of life. Repeated warnings that the loss of virginity could not be reversed are absent. He does not use the favourite simile of the multiplication of the crops to eulogise the greater glory awaiting virgins in heaven compared to

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36 *Rule for a Recluse* 15.

37 *Rule for a Recluse*16.

38 *Rule for a Recluse* 20; cf. **Ambrose**, *De virginibus* II 27.

39 **Bugge**, *Virginitas* 48-49.

40 **Bugge**, *Virginitas* 49.

41 **Ambrose**, *On Virginity* VI. 28 (16)

widows and married women.[42] Furthermore, Goscelin never appeals to examples of fallen women in order to warn Eve of the fragility of her state. When describing the ascetic heroism of Mary of Egypt in Book III, for example, Goscelin refrains from mentioning Mary's infamous past. He simply introduces her as "Mary of Egypt, a woman to be venerated by virgins" (*mulier virginibus veneranda*).[43] He uses bridal imagery sparingly: only when recalling the ceremony of Eve's consecration in Book I and when describing the marriage of Christ with the redeemed Church. He does not emphasise the role of the female virgin as the archetypal Bride: Goscelin does not lose sight of the fact that the Church collectively was the Bride of Christ.[44] His focus is, therefore, not on the heavenly life of souls as the brides of Christ. He takes a more monastic viewpoint of life in heaven in the company of angels.[45]

Goscelin restricts himself to praising the virginity of Christ, the Virgin and John the Evangelist as well as several of the virgin martyrs about whom he writes. The virginity of Christ, Mary and John is used to describe the purity of their love and to comment on their relationship. Its inclusion in the early part of Book I where Goscelin is concerned with his own relationship with Eve, implies that he considered virginity here as the binding factor between the Virgin and John, and epitomised by Christ. It is an indirect comment on his own relationship with Eve, of which he had also said that Christ was in the middle.[46]

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42 Matt. 13:8 was frequently used to describe the relative status of virgins in heaven as having yielded a hundred-fold, widows a sixty-fold, and married women a thirty-fold. In relation to martyrs, virgins would yield sixtyfold rather than hundredfold. See Jerome, *Epist 22*, Cyprian, *The Dress of Virgins*, Augustine *On Holy Virginity*.

43 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 75.

44 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 110: .... *sponso Christo, sponse illi sanctorum cum Christo resuscitatorum ecclesie, aut etiam multitudini angelice; et ita demum, uniuersitate resuscitata, una perfecta erit ex omnibus sponsa.*

45 I will discuss Goscelin's perception of heavenin Chapter Five.

46 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 26 and 31.

VIRILITER AGE!

Despite the exemplary role of the Virgin Mary in salvation history and the esteem for women which Christ himself is shown to have displayed, authors since Saint Paul have been loath to allow women an equal share in this life and the next, any more than men had allowed this to women in pre-Christian times and cultures. Yet in the face of such opposition women have asserted their share in Christianity from the earliest times and have played a significant part in the spread of Christianity in both public roles, such as Helena, and private roles, such as Augustine's mother Monica. Desert Mothers, Roman matrons and the female martyrs of the persecutions have been instrumental in establishing woman's place in Christian history, albeit often with the help of men sympathetic to their cause. The praise bestowed on these women is abundant but it was not exempt from anti-feminist prejudice, at least as it appears to modern eyes.

Saint Paul's notion that in Christ there is neither male nor female created a problem: if woman is weak and sinful, how can she be equal to men as heir of the kingdom of heaven? This problem was given voice most explicitly in the apocryphal Gospel of Thomas, which sums up the dilemma and solution for the problem of woman in salvation history:

> Simon Peter said to them [i.e. the other disciples], "Let Mary leave us, because women are not worthy of life. "Jesus said, "Look, I shall lead her so that I will make her male in order that she also may become a living spirit, resembling you males. For every woman who makes herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven."[47]

Often, heaven was seen as an exclusive club from which the early Christian writers would have liked to exclude women altogether, were it not for the fact that woman was also created in God's own image and the role women, or rather *a* woman, had played in the Incarnation.[48] The solution to this dilemma was found in the idea that women could gain access to heaven if they not only behaved like men, but actually became male in everything but body. This notion was

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47 *The Gospel of Thomas* 114, in: *The Apocryphal New Testament*, J. K. Elliott, ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993) 147.

48 The pressing nature of this problem is exemplified by patristic discussions and theories about the status of women and the nature of women's bodies after the resurrection. See, for example, Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body* 91-100.

perpetuated in many writings by early Church authorities and it became an accepted form of praise for women who showed strength of faith or signs of intellect.

It is important to keep in mind that what we, on the threshold of the twenty-first century, would call misogyny was not perceived as such by the patristic and medieval authors of religious treatises. Augustine, for example, no doubt with great pride – if we could ever accuse him of that – wrote about his mother Monica that she was a woman possessing a masculine mind. In the *Confessions* he had written that she had the strong faith of a man.[49] In *De beata vita* he described how she impressed the assembled catechumens with her philosophical insights:

> At these words our mother exclaimed in such a way that we, entirely forgetting her sex, thought we had some great man in our midst, while in the meantime I became fully aware whence and from what divine source this flowed.[50]

Augustine, in introducing his mother into his early treatises, *De beata vita* and *De ordine*, not only acknowledged Monica's mastery of philosophy – traditionally the domain of men only – and the source of this knowledge, but also a woman's ability, if not eligibility to teach, if only in a private sphere. In the *De ordine* Augustine considered women to have a place in philosophy.[51] Monica had, of course, been an important factor in her son's conversion and it seems only natural that at a time when he was still considered to be new to the faith, Augustine should look toward his mother for guidance as much as he had turned to her for nurture when he was a little child. It is significant, however, that he can only express his admiration for her intellect in terms of masculinity. Augustine might be seen as fairly typical in this attitude: many authors could only express their admiration for some of the women they knew in these terms.

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49 Quoted in Chapter Two, p. 81.

50 St Augustine, 'The Happy Life', Ludwig Schopp, trans., in: *Writings of Saint Augustine*, The Fathers of the Church (New York: CIMA, 1948) 56. *In quibus verbis illa sic exclamabat, ut obliti penitus sexus eius magnum aliquem virum considere nobiscum crederemus me interim, quantam poteram, intelligente, ex quo illa et quam divino fonte manarent...* St Augustine, *De beata vita*. CCSL 29, 70-71.

51 *De ordine* I, ii, 31-33.

I will return to Augustine's ideas when discussing Goscelin's handling of the martyrdom of Perpetua below.

Augustine was not alone in this apparent inability to recognize intellect as a human rather than an exclusively masculine trait.[52] Gregory of Nyssa too had a great respect for a woman's ability to attain the highest religious ideals. He refers to his sister Macrina, in a treatise that was based on her teachings on the soul and the resurrection, as The Teacher.[53] In the prologue to his *Vita Macrinae* he describes her as a woman but he admits that he has his reservations about the accuracy of calling "someone a woman who was by nature a woman, but who, in fact was far above nature."[54] Eusebius, in *The Martyrs of Palestine*, described the martyr Valentina as "in body indeed a woman, but in mind a man."[55] Melania the Elder was described in masculine terms by no fewer than three of her male admirers.[56] It is worth noting, however, that none of these authors neglected the very feminine virtues of these women. Melania, for example, despite her complete

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52 Recent scholarship has paid much attention to this particular phenomenon, see Elizabeth Psakis Armstrong, 'Womanly Men and Manly Women in Thomas à Kempis ans St Teresa,' in: *Vox Mystica: Essays on Medieval Mysticism in Honor of Professor Valerie M. Lagorio*, Ann Clark Bartlett, *et. al.* eds. (Cambridge: Brewer, 1995) 107-115; Bartlett, *Male Authors, Female Readers*; Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia UP, 1988); Elizabeth Castelli, '"I Will Make Mary Male": Pieties of the Body and Gender Transformation of Christian Women in Late Antiquity,' in: *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity*, Julie Epstein & Kristina Streub, eds. (New York & London: Routledge, 1991) 21-49; Cloke, *This Female Man of God* ;Joan M. Ferrante, 'The Education of Women in the Middle Ages in Theory, Fact and Fantasy,' in: *Beyond Their Sex: Learned Women of the European Past*, Patricia H. Labalme, ed. (New York, NY: New York UP, 1980) 9-42, and *To the Glory of Her Sex: Women's Roles in the Composition of Medieval Texts* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1997); Julia M. H. Smith, 'The Problem of Female Sanctity in Carolingian Europe *c.* 780-920,' *Past and Present* 146 (1995): 3-37; for the late Middle Ages see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York, NY: Zone, 1991).

53 Gregory of Nyssa, 'On the Soul and the Resurrection,' in: *Dogmatic Treatises, etc.*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church 5 (Oxford: Parker, 1903).

54 Petersen, *Handmaids of the Lord*, 'On the Life of Saint Macrina' 51.

55 Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History and the Martyrs of Palestine*, Hugh Jackson Lawlor and John Ernest Leonard Oulton, trans. (London: SPCK, 1927) I, 367.

56 Palladius, Paulinus of Nola and Gerontius. Gillian Cloke in *This Female Man of God* – the title itself taken from Palladius' account of Melania the Elder in the *Lausaic History* – provides a catalogue of instances where the Fathers express their admiration for the manly behaviour of ascetic women.

dedication to Christ and her community, never neglected her love for her son.[57] It was, however, not only men who saw this need of gender transformation. There are at least two instances from the patristic era in which women themselves described their strength of faith in terms of having shed their feminity. Reputedly in their own words, both Perpetua and Amma Sara gave voice to this idea. I will return to these women below in a discussion of Goscelin's use of the examples that these women provide for the instruction of Eve.

A continuation of this phenomenon of praising women for displaying perceived masculine qualities is found in early medieval hagiography, where frequent allusions to a female saint's masculinity seem to have become commonplace. Julia Smith, who notes this phenomenon in Frankish *vitae* ranging from Venantius Fortunatus' *Life of Radegund* (late sixth century) to the early tenth-century *Life of Rictrude* by Hucbald,[58] ascribes it to the absence of a tradition of female hagiography extending into the early Middle Ages and the enormous popularity of Sulpicius Severus' *Life of St Martin.*[59] She argues, furthermore, that even as late as the ninth century hagiographers had to use as models the acts of the martyrs and the patristic writings on women such as Melania and Paula, for the simple reason that these were much more widely diffused than the *Lives* of those local saints that were based on them.[60]

Ælfric is a good early medieval representative of this line of thought. His homily on the life of a so-called transvestite saint, Saint Eugenia, praises the behaviour of a woman who disguised herself as a man in order to pursue her religious calling. The author of the *Life* of Saint Euphrasia had a similar case in hand. Apart from dressing like men, the courage and demeanour these two saints displayed was also manlike. For Ælfric, however, the status of Saint Eugenia was never called into question, and his concern was more to praise her

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57 Palladius, 'Melania the Elder,' in: Petersen, *Handmaids of the Lord* 303-4.

58 Julia M. H. Smith, 'The Problem of Female Sanctity in Carolingian Europe *c.* 780-920,' *Past and Present* 146 (1995): 18-20.

59 Smith, 'The Problem of Female Sanctity' 16-17. Smith makes a case for the hagiographer's heavy reliance on the *Lives* of Martin and Germanus, and the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great.

60 Smith, 'The Problem of Female Sanctity' 14.

virginity than her masculinity. It sufficed him to say that unknown to anyone that she was a woman, she dwelt with the monks, "mid wærlicum mode . þeah þe heo mæden wære."[61] In the life of Saint Euphrasia, the saint expresses the wish to end her life manfully (*werlice*),[62] a wish repeated by her fellow monks after her death.[63] It is worth noting that the author, or possibly his scribe, became confused about the sex of his subject in the passage where the abbot admits the saint to his community. Here she is referred to with the use of masculine personal pronouns, a slip which is corrected later on.[64]

The conviction that women are capable of rational thought only if they transcend their feminity was not peculiar to Christian philosophy, but was inherited from the pagan sages and was rooted in the idea that woman stands for the physical, the weak and, therefore, the sinful. *Virtus*, as frequently pointed out by patristic and medieval authors alike, derived from the Latin word for man *vir*, and has the meaning of strength as well as virtue. It was only a small step to the idea that women represent the opposite of strength and virtue. *Viriliter* is another case in point, and although in modern translations this word may be interpreted as "courageously,"[65] the association with the masculine gender is unavoidable, as may be seen in the examples from Ælfric quoted above. The influence of language must not be underestimated in the formation of world view in general, nor in the formation of gender relations. The grammatical gender of a word has an influence on the interpretation of that word. An important example is the identification of the meaning of the words *animus* and *anima* with male and female characteristics respectively. This is perhaps most clearly

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61 'Saint Eugenia, Virgin,' in: *Ælfric's Lives of Saints Being a Set of Sermons on Saints' Days Formerly Observed by the English Church*, Walter W. Skeat, ed. EETS OS 76 and 82, p. 30.

62 'Saint Eufrasia (or Euphrosyne), Virgin,' in: *Ælfric's Lives of Saints Being a Set of Sermons on Saints' Days Formerly Observed by the English Church*, ed. Walter W. Skeat. EETS OS 94 and 114, 353.

63 'Saint Eufrasia (or Euphrosyne), Virgin,' 355.

64 For example , "Se abbod him to cwæð", Ða cwæð he [Eufrasia]" 345.

65 Lewis & Short Latin Dictionary at Gregory Crane, ed., The Perseus Project, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu, April 1998.

illustrated with a passage from William of St-Thierry's *Golden Epistle* quoted by Newman.[66] William, speaking of the soul, *anima*, writes,

> Quae ubi perfectae rationis incipit esse, non tantum capax, sed et particeps, continuo abdicat a se notam generis feminei, et efficitur animus particeps rationis, regendo corpori accomodatus, vel seipsum habens spiritus. Quamdiu enim anima est, cito in id quod carnale est effeminatur; animus vero, vel spiritus, non nisi quod virile est et spirituale meditatur.[67]

Spiritual growth, according to William, is the transformation of the feminine soul into the masculine spirit. This example serves to show how the identification of women with the weaker and lower aspects of life is influenced by language. The impact of language and association of the weak with the feminine thus became part of the mental process and hence a topos in literary tradition.[68] This, arguably, makes it difficult to accuse the user of such topoi of blatant misogyny; a better description may indeed be "androcentricity", the perception of the world from a male bias.[69] This does not mean that authors who capitalised on the use of gender distinctions in the way that William of St-Thierry did were not aware of what they were doing. Androcentricity alone does not supply an adequate explanation for what was essentially a belief that women were less capable and therefore less worthy of salvation. Recent scholarly interest in this phenomenon of "regendering" of women, and from the twelfth-century onwards of men as well,[70] has produced valuable insights as to how this subject may be approached. The – to modern eyes – rather dubious praise of religious women whenever they showed courage or strength of faith is classified by Barbara Newman as "inverted

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66 Newman, 'Flaws in the Golden Bowl' 115.

67 William of St.-Thierry, *Epistola ad fratres de Monte Dei* 198, ed. Jean Déchanet, *Lettre aux frères du Mont-Dieu*, Sources chrétiennes 223 (Paris, 1975) 306-8. ["when it begins to be not only capable but also in possession of perfect reason, it immediately renounces the mark of the feminine and becomes spirit endowed with reason, fitted to rule the body, spirit in possession of itself. For as long as it is soul it is quick to slip effeminately into what is of the flesh; but the spirit thinks only on what is virile and spiritual" Theodore Berkeley, trans. *The Golden Epistle: A Letter to the Brethren at Mont Dieu*, Cistercian Fathers Series 12 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian, 1971) 79.]

68 Cf. Newman, 'Flaws in the Golden Bowl' 120.

69 As used by Newman, 'Flaws in the Golden Bowl' 121

70 See Bynum, *Jesus as Mother:*

misogyny": not the constant derogation of woman as weak and sinful, but the praise of women for manifesting masculine qualities.[71]

A further distinction should be made between the inverted misogyny of praising women by calling them honorary men, and the use of men as models for the instruction of women. In her analysis of the Latin and Middle English versions of Aelred of Rievaulx's *De institutione inclusarum*, Anne Clark Bartlett makes a case for what she calls the "phenomenon of 'regendering'", which she describes as "the identification of the self with norms associated with the opposite sex."[72] In contrast to the fifteenth-century Middle English versions of the text, she writes that the original version

> neatly illustrates the masculinist techniques of the self perpetuated for women by the early church. On one hand, the text functions repressively, by repeatedly forbidding women readers to identify themselves with an ethos of the feminine because women are figured as naturally provocative and promiscuous. Female audiences are to employ what Foucault calls the "hermeneutics of desire" in order to eradicate any traces of a feminine subjectivity. On the other hand, the text works actively, seeking to reorient the female reader with identifications explicitly associated with maleness. Through its prescriptive formulations in three categories — bodily observances, inner purgation, and meditation — Aelred's treatise attempts to absolve female readers of a feminine identity and to fix them within a masculine-gendered economy of speech and silence, asceticism, and sexuality.[73]

Bartlett argues that, in contrast to this, the fifteenth-century translators of the work make a conscious move towards the feminisation of their discourse of conduct and sexuality. They make use of a "discourse of courtesy" influenced at least partly by the popularity of courtly literature.[74] Rather than denying their femininity, women are encouraged to focus their desires on Christ who is

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71 Newman, 'Flaws in the Golden Bowl' 115 and 120.

72 Bartlett, *Male Authors, Female Readers* 40-41. Bartlett's study is very much concerned with anti-feminist discourse and the counterdiscourses within the same texts and the responses these try to elicit from their female readers. These counterdiscourses are 1. the ideology of feminine courtesy; 2. familiarity in the sense of *familia* (mostly in letters of spiritual friendship); and 3. narratives of nuptials and Passion.

73 Bartlett, *Male Authors, Female Readers* 41.

74 Bartlett. *Male Authors, Female Readers* 41. 54 and 58.

presented as the perfect courtly lover. By means of omissions, summaries of extended passages, and rewording, the later versions of Aelred's work allow women to be female in their devotions, culminating in the shift from Aelred's accusation that his readers would turn their "anchorholds 'into brothels' through forbidden imaginations" to the implication that women transform their "prayer cells into bowers of devoutly erotic bliss."[75]

Aelred's original work attempted to impose on his readers an urge to repudiate their feminity by using exclusively male role models, and only those female role models who have shown their "masculinity" in their religious fervour, while repeating alongside these the conventional prejudices against women. In this he conforms to a longstanding tradition of devotional writings for women which is perpetuated in later works such as the *Ancrene Wisse*. Although it is unlikely that Aelred was acquainted with Goscelin's work for Eve, it seems nevertheless remarkable that Bartlett does not once mention the *Liber confortatorius* in the course of her book.[76] It is true that her argument focusses on late Middle English devotional treatises and the way in which these reverse renewed misogynistic trends set in twelfth-century works for women. Many of her arguments could, however, be applied to the patristic sources at the root of all these works, and, as I will show in this chapter, to Goscelin's adaptations of them to suit his own purposes.

A further necessary, and very important, distinction is made by Elizabeth Psakis Armstrong in connection with the use of regendering by Thomas à Kempis and Saint Teresa:

> The word "sexist" is not only anachronistic but irrelevant to the kind of interest these writers bring to the question of gender. That interest, though it is engaged within the two discourses in different ways, has a precisely similar goal: both Thomas and Teresa encourage their audiences [male and female respectively] to shed those attributes of gender which create barriers between them and Christ. Their purpose is to change

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75 Bartlett, *Male Authors, Female Readers* 55.

76 Bartlett must have been aware of the *Liber*'s existence through McGuire's *Friendship and Community* if not through the Appendix to Newman's 'Flaws in the Golden Bowl'. Newman acknowledges the *Liber confortatorius* in the Appendix as one of the letters of formation that she has studied for her article.

> behaviors and attitudes which are tuned to the world's wish and convenience into behavior fit for God.[77]

And more specifically,

> As the *Imitation of Christ* constantly encourages its audience to give up what the world grants them, the *Way of Perfection* urges its audience to seize for Christ what the world denies them. Thomas implicitly revises the image of manliness fostered by the world, but Teresa explicitly revises the image of femininity.[78]

This is a subtle but, I believe, a crucial distinction between the uses (and interpretations) of the attribution of characteristics of the opposite sex to the author's audience, and will prove a useful to keep in mind when analysing Goscelin's treatment of the examples on which he bases his exhortations for Eve.

A distinction of a different kind needs also to be made: that between a treatise written by a male author addressed to a female audience, such as Jerome's letter to Eustochium and Aelred's rule – addressed to a specific person but intended for a larger audience – and that of a specific author to a specific reader[79] such as, as I have argued, Goscelin's letter for Eve. Knowledge of one's reader allows for greater precision and more carefully chosen advice which is tailored to the individual's perceived needs, making generalisations, and therefore arguably prejudice, unnecessary. Jerome's and Aelred's provisos[80] may thus be seen as clear instances of this distinction in practice.

Goscelin's Role models for Eve

On an overall level Goscelin's approach to women as examples for Eve, and his approach to Eve as a woman, is different from that of his predecessors and

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77 Armstrong, 'Womanly Men and Manly Women' 108.

78 Armstrong, 'Womanly Men and Manly Women' 111. Thomas warns his audience about the dangers of the power of the abbot, the dangers of knowledge for the monk's humility, whereas Teresa sees the concerns over their constitutional weaknesses which the world allowed, perhaps even imposed, on women as a hindrance in their devotion to Christ.

79 Cf. Bartlett, *Male Authors, Female Readers* 96.

80 See Chapter Three, p. 103. 104 above.

contemporaries. As I have shown in the previous chapter, the *Liber confortatorius* should be considered within the context of other writings for women. Within this frame the *Liber* takes a distinguished place. Although he used traditional examples and showed a familiarity with other texts for women, Goscelin generally refrained from falling into anti-feminist discourse, as we might perceive it today. Throughout the *Liber confortatorius* he maintained a positive attitude towards women whom he sees as important instruments of divine grace. In his instruction of Eve, he did not feel the need to quote negative examples of biblical women as a warning of the weaknesses of her sex. As I have also shown in the previous chapter, Goscelin made sparing and discriminating use of the example of the first Eve. He was not completely silent about Eve, nor about the unfortunate episode of the apple, but in connection with the Fall of Man it is Adam who was put forward, not Eve.[81] Furthermore, when he did mention Eve it was to draw a parallel with the redeemed Church, thus putting the emphasis on her redemption, not on her fall: "For as out of the side of Adam Eve was made, even so out of the side of Christ grew the redeemed Church."[82]

Goscelin's spirituality was in this way universal. He believed that in the eyes of God everyone is equal. Saint Paul, expressing the equality of all mankind in God in Galatians 3:28, mentioned sex as the last item in a list of distinguishing characteristics:

> non est Iudaeus neque Graecus non est servus neque liber non est masculus neque femina omnes enim vos unum estis in Christo Iesu

Goscelin, alluding to and deeply concious of echoing Saint Paul, significantly and deliberately put sex first:

> Nulli sexui, nulli etati, nulli conditioni negatur in Christo palma. Quique terrigene et filii hominum, simul in unum diues et pauper, reges et principes, iuuenes et uirgines, senes cum iunioribus, [Ps.148,12.] pueri,

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81 Talbot. *Liber confortatorius* 53.

82 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 90: *Nam sicut ex latere Ade fabricata est Eua, ita ex latere Christi redempta creuit ecclesia.* This is a good instance of Goscelin's dependence on Augustine's *The City of God*, Bk XXII, ch. 17 (p. 1057).

> puelle, lactentes quoque et uagientes, uel martyrio uel uirginitate uel continentia coronantur,...[83]

In the following case-studies of Goscelin's use of the examples provided by saints, I intend to explore the extent to which Goscelin seems to further his belief that women are spiritually equal to men in their own right, rather than honorary males. Goscelin was working within a tradition of writings for women with which he was very familiar, and he did not refrain from giving examples which were used in these writings, nor from using the imagery that was popular in his time. The treatment of these familiar episodes in the *Liber confortatorius* is, as I will argue, a subtle assertion of woman's own strength in religious matters. I will start this discussion with the examples of Saint Perpetua and Amma Sara, which are directly relevant to the notion of regendering as described above.

The second chapter in Book II, entitled *Palma Celestis*, consists mainly of what either Goscelin himself or his twelfth century editor referred to as an *exemplum*. The *exemplum* is the account of the martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas, but it was clearly Goscelin's own rendition of it. Goscelin implied that he did not have a copy of the martyrdom at hand as he hesitated at one point concerning the name of Perpetua's brother Dinocrates, who is the subject of two of her visions. It seems that Goscelin was working from memory here. It is interesting to notice that although he clearly remembered the details of the *Passio* very well, he highlighted those visions and stages in the martyrdom which suited his own needs. Here, as with other examples he provided, he did not just use the stories of the saints to illustrate the glories of martyrdom; more important are the examples they provide for Christian living and how they provide lessons for Eve as an anchorite. With the example of Perpetua, for instance, he starts by relating how at first Perpetua abhorred the unaccustomed darkness of her prison cell, but that she was soon accustomed to it. Leaving out the point that Perpetua only became accustomed to prison after she had been reunited with her baby,

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83 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 55: "In Christ, the palm is refused to no sex, no age, no condition of life. All those born on the earth and the children of men, both the rich and the poor man, kings and princes, young men and maidens, the old with the young, [cf. Ps. 148:12] boys, girls, also the unweaned and the crying, are crowned whether they are martyrs or virgins or chaste,..."

Goscelin draws a parallel with Eve's cell.[84] Perpetua's vision of the narrow and spiked ladder reaching into heaven signified the Christian life, and especially the reclusive life: the ladder has to be climbed alone as it allows only room for one person at the time (*ad unius hominis ascensum ar<c>tata*), and although encouragement is allowed, one has to do the climbing alone.[85] Goscelin liked this imagery and he made use of it again later on in the same section,[86] having already used it to refer, and draw a parallel, to Christ's cross in the short introductory paragraph preceding the *exemplum*. Perpetua's second and third visions concerning Dinocrates represented another part of the Christian life, that of charity, the love of one's neighbour. Perpetua's famous vision of her impending martyrdom in which she has to fight with the "Ethiopian" (the "Egyptian" in the original account) summed up the subject of Goscelin's Book II:

> She saw both a certain Ethiopian who was to fight against her and on the other hand a most excellent man surrounded by signs, reaching out a leafy branch with golden apples signifying victory, and saying: "If this Ethiopian defeats you, he will kill you, if you defeat him, you shall be given this honour." Thus having engaged in the fight she defeated him and received the honour of the palm.[87]

It is worth noting here that, throughout his version of the martyrdom, Goscelin minimises the role of the male companions, especially that of Saturus who had in Perpetua's own account a much more significant part as her spiritual friend and mentor.[88] Of course Goscelin did not set out to relate the whole of the

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84 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 50: *Beata Perpetua, cum ob Christi fidem cum sorore felicissima Felicitate carceri retruderetur, primo insuetas tenebras abhorrebat; mox assuetudine carcerem pro pretorio, ut ipsa describit, habebat.*

85 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 50.

86 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 51.

87 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 50: *Uidit et quendam contra se luctaturum Ethiopem, et e contra quendam precellentissimum uirum insigniter redimitum, ramum frondentem cum aureis pomis, ut insigne uictorie, pretendentem sicque dicentem: « Si hic Ethiops te uicerit, occidet te; si tu illum uiceris, hoc honore donaberis ». Sic congressa uicit et palme honorem suscepit.*

88 It has generally been accepted that Perpetua herself wrote the account up to her martyrdom which was then included in the *Passio SS. Perpetuae et Felicitatis*. See Erich Auerbach, *Literary Language and Its Public in Late Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages*, Ralph Manheim, trans. Bollingen Series 74 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1965) 63, Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages: A critical Study of the Texts from Perpetua († 203) to Marguerite Porete († 1310)* (Cambridge:

martyrdom and all of the visions, there simply was no space or need; but by concentrating on the two women he emphasises their strength in their own right. The only other men Goscelin includes in his version are Perpetua's father, whose entreaties she resists, and the men in her last vision who, of course, should be interpreted as the devil and Christ respectively.[89] It should therefore be assumed that Perpetua's father was included in order to relate Perpetua's independent decision to choose martyrdom to the recluse's decision to relinquish the world and follow Christ.[90]

More significant, I believe, is Goscelin's silence about the man into whom Perpetua, in her own account of her last vision, saw herself changed the moment she stood face to face with her enemy:

> And there came out against me a certain ill-favored Egyptian with his helpers, to fight with me. Also there came to me comely young men, my helpers and aiders. And I was stripped naked, and I became a man. [*et expoliata sum et facta sum masculus*].[91]

In order to be victorious over the enemy and win the palm of heaven, Perpetua did not just see herself as acting in a masculine fashion, she was physically transformed into a man, shedding not only her feminine dress, but her whole feminine being. Her vision should be taken symbolically, and it is to the

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Cambridge UP, 1984) 1. For a study on the issues of gender in the *Passio* see Brent D. Shaw, 'The Passion of Perpetua', *Past and Present* 139 (May 1993) 3-45.

89 Goscelin changes the order of the visions in his account, and he includes Perpetua's vision of her impending martyrdom immediately after the vision of the ladder, making the interpretation of the visions more obvious.

90 As Christ's commandment required: He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me (Matt. 10:37). Goscelin has already made reference to this commandment in Book I (p. 37) and it is also expressed in a later chapter where he compares Eve's decision to leave England for the love of God with the decision made by princesses leaving England for the love of worldly gains through marriage. "*Quanto magis anima Christum tota mente ac perpetua caritate secuta debet obliuisci populum suum et domum patris sui...*" (p. 41)

91 Latin text from *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs*, H. Musurillo, ed. (Oxford: 1972)106-130, reprinted at http://www.gmu.edu/departments/fld/CLASSICS perp.html, Translation adapted by Paul Halsall (April 1996) from the translation by W. H. Shewring *The Passion of Perpetua and Felicity*, (London: 1931), published in Internet Medieval Source Book at http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/perpetua.html. See Castelli 'I Will Make Mary Male' who sees in this transformation the completion of "her rejection of paternal authority and the concommitant abandonment of her subjectivity in the feminine." (p. 37)

considerable merit of the author who incorporates Perpetua's account in his *Passio* that he never loses sight of the fact that she was a strong woman.[92] He is not tempted to dwell on any exceptionally manly behaviour in the arena.

Considering his accuracy in much smaller details, it is unlikely that this striking gender transformation had slipped Goscelin's mind. The *Passio* of Perpetua and Felicitas was often discussed and highlighted in sermons written for their feastday, more so than the martyrdoms of men, which seemed to warrant much less attention, even on their feastdays.[93] Three of Saint Augustine's surviving sermons[94] are dedicated to Perpetua and Felicitas, and each of these show Augustine's concern with the popularity of the two women and the need to explain their exceptional virility, using all the prejudices about the female sex in his repertoire: "the virtue of their mind/soul (*anima*) concealed the sexuality of their flesh"[95]; "it goes without saying, a male mind in a female body is able to achieve greater things" and "It was a good thing ... that women were able to lay low that old enemy, who, through woman, utterly defeated man".[96] He also explained why the day is remembered because of Perpetua and Felicity and not the many men who died with them. It is not "because females outshone men in the worth of their actions, but since womanly weakness was able to conquer the old enemy because of *a greater miracle*, and a male virtue struggled on behalf of perpetual felicity."[97]

Goscelin foregrounded this example of Perpetua's strength as an example of exceptional Christian virtue by placing it at the beginning of Book II. It is signposted with the subheading *exemplum*. The fact that when he recounted the

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92 This fact alone might be used against the thesis that Perpetua's first editor was none other than Tertullian himself. See Shaw, 'The Passion of Perpetua' 30.

93 Shaw, 'The Passion of Perpetua' 37 n. 79.

94 Again, the Peterborough booklist shows that there was at least one volume of Saint Augustine's sermons in the library. Peterborough seemed to have had an exceptional collection of Augustine's works.

95 *Sermo* 280.1.1. I am quoting this and following instances from Shaw. 'The Passion of Perpetua' 38- 39 and 41.

96 *Sermo* 281.

97 *Sermo* 282. Italics are mine.

vision he omitted the gender, or rather sex transformation, which served other authors so well in their arguments for male superiority is an important indication that Goscelin did not feel the need to use it here. Irrespective of whether Eve knew the original version of the *passio* or not, Goscelin saw no necessity to explain or accentuate Perpetua's singularity in terms of perceived masculine qualities.[98] It was, as I will continue to argue, not Goscelin's conviction that a woman had to act like a man in order to fight in God's army. In fact, Goscelin emphasises the women's feminity. He includes Perpetua's vision of her little dead brother at the fountain of life and her concern for his soul. He also purposely includes in his account Perpetua's grief when her baby son was taken away from her. Goscelin wrote that she was still able to suckle him not at her breasts but with the help of God. Felicitas, being eight months pregnant, prayed to be delivered from her child so that she is would be allowed to suffer martyrdom with her companions. Although this might be construed as acting against all maternal instincts, it is wholly consistent with Matt.10:37: " and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me." The focus is on these women as mothers and sisters, and it emphasises their feminine roles as nurturers and thus on the considerable virtue of preferring martyrdom over those instincts.

The example of Perpetua's vision would in itself be a strong enough argument to show that Goscelin did not subscribe to the belief that the only good woman is a masculine woman. There is another significant example which supports this. It occurs in Goscelin's version of the story of Amma Sara, one of the three women who, perhaps significantly in this context, is included in the *Verba Patrum*. Goscelin's rendition of Sara's fight against the spirit of fornication runs very much along the lines of the original account. In the original, however, this passage is closely followed by an episode in which two great anchorites pay Sara a visit, but when they arrive they warn her not to become conceited by this visit.[99] Sara responds to this warning by saying: "According to nature I am a

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98 It is more than likely that Eve was already familiar with the story. The feast of the passion of Saints Perpetua and Felicitas (17 March) occurs in most of the surviving kalendars from before 1100, including those from Sherborne (ca AD 1061), Winchester. Evesham and Worcester. See Francis Wormald,ed. *English Kalendars before A.D. 1100*, vol. I, Henry Bradshaw Society 72 (London, 1934).

99 Significantly, this little show of vanity and pride on the part of the "great anchorites" goes uncommented by the original collector of the *Verba*.

woman, but not according to my thoughts."[100] Goscelin does not use this, and another opportunity to praise masculinity as a virtue in a woman is left by the wayside. Now while there could be some danger in the use of "negative" evidence, I believe that Goscelin's negligence in repeating these instances of "inverted misogyny,"[101] when supported by further examples in which he foregrounded the merits of the women saints, should be seen as a significant part of his attitude towards women. The strength of women may have been denied by man, yet it was firmly recognised by Christ.

Goscelin furthers this conviction in his account of the martyr Blandina. With the martyrdom of Blandina from Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History*, Goscelin also decided to give his own rendition. Here, however, we know with some certainty that the text was available to him in Rufinus's translation. The account is followed in the *Liber confortatorius* by another example from the same volume: the first book of Rufinus's continuation of Eusebius's work.[102] This example, given the title of *Virtus Captive* in the *Liber*, is verbatim.[103] Again, in his rendition of the martyrdom of Blandina, Goscelin minimises the role of the two men with whose martyrdoms that of Blandina is linked. The only men in her story, as told in the *Liber*, are her oppressors and by emphasising this Goscelin made Blandina the focal point of his account. Once more it is the strength of the woman under duress that is singled out here. Goscelin, like Eusebius, describes Blandina as representing "those that are weak and lowly and scorned by the world" who are

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100 *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: The Alphabetical Collection*, Benedicta Ward, trans. Cistercian Studies Series 59 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian, 1975) 230.

101 I should probably speak of "inverted 'inverted misogyny'" as both the examples above have reputedly been uttered by the women themselves, but as these instances are usually used as examples by men we can avoid getting entangled in terminology.

102 A copy of this translation occurs on the Peterborough booklist published by Lapidge: list no XIII, catalogue number 7 (p. 77).

103 See text in *PL* 21 Rufinus *Historia Ecclesiastica libri duo*, Book I, Chapter X (columns 480-82) "De conversione gentis Iberorum per captivam facta." Talbot used the edition by Schwartz. There are only minor deviations that are most probably due to differences between manuscripts. Goscelin is not trying to pass this off as his own work: he clearly states before hand that it is not his own account. (Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 64) Goscelin always acknowledged his sources whenever he quoted large sections.

used by God to confuse "the strong and mighty".[104] The reason why Blandina is of interest for Goscelin's purposes is the way in which she is described as having gained strength from her afflictions. Goscelin elaborates greatly on Eusebius's account:

> She proved to possess such strength and endurance, that in perseverance she surpassed the strongest men and soldiers of Christ. The utterly despicable madness of the torturers came down on her, the whole clamour, fury, vigour and anger of the people that raged against her. She was torn apart, quartered, stoned, and torn in pieces like a prey between beasts. All day she was tortured, more than the barbarity of the executioners could inflict. The torturers got tired, but she herself tired not, she was revived by new persecutors and new wounds and while the gladiators were nearly dead she was strengthened more and more. They collapsed, she persevered. They roared, she laughed. The victim was stronger than the torturer, the one who received the blows [was stronger] than the one who inflicted them, even the torments which dominated all, were trampled by the weaker sex. One utterance: *I am a Christian*, was thrown among the torments. she told the stupefied Christians that, every time she exclaimed: *I am a Christian*, she was revived by new strength.[105]

When we compare this passage to Goscelin's lives of the saints, we find that there too he highlighted will-power and strength of mind and faith as essential

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104 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 64, Goscelin: *Ita Deus omnipotens non solum per heroes regios et milites, uerum etiam per infima hominum triumphat mancipia, qui ea que infirma et ignobilia et contemptibilia sunt mundi elegit, ut confundat fortia, et magnus in magnis mirabilia operatur in minimis, ...* Goscelin followed Rufinus closely but he seems to have preferred to use words which were more closely related to Saint Paul's words in I Cor. 27-28: *sed quae stulta sunt mundi elegit Deus ut confundat sapientes et infirma mundi elegit Deus ut confundat fortia et ignobilia mundi et contemptibilia elegit Deus et quae non sunt ut ea quae sunt destrueret.* Compare Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* V, 1, 17 pp 141-42. CETEDOC: Rufinus: 17 *et Blandinam feminam, per quam Christus ostendit, quia ea, quae apud homines despecta sunt et in contemptu habentur, in magna gloria apud deum ducuntur, et quia caritas eius quae fragilia sunt per naturam, per gratiam facit esse firmissima.* Goscelin's choice of words here may have had the purpose of lending more weight to the idea by quoting a biblical authority.

105 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 64: *Tante fortitudinis ac tolerantie est inuenta, ut uiros ac milites Christi fortissimos anteiret constantia. Ruit in hanc tota ui contempta tortorum uesania, debac<c>hatur totius populi clamor, furor, impetus, ira. Discinditur, dilaniatur, dilapidatur, et ut preda inter beluas discerpitur. Tota die, plus quam immanitas carnificum inferre poterat, tormentatur. Lassantur tortores nec ipsa lassatur, nouis percussoribus ac nouis uulneribus recensetur ac, pene exanimatis lanistis, magis ac magis roboratur. Illi concidebant, hec perdurabat. Illi fremebant, hec ridebat. Fortior patiens quam torquens, plagas excipiens quam infligens, et que cunctis dominantur supplicia ab infirmo calcantur sexu elisa. Una uox: Christiana sum, inter cruciamenta iactabatur. Referebat autem Christianis obstupescentibus quotiens clamasset: Christiana sum, totiens nouis uiribus se reparatam esse.*

characteristics of Edith and Wulfthryth. Susan Millinger points out that the instances of Wulfhild's double escape from the amorous pursuit of King Edgar show not only the hand of God, but are also evidence of her determination to be faithful to her vows.[106] The same is shown in the rejection of worldly riches and royal status by Wulfthryth and her daughter Edith,[107] and these examples may have been intended as much as an incentive for the inmates of Wilton to do the same as to emphasise the greater sacrifice these women made for God.

However, it was not for Goscelin to leave the opportunity of a good pun when one presented itself. In Book Four, the book most openly concerned with the issue of virginity, Goscelin retells the story of a virgin martyr from Ambrose's *De virginibus*.[108] Here a nameless young woman who had been dragged into a brothel was saved by a beardless young man with whom she swapped clothes so that she could escape. When the deception was discovered, however, she ran back to plead the innocence of her rescuer. Goscelin, greatly enhancing the drama in Ambrose's original account, describes her as *puella uiriles habitus et animos induta*, "the girl dressed in masculine clothes and spirit".[109] I do not think that we need to see this as a lapse into inverted misogyny. This description is immediately juxtaposed with that of the young man wearing the girl's dress, and Goscelin described him earlier "as yet beardless, surpassing the others in girlish

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106 Susan Millinger, 'Humility and Power: Anglo-Saxon Nuns in Anglo-Norman Hagiography', in: *Medieval Religious Women*, vol. 1 *Distant Echoes*, John A. Nichols and Lillian Thomas Shank, eds. Cistercian Studies Series 71 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1984) 117-118.

107 Millinger, 'Humility and Power' 117-118. Edith's reply to Bishop Æthelwold's accusation that her purple dress was not appropriate for a nun shows, Millinger writes, also such determination. Edith, rather than disclosing the fact that she is wearing a haircloth under the dress, reminds the bishop that God "*non vestem, sed mentem attendit*", Wilmart, 'La Légende de Ste Édith' 70. Goscelin also relates that the kingdom was offered to Edith and that she refused to take up such worldly responsibilities. Historically accurate or nor, this episode shows strength of will under the pressure of influential men. ('La Légende de Ste Édith' 84-85).

108 This is the letter written to his sister Marcellina, *De virginibus*, not to be confused with his other treatise on virginity, in: *Selected Works*, H. De Romestin, ed. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church 10 (Oxford: Parker, 1896) 363-387.

109 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 98-99. See also on the subject of Goscelin's rendition of the story: Roy, 'The Female Recluse as Reader' 116.

grace and authority."[110] Goscelin does not comment on this woman's implied masculinity in any detail and the role reversal is just taken in his stride. The example, if not seen as a sign of Goscelin's delight in apparent contradictions, could be viewed as an example of the natural interchangeability of gender roles in a religious context.

A very important observation to make in relation to the examples used by Goscelin is that none of the women serve as negative examples. Many of the saints, both male and female, show human failures, but their faults are not singled out to serve as warnings. All of Goscelin's examples are offered for imitation and to encourage hope in God. The implications of the extraordinary number of examples showing God's grace on fallen souls will be discussed in the following chapter, but this principle could be illustrated with Goscelin's passing mention of the Old Testament figure of Dinah. Dinah's tragic story was often elaborated on and used to warn nuns and monks alike about curiosity and pride. Her vice, curiosity, was seen as a specifically female fault and her example was used to warn women against the repercussions, which, as often as not, included rape.[111] Goscelin's use of this traditional scapegoat does not allude at all to the possible interpretation of her story as an example of female failure. It is used in the context of the failures and tragedy of human nature, where Goscelin laments mankind's wrongful use of free-will. Curiosity, then, is only one example of an essentially human failing leading mankind away from God.[112]

When Goscelin recounts a failure in any of his examples, it is usually one of somebody who was already considered to be a saint, such as in a story from the *Life of Saint Martin of Tours*. In this example, Martin helped out Saint Vitaliana who despite her exemplary life, was after death still in a state where she was unable to see the divine face. Her one fault had been that she had washed her face on Good Friday, when she should have been meditating on Christ's passion. Other examples include Saint Peter and various other great saints, and

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110 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 99. *Adolescentulus adhuc imberbis, puellari decore et auctoritate ceteris prestantior, ...*

111 Newman, 'Flaws in the Golden Bowl' 119.

112 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 97.

I shall return to the significance of these in the context of Goscelin's emphasis on humility and grace in the next chapter.

These examples show only one, but a very important, aspect of Goscelin's exhortation. The merit of Goscelin's advice lies in his approach to women in general. Rather than laying down rules of what to do and mostly what *not* to do, Goscelin provides encouragement based on positives. His exhortation shows that he considered Eve as a spiritual and intellectual equal. Although men like Jerome and Aelred tended to write for women whom they professed to admire, their approach in boosting their addressees' religious fervour is through the deprecation of women by using negative examples and stereotypes. Much of this is part of rhetoric and literary commonplace, so much ingrained in tradition that they were probably not aware how much constant denigration of the female sex might have undermined women's morale. Negative examples of women, which are used to warn women of the weakness of the female flesh, the garrulousness of women and their inherent curiosity, *imply* that women have to rise above their sex in order to achieve Christian perfection. Positive female examples, in contrast, and especially those which do not set out to praise women for their perceived masculine qualities, allow women a spirituality of their own. It is in this respect that Goscelin might be seen as having pro-feminist tendencies.

CHAPTER FIVE

CATHARSIS AND CONSOLATION:

A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO THE *LIBER CONFORTATORIUS*

Uton we hycgan hwær we ham agen,
ond þonne geþencan hu we þider cumen,
"The Seafarer" ll.117-118

INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapters have, to a large extent, been concerned with the merits of the *Liber confortatorius* as an educational tool for Eve. In this chapter the focus is turned to the inner life of the *Liber*'s author. Goscelin believed that his sorrow, as he expressed it in the first chapters of the work, was caused by Eve's departure. Eve's decision to become a recluse and her departure to Anjou without consulting the man who had considered himself to be her spiritual mentor, had greatly affected him. I will be showing that this was probably not the only reason why he was feeling abandoned. It is, however, often difficult to establish how genuine his feelings of grief were. Works such as these were conditioned by the rules of rhetoric and most authors would not hesitate to exaggerate their own unworthiness to write, especially when writing the dedication to their patrons. I have suggested that it is plausible that Goscelin's grief was genuine, although he made use of rhetorical conventions in his expression of it. There is evidence that Goscelin may have used the *Liber* not only as a means to educate Eve and provide her with a spiritual tool. It appears that, subconsciously, Goscelin used the composition of the text as a kind of mirror in which he reflected his own insecurities and feelings of abandonment. There are several aspects of the *Liber confortatorius* that invite such speculation concerning Goscelin's state of mind at the time of writing. The first is the theme of exile and pilgrimage, discernible throughout the work on several levels and exploited by Goscelin, although perhaps not to its full potential. Connected to this theme is his sense of nostalgia that pervades the passages where he looks back to times of festivity and community. The prominence of the spirit of community when he envisaged eternity reinforces the notion that Goscelin was preoccupied by it. A third aspect is his discussion of God's grace for sinners,

which is especially prominent in the final book, and which suggests that he was feeling oppressed by some kind of personal sin. The circumstances of Goscelin's relationship with Eve, as we know them, could lead to the assumption that there had been something more than a purely spiritual friendship.[1] I will discuss the evidence that might support such an interpretation. It will also be argued that Goscelin was projecting his own feelings and insecurities in his advice to Eve. At the same time it is evident that he benefited from the process of writing his book and that the activity of writing the *Liber confortatorius* had a cathartic effect on him. In this chapter I will examine how the recurring motives of exile, journeying, community and grace support the thesis that the composition of the *Liber* is evidence of Goscelin's spiritual progress from a state of desolation to one of hope and acceptance, perhaps a restoration of complete faith in God's purpose with his life.

Pilgrims and Exiles

Peregrinatio has been a familiar theme in theological writings and spiritual literature throughout the Middle Ages and later centuries. Conventionally the exile or pilgrim theme in Christianity refers to man's wanderings in this world, searching and waiting for the heavenly homeland, as given expression in the New Testament by Saint Paul:

> By faith he that is called Abraham, obeyed to go out into a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out not knowing whither he went. By faith he abode in the land, dwelling in cottages, with Isaac and Jacob the co-heirs of the same promise. For he looked for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. ... All these died according to the faith, not having received the promises, but beholding them afar off, and saluting them, and confessing that they are pilgrims and strangers [*peregrini et hospites*] on the earth. For they that say these things, do signify that they seek a country. And truly had they been mindful of that from whence they came out, they had doubtless time to return. But now they desire a better, that is to say, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a City.[2]

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1 Barlow, *Life of King Edward* 145, suggested that "in his love for Eve he toppled on the brink of spiritual disaster."

2 Heb. 11: 8-10, 13-16.

This text was at the root of the medieval concepts of life as exile from the Lord and a pilgrimage towards heaven. Spiritual pilgrimage is an integral part of medieval religious philosophy and it is firmly grounded in classical literature and philosophical ideas[3] as well as in the writings of the Church Fathers. Physical expression of the concept was given by the Desert Fathers, who abandoned family, friends and society to retreat into the desert, following God's command to Abraham. Saint Augustine explored the idea on a more spiritual level, most notably, of course, in the *City of God*. The Augustinian idea of pilgrimage is perhaps best summed up by the definition he gave in *On Christian Doctrine*, when he spoke about the truth of God:

> Therefore, since that truth is to be enjoyed ..., and since God the Trinity, the Author and Founder of the universe, cares for his creatures through that truth, the mind should be cleansed so that it is able to see that light and to cling to it once it is seen. Let us consider this cleansing to be as a journey or a voyage home. But we do not come to Him who is everywhere present by moving from place to place, but by good endeavor and good habits.[4]

Augustine saw people who were living Christian lives as the exiled City of God which is still dwelling in the city of this world. They are on a journey in the same way as pilgrims are on a journey. They are also exiles because they have not yet reached their heavenly homeland from which they had been separated by the Fall.[5] Very important in Augustine's notion here is that he considered the journey a quest for truth in which virtue is a means rather than an end. Perfect virtue enables the soul to see truth, an idea which is implied in the *Liber confortatorius*, as I have argued in Chapter Three. The Christian concepts of exile and pilgrimage have found expression in many different ways and for this reason I will start with a short overview of these, and discuss in some detail the various meanings and interpretations of these terms in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages.

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3 Cicero's *Dream of Scipio* and Virgil's *Aeneid*, for example.

4 Saint Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, Bk I. x. 10 (p. 13).

5 Saint Augustine. *City of God*, Bk XV, 1 (p. 596).

Exile and pilgrimage, although not exactly the same thing, are so closely connected in Christian context that they should be taken together. Broadly speaking, five forms of exile and pilgrimage can be distinguished. First there is the forced displacement from *patria*, family and friends, and everything that is familiar, often for political reasons. This is mostly associated with exile as it does not necessarily involve a continuing journey. Saint Wilfrid's biographer Eddius Stephanus, for example, does not compare Wilfrid's many journeys and banishments to spiritual exiles. They were the result of political actions against this man of God, and although Wilfrid suffered the banishments for his religion they were not entered upon voluntarily. In contrast to this stands the voluntary displacement from *patria*, family and friends for religious purposes, either as traveller or simply by living in a foreign place. This may have served one or more of three purposes: withdrawal, penance or mission. Saint Boniface, who saw himself as an *exulem Germanicum ... qui tenebrosos angulos Germanicarum gentium lustrare debet*,[6] may serve as an example of the latter here. In the early Middle Ages this form of pilgrimage had often been part of ascetic practices, especially in the Celtic church.[7] Missionaries such as Boniface were seen as exiles for the Lord. Often, this kind of voluntary exile was considered to be a penitential exercise.

The complete retreat from the world was seen as another form of exile for God and was in imitation of Christ's retreat into the desert. It was simultaneously a withdrawal to be nearer to God and a means to fight the devil by being more exposed to his temptations. Withdrawal from the world into a monastery was considered similar to withdrawal into the wilderness and often a more accepted form of withdrawal from the world. Sometimes pilgrimage and exile were thus seen as a form of martyrdom, especially by hagiographers.[8]

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6 *Epist.* 30 to abbess Eadburga, *Die Briefe des Heiligen Bonifatius* 54.

7 Colin A. Ireland, 'Some Analogues of the O.E. *Seafarer* from Hiberno-Latin Sources,' *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 92 (1991): 1-14.

8 Irish sources distinguised three types of martyrdom in saints' lives: red martyrdom is self-explanatory, green martyrdom was the subjection of the body through penance, white martyrdom was voluntary exile from everything that a man loved. See Ireland, 'Some Analogues' 2.

These kinds of exile are separations from society and from fellow men; more important in Christian thought is, however, the exile from God: the state of the individual Christian soul as separated from God (exile) but journeying towards God through penance and virtue (*peregrinatio*).

Then there is the Augustinian idea of Ecclesia, the whole of Christendom (*Ecclesia peregrinans*), or the City of God in exile on earth moving towards the heavenly city.

Finally there is pilgrimage as a journey to holy places. As Leclercq points out, *peregrinatio* was not often used for these journeys in the early Middle Ages; instead expressions such as "*visitare loca sacra*" are found as descriptions.[9] This last form of pilgrimage is not taken into consideration here.

It is important to keep in mind that it is often difficult to ascertain where one interpretation stops and another begins. When a person decided to leave his home to live in strange regions in order to be closer to God, it was both an expression of spiritual alienation from the world *and* a sacrifice for God. It was a means to leave the distractions and affections that are connected with familiar surroundings in order to attain spiritual alienation. The larger the gap between the exile and society, the smaller the distance between the exile and God. Voluntary exile was therefore seen as a sacrifice because, although hagiographers present it as a natural act of following Christ's command to leave one's parents and follow him, in human terms it would often have had a significant impact. This, in any case, is evident from Goscelin's reaction to Eve's decision.

Those who literally abandoned *familia* and *patria* to live either in isolation in the desert or among heathen tribes did so from the same desire to be closer to God as Augustine believed should be done in spirit. In literature, however, the emphasis is usually on one or the other. Leclercq's studies of the subject show a continuation of the ideas throughout the early Middle Ages up to the twelfth

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9 Jean Leclercq, "Mönchtum und Peregrinatio im Frühmittelalter." *Römische Quartalschrift* 55 (1960): 214. Boniface, by the way, uses *iter peregrinum* in his letter to abbess Bugga, for her proposed trip to the shrine of Saint Peter in Rome.

century.[10] Leclercq discerns a shift of emphasis towards internalised exile and pilgrimage in the twelfth century, together with a shift from mostly hagiographical writing in which the subject surfaces to treatises on the internal experience, especially those influenced by Saint Bernard's sermons on the Canticle.[11]

The interpretation of the themes of exile and pilgrimage in the sources can be problematic: when were they simply literary themes and when actual practice? Early hagiographic sources suggest that foreign travel undertaken by the saint whose life was being remembered was often described in terms of exile and pilgrimage. Bede, for instance, writes that Hilda, having renounced her family and secular life to serve God, wished to travel to Gaul and "to live an exile for our Lord's sake".[12] In this case, Hilda left her homeland to live among strangers, not to live in solitude, and her move was one of necessity: at the time there were few – if any – religious houses for women in the British isles.

When pilgrimage or exile was seen as a form of martyrdom, it was also envisaged as laborious; it entailed poverty and toil in isolation. The exile was making a true sacrifice in leaving his community behind to live among aliens whose language he did not understand, searching perhaps for real martyrdom. Pilgrimage or exile was not necessarily a solitary undertaking, nor was it always an accepted form of religious vocation. There are numerous examples of abbots expressing doubts about a person's ambitions. An alternative form of pilgrimage could therefore also be undertaken without leaving the abbey's precincts. *Peregrinatio in stabilitate* was considered to be equally worthy. Eve's ambitions may initially have been in this direction. As seen, Hilary of Orléans wrote that Eve's first step towards the reclusive life had been a separate cell at Wilton.

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10 Leclercq, "Mönchtum und Peregrinatio" 212-225, and "Monachisme et Pérégrination du IX^{e} au XII^{e} Siècle," *Studia Monastica* 3 (1961): 33-52.

11 Leclercq, "Monachisme et Pérégrination" 34 and 48.

12 Bede. *Ecclesiastical History* 243.

Eve's Pilgrimage and Exile

Eve's exile, as far as we know, was a voluntary one. She was not only an exile from her homeland England, she was also an exile in her life as a recluse. Eve's situation was two-fold: it was both *peregrinatio in stabilitate* and *stabilitas in peregrinatione.* She had left England to live in foreign regions, but she lived in a cell and was not actually travelling around. Goscelin perceived her move to another country as an analogy for her spiritual journey. Her self-imposed exile from England thus became a physical expression of the spiritual exile from her heavenly homeland:

> You too, among the pilgrims and paupers of the Lord, have departed not just in the spirit of poverty and renunciation of earthly pleasure, but also from your land, [putting] many regions in between so that the further you are away the more closely you can commend yourself to the ear of God.[13]

In her cell she was leading a threshold existence: she was neither in this world, nor in the next. Goscelin perceived her as standing at the gates of heaven. He exhorts her to keep knocking and not to give up if the Lord does not answer her call, for only if she perseveres will he answer.[14] Goscelin frequently encourages Eve to identify with the Old Testament exiles:

> You have fled with Abraham from your land and your relatives, to go to the land which the Lord your God will give you, the land flowing with milk and honey, to see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living, and to please the Lord in the region of the living.[15]

Eve was in good company and Goscelin encourages her to find strength in the many examples that were before her:

> Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, Moses, the sons of Israel, also Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and the other prophets, also the apostles, and the large crowd of

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13 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 38: *Tu quoque inter omnes peregrinos et pauperes Domini, non solum in spiritu paupertatis et abrenuntiatione terrene uoluptatis, sed etiam regionum longinquitate de terra tua existi, ut tanto propinquius quanto exulatius te commendare possis in aurem Domini.*

14 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 37.

15 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 37: *Egressa es cum Abraham de terra et de cognatione tua, ut uenias in terram quam Dominus Deus tuus dabit tibi, terram lacte et melle manantem, ut uideas bona Domini in terra uiuentium, et placeas Domino in regione uiuorum.*

> the apostolic doctors, all were either brought over by pilgrimage or captivity, as Denys who went from Athens to Gaul, Martin, the jewel of confessors, from Pannonia to these regions, Augustine from Rome to your Britain. But never did the Lord leave behind those who seek him.[16]

The wanderings of the children of Israel on their way to the promised land are a *leitmotif* throughout the *Liber confortatorius*. Goscelin started both Book II and Book III with Moses, and by doing so he made him the leader for Eve to follow in her quest for the land promised her by Christ. In Book II Goscelin presents Eve's pilgrimage as one of danger. The military imagery discussed in Chapter Three supports the imagery of life as a cumbersome journey and it is significant that he includes Joshua's army crossing the Jordan into Israel. Goscelin's main source for the connection between the wanderings of the Israelites and the Christian pilgrimage towards heaven appears to have been Augustine's homily 28, On the Gospel of Saint John.[17] Augustine draws a direct parallel here between Israel and the Christian soul. Goscelin was aware that pagan authors also conceived life as a journey when he quotes from Virgil and Horace to illustrate his point.

At the start of Book III Goscelin gives a description of the Tabernacle. The language he uses here carries the connotation of travel and exile. The Tabernacle is the symbol of hope which "offered great solace for the solitary people at that time, and yet relieved the labour and weariness of long-lasting solitude."[18] He exhorts Eve to contemplate the splendours of "that moveable palace" [*illud mobile palatium*] and the "clearest tent" [*perspicacissimum castrum*]. He puts great

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16 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 37: *Abraham, Isaac, Iacob, Ioseph, Moyses, filii Israel, item Ieremias, Ezechiel, Daniel aliique prophete, item apostoli, atque apostolicorum doctorum plurima turba, omnes uel peregrinatione uel captiuitate translati sunt, ut Dionisius ab Athenis in Gallias, Martinus gemma confessorum a Pannoniis in has regiones, Augustinus a Roma in tuam Britanniam. Sed nunquam derelinquit Dominus querentes se.*

17 Saint Augustine, 'Homilies on the Gospel of John,' XXVIII, in: *Homilies on the Gospel of John, Homilies on the First Epistle of John, Soliloquies,* vol. VII Nicene and Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (Christian Classics Ethereal Library at http://www.ccel.org/fathers2).

18 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 69: *magna tamen solatia populo tunc solitario prebebat, ac tam longinque solitudinis labores et tedia leuigabat. De celo lucis columna, de terra deserta species fauebat argumentosa.*

emphasis on the symbol of God's law and benevolence which accompanied the wanderers on earth, both then and now, and on its role of sustaining their hope.

In comparison to Goscelin himself, however, Eve had in a sense come home, as she had already found the stability for which Goscelin was still searching. He saw her life in her cell as a safe refuge from the troubles of the world. The imagery of the pilgrimage of life is often taken from sea travel, with all the dangers that that implied in those days, as well as that of the lone individual crying in the wilderness. This familiar imagery is recurrent in Goscelin's letter. He describes Eve as having reached a safe haven, whereas he is still lost at sea. His anguish about his uncertain status as a peripatetic monk becomes apparent in the contrasting imagery of sea and harbour when he reflects on their respective circumstances: "You are in the harbour, I am still adrift. You live in a house, I am shipwrecked. You have built a nest on a rock, I am being dashed against the shores."[19] He compares Eve's little cell [*peregrinalis et pascualis casula*] to Noah's ark which had protected the eight souls it held against the violence flooding the world.[20] Another instance of travel imagery which reflects the turbulence of Goscelin's mind is found in his recollection of the time when he came to the realisation that spiritual living is like rowing for your life so that you will not drown in turbulent waters.[21]

In the *Liber confortatorius*, the exile/pilgrimage theme thus occurs on different levels. At its most basic level Goscelin saw Eve and himself as exiles like all Christians when he quotes Augustine: "Every man who is on his way to the city above is an exile in the world."[22] The truth of these words is also illustrated by the examples of the actual exiles of Saint Martin, Saint Denys, and Saint Augustine of Canterbury, who all left their native countries to do God's

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19 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 35: *Tu in portu es, ego fluctuo, Tu domi resides, ego naufragor. Tu nidificasti in petra, ego arenis illidor.*

20 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 73: *tua peregrinalis et pascualis casula, hec domuscula octo pedum, ut arche summitas octo animarum a mundi impetu seclusa, et a mundano pelago uelut in ipsa archa reposita,....*

21 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 49. I have quoted this passage already in Chapter Three, see page 129.

22 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 37. The reference is to Saint Augustine's Tractate XXVIII,9 on the Gospel of Saint John.

work in foreign regions. But both he and Eve were exiles in a more specific way, too. Goscelin's spiritual exile was intensified by his physical exile. His sense of banishment was very much a real one. Goscelin was a pilgrim in his land of adoption. His was an involuntary pilgrimage which did not suit him. The *Liber confortatorius* gives the distinct impression that this was a time in which he felt lost and that he longed for a place of rest. In the *Liber* he quotes a line from Virgil's *Aeneid* – "there a sure rest from thy toils"[23] – three times. It points to a soul weary of travelling, longing for a permanent monastic home as much as longing for the heavenly homeland. He writes that he often had wished for a little cell like Eve's:

> O how often have I not sighed for something similar to your little shelter, as long as it had a little door for solemn exit so that I am not without that most distinguished church, where I might have the good fortune to pray, read, write, compose often, where I might escape the crowd which is tearing at my heart, where I might impose the law to my stomach at my own little table, so that in that pastoral place I might set myself to books instead of banquets, and re-awaken the little dying sparks of my talent, so that I, who am unable to bear fruit by doing well, can bear fruit however small in writing in the house of the Lord."[24]

As I have argued in Chapter Three, in the *Liber confortatorius* Goscelin exploits the idea of books as nourishment for the mind. Used in relation to himself here, the empty stomach he needed to feed should therefore be interpreted as an empty mind: another sign that he was troubled. There is another level on which Goscelin saw himself as an exile. This was his separation from Eve: by becoming enclosed, Eve had become dead to the world. She had made herself unattainable for Goscelin in a very concrete sense. Furthermore, she had become a recluse in a different country, separated from his by the sea. Goscelin's reaction to her decision had been fierce. He saw her sudden departure

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23 Virgil, *Aeneid* III 393: *Requies ea certa laborum.*

24 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 34: *O quotiens suspirabam simile tuo hospitiolum, quod tamen ad sollemnes exitus, ita ut non carerem amplissimo templo, haberet ostiolum, ubi orare, lectitare scriptitare, dictitare meruissem, ubi cor meum diripientem turbam euaderem, ubi propria mensula uentri legem ponerem, ut in loco pascuo libris pro epulis incumberem, morientemque scintillulam ingenioli mei resuscitarem, ut qui nequeo benefaciendo, quantulumcumque fructificarem in domo Domini scribendo.*

as a crime against charity[25] and he gave evidence of having felt a great pain in her absence. Spiritually, however, he knew that they were together. He came to see the separation as divinely determined. He understood that it should be seen as a learning experience.[26] A look at the known facts of Goscelin's life at the time when he was composing the *Liber confortatorius* and his perceptions of his own plight may be indicative of the reason why he seemed to have felt his isolation so intensely.

GOSCELIN'S JOURNEY

Goscelin had, for a great part of his life, moved in circles of royalty, aristocracy and high clergy. As we have seen, Saint-Bertin was a well-connected monastery with fine resources: the library was well-stocked and learning had a high place. The monastery also had close connections with England. Hermann's choice of the abbey for his exile may well have originated from politically strategic motives. Hermann had come to England as one of King Edward's chaplains in 1042 and he had become bishop of Ramsbury. Despite the fact that he had been given an impoverished see, it seems that he was held in high regard. In 1050 he was sent to Rome on a mission for the king.[27] Goscelin recalled the speech Hermann made at Pope Leo IX's Easter Council in his *Historia translationis sancti Augustini episcopi.* Perhaps Goscelin meant to imply that he was present when this speech was made when he wrote that he had been at Hermann's side (*cui laterales adhaerebamus*), although Barlow believes that Goscelin's words need not be taken literally.[28] It is unlikely that Goscelin was actually present at the council

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25 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 30: *Si Deus caritas est, san<c>tius uideretur adiri commendata quam contempta caritate. Nam qui totam legem seruauerit, offenderit autem in uno, hoc est in caritate, attende quid sequatur. Unde estimaris in caritatem peccasse.*
("If God is charity, it would seem more holy to go to Him when you have esteemed charity than when you have despised charity. For if one who observed the whole of the laws, has nevertheless offended in one respect, that is in charity [Jas. 2:10], listen carefully to what follows. And so you are considered to have sinned against charity.")

26 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 27.

27 See footnote 7 of the Introduction.

28 Barlow. *Life of Edward* 134. note 7.

as he must have been fairly young at the time; if he was, however, it is clear that such a privilege would have made quite an impact on a young monk. In 1055, Hermann was disappointed at the failure of his attempt to move his see from Ramsbury to Malmesbury. Even the queen's support had not been as important as the protests of the Malmesbury monks. His disappointment at not having sufficient support in high circles was considerable enough for him to resign his see and leave the service of the English Church which he had praised so much in Rome. Choosing Saint-Bertin as a place of residence must, however, have meant that he had left the door open for an offer to come back to England; this came in 1058 when he was offered the see of Sherborne.

Goscelin joined him in England at some point in the early 1060s[29] and it seems that he travelled with Hermann to court, possibly in the position of Hermann's personal secretary. It may be safe to say that Goscelin led a fairly unusual life for a monk. He moved in circles of royalty and nobility and was present at important events such as the dedication of the new church at Westminster. Goscelin's admission of his distaste at his lodgings when he first arrived in England shows that he was used to higher standards at Saint-Bertin and also that he may have been prone to mild forms of pride himself. The reason as to why he fell out with Hermann's successor Osmund remains rather vague, but it is possible to conjecture that one of the reasons he left Salisbury was that he did not have the standing under Osmund which he had had under Hermann. If this was so, Goscelin's sense of doing penance may be traced back to this act of pride which he had come to regret later.

At the time of writing the *Liber confortatorius*, Goscelin's situation was still uncertain. Goscelin could, of course, not foresee his future, and although he was seemingly resigned to his situation – he does not openly refer to it – a strong sense of loneliness and exile from community life is evident. In his salutation, Goscelin refers to himself as "one excluded" [*exclusus*], and "a solitary in the world" [*solitarius in mundo*]. Playing on the *inclusa* with which he saluted Eve, he immediately sets the tone: she belonged, by her own choice; he was excluded, not by his own free will. A poignant sense of loss pervades the first book of the

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29 Barlow believes a date between 1061 and 1064 to be likely. 134. note 5.

Liber, and is especially apparent in the Prologue, which may have been written after the main part of the text.[30] For Goscelin, life must have felt as inconstant as the winds to which he commended his letter to Eve, and he was more aware of this than most other monks who had vowed stability of place.

For Goscelin, community was very important and it is just that which he had lost. Longingly and tellingly, he still considered himself a member of the community of Saint-Bertin and Saint-Omer[31]: twenty years in Britain had not given him the feeling that he truly belonged to a community. The community of Wilton clearly was very close to his heart, but it was not his community, and the cloud under which he had left the diocese must have annulled all feeling of belonging he had at Sherborne. The years in Hermann's household had probably presented an exciting life-style, brushing shoulders with the rich and famous at court, in London, and at Wilton.[32] With hindsight, cast out like the Wanderer in the Old English poem, Goscelin experienced the instability of life in a very personal manner. This experience may have been accompanied, perhaps, by a realisation of having neglected his duties to God as a monk.[33] It seems that he had considered his wanderings as some kind of voluntary penance, making him hunger more for the true homeland.

It seems that monks without monasteries were not unusual in eleventh-century England. Æthelred's law codes of 1008, for example, make allowance for them. It is clear from these that it was considered better if monks lived in a community under a rule.[34] The *Rule of St Benedict*, furthermore, stipulates that any monk who asks to become a member of the community where he is staying

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30 This at least is indicated by the end of the Prologue where Goscelin writes that he has divided the text in four books.

31 You have praised our Bertin.... Saint Omer, of whose community I am....

32 This may have been even as exciting as John Gosling suggests in his article "The Identity of the Lady Ælfgyva in the Bayeux Tapestry and Some Speculation Regarding the Hagiographer Goscelin." See page 23 of the Introduction.

33 The instability of all things in this life is a recurrent theme in the *Liber confortatorius*.

34 Codes 5 and 6. Whitelock, *English Historical Documents c. 500-1042* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1968) 406.

as a guest, should not only *not* be dismissed, he should be urged to stay.[35] Despite this and despite the obvious respect that Goscelin enjoyed at the monasteries where he stayed and is remembered, he chose to be a guest rather than a member of the community. In Book II he describes himself as lodging [*hospitor*] at Peterborough,[36] the term carrying with it all the biblical associations of a stranger taken in out of Christan charity. I believe that Goscelin saw his homelessness as some kind of penance or exile and that, consciously or unconsciously, he built the ideas of exile and pilgrimage into the *Liber confortatorius*. I will continue to show the ways in which the theme surfaces and how Goscelin used the concepts to come to terms with his own situation.

Even in the early pages of the *Liber confortatorius*, Goscelin was aware of the notion that his separation from Eve was only temporary and that it was part of God's plan for them. Despite the acknowledgement that they "pant and hurry to be united in that homeland, where [they] can never ever be separated,"[37] it is clear that his heart had not fully accepted this. The expressions of grief when he thought about her desertion are still fierce at this point. It is necessary to keep an awareness of rhetorical strategies here, and it is therefore difficult to establish whether this mix of knowledge and refusal to come to terms with this knowledge is a conscious step in the composition of the *Liber confortatorius*. The interpretation of this is completely dependent on how the composition of the work is construed. I will show that Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* had a profound influence on Goscelin's work as it had on many other authors throughout the Middle Ages and it may be possible to make a few more specific conjectures about the *Liber*'s dependence on it.

Boethius, when writing his *consolatio*, had already learned the outcome of the lesson it conveys: the acceptance of the instability of life and the constancy of philosophy. He already knew that he was to return to philosophy when he started writing the work. The text presents the process of learning and

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35 Chapter 61, *Rule of Saint Benedict* 138-139.

36 Talbot. *Liber confortatorius* 49.

37 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 27: *ut scilicet in illa patria anhelemus et festinemus coniungi, ubi numquam perpetuo possimus seiungi.*

acceptance *post factum.* A similar assumption could perhaps be made for Goscelin's work but it also poses a few problems. If it is accepted that Goscelin had a plan when he started writing, then the expressions of his grief should be seen as little more than exaggerated rhetorical commonplaces. When he describes that he had to stop writing because, "roaring and wailing have invaded [him]" and grief prevented his hand and his pen from writing,[38] it may be because he intended to offset the feelings of despair at the start of the letter against those of hope of a reunion which are achieved by the end of it. There are few indications, however, that this might have been the case. The consolatory aspect has not been given much prominence and it manifests itself as being more of the nature of a beneficial side-effect than as the purpose of the exercise. Goscelin's advice to Eve shows that he knew intellectually that he had to accept his situation, but it is clear that his heart had not accepted that yet. The writing of the *Liber* had as a result Goscelin's coming to terms with his feelings of loss and exile, but it is clear that he had intended to write for Eve, not for himself. Despite this, there are more indications that Goscelin was pre-occupied with his own sense of exile when he discussed issues connected to the reclusive life.

One of Goscelin's overriding concerns is that of community. He expressly told Eve that he wished that she had stayed a monastic or that she had at least stayed in her own country (*in patria*).[39] Although he had to admit that this was mostly a selfish wish, there is evidently a deep-seated belief in the spirit of community and people's need for human company, which lived alongside his admiration for the solitary saints. Human interaction was clearly very important to him. Shared stories and shared wisdom are a vital part of the community spirit, and Goscelin's discussion with the young Danish monk at Peterborough is a good example of this. Another example of his intimation of enjoyment of human company occurs when he recounts the story of Brithric the recluse. He added here that the story was witnessed by "...Eilsius, who is now kind-hearted

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38 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 27: *Sed ecce, dum scribo, grassans dolor non potuit dissimulari; cecidere manus et usus scriptorii; rugitus et eiulatus inuasit me;*

39 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 36: *sed hoc alibi quam hic et alia cupiebam uia, ut scilicet sancte uiueres et utile uas esses in domo Domini, cenobialis columba, non turtur solitaria, aut, si malles, turtur fieres in patria.*

towards me."[40] With his memories of feasts and banquets, Goscelin conjures up images of companionship, belonging and togetherness. These signified for him the happy times he had spent with Eve. Although he later encourages Eve not to look back to what she had left behind, it is evident that he could not leave it himself. He presents a brief description of the banquet at the consecration of the new church at Wilton in terms of holy and monastic familial relationship, but the end of the feast also signalled the end of their time together. He writes that their pleasant time together came to an end which left him grievously wounded.[41] When he takes the first steps towards acceptance of changed circumstances, he has to admit that they had had their good times. In an analogy with *Ecclesiastes* 3:1-8 he writes: "We had our times too. We saw enough of each other, we had enough conversations, we also feasted and dined sumptuously, we celebrated and rejoiced sufficiently in the mercy of the Lord, if only anything could be enough for charity."[42]

The concept and imagery of feasting and banqueting as a social as well as a spiritual phenomenon recurs throughout the work in different contexts. Instances of feasting and banqueting are, for example, also used in the context for the solitary activity of reading and study,[43] but even here they have a wider social significance. The banquets of books are in preparation for the great banquets in heaven, and they may be seen as banquets enjoyed in the company of angels already.[44] It is significant that Goscelin envisages the blessings of heaven so emphatically in terms of community and festivity. He expresses the hope that he will be part of the heavenly feast even if he is only the most

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40 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 67: ..., *et nunc erga me benignus, dominus Eilsius.*

41 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 29: *Solutus est conuentus festiuitatis. Heserunt altius infixa spicula, caritatis languebant uulnerata precordia.*

42 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 42: *Habuimus nos quoque nostra tempora. Satis inuicem uidimus, satis collocuti sumus, conuiuati quoque et epulati, sollemnizati et iocundati satis in misericordia Domini, si modo quicquam satis esse posset caritati.*

43 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 34 and 72.

44 Talbot. *Liber confortatorius* 74: "What is it that makes the Christian invited to the heavenly banquet, that can condemn the pagan without a better hope?" (*Quid in his faciet inuitatus ad celestia conuiuia Christianus, que sine meliori spe contemnere potuit paganus?*).

insignificant participant. Everything that he and Eve must miss in earthly terms will be magnified when they are reunited in heaven:

> Everywhere there will be choruses, everywhere songs, everywhere ceremonies, applause, jubilations, exclamations of joy, celestial banquets, the wedding songs of the immaculate nuptials, everywhere the glorious crowd of angels and people, everywhere the closest companionship of the heavenly ones with people; nowhere is there solitude, nowhere silence of bliss, nowhere is there an absence of any good; everything will be present everywhere, so that, although one may be wiser than another, everybody will be wise, even so all will be holy, all will be just, all will be chaste, all will be the children of God. Every one will know all the languages, but usually they will speak the one mother of languages, Hebrew, so that there will be one city as a result of the concord of all.[45]

The keywords here are companionship, absence of solitude, banquets. They are all those things that Goscelin longs for.

At the centre of monastic life was communal praise and prayer, and every member of the community had a key function in the service. Monastic rules put great emphasis on the essence of monastic life, the community. The rules themselves are there to safeguard the integrity of the community as a whole rather than that of the individual souls. If one of the members of the community strayed, it affected the whole community. This is exemplified by the fact that punishments were harsher when the community spirit was compromised by the behaviour of a member; the punishment of excommunication from the choir and communal worship was considered to be the worst one.[46] Monastic life demanded great discipline of the individual; in return it gave the monk or nun a sense of belonging and security which was much greater than a family had to offer. Eve's decision to leave her community was naturally a concern to Goscelin. Though the picture he painted of the Wilton community as inconsolable may be a dramatisation of reality (he wasn't there to witness it), it was nevertheless in the

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45 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 115: *Ubique chori, ubique carmina, ubique sollemnia, plausus, iubili, tripudia, conuiuia celestia, nuptiarum immaculatarum epythalamia, ubique angelorum et hominum gloriosa frequentia, ubique supernorum cum hominibus iunctissima contubernia; nusquam solitudo, nusquam gaudiorum silentia, nullius usquam boni absentia; ubique aderunt omnia, ut quamuis sit alius alio sapientior, omnes erunt sapientes, sicut omnes sancti, omnes iusti, omnes pudici, omnes filii Dei. Omnes scient omnes linguas, sed usitatius una loquentur matre linguarum Hebrea, ut sit una ciuitas omnium concordia.*

46 Jo Ann McNamara, *The Ordeal of Community* (Toronto: Peregrina, 1993) 24.

spirit of the communal ideal: entry into the monastery was for life and when a member left it was felt by every one.[47]

Significant in Goscelin's scenario of his reunion with Eve in heaven is the idea that there will also be a return to England and, more specifically, Wilton. To Goscelin a reunion in heaven is not enough: it will only be perfect if there is a return to Wilton in its heavenly form. Eve's exile from her community will thus be rewarded quite specifically too. The beauties of the vision of the heavenly Jerusalem are shared in part with a heavenly Wilton, established in the *terra nova*, clearly visible and easy to revisit in Eve's angelic state:

> ....., o desirable soul, for wherever you will then wish to go, you will be able to so much more freely, as you are restricted now. In order to touch also upon the whole knowledge with human affection, the superior benefactions of the love of Christ, which do not arise in the heart of men, with your holy lady Edith and all the choirs of sisters, whom their own place had educated for God, you will revisit your Wilton from heaven, (...) Then your Wilton will be an enormous and large town with a glass wall, seen from far and wide, with a shining citadel and gemmed towers raised, not for battle, but as a watchtower of glory, from whence the daughters of Zion more extensively may behold all of their England. Her gates will be of pearl, all her houses gold. The church shining with jaspers, green gems, beryls, amethysts and all the precious stones, (...) To this place she [St Edith] will bring the beloved bridegroom with all of her important friends, the angels and archangels, apostles and martyrs, with kings and the Roman and English Fathers, with her father Edgar and her brother Edward, with Thecla, Agnes, Cecilia, and Argina, Katherine, and the whole crowd of virgins, and all of the people in the household at Wilton, all those to whom the Lord has allocated a place of honour.[48]

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47 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 32.

48 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 114-115: *Unde credas, o anima desiderabilis, quia quocumque tunc ire uolueris, tanto liberius poteris, quanto nunc ar[c]tius teneris. Ut etiam tangam humano affectu omnem intellectum, supereminentia caritatis Christi beneficia, que in cor hominis non ascenderunt, cum sancta tua domina Edgitha cunctisque sororum choris, quascumque locus suus Christo educauerat, reuises de celo Wiltoniam tuam, (...) Tunc erit Wiltonia tua urbs ingens et ampla, muro uitreo late perlustrata, arce fulgida [tu]rribus gemmeis, non in pugnam, sed in speculam glorie sublimata, unde filie Syon latius aspiciant tota Anglica sua. Porte eius margarite, omnes domus eius auree. Templum iaspide, crisolitis, berillis, amet(h)istis cunctisque lapidibus preciosis perlucidum, (...)Huc quotiens uoluerit, descendet potens regina tua Edgytha, magni Christi thalamo superba. Huc dilectum sponsum inducet cum summis amicis suis angelis et archangelis, apostolis et martyribus, cum regibus et patribus Romanis et Angligenis, cum patre Edgaro et fratre Edwardo, cum T<h>ecla, Agnete, Cecilia, et Argina, Caterina, multaque uirginum turba, totaque sua Wiltoniensis populi familia, quotquot dignos fecit Dominus in sorte sua.*

Implicit in this vision is Goscelin's wish to return there himself. Wilton represented his earthly happiness and this happiness will be multiplied in the heavenly Wilton with the actual presence of Christ and the angels and all the saints.

Eve's cell in Anjou will also gain a special status on the new earth. Goscelin envisages it as having become a remarkable palace (*insignem regiam*).[49] Having previously used *insigne* in reference to virtue and, more importantly, the instruments of suffering for Christ and his saints, he clearly viewed Eve's cell as a martyr's emblem, a vital part in her journey home. Throughout the text Goscelin never doubts that Eve will deserve her place in heaven. He envisages her already on the arched way, which was enlarged by her virtue and learning, or already on the threshold of heaven.[50]

Connected to the spirit of community are the familial relationships and close association of humanity with the angels within the celestial hierarchy. Goscelin also shows a strong sense of a wider Church community and a keen awareness of nationhood.[51] These are recurrent themes and emphasise Goscelin's pre-occupation in his state of dejection. In Chapter Two, I have already looked at the family relationships which occur on different levels, and it is true that Goscelin's use of the language of consanguinity to describe monastic relationships is hardly remarkable. There are, however, a considerable number of instances where real familial bonds are used to exemplify levels of sacrifice. Perpetua and Felicity have already been mentioned several times. The Virgin is given as a prime example of maternal suffering, but Goscelin also used lesser-known examples such as the woman from Speyer who was forewarned by the infant Jesus that her child was going to die.[52] Alongside these examples, Goscelin implied a father and daughter relationship. He amplified in this way Eve's sacrifice and his penance.

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49 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 114.

50 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 32.

51 The term nationhood is a term that should perhaps be used with some caution here.

52 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 107-108.

But Goscelin's sense of community and kinship went further. On several occasions Goscelin expands on the kinship of human souls to the celestial community.

> If, then, these temporary and transitory things are so great, how great and how much surpassing all excellence of visible things and how much more transgressing all intellect are those things which the eye has not seen and the ear has not heard, and which have not entered into the heart of man either, the things that God hath prepared for them that love him, [I Cor. 2:9] and that thou, O God hast prepared in thy goodness for the poor, [Ps. 67:11] how many mansions there are in the house of the father of Christ, [John 14:2] how distinct and joined together are all the orders and merits of the patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles, the martyrs, the confessors, the virgins, widows and all the elect, all that there is from men to the angels, from the angels to the archangels, from the archangels to the thrones, from the thrones to the dominations, from the dominations to the principalities, from the principalities to the powers, from the powers to the virtues, from the virtues to the cherubim, from the cherubim to the seraphim, from thence to the king himself, the Lord, the emperor, the majesty of the universe, interminably rising above his universal creation, ruling and governing it justly, piously, benignly, filling everything with his limits, balancing the highest and the lowest, presenting himself most sufficiently for the small and the great. And while all individual things are distributed according to their rewards and places [of honour], nevertheless from the deepest until the most superior it is one kingdom in everlasting charity and harmony, one city, people, house, church, bride, one body and soul, that is, one universal harmony of everlasting charity. For as from many grains one loaf is produced, from many threads one cloth, from many stones one temple, from many members one body, even so from many (people) is the one building of the court of God.[53]

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53 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 87: *Si ergo tanta sunt hec temporaliter transitura, quanta sunt et quam omnem altitudinem uisibilium supereminentia et quam omnem intellectum exsuperantia, illa que oculus non uidit et auris non audiuit, et in cor hominis non ascenderunt, que preparauit Deus se diligentibus, et que parasti in dulcedine tua pauperi Deus, quam multe in domo patris Christi mansiones, quam distincti et coniuncti sunt patriarcharum, prophetarum, apostolorum, martyrum, confessorum, uirginum, uiduarum cunctorumque electorum ordines et merita, quantum sit ab hominibus ad angelos, ab angelis ad archangelos, ab archangelis ad thronos, a thronis ad dominationes, a dominationibus ad principatus, a principatibus ad potestates, a potestatibus ad uirtutes, a uirtutibus ad cherubim, a cherubim ad seraphim, inde ad ipsum regem, Dominum, imperatorem, augustum uniuersorum, uniuersam creaturam suam interminabiliter supereminentem, iuste, pie, benigne regentem, administrantem, adimplentem omnia, suis terminis librantem alta et infima, seque paruis et magnis sufficientissime prebentem per seculorum secula. Cumque singula sunt suis premiis et sedibus distributa, unum tamen ab imo usque ad excellentissimum est regnum perpetua caritate et concordia, una ciuitas, populus, domus, ecclesia, sponsa, unum corpus et anima, unica scilicet omnium sempiterne caritatis consonantia. Nam sicut de multis granis unus panis, de multis filis una vestis, de multis lapidibus unum templum, de multis membris unum corpus, ita de multis unicum est aule Dei edificium.*

This passage gives a good impression of how Goscelin saw the part of humanity in creation. After the judgement, mankind, made up of all individual Christians who, having fulfilled their roles in life, would make up the perfect hierarchy in heaven. There are two more occasions where he enumerates in a similar fashion the celestial hierarchy, while underlining the kinship of all of creation.[54] Salvation is not only a solitary endeavour of the soul, it is a communal struggle. Although Goscelin is keenly aware of tribal if not to say national distinctions, he continually subscribed to the idea that people are not fighting alone. It is the difference between secular distinctions of race and country, and the unifying ideal of the City of God. Every soul's endeavour is needed to make up a whole, and this whole body with Christ as its head is to be one with the angels and the entire court of heaven.[55]

In his exhortation to Eve as a recluse, Goscelin often alludes to her solitary struggle,[56] and he emphasised the difference between the vocations of the monastic and the recluse. The monastic would have the support of her community, the recluse had to rely only on her books and her meditation. This contrast between the individual's relationship with Christ and the individual's part in the army of Christ does not constitute an inconsistency. They should be seen as existing on different levels.

In stark contrast to the affiliation of Christians among themselves and the kinship of human souls to the angels stands Goscelin's preoccupation with the secular abuse of power. He repeatedly lashes out at mankind's urge to conquer and supress other people and he juxtaposes conquerors to the exiles for God. Goscelin praises Saint Denys, Saint Martin, and Saint Augustine of Canterbury, who made their exile from their native lands worthwhile. Their exiles served to increase the number of souls for the heavenly city. Their migrations emphasise the universality of the Church. Denys, Martin and Augustine are the spiritual

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54 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 108 and 115.

55 See also Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 54: *... et unum corpus et unum spiritum se capite in nobis membris suis Deus fecit. Hinc Apostolus: «Non estis, ait, uestri sed corpus et membra Christi»* [I Cor. 12, 27]. *Corpus est uniuersalis ecclesia et unica uniuersorum electorum sponsa, singula uero singuli quique fideles Dei membra.*

56 See, for example, Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 28: *Ut solum accipias, sola huc intrasti.*

descendants of the patriarchs Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, but also of Ruth.[57] Eve is compared to them: her move to Anjou, even though Goscelin would have preferred her to be a solitary in England, should be seen in this light. In a later chapter Goscelin returns to this when he contrasts Eve's move to that of the daughter of the Duke of Flanders who married Canute of Denmark.[58] Having known nothing except the happiness and glory in their native countries, women like her find life difficult in foreign regions, among people whose language they do not speak, and they will always look back to the land they had left behind. Eve, herself the product of an international liaison, knew, Goscelin writes, that all the good things she had left behind for Christ, she would have even better in heaven.[59]

There is a strong awareness of nationalities in the *Liber confortatorius* and there is a subtle assertion of the merits of the English and British in God's plan.[60] Barlow suggests that some of Goscelin's comments in the *Liber* should be interpreted as signs of resentment against the Normans in England.[61] If this is so, Goscelin made sure that his comments could not be pinned down as such. There are no open attacks on the Norman rulers. There is really only one explicit mention of the Normans in England and this occurs in the more neutral context of other conquering nations.[62] Goscelin also reminds Eve that God is always on

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57 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 37-38, under the heading "Salus peregrinantium sanctorum".

58 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 41. An historical event which has been used as a key to the date of the *Liber confortatorius*, see page 120.

59 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 37.

60 It seems that Goscelin did not distinguish between English and British, and England and Britain, but that he used the words indiscriminately. He referred to the English fathers and kings and British kings, for example. Eve's native country is referred to both as Britain and England. At one point he uses both terms as if he is not sure what the distinction between the two is: *hodieque Normanni in Angliam, Brittanniam.* Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 41.

61 Barlow, *The English Church 1000-1066* (1963) 28-29.

62 For example, Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 41: *Quam multi ob terrena lucra in longinquos fines cognationes mutant et genituram, de Gallia in Galatiam <et> in Hispaniam, de Anglia in Apuliam, in Greciam, pro perituris rebus ponentes animam suam, et nos dissimulamus migrare ad beatitudinem sempiternam? Transferuntur denique gentes et regna, ut Israel in Egiptum, de Egipto in Chananeam, de Chananea in Assirios et Babilonem, sic Cuthite in Samariam, Troiani in Italiam et Romam,*

the side of the good and he continues to give biblical examples of subjected peoples.[63] The suggestion that he experienced a feeling of oppression is continued when he envisages God's judgement:

> Then the Lord will judge between people and people, between kingdoms and kingdoms, between Syrians and Hebrews, between Romans and subjected nations, between Gauls and Britons, between towns and houses, between fathers and children, between brothers and sisters, between men and women, between friends and comrades, between rulers and subjects, between all arts and human duties.[64]

In the first half of this passage at least, there is a strong bias against subjugating nations. Again Goscelin singles out the triumph of the weak over the strong and it is significant that he chooses the subjection of entire peoples to illustrate that point. It is even possible to speculate, especially in light of other passages, that the reference to the Gauls and Britons was a veiled comment on the Norman presence in Britain in his own time. In a line-up of rulers who deserve to assist the Lord, Goscelin mentioned, after several biblical kings, Constantine the Great, "chosen by God to act as servant from Britain to where the sun comes up" and the holy kings of Britain, Oswald, Edmund, Kenelm, Ethelbert, Edgar, Edward.[65] Goscelin is consistent in his use of political examples to distinguish good from bad. At the beginning of Book IV, he had also used good rulers versus bad ones to illustrate that God may allow tyrants to subject his elected people, but that He

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hodieque Normanni in Angliam, Brittanniam, in qua te quoque cum Anglica gente constat fuisse aduenam sed et patre Dano et matre Lotaringa a claris natalibus filiam emersisse Anglicam.

63 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 92.

64 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 111: *Tunc iudicabit Dominus inter gentes et gentes, inter regna et regna, inter Assirios et Hebreos, inter Romanos et subiugatas nationes, inter Gallos et Britannos, inter urbes et domos, inter patres et liberos, inter fratres et sorores, inter uiros et uxores, inter amicos et sodales, inter prelatos et subiectos, inter omnes artes et humana officia.*

65 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 113: *Reges quoque et principes, magistratus et pre(si)des, qui bene administrauerunt negotiationem Domini et militiam, ut Dauid, Ezechias, Iosias, (m)axi(mus) Augustorum et optimus Christianitatis dilatator Constantinus, qui se gloriatur a Britannis in ortum solis ministrum a Deo electum, aliique Romani imperii Cesares et consules, sancti quoque reges Britannie Osuualdus, Edmundus, Kenelmus, Ethelbertus, Edgarus, Eduuardus, cumque his millenus ordo regum terrarum insigniter coronabuntur et, ut filii inter patres, ditius et regalius Domino assistent quam regnassent.*

is always on the side of the oppressed.[66] This pre-occupation cannot be ignored and should be seen as indicative of Goscelin's state of mind: Goscelin felt abandoned, lonely, suppressed. It is evident that Goscelin felt himself excluded. Although he wistfully refers to the community at Saint-Bertin, it is clear that he no longer feels part of a monastic community. Perhaps this is the reason why he focuses so exclusively on Eve, and the heavenly community. In the *Liber confortatorius* he looks back on the good old days and he hopes to find a similar but even better happiness in heaven. Goscelin conflated about fifteen years of association with Wilton and Eve into a few key events in which Eve was the centre point of his affections. There are signs that he was projecting on Eve his own feelings at the time he was writing her his letter of encouragement.

Another aspect of the *Liber confortatorius* which needs to be explored in the investigation of Goscelin's state of mind is the extraordinary emphasis he put on the forgiveness of sinners and the focus on the virtue of humility in comparison to other virtues. Book IV especially is concerned with these subjects. Goscelin refers to his "crimes" and his sins in Book I. It is hardly unusual for a medieval author to admit sins, but there is reason to believe that some realisation of a specific sin was pressing on Goscelin's mind. The nature of this sin cannot be established beyond reasonable doubt, but there are some conjectures that could be made. It could be argued that Goscelin's sense of exile was intensified, if not explained, by an alienation from God because of a personal sin, a specific trespass for which he felt he was being punished.

The closeness that had once been between Goscelin and Eve, and which led to such grief when she left the country, could cause speculation as to whether anything inappropriate to their relationship might have happened. Although it would be impossible to say anything definitive about this either way, it is necessary to examine the evidence. To begin with, it needs to be stressed that Goscelin's whole approach toward his addressee is clearly that of love and respect. There are no reproaches, nor are there expressions of guilt or remorse.

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66 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 92: *Sic ipsos etiam impios reges sepe suis electis benignificauit; sic Abraham, Isaac, Iacob, sub alienigenis principibus, sic Ioseph sub Pharaone, sic Daniel sub Nabugodonosor uel Dario, sic filios Israel sub Cyro, sub As(s)uero, sub Tholomeo, aliisque tirannis captiuos suos magnificauit, quia cor regis in manu Domini, qui singula finxit, et gratiam et gloriam Dominus suis dabit.*

On the other hand, there is no excessive praise of virginity as in other works of the sort, as I have shown, but there is an abundance of "fallen" women and men who had subsequently been redeemed. Prominent examples are Mary of Egypt, Mary Magdalen, and Saint Alexander, who all are described as having won their place in heaven and sainthood by their humility. The story of the unknown Alexander seems especially liable to be used in favour of an interpretation of a possible scandalous affair between Goscelin and Eve. Saint Alexander's legend, Goscelin informs Eve, was a song and a story, yet it had been not been written down.[67] The hermit had been tricked by the devil, who in the disguise of a monk had abducted a royal child and had asked Alexander to look after his orphaned "niece" for him because his abbot did not allow the presence of children inside the monastery. Alexander took up the education of the girl but inevitably fell into the devil's traps. When the girl had grown up, Alexander raped her and when she got pregnant he turned bad to worse by killing her. When the devil returned, again disguised as a monk, to claim his charge, Alexander was filled with remorse. For fifteen years he hid in a tree and did penance for his sins, existing only on acorns, leaves and rain water. When the king heard about a man living in a tree he went to see him. Alexander confessed his sins to the king and when the king realised that the girl in question must have been his daughter, he was determined to avenge her. Then suddenly a bright light prevented him from harming the man. Divine intervention thus saved Alexander's life and he knew that he had been forgiven. The king also forgave and built a monastery in that place, and Goscelin wrote that a great number of monks still lived there.[68]

Goscelin provides Eve with the whole story, not just a reference. It runs for two pages of printed text and it is the one of the few extended examples in the *Liber*. Whenever Goscelin elaborated on a story it was because he believed that Eve might not be familiar with it, as she was with the story Brihtric, and Rufinus' addition to Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*. With the story of Alexander the question arises as to whether this was just another instance of God's extraordinary grace for those who repent their sins, or whether it is necessary to look for an analogy in Goscelin's own life, whether Goscelin was thinking of a

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67 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 104.

68 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 104-105.

similar abuse of trust. I do not think there is any reason to believe that anything quite as dramatic had happened. It seems, however, that Goscelin had a sense of having sinned in a very grave way. One of the possible sins, as I have suggested, was pride, another perhaps a temporary loss of faith. The sin of pride is much on his mind in Book IV, but there are also signs that Goscelin had experienced strong feelings of abandonment and persecution. He projects these feelings on Eve and disguises them as a warning against the danger of wavering faith in her solitude. In Book I, following on the chapter in which he had expressed most explicitly his homelessness, he exhorts Eve (or rather more generically "Zion") to keep her faith in God, who readily offers his support. He quotes from Isaiah, "And Zion said: *The Lord has forsaken me, and the Lord has forgotten me* [Is. 49,14]. Oh how often do we say that in poverty of mind!"[69] This sentence seems to be a cry from the heart. The following passage seems to support the supposition that he was thinking of an instance of his own wavering faith.

> We are an inconstant form. Now we are raised by hope, now we are weakened by failure. Peter walks on water while he remains constant, but he sinks as soon as his faith weakens. When we are cherished by the Lord we contemplate the eternal state, when we are left for a moment, we are shaken from our very foundations. We do not stand up unless we are raised by the hand of the Lord, nor do we stand unless we are held upright in the same place. *And in my abundance I said: I shall never be moved.* (Ps. 29:7)*Lord in thy favour thou gavest strength to my beauty* (Ps. 29:8). Behold the eternal position. What follows? *Thou turnedst thy face away from me, and I became troubled.* (Ps. 29:8). I shall never be moved: What is more stable? And I was troubled: What is falling down more? Night pushes away the day, the day pushes away the night, and we experience the alternation of serenity and tempest. And sometimes our road is even and sometimes it is rough. Even man fluctuates with the world, unless he is strengthened in the Lord.[70]

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69 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 35: *Et dixit Syon: Derelinquit me Dominus, et Dominus oblitus mei. O quotiens hec dicimus mentis inopia!*

70 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 69-70: *Mobile sumus figmentum. Nunc spe erigimur, nunc defectu frangimur. Constanter Petrus super undas graditur, sed mox infirmante fide mergitur. Cum fouemur a Domino eternum statum meditamur, cum ad punctum relinquimur, ab ipso fundamento evertimur. Nec surgimus nisi manu Domini erigamur, nec stamus nisi eodem teneamur. «Ego dixi in abundantia mea: non mouebor in eternum. Domine in uoluntate tua prestitisti decori meo virtutem.» Ecce eternum statum. Quid sequitur? «Auertisti faciem tuam a me, et factus sum conturbatus.» Non mouebor in eternum: Quid stabilius? Factus sum conturbatus: quid precipitatius? Nox diem trudit, dies noctem et serenitatis et tempestatis experimur uicissitudinem. Et via nostra nunc plana, nunc aspera est. Et homo cum mundo uariatur, nisi in Domino*

This passage suggests something more than a simple piece of advice, especially when other evidence is taken into account. In the course of Book IV, Goscelin focuses on two issues which seem to have been closely connected in his mind: the need for humility and the danger of pride. He warns Eve that pride is the greatest threat to virtue and that humility only is the guardian of the virtues. If humility succumbs to pride then all other virtues are at stake. Even among the greatest saints there were those who fell prey to it. Goscelin mentions Anthony who "believed himself the only, or the first hermit in the world, when he was commanded by a divine voice to seek Paul, whom he discovered to be both earlier and better than himself.[71] Goscelin also alludes to the monk Zosimas who, he writes, believed himself to be holier than any one alive because he had been in the army of Christ from infancy and he was now one hundred years old. Zosimas was told by God to look for Mary of Egypt.[72] As in the first instance where he mentions Mary of Egypt Goscelin makes minimal use of her past.[73] Even in the context here, the emphasis is on the pride shown by Zosimas, and not on the sins of the flesh in Mary's past. In fact, Goscelin does not even mention her name in this example but refers to her briefly with the generic description of sinner (*peccatricem*). Because of this, although the story might have been sufficiently famous for Eve to know about whom he was talking, the focus is on Zosimas's trespass.

The reason for giving so many examples of saints who had at one point committed a terrible sin may be that Goscelin was trying to gain consolation from the fact that great men had sinned - with worse actions than he had - and nevertheless had become great saints through their penitence and humility. Goscelin believed it is God's purpose to humble even the most holy ones to prevent them from becoming proud of their achievements. An example of less-

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solidetur.

71 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 105-106: Goscelin refers to Jerome's *Life of Paul the First Hermit. Beatus Antonius, cum inter excellentissima meritorum preconia et miraculorum insignia, unicum se uel primum heremitam in mundo estimaret, diuina uoce iussus est Paulum querere, quem et priorem et meliorem inueniret se.*

72 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 106.

73 See Chapter Four p. 159.

than-perfect faith concerns the apostle Peter who would nevertheless become of one Christ's greatest saints.[74] Peter's holiness is well attested by Goscelin on multiple occasions, showing that erring is human and does not prevent man from attaining the highest good. Goscelin thus presents Eve with examples of people from all ranks of life and history, who had received grace after having sinned. There is a continual reassurance that God will forgive the humble, accompanied by the warning that perfect virtue will often lead to pride. On the other hand, there is a reiteration of God's grace in picking up the fallen and the wounded, and the elevation of people from humble backgrounds. David had been a shepherd, Peter a fisherman, Paul a sinner. Goscelin adamantly believed that God would erect in greater splendour that which had fallen down, and he used the analogy of Solomon's temple.[75] Goscelin seems to have believed, furthermore, that it might be necessary for good people to be humbled, in order to make them even better people. He may have had a passage from Boethius in mind when he contemplated the reversal of fortune in people's lives. Philosophy tells Boethius that,

> ..., we know that in the case of the mind health means goodness and sickness means wickedness. And that the protector of the good and the scourge of the wicked is none other than God, the mind's guide and physician. He looks out from the watch-tower of Providence, sees what suits each person, and applies to him whatever he knows is suitable.

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74 Apart from the instance quoted above there is a reference to Peter's denial of Christ on p. 31 and a more explicit one on p. 94.

75 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 97. Goscelin sustains the analogy of architecture and buildings for the human soul in a few more examples. The architect of the Palatine hill demolished inferior buildings in order to erect more splendid ones (p. 93). Goscelin writes that he, too, generally regards small buildings as useless and he designs (*propono*)better and greater ones. God built everything and he built everything well, but if it is not looked after it will fall in ruins. (Goscelin quotes from Ps. 126:1-2). The pure soul is thus like the heavenly Jerusalem, translucent like glass, adorned with gems. This ties in with the opening sentences of Book IV where the streets of Jerusalem as described by Saint John should be seen as, "the pure gold, tested in the furnace of poverty and patience, and the transparent glass of the pure mind," which "adorn the streets along which humility, having trampled Egypt and the wildernesses and the enemies underfoot, must follow the way of God's laws" (p. 91). Goscelin's interest in buildings and his knolwedge of architecture is apparent from his Canterbury hagiography, see Richard Gem. 'Canterbury and the Cushion Capital' 83-101, and *St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury* (London: Batsford/English Heritage, 1997).

> This, then, is the outstanding wonder of the order of fate; a knowing God acts and ignorant men look on with wonder at his actions.[76]

Goscelin used the same medical imagery to make a similar point:

> There are sick people who think that they are healthy, but doctors consider the risk of death. In the same way, a little verse by the blessed Augustine tells us that:
>
> The sick man thought that he was healthy
> But the doctor reached for the vein.
>
> He knows therefore what everybody suffers, what hurts every one, what remedy he needs."[77]

In this final book Goscelin comes to realise that his change in fortune should be seen in this light, that it is part of God's plan and that it should not be questioned. He has come to the conclusion that God

> himself being unmoving moves all things, he changes all things being immutable himself, [but] he does not change either his judgement or his plans. He, being most calm, disturbs and confounds all things, he turns and turns around all things being most stable himself, he raises what is lowest to the highest rank, what is highest he makes the lowest. He throws down those who are standing, he raises those who are fallen, he torments the strong, he heals the wounded, he weakens the hardy, he makes firm the weak, he reprimands the just, he justifies the wicked, he humbles the high, he exalts the humble. The virgin falls down, the harlot rises, the chaste woman is violated, the prostitute is made chaste.[78]

Goscelin did not explicitly indicate a sense of doing penance for anything in his past. In fact, from the accusation directed at Osmund, bishop of Salisbury, we have to assume that Goscelin is not taking the blame for his expulsion from the

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[76] Bk IV. vi Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*, V.E. Watts, trans. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969) 138.

[77] Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 94: *Sunt egroti qui sanos se autumant, sed medici mortis periculum considerant. Hinc talis est beati Augustini uersiculus.*
Egrotus de sanitate presumebat
Sed medicus uenam tangebat.
Ille igitur scit quid quisque doleat, quid cuique noceat, qua medicina indigeat.
This sort of medical imagery is frequently used by Boethius.

[78] Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 93: *Mouet immobilis omnia, mutat immutabilis omnia, nec suam sententiam nec sua mutat consilia. Turbat et confundit tranquillissimus omnia, uertit et transuertit stabilissimus omnia, imis summa, summis preponderat infima. Stantes deicit, lapsos erigit, fortes tribulat, contritos sanat, robustos infirmat, infirmos roborat, iustos inculpat, iniquos iustificat, altos humiliat, humiles exaltat. Ruit uirgo, surgit meretrix, uiolatur pudica, castificatur prostituta.*

diocese, whatever the reason might have been. In connection with his relationship with Eve, he expresses the wish that they be spared from gossip because their love is pure due to Christ's mediation,[79] which could suggest that he gave cause for gossip, or that he believed himself to be persecuted by people who might start rumours. The remark is commonplace enough, however, for us to assume that it was part of his rhetoric for the Prologue.

The *Liber confortatorius* is the only source we have for the relationship of Goscelin and Eve. It is a one-sided account, and it does not provide an explicit statement of their relationship. We are further hindered by the barriers posed by rhetorical tradition. There are many assumptions that a modern reader could make when reading the first part, but these would all be founded on rather fragile premises. It is necessary to be wary of treating the expressions of love and grief any differently from similar expressions by letter writers such as Alcuin and Anselm. It is impossible to look into the mind of the authors when reading their letters. There are also a few other considerations to be made. If, for instance, one was to suggest that Goscelin and Eve had overstepped the bounds of propriety at some point in their shared past, would Goscelin have written the letter that he has? At no point do we find any admission of a major sin committed by either party. This is apart from traditional statements of unworthiness on Goscelin's part – and it would be difficult to name a single medieval author who did not express the same sentiments.

Another conjecture based on the text would be the degree of the actual closeness between the author and addressee. Goscelin implies that there was a real bond between himself and Eve; a bond which may have been as close as that of a father and daughter, or one of true spiritual friends. He had known Eve from the time she was very young, probably from the time she was presented to Wilton abbey, and he had been her teacher and possibly her confessor for a prolonged period. The events he recalls of their time together seem to suggest that his closest contact with the abbey was at the period when Eve was still a little girl,

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79 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 26: *Archanum duorum est Christo medio signatum, uirginee simplicitatis et candide dilectionis prelibans officium. Absint a puro susurrio sibilantes insidie, nequam oculus, uafer digitus, uentilator et cachinnator impurus.*

in the years just before the Conquest.[80] It could well have been that Goscelin was chaplain at the abbey then, but that in later years their relationship was based on letters and brief visits with bishop Hermann. Goscelin suggests that this might have been the situation. The death of their spiritual father Hermann was an occasion which brought them together again. Goscelin recalls how they found consolation in each other. On the whole, he presents us with no detail that could imply anything that was not part of a perfectly spiritual relationship. There is indeed little reason for us to suspect that there was anything more than that.

THE *LIBER CONFORTATORIUS* AS PILGRIM AND CONSOLATION

To return to the pilgrimage theme once more, it is safe to say that it was never far from Goscelin's mind. The letter itself can be seen to reflect the pilgrim's life. In his Prologue, Goscelin calls his work *hec peregrina epistola*, this pilgrim letter, which he would give over to uncertain winds in order for it to find its way to Eve. The letter itself became in this way analogous to Eve who was, as Goscelin imagined it, also given over to many uncertainties. Yet the *Liber confortatorius* is not only a pilgrim letter in the sense of its journey from Goscelin to "her for whom alone it is destined"; it could be seen as a pilgrimage in itself for the reader *and* for the author by way of its structure and major themes. The *Liber confortatorius* accords with the Augustinian idea quoted above that spiritual pilgrimage is also a quest for divine truth. Goscelin informs Eve that he divided the work in four parts so that she may stop and rest while "running [*cursitans*] through it".[81] Broadly speaking, it can be said to represent stages and elements of the Christian's life. The *Liber* starts with Goscelin's and Eve's experiences at Wilton, standing perhaps for this life here on earth, and spiritual love and friendship; Book II discusses the war against the vices, symbolic for the struggle of living righteously; Book III is an exhortation to prayer, learning and the imitation of Christ, and Book IV, after describing the dangers of pride and God's grace on those who put their faith in him, describes the joys of heaven and the eventual

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80 Goscelin recalls two events datable to 1065.

81 Talbot, *Liber confortatorius* 26. In the Prologue to his Life of Wilfrid, Eddius Stephanus also described the writing (and reading) of his text as a journey.

reunion with Christ and with each other. At the letter's conclusion, the pilgrim's journey has ended and the exile has finally found his homeland. Its reader, that is to say, Eve, as well as its author have made a spiritual pilgrimage in the course of the letter. They started off in Wilton and through a process of learning, struggling and virtue they have come to eternal rest. Goscelin has grieved for and accepted his temporary loss. He has learned through the act of writing the encouragement for Eve that God's grace will lead the pilgrim towards the heavenly homeland. Eve should have been given comfort and encouragement in her existence as a recluse.

Looking at the *Liber confortatorius* in this way, it is possible to say that it resembles another genre, namely the *consolatio*. The encouragement or comfort in the title has usually been taken to be meant for Eve, but as we have seen, the *Liber confortatorius* is witness that Goscelin himself is comforted and encouraged. The process of writing proved to be a cathartic experience: the complaint of the first book is turned around into a full acceptance of God's purpose and a forward-looking attitude towards the bliss of heaven. Boethius wrote in his *Consolatio* that:

> Providence stings some people to avoid giving them happiness for too long, and others she allows to be vexed by hard fortune to strengthen their virtues of mind by the use and exercise of patience. Some people are excessively afraid of suffering for which they actually have the endurance; others are full of scorn for sufferings they cannot in fact bear. Both kinds she brings to self discovery through hardship.[82]

It is this lesson which Goscelin intended for Eve but which he learned himself. The analogy with the *Consolation of Philosophy* could even be taken a step further when the relationship between Eve and Goscelin is seen on a higher level. Goscelin's relationship could thus be compared to that of Boethius and Philosophy, and also, for example, that of the Dreamer and the maiden in the Middle English poem *Pearl*. Boethius came to his understanding by the imaginary dialogue with the personified Philosophy. The Jeweller's grief is abated by his interaction with the subject of his grief, his young daughter. Goscelin is comforted by addressing what he perceives to be the subject of his sorrows. In his encouragements for Eve he addresses issues with which he needs to come to

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82 Boethius. *Consolation of Philosophy* Bk IV. vi, (p. 139).

terms. Through his own literary endeavours, Goscelin comes to a better understanding of his own plight. By analogy, Eve, as his "audience" and the subject of his grief, acts as the catalyst. She ceases to be a real person on this level but she is made, as it were, sublime; she becomes an abstraction. The comforting aspect from the title given to his work is, therefore, working on Goscelin himself, whether this was his original intention or not. By writing his letter he is healed from his initial despondency. From the intense grief over Eve's departure, he moves in stages towards hope and joy in their ultimate reunion in heaven.

Conclusions

In this thesis I set out to study the relationship between Goscelin and Eve in the context of their time and tradition. To do this I have concentrated on three aspects: Goscelin's approach to Eve in educating her; his attempts to encourage her in her new situation; and the way in which he projects his own feelings of displacement on Eve's new life.

When studying a text such as the *Liber confortatorius*, there is only a limited number of issues which can be taken as fact: those which we get from the text itself and those we get from other primary sources. In the case of Goscelin and Eve we are rather fortunate to have as much information as we do. Of Goscelin's life especially, scholars have been able to piece together an interesting biography. Although Eve remains a much more shadowy figure, we are fortunate to have more than one piece of documentary evidence about her existence, background and manner of life. Because the *Liber confortatorius* is a one-sided account, it is not easy to come to conclusions about Eve's reasons for choosing to pursue a reclusive life in Anjou. It is possible, however, to establish some kind of context which may have influenced her decision by looking at what we know about Wilton in the years after the Norman Conquest and the attractions of the eremitic life as it started to develop on the Continent. It is unfortunate that there is no concrete evidence that English monastics turned to the Continent, either to escape Norman influence in their own monasteries or because they believed they would find greater religious fulfilment there. To complement the picture we have of Eve's life, we can look to the larger historical setting of the religious developments in France. Although Eve's actual involvement in the eremetical movements of eleventh-century France must remain a matter of speculation, there are at least some indications, such as her association with Herveus, to suggest that she was part of a movement which was to have a considerable impact on the future of monasticism in western Europe.

The relationship between Goscelin and Eve as it emerges from the *Liber confortatorius* has been one of the main points of interest to modern scholars. Friendship between a monastic man and a monastic woman, as has been shown, was not unusual. Many examples of such friendships have come down to us and

those discussed in Chapter Two are by no means the only ones. The relationship between Goscelin and Eve, as we witness it from the *Liber confortatorius*, is not remarkable in that way. As with most of the other friendships of which we know, Goscelin, as the male author, assumed the role of teacher in his letter to Eve. The *Liber confortatorius* is a letter written with the intention of giving hope and encouragement, and to provide Eve with spiritual tools in her life as a recluse. Since Goscelin was writing specifically to her, it was, of course, unnecessary to tell her things about herself; his reminiscences of their time together serve to remind her of his claim to her affection and his duty to continue his care for her spiritual welfare. Goscelin did not set out to paint a picture of a saint in the making, nor is the letter a straightforward rule of life. It seeks to teach by example and by exhortation to study. Goscelin provides Eve with the necessary tools: the *Liber confortatorius* is an anthology of quotations, biblical and hagiographical examples, as well as personal memories.

Goscelin's positive attitude towards Eve and women in general has been pointed out by scholars, but it has not been studied in detail. I have attempted to show here that Goscelin's approach to his task of encouraging Eve is subtly, but nevertheless remarkably, different from other works written with the intention to instruct a religious woman. It has been my aim to look at the ways in which this positive attitude comes to the surface and the factors which may have contributed to his positive approach. One of the most important aspects is that his general approach to Eve is one of encouragement and never one of admonition. He does not warn her against what other authors perceived as the dangers and weaknesses of female nature. This is especially noticable in the examples Goscelin presents to her. The examples serve the purpose of encouragement rather than warning. They show that courage and strength are manifested in men and women. Both men and women make mistakes and all can learn from these errors. Goscelin obviously wanted to appeal to Eve's common sense: he makes it clear that the examples of the martyrs are to be taken spiritually and are to be considered not incentives to self-mutilation. They serve as examples of strength of faith and of endurance. Goscelin explicitly states that Christ does not require people to starve themselves or mutilate their bodies; he wants them to fight and overcome their weaknesses. With this view, Goscelin can be said to have adopted a general "humanist" outlook. His

humanism can be considered as an awareness of human failures and of God's grace on sinners, and I have suggested that Goscelin's insistence on grace may reflect his own knowledge of having sinned.

I have inferred from Goscelin's approach to his subjects that he appealed to Eve's spiritual life rather than her physical existence when he addressed her as a recluse. Despite his difficult, turgid language, Goscelin's message is clear. He dispenses with direct advice concerning diet, dealings with the outside world, and temptations of the flesh. Instead, he encourages her to imitate the examples of illustrious hermits such as John the Baptist, Anthony, and Mary of Egypt. It is through her studies of the works of the Fathers and through contemplation and prayer that Eve will come to divine understanding. Goscelin showed a gentle concern for Eve in her new vocation, accompanied by a strong belief that she would be able to persist. The *Liber confortatorius* gives evidence to a subtle insistence on the equality of women and men in spiritual matters. Goscelin did not feel the need to write a full defense of women in the religious life. Instead, he appeared to take equality as a matter of course even though he was clearly aware of the negative attitudes to women in society and the Church. His presentation of the legend of Saint Perpetua should be seen as one of his most outspoken examples. By omitting reference to Perpetua's transformation into a man, he emphatically asserts her strength as a woman. By treating a well-known story in such a way, Goscelin could not fail to make the point that women do not have to give up their womanhood in order to be deemed worthy of salvation.

Goscelin's appreciation of the spiritual worth of women religious may have been something he acquired through personal experience. It is not possible to ascertain exactly how long his direct association with Wilton lasted, but we know from his later career that he continued his contacts with monastic houses for women when he was writing the *Lives* of their patron saints. Wilton was a house where many of the women had chosen the religious life over one of considerable wealth and status, and this is one of the points which Goscelin emphasised in his *Life of Edith*. Their choices to dedicate their lives to poverty and humility showed their strength of character and faith in Christ. Goscelin's love for Eve must have been another factor which formed his favourable attitude towards female monastics.

Because the composition of the *Liber confortatorius* coincided with the beginnings of the eremetic movements, it would be tempting to assume that Goscelin's positive views on womankind were somehow influenced by what was going on on the Continent. Goscelin certainly appears to be thinking along similar lines, and it could be speculated that he was influenced by similar forces as, for example, Robert of Arbrissel. The *Liber confortatorius* was, however, written at a time too early for it to be considered a reaction against the effects of the Gregorian Reforms such as were outlined by McNamara. Goscelin's actual knowledge or awareness of changing times at this stage may easily be overestimated, and to classify the work as some kind of reaction to anti-feminist currents, although very tempting, would therefore be hazardous.

We are in no position to know how Eve experienced her relationship with Goscelin. It is possible to speculate that she felt oppressed by the affections of the older man and that this was one of the reasons why she chose to leave the country. It might even be tempting to read into Goscelin's passionate expressions of grief and his insistence on the charity of forgiveness, that there had been a sexual relationship between them, or at least an attempt to have one. There are however no explicit indications within the text that support this. Goscelin certainly would not have intimated that as a reason for Eve's departure. The exact reasons for her choice will therefore remain forever in the realm of conjecture.

We tread on firmer ground when we consider the intellectual side of Eve's personality. The standards of education at Wilton appear to have been quite high, if the *Liber confortatorius* and reports about the poet Muriel can be taken as evidence. It would, however, be dangerous to assume on the basis of these two individuals that all women educated at the abbey attained the level of learning which the *Liber confortatorius* presupposes. It is more likely that Goscelin was drawn to Eve because of her intelligence and her aptitude for learning; this would explain his continuing interest in her education. His encouragements to study show his faith in her abilities. Hilary's poem about her life corroborates this. Goscelin's language is sophisticated but difficult, and he expects Eve to understand his allusions without his having to provide constant explanations. Throughout the work his expectations for Eve's spiritual

achievements are high, but they are never unrealistic. The *Liber* frequently gives the impression that Goscelin was covering ground which was common to both of them: he is continuing an education which had started years before and he uses memories and sources which were familiar to them both. This is another of the arguments which supports the thesis that Goscelin intended this work primarily for Eve. If he had intended to address a larger audience, one would assume that he would have constructed his text with the lowest common denominator in mind. A more general exhortation would be expected, together with a greater reiteration of commonplaces. On the whole, it should be assumed that he would have been more explicit if he had expected a wider audience.

I have given an overview of different relationships between religious men and the women to whom they addressed their letters of instruction. Men such as Jerome also had genuine friendships with their addressees but they used their letters to them to instruct a larger audience. Although the educational contents of the *Liber* could appeal to a wider audience, the *personal* contents which may be inferred from a closer reading of the text indicate that it was not a general letter of instruction. The *Liber confortatorius* is a work written out of friendship and feeling of kinship by a man who felt himself exiled from the places and people he loved. Goscelin's love for Eve lies at the foundation of the text, despite the fact that the work is not primarily about their relationship in the way that many letters of friendship of the period were.

Goscelin wrote his letter in a state of dejection: the news of Eve's departure seems to have aggravated his sense of exile from his former life as a monk at Sherborne and a priest at the prestigious abbey of Wilton. He expressed his grief over Eve's decision to leave Wilton only at the beginning of his work, but as I have shown, there are indications throughout the *Liber* that he was not happy with his new life as a peripatetic monk. The *Liber* became, in a way, a means for Goscelin to come to terms with his own situation. He was a solitary monk in a strange land. The evidence points to the fact that he had been expelled from the diocese where he had lived for about twenty years, and four years on he was still "on the road." Goscelin felt himself to be outside the monastic community and it is not surprising that he perceived himself as an exile. He expresses this feeling mostly in an indirect way by projecting the exile theme on to Eve. Eve's situation as a

recluse outside her native country was at the same time similar to and different from the one in which Goscelin perceived himself to be. Eve had made a conscious choice of the life of exile whereas Goscelin had not. Nevertheless, he projected on to Eve some of the fears which he himself felt. At the same time he evidently learned to accept his own situation as he was writing down his encouragements for Eve. She functioned to a large extent as the symbol of the life which Goscelin felt he had known once: she stands for the happy past, for the "family" and community he had lost. Despite of this, Goscelin shows a keen awareness of the religious life on a spiritual level. His exhortation concentrates therefore on the life of prayer and meditation: the kind of life he so obviously wished for himself. There was thus a dichotomy between his obvious need for human company and the ideals of a life dedicated to God. By addressing Eve and by taking it on himself to become a part of her life again by writing for her his *Liber confortatorius*, Goscelin's anger, grief, and his awareness of being a sinner, were turned into acceptance, hope and a sense of grace. The perfect compromise of spiritual happiness and his need for fellowship is apparent in his vision of the heavenly life, which is the epitome of the companionship of mankind with Christ and the heavenly host. The progress from grief to acceptance of his lot which Goscelin made by composing the *Liber confortatorius* can thus be seen as part of a tradition of *consolatio* literature.

Cicero described friendship as providing "bright rays of hope [which] it projects into the future: it never allows the spirit to falter or fall. When a man thinks of a friend, he is looking at himself in the mirror. Even when a friend is absent, he is present all the same." (7, 23) This is how Goscelin, after his intial reaction to Eve's departure, perceived his relationship with her. He builds his hopes on their reunion in heaven and this gives him the strength to continue and accept his new situation.

APPENDIX A

Book I	O luce dilectior anima	O soul more beloved than light
	anima mi dulcissima	my sweetest soul
	dulcissima	my sweetest
	pia anima	pious soul
	o domina mea	o my lady
	karissima	dearest
	virgo filia Syon	virgin daughter of Syon
	Ierusalem	Jerusalem
	dulcissima	my sweetest
	anima mi	my soul
	anima mi dulcissima	mysweetest soul
	anima mi	my soul
Book II	pusilanimes	little one
	dilectissima	most beloved one
	o desideriosa anima	o most loving soul
	o flagrantissima in Deo anima	o soul most passionate for God
	dilectissima	most beloved
Book III	o pignus meum dulce	o my sweetest child
	karissima	dearest
	o dilectissima	o most beloved one
	karissima	dearest
	karissima	dearest
Book IV	o specialis anima	o my special soul
	o dulcissima	o sweetest
	o pignus anime mee dulcissimum	o sweetest child of my soul
	o dulcissima anima	o sweetest soul
	dulcissima	my sweetest
	o anima desirabilis	o desirable soul
	o dulcis partus anime mee	o sweetest part of my soul

APPENDIX B

CHAPTER TITLES IN THE *LIBER CONFORTATORIUS*

I

Prologus
[Incipit]
Partus Dilectionis
Exemplar Dilectionis
Fructus Orationis
Assurgendum Perhenni Gloria
Salus Peregrinantium Sanctorum
A Vanis Vera
A Fluxis Manenti
Spes Orbatorum

II

Tuba Belli Divini
Palma Celestis
(Exemplum)
Ratio Dominice Passionis
Strages Demonum
Multitudo Sanctarum Virtutum
De Sancte Blandina
Virtus Captive
Virtus Anachorite

III

Contra Tedia
Felicitas Exiguitatis
Phylosophia Ethnicorum
Longanimitas Sanctorum
Pax Pusillis
Mensa Scripturarum
Sanctus Dies Redemptionis
Cuncticreantis Divitie

IV

De Humilitate
Ab Imo Stabiliendum Cacumen
Merces Elationis Humilitatis
Humilitate Ascendendum
Timendum Iustis, Sperandum Lapsis

Talbot:
[Cum primum Poterne ....]
[Sanctus Alexander]
[Tunc erint celi novi et terra nova....]

Wilmart:
[His alloquiis arte.....]
[Quid restat, o dulcissima anima...]
[Iam mundus transit...]
[Tunc erint celi novi et terra nova....]
[Ad huius itaque letitie visionem]

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