READING RADEGUND:
"AN ENDURING TEMPLE OF GOD"

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract

This thesis will explore the character of Saint Radegund of Poitiers, a 6th-century Thuringian Princess and Merovingian Queen who played an important role in the spread of Christianity in early-medieval Europe. I argue that Radegund was influenced and strengthened by the writings of the Church Fathers, who are often thought to have had a uniformly negative view of womanhood. I will examine the primary sources to make the case that Radegund had the education and knowledge to read the Eastern Fathers in Greek and was probably not limited to Latin translations. I will then sketch out what a theological anthropology of womanhood, informed by the Church Fathers, would have looked like for Radegund.

Résumé

Cette thèse explorera le personnage de Sainte Radegonde de Poitiers, une princesse de Thuringe et reine mérovingienne du VIème siècle qui a joué un rôle important dans la diffusion du christianisme dans l'Europe médiévale. Je soutiens que Radegonde a été influencée et renforcée par les écrits des Pères de l'Église, souvent considérés comme ayant une vision négative uniforme de la femme. Je vais examiner les sources primaires pour faire valoir que Radegonde avait l'éducation et les connaissances nécessaires pour lire les Pères d'Orient en grec et n'était probablement pas limitée aux traductions latines. Je montrerai ensuite une esquisse de ce à quoi pourrait ressembler une anthropologie théologique de la féminité, informée par les Pères de l'Église, pour Radegonde.

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Mon mari, Michel Gauthier, me chérit. Il cultive le foyer que nous avons créé ensemble. Je suis à mon bien-aimé, et mon bien-aimé est à moi; et la bannière qu'il déploie sur moi, c'est l'amour. The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits.

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Finally, I wish to thank Dr. Torrance Kirby, who planted the seed of curiosity and taught me the value of a sympathetic reading. Professor Kirby encouraged me to follow my own heuristic path, while holding me to a high standard of personal accountability. His gentle guidance and creative generosity have given me the courage to find the questions I didn’t know I had.

Abbreviations

Ambrose	Ambrose of Milan, *St. Ambrose: Select Works and Letters*, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, translated by H De Romestin, volume X, *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979).
Aug.Trin	Aurelius Augustine, *The Trinity: De Trinitate*, edited by John E. Rotelle. Translated by Edmund Hill, 2nd edition, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century* (Hyde Park: NCP, 2012).
Carmen paschale	Sedulius, *The Paschal Song and Hymns,* edited by Michael John Roberts, translated by Carl P. E. Springer, volume 35 of *Writings from the Greco-Roman World* (Atlanta: SBL, 2013).
Carmina	Venantius Honorius Clementianus Fortunatus, *Poems*, translated by Michael Roberts, volume 46 of the *Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library*, (Cambridge, MA: HUP, 2017).
Civitate Dei	Aurelius Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, translated by R. W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998).
Commonitorium	Paulus Orosius, "Memorandum to Augustine on the Error of the Priscillianists and Origenists," in *Arianism and Other Heresies*, edited by John E. Rotelle, translated by Roland John Teske, 97–103, volume 18 of *The Works of Saint Augustine* (Hyde Park: NCP, 1994).
Confessiones	Aurelius Augustine, *Confessions*, translated by Thomas Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2019).
De anima	Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, translated by William Moore and Henry Austin Wilson, volume V, series 2 (NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917), 428-468.
Decem libri	Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, translated by Lewis Thorpe (Baltimore: Penguin, 1974).
De incarnatione	Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, translated by Archibald Robertson, 2nd edition, revised and enlarged (London: David Nutt, 1891).
De opificio hominis	Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man*, in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, translated by William Moore and Henry Austin Wilson, volume V, series 2 (NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917), 387-427.
De viris illustribus	Jerome, *On Illustrious Men*, translated by Thomas P. Halton, volume 100, *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation* (Washington: CUAP, 1999).
Epistolae	Jerome, *Select Letters*, translated by Frederick A. Wright, volume 262, *The Loeb Classical Library* (London: HUP, 2010).

DIECT	*Documents in Early Christian Thought*, edited by Mark Santer and Maurice Wiles (Cambridge: CUP, 1975).
Hil.Trin	Hilary of Poitiers, *The Trinity, The Fathers of the Church*, volume 25 (Washington: CUAP, 2002).
Historiae	Orosius, *The Seven Books of History Against the Pagans*, translated by Roy J. Deferrari, volume 50 of *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation (*Washington: CUAP, 2001).
Liber apologeticus	Ruth May Gover, "The '*Liber apologeticus'* of Paulus Orosius: A Translation and Commentary," City University of NY Queens College, 1969.
Macrina	Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Saint Macrina*, translated by Kevin Corrigan (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2005).
Morals	"Herewith Begins the *Morals*," in Basil of Caesarea, *Ascetical Works*, edited by Mary Monica Wagner and Roy Joseph Deferrari, volume 9, *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation* (Washington: CUAP, 1999).
Orations	Gregory of Nazianzus, "Select Orations," in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, volume VII, series 2 (Oxford: CLPC, 1894), 185–498.
Patrology III	Johannes Quasten, *The Golden Age of Greek Patristic Literature, from the Council of Nicaea to the Council of Chalcedon,* 6th edition, volume III, *Patrology* (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1992).
Regula	Maria Caritas McCarthy, trans., *The Rule for Nuns of St. Caesarius of Arles: A Translation with a Critical Introduction*, in Studies in Mediaeval History, Washington: CUAP, 1960.
TODCC	*The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, edited by F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Oxford: OUP, 1997).
TOHWGME	*The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe,* edited by Bennett, Judith M., and Ruth Mazo Karras (Oxford: OUP, 2016).
Variae	Flavius Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus, *Variae*, edited and translated by Sam J. B. Barnish, *Translated Texts for Historians* 12 (Liverpool: LUP, 2010).
Vita I	Venantius Honorius Clementianus Fortunatus, "Radegund, Queen of the Franks and Abbess of Poitiers (ca. 525–587)," in *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages*, edited by Jo Ann McNamara, John E. Halborg, and E. Gordon Whatley (Durham: DUP, 1992).
Vita II	Baudonivia, "Three Consecrated Women of Merovingian Gaul," in *The Writings of Medieval Women: An Anthology*, 2nd edition, *Garland Library of Medieval Literature*, v. 100B (NY: Garland, 1994).
WGME	*Women and Gender in Medieval Europe: An Encyclopedia,* edited by Margaret Schaus, *Routledge Encyclopedias of the Middle Ages*, vol. 14. (NY: Routledge, 2006).

Prevent us, O Lord, in all our doings, with Thy most gracious favour, and further us with Thy continual help: that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in Thee, we may glorify Thy holy Name, and finally, by Thy mercy, obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Collect from *The Book of Common Prayer*

O Ineffable Creator,

Who, from the treasures of Your Wisdom, have established three hierarchies of angels, have arrayed them in marvelous order above the fiery heavens, and have marshaled the regions of the universe with such artful skill: You are proclaimed the true font of light and wisdom, and the primal origin raised high beyond all things.

Pour forth a ray of Your brightness into the darkened places of my mind. Disperse from my soul the twofold darkness into which I was born: sin and ignorance.

You make eloquent the tongues of infants. Refine my speech and pour forth upon my lips the goodness of Your blessing. Grant to me keenness of mind, capacity to remember, skill in learning, subtlety to interpret, and eloquence in speech.

May You guide the beginning of my work, direct its progress, and bring it to completion, You Who are true God and true Man, Who live and reign, world without end. Amen.

Thomas Aquinas, Prayer Before Study

Introduction

> Scorning all things, though still existing in the body, her spirit lives here, but her flesh is dead and buried. Though residing on earth, she freely enters heaven with her senses, and while still among men already is on her way to the stars. Her banquet is whatever the holy canon prescribes: whatever Gregory and Basil teach, the writings of fierce Athanasius and gentle Hilary, whom a single light holds as twin allies in the cause, the thunder of Ambrose and Jerome's lighting flash, the flowing spring of Augustine's abundant waters, the words of sweet Sedulius and incisive Orosius. The rule of Caesarius is her guide of conduct…. Let all sacred poets, who can, send their verses, a generous offering, however slim the books; let all who send her holy writings as she wishes believe that in so doing they enrich an enduring temple of God.[1]

Radegund of Poitiers (b. *c.*518 – d. 13 August, 587)[2] lived her life at the intersection of many identities: Thuringian Princess, Merovingian Queen, founder of a monastery, Deacon, Saint, but also daughter, wife, sister, trauma survivor, adoptive mother, ascetic, friend, patron, and able politician. She came of age at the crossroads of Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages and was one of many formidable Queens who were also Saints, among them Saint Helena (AD *c.*247 – *c.*330), Saint Clotilde (*c.*475 – 545), Saint Bertha of Kent (*c.*565 – *c.*616), Saint Bathildis (623 – 680), Saint Olga of Kiev (*c.*890 – 969), the first and last of those in this list also holding the title *ἰσαπόστολος*, or "Equal to the Apostles" in the Orthodox Church and the Byzantine rites of the Catholic Church.[3] Like these sainted queens, she played an important role in the establishment and spread of pre-Schism orthodox Christianity to early-medieval Western Europe.

The political and social elements of Radegund's character have been explored by academics with significant differences in approach and method, each with a unique perspective and interest

[1] Venantius Honorius Clementianus Fortunatus, *Poems*, translated by Michael Roberts, volume 46 of the Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library (Cambridge, MA: HUP, 2017), VIII.1.47-62, 492-495. Hereafter *Carmina.*

[2] Latin: Radegundis. Also spelled Radegunde, Rhadegund, Radegonde, Radigund, Radegundes, Radegond, Radegonda, Radagunda.

[3] Catherine Brown Tkacz, "Singing Women's Words as Sacramental Mimesis," in *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie Médiévales* 70, no. 2 (2003), 297-298, n99.

in her story. At the heart of Radegund's acumen and skill in the complex dance with theological, rhetorical, and political partners of her time was a theological anthropology of womanhood that was deeply nourished by the Church Fathers.

Unfortunately, a reader of theologians who engage with patristic writings on womanhood may come away with the impression that traditionally, Christian theology "not only assumed male standards of normative humanity, but is filled with an ideological bias that defines women as secondary and inferior members of the human species."[4] This perspective, here voiced by Rosemary Radford Ruether,[5] can also be found in the writings of Mary Malone, who writes about Christianity from the perspective that "the accepted story was written in the firm belief that the voices of women were irrelevant and intrinsically false."[6] Similar issues are explored by Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, whose method of reconstructing history through a feminist lens does not, in her words, "subscribe to value-neutrality but is explicitly partisan and thus offends the standards of positivist scholarship."[7] Lynda Coon's project is to demonstrate how the portrayal of saintly women like Radegund illustrates "domesticity, submission to male authority, and the codependency of women's depravity and piety."[8] Dyan Elliott argues that Bride-of-Christ (*sponsa Christi*) imagery was used throughout ecclesiastical history as a tool of manipulation to shame, subdue, and erase women.[9] Simon Coates writes that "the Fathers constructed an ideal of

[4] Rosemary Radford Ruether, "The Feminist Critique in Religious Studies," *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 64, no. 4 (1981): 389.
[5] See also Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon, 1983); "Augustine: Sexuality, Gender, and Women," in *Feminist Interpretations of Augustine: Re-Reading the Canon* (University Park: PSUP, 2007), 47-68.
[6] Mary T. Malone, *Women & Christianity*, volume 1, *The First Thousand Years* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2001), 32.
[7] Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), xiv.
[8] Lynda Coon, *Sacred Fictions: Holy Women and Hagiography in Late* Antiquity, (UPP, 1997), *xxii*.
[9] Dyan Elliott, *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell: Metaphor and Embodiment in the Lives of Pious Women, 200-1500*, 1st ed. *The Middle Ages Series* (Philadelphia: UPP, 2012).

virginity based upon the cultivation of masculine virtues. In rejecting their sexuality women transcended their gender and gained the souls of men."[10]

We learn from Gregory of Tours that two years before Radegund's death, the question of whether women are full image-bearers of God, fully human, was argued during the 2nd Council of Mâçon.[11]

> There came forward at this council a certain bishop who maintained that woman could not be included in the term 'man'. However, he accepted the reasoning of the other bishops and did not press his case: for the holy book of the Old Testament tells us that in the beginning, when God created man, 'Male and female created he them, and called their name Adam,'[12] which means earthly man; even so He called the woman Eve, yet of both He used the word 'man'. Similarly our Lord Jesus Christ is called the Son of man, although He was the son of the Virgin, that is to say of a woman. When He was about to change the water into wine, He said to her: 'Woman, what have I to do with thee?'[13] and so on. They supported their argument with many other references, and he said no more.

Katharina Bracht notes that this discussion had been ongoing since at least time of Clement of Alexandria, in the 2nd century,[14] with fathers like Ambrosiaster arguing that "*homo*" (man) only referred to a male humans (*vir*) and not a female human (*mulier*) even though Clement had argued that "man" *ἄνθρωπος* referred to both men and women, who share the properties of life, grace, salvation, virtue, and education.[15] Whereas ἀνήρ, ἀνδρός are employed as terms to distinguish man from woman. While questions around sex and gender roles were different in Late Antiquity, the Church had already been working on the problem of inclusive language for some time, and had decided that in the word "man," all of humanity was included.

These critiques of traditional theologies and anthropologies of womanhood can help to sharpen perspective and provide a point of departure. Others whose work will help to

[10] Simon Coates, "Regendering Radegund? Fortunatus, Baudonivia and the Problem of Female Sanctity in Merovingian Gaul 1," in *Studies in Church History* 34 (1998): 40.
[11] Katharina Bracht, "Can Women Be Called 'Man'? On the Background of a Discussion Led at the 2nd Council of Mâcon (585 AD)," in Acta Patristica et Byzantina 17, no. 1 (January 2006): 144–54.
[12] Genesis 5:2.
[13] John 2:4
[14] Bracht, "Can Women Be Called 'Man'?," 145.
[15] Bracht, "Can Women Be Called 'Man'?," 146-147.

contextualise woman historically and theologically as *imago Dei* include, but are not limited to: Prudence Allen,[16] Jennifer Edwards,[17] Verna Harrison,[18] Judith Herrin,[19] Elizabeth Johnson,[20] Kim Power,[21] Edmund Hill,[22] and Jarred Mercer.[23] There will be no attempt in the following pages to deny that misogyny can be found in some of the Patristic writings, but the attempt here will be to allow the Fathers and Mothers to speak for themselves wherever possible.

I will argue that Radegund, who achieved real political notoriety and spiritual authority would have had the education to read and understand the Fathers named by Venantius Fortunatus in his description of her: Gregory and Basil, Athanasius and Hilary, Ambrose and Jerome, Augustine, Sedulius, Orosius, and Caesarius.[24] I will then make the case that Radegund was in fact influenced and bolstered by what the Fathers had written and were continuing to write about women, which offered her an unequivocal understanding of woman as being the *imago Dei* and feminine models of leadership and strength.

Scholarly opinions about and analyses of Radegund's literary competence and other salient details of her life have been proffered by Jo An McNamara,[25] Marcelle Thiébaux,[26] René

[16] Prudence Allen, *The Concept of Woman: The Aristotelian Revolution, 750 B.C. - A.D. 1250*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).
[17] Jennifer Edwards, *Superior Women: Medieval Female Authority in Poitiers' Abbey of Sainte-Croix*. 1st ed., (Oxford: OUP, 2019).
[18] Verna E. F. Harrison, "Male and Female in Cappadocian Theology," in *The Journal of Theological Studies* 41, no. 2 (October 1990): 441-471.
[19] Judith Herrin, *Ravenna: Capital of Empire, Crucible of Europe,* (London: Penguin, 2021).
[20] Johnson, Elizabeth A. *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*. NY: Crossroad, 1998.
[21] Kim Power, *Veiled Desire: Augustine on Women* (New York: Continuum, 1996).
[22] Aurelius Augustine, *The Trinity: De Trinitate.* Edited by John E. Rotelle. Translated by Edmund Hill. 2nd ed. *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century* (Hyde Park: NCP, 2012), XII (3).10, 329-330. Hereafter *Aug.Trin.*
[23] Jarred Austin Mercer, *Divine Perfection and Human Potentiality: The Trinitarian Anthropology of Hilary of Poitiers* (New York: OUP, 2019).
[24] *Carmina*, II.2, 72.
[25] Jo Ann McNamara, "Radegund, Queen of the Franks and Abbess of Poitiers (ca. 525–587)," in *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages*, (Durham: DUP, 1992), 60. The primary text by Fortunatus will hereafter be cited as *Vita I*.
[26] Marcelle Thiébaux, "Three Consecrated Women of Merovingian Gaul," in *The Writings of Medieval Women: An Anthology*, 2nd ed., *Garland Library of Medieval Literature*, v. 100B, (NY: Garland, 1994). Hereafter *Vita II*.

Aigrain,[27] Caroline Schroeder,[28] Maria McCarthy,[29] Katrinette Bodarwé,[30] Henry Hallam,[31] Émile Briand,[32] Charles Nisard,[33] Édouard de Fleury,[34] J. M. Wallace-Hadrill,[35] Phyllis Brown,[36] Steven Stofferahn,[37] Ian Fielding,[38] Karen Cherewatuk,[39] Beverly Kienzle,[40] Jane Jeffrey,[41] Brian Brennan,[42] Maria del Fiat Miola,[43] and Julia Hillner.[44] Alas, corroborating evidence is sometimes difficult to find. I have compiled and evaluated a number of these opinions with the aim of evaluating the facts as objectively as possible.

Radegund almost certainly possessed sufficient knowledge of Greek to read the Eastern Fathers in the original language and was unlikely to have been limited to translations into Latin. If Radegund read only Latin, then representative texts for my exploration would be limited to what had been made available by translators such as Tyrannius Rufinus, Dionysius Exiguus,

[27] René Aigrain*, Sainte Radegonde (Vers 520-587)*, 2nd ed. (Paris: V. Lecoffre, 1918).
[28] Caroline Schroeder, "Francia as 'Christendom': The Merovingian *Vita Domnae Balthildis*," in *Medieval Encounters* 4, no. 3 (1998): 265-84.
[29] Maria Caritas McCarthy, *The Rule for Nuns of St. Caesarius of Arles: A Translation with a Critical Introduction*, in *Studies in Mediaeval History* (Washington: CUAP, 1960). Hereafter *Regula*.
[30] Katrinette Bodarwé, "Abbesses," in *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe: An Encyclopedia*, edited by Margaret Schaus. *Routledge Encyclopedias of the Middle Ages*, vol. 14. (NY: Routledge, 2006). Hereafter *WGMEAE.*
[31] Anonymous, "Review: *Introduction to the Literature of Europe, in the Fifteenth, Sixteenth, and Seventeenth Centuries*. By Henry Hallam, F.R.A.S." in *The Athenæum: Journal of Literature, Science, and the Fine Arts* 3035 (January 14, 1837): 58–61.
[32] Émile Briand, *Sainte Radegonde, Reine de France et Patronne Du Poitou, Sanctuaires-Pèlerinages En Son Honneur*, (Poitiers: Oudin, 1887).
[33] Charles Nisard, "Des Poésies de Sainte Radegonde Attribuées Jusqu'ici à Fortunat," in *Revue Historique* 37, no. 1 (1888): 49-57.
[34] Édouard De Fleury, *Histoire de Sainte Radégonde, Reine de France Au VIe Siècle et Patronne de Poitiers*, (Poitiers: Chez H. Oudin, 1843).
[35] J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church* (Oxford: OUP, 1983).
[36] Phyllis R. Brown, "Women Authors: Latin," in *WGMEAE.*
[37] Steven Stofferahn, "Literacy and Reading: Latin," in *WGMEAE*.
[38] Ian Fielding, "The Ovidian Heroine of Venantius Fortunatus, Appendix 1," in *Transformations of Ovid in Late Antiquity*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2017), 182-207.
[39] Karen Cherewatuk, "Radegund and Epistolary Tradition," in *Dear Sister: Medieval Women and the Epistolary Genre,* (Philadelphia: UPP, 1993).
[40] Beverly Mayne Kienzle, "Sermons and Preaching," in *WGMEAE*.
[41] Jane E. Jeffrey, "Radegund," in *WGMEAE.*
[42] Brian Brennan, "The Disputed Authorship of Fortunatus' Bizantine Poems," in *Byzantion* 66, no. 2 (1996): 335-345.
[43] Sr. Maria del Fiat Miola, "The Female Monastery of Saint Caesarius of Arles: His Hidden Collaborators in the Christianization of Arles and Beyond," in *Papers Presented at the Eighteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies Held in Oxford 2019*, edited by Markus Vinzent, *27: From the Fifth Century Onwards (Latin Writers). Studia Patristica, Vol. CXXX* (Leuven: Peeters, 2021).
[44] Julia D. Hillner, "Empresses, Queens and Letters: Finding a 'Female Voice' in Late Antiquity?" in *Gender & History* 31, no. 2 (2019): 353–382.

Evagrius, Hilary, and Jerome. I will argue that this limitation would have been most improbable. There are strong historical, textual, and contextual arguments to be made, but they have never, as far as I can ascertain, been compiled in the way that we propose.

En route, it will be necessary to create a multi-dimensional portrait of Radegund. This will be done with help from the primary sources, supported where possible by contemporary scholarship, although this is not always an option.

Radegund is hardly given a mention in *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe*.[45] She is not mentioned in the article on "The Political Traditions of Female Rulership in Medieval Europe,"[46] despite her status as a Thuringian Princess and a Merovingian Queen. Nor is she discussed in "Women and Laws in Early Medieval Europe,"[47] although she demonstrates legal acumen in her *Letter to the Bishops*, preserved by Gregory of Tours.[48] Although she was given cities as a "morning gift,"[49] she is not mentioned in "Brideprice, Dowry, and other Marital Assigns"[50] either. She is similarly absent from "Women and Gender in Canon Law"[51] even though Fortunatus says that she was ordained to diaconal ministry by her bishop.[52] There is similarly scant reference to Radegund in any of the essays by Reimitz, Rio, Kreiner, Gillett, Handley in the section about Merovingian culture, which makes up more than a tenth of

[45] *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe,* edited by Judith M. Bennett and Ruth Mazo Karras (Oxford: OUP, 2016). Hereafter *TOHWGME*.
[46] Amalie Fößel, "The Political Traditions of Female Rulership in Medieval Europe," in *TOHWGME*, 68–83.
[47] Janet L. Nelson and Alice Rio, "Women and Laws in Early Medieval Europe," in *TOHWGME*, 103–117.
[48] Radegund, "Letter of Foundation," in *Decem libri*, IX.42, 535-538.
[49] See E. T. Dailey, *Queens, Consorts, Concubines: Gregory of Tours and Women of the Merovingian Elite*. Mnemosyne Supplements. *Late Antique Literature*, volume 381, (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 110; and *Vita I*, c. 3, p.72, c. 4, p. 72, c.15, p. 76.
[50] Susan Mosher Stuard, "Brideprice, Dowry, and other Marital Assigns," in *TOHWGME*, 148–162.
[51] Sara McDougall, "Women and Gender in Canon Law," in *TOHWGME*, 163–178.
[52] *Vita.I.*12, 75.

The Oxford Handbook of the Merovingian World,[53] although Radegund was a powerful figure in Late Antiquity and represents women in that role.

This educated woman, who chose to live a religious life without her royal accoutrements and who contributed so much to the record of Early Medieval history, corresponded with kings, bishops, and emperors, and yet her writings are not discussed in "Public and Private Space and Gender in Medieval Europe."[54] She is only parenthetically mentioned in "Pious Domesticities": "the Merovingian saint Radegund (*c*.520–586) was described by her biographer as 'a new Martha,' tired from her labors in the kitchen but tireless in her efforts at Christian service."[55] "The Gender of the Religious: Wo/Men and the Invention of Monasticism,"[56] does not give her even a brief acknowledgment, even though she founded "the first large-scale female monastery that we know about among the Franks."[57] The *soi-disant* goal of this volume is to deconstruct a so-called "master narrative" of the medieval woman as inferior;[58] this is why I find the dearth of references to Radegund surprising.

This lack of contemporary attention is more than compensated for by the many primary sources which include: many references by Fortunatus;[59] Baudonivia, who described Radegund's lifestyle and reading habits;[60] Caesarius of Arles,[61] who may have composed the *Regula* in collaboration with his sister Caesaria I;[62] Caesaria II, her successor at the female monastery they

[53] Bonnie Effros and Isabel Moreira, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the Merovingian World*, (Oxford: OUP, 2020).
[54] Sarah Rees Jones, "Public and Private Space and Gender in Medieval Europe," in *TOHWGME*, 246–261.
[55] Jennifer Deane, "Pious Domesticities," in *TOHWGME*, 262–278.
[56] Albrecht Diem, "The Gender of the Religious: Wo/Men and the Invention of Monasticism," in in *TOHWGME*, 432-446.
[57] McNamara, *Sisters in Arms: Catholic Nuns Through Two Millennia*, (Cambridge: HUP, 1998), 98.
[58] *TOHWGME*, 13.
[59] *Carmina*; *Vita I.*
[60] *Vita II.*
[61] *Regula.*
[62] Del Fiat Miola, "The Female Monastery," 91, n21.

founded;[63] Gregory of Tours;[64] the letter to Radegund of the seven Bishops;[65] and Radegund's own Letter of Foundation to said bishops, a demonstration of her sharp legal mind.[66] The aim is to provide information crucial to understanding those elements of her context which are relevant to the formal education she received and to her lived experience.

Radegund was well documented by those with living memory of her. She chose the 'Rule of Caesarius', a discipline which placed a great deal of emphasis on literacy, over the Rules of Basil, Augustine, and Benedict for the monastery she founded. She also enjoyed an especially close friendship with the poet and bishop Venantius Fortunatus, a deeply theological poet who received his education in Ravenna. His writings about her are at least as intimate, extravagant, and plentiful as his deeply theological poetry, and a strong case can be made that she was a spiritual guide to him as well as being his patroness. Radegund is portrayed in a clerical, almost sacerdotal role by Fortunatus in addition to her being a patroness, maternal figure, and spiritual guide. In *Superior Women: Medieval Female Authority in Poitiers' Abbey of Sainte-Croix*, Jennifer Edwards discusses this clerical role:

> Fortunatus portrayed Radegund in much the same way as he depicted bishops in his prose hagiography… Radegund even blessed with the sign of the cross—a reference to the relic she secured for the abbey, but also to her assertion of semi-episcopal power. Several saints have been described as "becoming male," like Perpetua in her vision of gladiatorial display, and once again Radegund's asceticism might justify the assumption of episcopal power. But, we might also read the origins of such authority earlier in her *vita*, before Radegund began her mortifications: perhaps when she became a deaconess she received authority from Médard—one bishop consecrating another. The combination of her asceticism and her clerical office gave Radegund authority to act in this semi-episcopal fashion, not despite her femininity, but in embracing the religious positions and tools available to her. And the many ascetic bishops of her day inspired her.[67]

[63] Caesaria II, Abbess of Saint Jean of Arles, "Caesaria the Insignificant, to the Holy Ladies Richild and Radegund," in *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages*, 114-118.

[64] *Decem libri*.

[65] *Decem libri*, IX.39, 527-529.

[66] *Decem libri*, IX.42, 534-538.

[67] Edwards, *Superior Women*, 54.

The True Cross, such an important part of Radegund's life, can be seen as an icon with special significance for women:[68] women remained at the cross when all the other followers of Jesus had fled; and tradition holds that Constantine's mother, Saint Helena, discovered the Cross on their visit to the Holy Land. This may be why Radegund took such pains eventually to acquire a relic of the Holy Cross. Her success in this endeavour established Sainte Croix monastery in Poitiers and cemented her reputation; Fortunatus played an active role in this process, writing *Pange, lingua* and *Vexilla regis* for the occasion, "two of his best-known works because of their acceptance into the liturgy."[69]

A reconstruction of Radegund's life with a view to understanding her as a spiritual authority with linguistic, academic, and theological acumen, comprises the first part of my thesis. The second part will be reserved for theological work. It is one task to explore how the Latin theologians might fit into Radegund's Christian anthropology, quite another to imagine her interactions with Basil, Athanasius, or Gregory, although it must be asked whether Fortunatus was referring to Gregory of Nyssa or Gregory of Nazianzus; I will evaluate the evidence. I will then examine some representative texts that include passages from Gregory, Basil, Athanasius, Hilary, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, Sedulius, and Orosius, examining how they portray womanhood. I will show how these texts might help a woman such as Radegund to recognise herself as created in the *imago Dei*, and what that might mean for her leadership**.**

[68] Barbara H. Rosenwein, "Entry and Encroachment," in *Negotiating Space: Power, Restraint, and Privileges of Immunity in Early Medieval Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2018), 52.

[69] Michael Roberts, "Introduction," in *Carmina*, xiii.

CHAPTER ONE: READING RADEGUND

Radegund's Childhood and Education

Whatever scholars want to say about the objectivity of Radegund's contemporaries, the fact remains that almost all of our information about her comes from Fortunatus, Gregory of Tours, Baudonivia and Caesaria of Arles, and, for those who accept the various arguments, Radegund herself, either in the form of the epistolary poems, the letters attributed to her that are no longer extant, such as the poems she wrote to Fortunatus, her letters to Sigibert and Caesaria of Arles, and her letters to the bishops, one of which we find in Gregory of Tours and one of which is no longer extant. We must either gather the information from the pages of the manuscripts, or with reason as our guide, take care great care in deducing additional details from the gleanings.

Radegund was born in Thuringia, somewhere in what is today known as Central Germany. Her exact date of birth is unknown, but most scholars suggest dates from 518 – 520 C.E.[70] Thiébaux states that "Radegund was born at Erfurt in the kingdom of Thuringia in about 520 during the reign of the eastern emperor Justinian."[71] The exact location would seem to be probable, although Thiébaux offers no evidence for this assertion. It should also be clarified here that Justinian I became the Roman Emperor in 527.[72] He was preceded by Justin I, his uncle, who became Emperor in 518, after the death of Anastasios.[73]

Justinian "supervised the rebuilding in Constantinople of the domed and still-standing Hagia Sophia, the Church of the Holy Wisdom, dedicated in 537," and closed the Academy at Athens

[70] *Vita I*.
[71] *Vita II*, 85.
[72] "Justinian I," in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, edited by F. L. Cross and Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Oxford: OUP, 1997), 915. Hereafter *TODCC*.
[73] Herrin, *Ravenna*, 132.

in 529.[74] Justinian was married to the redoubtable Empress Theodora, immortalised in the mosaics of the church of San Vitale at Ravenna, which "portray Theodora in parallel with Justinian," Theodora presenting the communion wine and Justinian presenting the bread.[75] Justin II and Sophia, who provided Radegund with her piece of the True Cross, followed; Sophia served as regent during the last four years of Justin's reign (565 – 578), when his mental health declined sharply until his death.[76] Radegund was thus directly acquainted with strong women and portrayals of womanhood. Radegund also saw the reigns of Tiberias II (578 – 582)[77] and Maurice (582 – 602);[78] her life encompassed the whole Justinian dynasty.

In Radegund's infancy, the reign of Theodoric the Goth (*c.*453[79] – 526[80]) in Ravenna was coming to an end; he was to be succeeded in name by the child Athalaric, whose mother Amalasuintha, the only child of Theoderic,[81] reigned as regent. Judith Herrin notes that Amalasuintha was exceptionally well-educated at Ravenna in Gothic, Frankish, Latin and Greek.[82] Herrin makes strong arguments about the use of educated women to solidify power or rule in times of need, citing the example of Galla Placidia among several others. Boethius, in prison and soon to be executed by Theoderic, was writing his *Consolation of Philosophy*, in which Wisdom is personified as Lady Philosophy.[83] Cassiodorus, the prolific writer and thinker

[74] William E. Dunstan, *Ancient Rome*, (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), 526.
[75] Dunstan, *Ancient Rome*, 529.
[76] Michael Whitby, "The Successors of Justinian," in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, edited by Averil Cameron, Bryan Ward-Perkins, and Michael Whitby, 1st ed. (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), 94.
[77] Whitby, "The Successors of Justinian," 99.
[78] Whitby, "The Successors of Justinian," 106-108.
[79] Herrin, *Ravenna,* 89.
[80] Herrin, *Ravenna*, 137.
[81] Flavius Magnus Aurelius Cassiodorus, "Introduction," in *Variae*. Edited and translated by Sam J. B. Barnish. Repr. Translated Texts for Historians 12. (Liverpool: LUP, 2010), xii. Hereafter *Variae.*
[82] Sam J. B. Barnish, "Introduction," in *Variae*, xiii.
[83] Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, "Life of Boethius," in *Theological Tractates*. Edited by Jeffrey Henderson et al. New ed., Reprinted. *The Loeb Classical Library* 74. (Cambridge, MA: HUP, 2003), xi.

who would later found the Vivarium monastery and library, would soon replace him as *magister officiorum*.[84]

Fortunatus tells us something about Radegund's ancestry. We learn from him (*Vita*.2) that her father was King Bertachar, or Berthar, of Thuringia; his father was King Bassin and one of his brothers was Hermanfred.[85] According to Fortunatus, Radegund had "lived with her noble family only a little while when the victorious Franks devastated the region with barbaric turmoil and, like the Israelites, she departed and migrated from her homeland."

Gregory of Tours gives us a fuller picture: we learn that Berthar had another brother, Baderic: "Hermanfrid beat his brother Berthar in battle and killed him. When Berthar died he left an orphaned daughter called Radegund; he also left a number of sons, about whom I shall have a deal to say later on."[86] Unfortunately, Gregory must have gotten a bit distracted, as we never hear about "a number" of sons again. We do know there was one son, by the name of Amalfred,[87] to whom we shall return shortly. We learn that Radegund's new stepmother was an imposing figure:

> Amalaberg, the wife of Hermanfrid, was a wicked and cruel woman: it was she who sowed the seeds of civil war between the two remaining brothers. One day when her husband came in to have a meal, he found only half the table laid. When he asked Amalaberg what she meant by this, she answered: 'A king who is deprived of half his kingdom deserves to find half his table bare.' Hermanfrid was roused by this and by other similar things which Amalaberg did. He decided to attack his brother and sent secret messengers to King Theuderic to invite him to make war on Baderic in his turn. 'If we can only manage to kill him,' said Hermanfrid, 'we will share his kingdom equally between us.' Theuderic was delighted when he heard this and he marched against Baderic with his army. Theuderic and Hermanfrid made contact, gave each other pledges of good faith, and set out for battle. They encountered Baderic, destroyed his army and cut off his head. Once this victory was won, Theuderic returned home. Hermanfrid broke his word without more ado, and made

[84] *Variae*, xvii.
[85] *Vita I*.2, 70.
[86] Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, translated by Lewis Thorpe. (Baltimore: Penguin, 1974), III.4, 164. Hereafter *Decem libri.*
[87] *Carmina,* VIII.1, 493.

> no attempt to carry out the promises which he had given to Theuderic. As a result there was a great enmity between the two Kings.[88]

We don't know who Radegund's mother was, but we do know from Paul the Deacon's *History of the Langobards* that the sister of Baderic, Hermanfrid and Berthar, had been married to the Lombard King Wacho:[89] "Habuit autem Wacho uxores tres, hoc est primam Ranicundam, filiam regis Turingorum."[90] The name of this woman, Radegund's paternal aunt, comes out as Ranichundam, Raingundam, Rinigundam, Radicundam, Radicundiam, Ramocundam, Radegundam, and Ranidina in the textual variants. Considering that this was a Latinized transcription of her name, it seems probable that Radegund was the namesake of her father's sister. René Aigrain gives her name as "Ranigonde ou Radegonde."[91] Although he had taken the lives of his two brothers, perhaps Hermanfrid had a soft spot for his little niece. Living with Amalaberg, he was at any rate able to appreciate her political value in a marriage that would create unity between the Thuringians and their Frankish conquerors.[92]

It should be noted here that Amalaberg would have been an important maternal figure in Radegund's life at that point, since Radegund had been taken into Hermanfrid's household after he killed his brother Berthar. Gregory doesn't tell us any more about Amalaberg, but we know from Cassiodorus that she was a niece of Theoderic the Great. Of Amalaberg Cassiodorus had written the following on behalf of Theoderic:[93]

> In my desire to add you to my kinship, I unite you, by God's favour, to the beloved pledge of my niece. Thus may you, who are descended from a royal stock, shine forth still more widely in the splendour of the Amal blood. I send you the glory of a court and home, the increase of a kindred, a loyal and comforting counsellor, a most sweet and charming wife. With you, she will lawfully play a ruler's part, and she will discipline your nation with a

[88] *Decem libri*, III.4, 164.
[89] Paul the Deacon, *History of the Lombards*. Edited by Edward Peters. Translated by William Dudley Foulke. Sources of Medieval History (Philadelphia: UPP, 1974), I.21, 40.
[90] Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*. Edited by L. Bethmann and G. Waitz. (Hannoverae: Impensis bibliopoli Hahniani, 1878), I.21, 68.
[91] Aigrain, *Sainte Radegonde*, 10.
[92] Aigrain, *Sainte Radegonde*, 25.
[93] *Variae*, XI.12, note, 148.

> better way of life. Fortunate Thoringia will possess what Italy has reared, a woman learned in letters, schooled in moral character, glorious not only for her lineage, but equally for her feminine dignity. So, your country will be famous for her character, no less than for its victories.[94]

Amalaberg was also the niece of Theoderic's daughter, Queen Amalasuintha. Of her who was the regent mother of Athalaric, Cassiodorus wrote:

> To behold her inspires awe; to hear her discourse, wonder. In what tongue is not her learning proven? She is fluent in the splendour of Greek oratory; she shines in the glory of Roman eloquence; the flow of her ancestral speech brings her glory; she surpasses all in their own languages, and is equally wonderful in each. For if it is the part of a man of sense to be well acquainted with his native tongue, how should we value the wisdom which retains and faultlessly practises so many kinds of eloquence?[95] Hence, the different races have a great and necessary safeguard, since no one needs an interpreter when addressing the ears of our wise mistress. For the envoy suffers no delay, and the appellant no damage from the slowness of his translator, since each is heard in his own words, and is answered in the speech of his nation. To this is added, as it were a glorious diadem, the priceless knowledge of literature, through which she learns the wisdom of the ancients, and the royal dignity is constantly increased.[96]

Theoderic himself had married Clovis' sister Audefleda, who would become the aunt of Clothar, who eventually married Radegund. Following the example of "kings and emperors throughout history, [Theoderic] used marriages very effectively as a method of reinforcing political links and avoiding warfare."[97] He surrounded himself with powerful and educated women, and knew their value. Amalaberg, Radegund's step-mother and aunt, was the daughter of Theoderic's sister Amalafrida,[98] who was daughter of Theodemir, king of the Ostrogoths, and his wife Erelieva. Before she married King Thrasamund, "Theoderic gave her the north-west promontory of Sicily, Lilybaeum, as her dowry, so she became a queen in her own right, with her own financial resources."[99] With such a lineage, it is difficult to imagine that Amalaberg and Hermanfrid would have neglected the education of their niece.

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[94] *Variae*, IV.1-2, 74.
[95] *Variae*, XI.6, 146.
[96] *Variae*, XI.7, 146.
[97] Herrin, *Ravenna*, 116.
[98] *Variae*, note to IV.1, 75.
[99] Herrin, *Ravenna*, 129.

Unfortunately, Hermanfrid, having broken his agreement with Theuderic to share Baderic's kingdom between them, was not to see what came of such an investment. Theuderic, with his brother Clothar and his nephew Theudebert, were coming, angered by the unfulfilled promise and recent atrocities committed by the Thuringians. "Such a massacre of the Thuringians took place here that the bed of the river was piled high with their corpses and that the Franks crossed over them to the other side as if they were walking on a bridge."[100] Hermanfrid, having been "driven from the battlefield,"[101] was lured back into Theuderic's presence with an assurance of safety, but he didn't live long before being "accidentally" given a push from the city walls of Zülpich, probably by Theuderic.[102]

There is no date for the year in which her uncle killed her father and brought her to live with him and Amalaberg, but Radegund's poignant memories of her beloved cousin Amalfred[103] seem to indicate that they developed a very close and intimate bond. All of this, in addition to the fact that Radegund speaks of her dead father and lack of a mother in far less intimate language,[104] might indicate that she had been brought into her uncle's household quite young, educated early and well, as had been her female relatives Amalaberg, Amalafrida, and Amalasuintha. It is true that we know very little about Radegund's childhood, but we do know that she was raised in the household of Amalaberg, and that in itself may be a fairly strong argument that she would have been well-educated before she ever encountered Clothar.

Gregory tells us that after the battle, which scholarly consensus places at 531, Clothar "took with him as his share of the booty Radegund, the daughter of King Berthar. Later he married her.

[100] *Decem libri*, III.7, 168.
[101] *Decem libri*, III.7, 168.
[102] *Decem libri*, III.7, 169.
[103] *Carmina*, Appendix.I, 762-765.
[104] *Carmina*, Appendix.1, 762-763.

This did not stop him afterwards from arranging for her brother to be murdered by assassins."[105]

Fortunatus adds,

> The royal girl became part of the plunder of these conquerors and they began to quarrel over their captive. If the contest had not ended with an agreement for her disposition, the kings would have taken up arms against one another. Falling to the lot of the illustrious King Clothar, she was taken to Athies in Vermandois, a royal villa, and her upbringing was entrusted to guardians.[106]

Jo Ann McNamara, in "Radegund, Queen of the Franks and Abbess of Poitiers (ca. 525–587),"[107] estimates Radegund's birth year following Wemple, based on the assumption that Clothar would not have waited so long to take her as his bride unless she had still been a small child. However, Aigrain suggests that her age would not have prevented the marriage, nor would the presence of any of his previous wives or the fact that Clothar's "youngest son, Chramn, was born about 540, apparently just before his public espousal of Radegund."[108]

> Tacitus had praised the ancient Germans for not marrying their daughters off too early, thus ensuring vigorous offspring. This wise custom was completely forgotten in the Merovingian family, where the marriages of very young children were a not-insignificant cause of weakness. Clotaire would therefore marry his prisoner upon the completion of her education, at least that is what Fortunatus seems to imply, and this project is even more credible because it was a possible means of bringing the conquered Thuringians into the Frankish unity.[109]

A birth year of 518 is more likely. This would make Radegund thirteen years old in 531, old enough to attract Clothar's attention. Nor was Clovis a stranger to the ancient Germans: his grandmother was the Thuringian Queen Basina, who left her husband Bisinus for Childeric, Clothar's grandfather.[110]

> [Childeric] questioned [Bisina] as to why she had come from far away to be with him, and she is said to have answered: 'I know that you are a strong man and I recognise ability when I see it. I have therefore come to live with you. You can be sure that if I knew anyone

[105] *Decem libri*, III.7, 168.
[106] *Vita I.*2, 71.
[107] The full title of McNamara's article is also troublesome because Radegund was never actually an abbess, although she would go on to become the founder of the famous Sainte-Croix Monastery in Poitiers.
[108] McNamara, "Radegund, Queen of the Franks," 61.
[109] Aigrain*, Sainte Radegonde*, 24-25, trans. mine.
[110] *Decem libri*, II.12, 128-129.

> else, even far across the sea, who was more capable than you, I should have sought him out and gone to live with him instead.' This pleased Childeric very much and he married her. She became pregnant and bore a son whom she called Clovis. He was a great man and became a famous soldier.[111]

Clothar's mother was the Queen and Saint Clothild, who had been taken by Clovis' envoys from Burgundy because she had royal blood and was "an elegant young woman and clever for her years."[112] She stood up to Clovis, baptizing her sons in spite of her husband's wishes, and finally converting him to Christianity.[113] If Clothild was anything to go by, Clothar was not looking for a bystander as a wife: he knew the value of a strong woman. In this translation by McNamara of Fortunatus, we are told that upon her capture and removal to Athies to be raised by guardians,

> The maiden was taught letters and other things suitable to her sex and she would often converse with other children there about her desire to be a martyr if the chance came in her time. Thus even as an adolescent, she displayed the merits of a mature person. She obtained part of what she sought, for, though the church was flourishing in peace, she endured persecution from her own household. While but a small child, she herself brought the scraps left at table to the gathered children, washing the head of each one, seating them on little chairs and offering water for their hands, and she mingled with the infants herself.[114]

McNamara's translation of this passage reflects her conclusion that Radegund was only six years old, but my own translation below shows a Radegund who was old enough to help raise other children. She is described as *puella*, *adolescens*, and *infantula* ~ this last rhetorically, since she is described doing household chores. Only the little ones she cares for are called *parvulis.*

> *Quae **puella** inter alia opera, quae sexui ejus congruebant, litteris est erudita: frequenter loquens cum **parvulis**, si conferret sors temporis, martyr fieri cupiens. Indicabat **adolescens** jam tunc merita senectutis, obtinens pro parte quae petiit. Denique dum esset in pace florens Ecclesia, ipsa est a domesticis persecutionem perpessa. Jam tunc id agens **infantula**, quidquid sibi remansisset in mensa, collectis **parvulis**, lavans capita singulis, compositis sellulis, porrigens aquam manibus, ipsa cibos inferebat, ipsa miscebat **infantulis**. [Emphasis mine.]*
>
> The girl (*puella*) was educated in literature, among other things suitable to her sex. She would often speak with the little ones (*parvulis*), hoping to become a martyr if fate

[111] *Decem libri*, II.12, 129.
[112] *Decem libri*, II.28, 141.
[113] *Decem libri*, II.30, 143.
[114] *Vita I.*2, 71.

> allowed. The young woman (*adolescens*) was already showing the qualities of old age, obtaining a part of what she sought. Although the Church was flourishing in peace, she herself endured persecution from her own household. Even then, as a baby herself (*infantula*), she would collect whatever was left from her table, gathering the little ones (*parvulis*), washing their heads one by one, arranging their little chairs, offering them water with her own hands, she herself bringing the food, she herself mixing it for the babies (*infantulis*).[115]

Scholarly consensus places the date of Radegund's marriage to Clothar close to 540.[116] She would have spent nine years at Athies, after the death of her Thuringian family in 531. It is very probable that before she ever arrived at Athies as a young adolescent, she had received a thorough education in the house of Amalaberg and Hermanfrid. She could have been a twenty-year old woman, which, considering her comportment there, seems likely.

"A *Monacha* Rather Than a Queen"

Fortunatus is a major source of information about Radegund. Apart from his *Vita*, he offers many descriptions of her. McNamara notes that he "emphasizes more than once that Radegund was Clothar's official queen," so as to discourage the impression that she might be on equal footing with the five other women with whom he shared sometimes polygynous domestic arrangements.[117]

Fortunatus also emphasizes Radegund's extreme asceticism and humility even in her role as Queen; throughout the *Vita* he portrays her quietly giving alms, nursing the sick, caring for the destitute, finding ways to experience appalling, almost indescribable physical suffering so that she might be like a martyr, and using her queenly status only to save people from the mortal

[115] Fortunatus, "*Vita S. Radegundis Reginae*," in *Patrologiae cursus completus: Series Latina*, 487-512, volume 88, edited by J.P. Migne. Paris, 1830. I.2, 499.

[116] "Radegunde," in *TODCC*, 1361.

[117] McNamara, "Radegund, Queen of the Franks," 72, n39.

consequences of her husband's wrath.[118] He portrays her eating only vegetables, like "the three boys"[119] (Daniel 1:6-20), emphasizing her alienation from royal life.

The way we understand the motivations of those writing about early medieval saints may have an impact on our perception of how they document her life. For example, Caroline Schroeder has suggested that the hagiographer of the Queen and Saint Balthild (*c.*630 – 680) used a model of Venantius Fortunatus's *Vita Sanctae Radegundis*,[120] to demonstrate that Balthild "fully Christianized Francia in a way no ruler before her had done."[121] Jo Ann McNamara, on the other hand, says that "Balthild took Radegund as her model and cultivated her spiritual power after she left her throne for a monastery."[122] I understand Schroder here to be attributing Balthild's apparent agency to the rhetorical skill of her hagiographer, while McNamara argues that in taking Radegund as a model, Balthild identifies herself as an agent of spiritual power.

Edwards argues following Caroline Walker Bynum that *Vitae* of early medieval women "reveal medieval women's abilities to assert control over their own lives and claim some autonomy from patriarchal expectations,"[123] and that Radegund's own life reflects this, because "she was able to escape an unpleasant marriage and choose a monastic life through her reputation for asceticism."[124] This is an interesting notion, although the extraordinary suffering involved might make one question whether this explanation is adequate, especially considering the number of male clerics who also engaged in these practises.

Edwards notes that "early medieval sources exist in a complicated space between history and legend, and it is not always possible to verify the veracity of written accounts" because the purposes for which they were written do not fit with modern historians' desire for faithful

[118] McNamara, "Radegund, Queen of the Franks," 74.
[119] McNamara, "Radegund, Queen of the Franks," 73.
[120] Schroeder, "Francia as 'Christendom," 279.
[121] Schroeder, "Francia as 'Christendom," 284.
[122] McNamara, "Introduction," in *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages*, 6.
[123] McNamara, "Introduction," 53.
[124] McNamara, "Introduction," 54.

records or chronological narratives."[125] Edwards' work is itself an analysis of women's power, and therefore the historical information she presents is curated through that lens.

At the death of her brother, Radegund "left the king and went straight to the holy Medard at Noyon," who hesitated to consecrate her as a *monacha* because of her marriage to Clothar but was ultimately "thunderstruck by [her] argument and, laying his hand on her, he consecrated her as a deaconess."[126] In 1887, Émile Briand presented a picture of a deaconess with apostolic and liturgical function; a woman deacon would participate in the preparation and celebration of baptism and the eucharist.

> Struck by the authoritative accent of Radegonde and undoubtedly obeying a divine inspiration, the bishop of Noyen no longer hesitates: immediately, he lays his hands upon the queen and consecrates her a deaconess. This function, now abolished in the Church, had apostolic origins; it involved presenting at the altar the bread and wine intended for the Sacrifice and destined for women; deaconesses were also tasked with preparing women for baptism and performing certain duties for them when they received the sacrament of regeneration.[127]

Gary Macy notes the complexity of this discussion in *The Hidden History of Women's Ordination: Female Clergy in the Medieval West*.[128] He argues that the laicization of women happened over a period of time, with evidence for their "more formal and public role in ministry than the tradition would suggest" having gradually been expunged.[129] Whether Radegund was "truly ordained" to the diaconate is an open question.[130] It is worthy of note, though, that according to Fortunatus, Radegund, in liturgical clothing, was consecrated at the altar by a bishop, through the laying on of hands.[131]

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[125] Edwards, *Superior Women*, 27.
[126] Edwards, *Superior Women*, 70.
[127] Émile Briand, *Sainte Radegonde*, 37, trans. mine.
[128] Gary Macy, *The Hidden History of Women's Ordination: Female Clergy in the Medieval West* (NY: OUP, 2008).
[129] Macy, *Hidden History*, 51.
[130] Macy, *Hidden History*, 86.
[131] *Vita I.*12, 75.

Lynda Coon, author of *Sacred Fictions: Holy Women and Hagiography in Late Antiquity,* theorises that the women in the Bible "express their piety" like Martha "through domestic service to godly men and the impoverished."[132] This fails to take other models of biblical womanhood into account, such as those of Myriam, Rahab, Deborah, Jael, Esther, Mary Magdalene, Lydia, Priscilla ~ and Martha's sister, Mary of Bethany. Coon objects that "Fortunatus places Radegund's charismatic abilities only within a feminine, domestic, and even child-like environment" and that Radegund "heals only powerless women and children."[133] This seems to clash with Coon's observation that in their "*vitae* Merovingian women usurp many of the sacerdotal, pastoral, and administrative functions of the male hierarchy."[134]

> Frankish churchmen chose to juxtapose the conflicting images of the holy woman as Christ crucified and domestic minister to prophetic men. These early medieval hagiographers created enigmatic portraits of their subjects to instruct lay, monastic, and clerical audiences that, although female saints can literally become Christ, they nonetheless continue to serve as the submissive attendants of male priests. Only consecrated men, who officiate at God's sacrificial table, provide the unique and ecstatic link between human communities and the divine.[135]

Coon's real objection would seem to be that early medieval women could not be ordained to the priesthood. While this is a valid problematization of an important reality, Coon's arguments seem to diminish the roles that women have traditionally occupied as being less important and deny the very real opportunities for agency that were available to a woman like Radegund. It also, in my view, diminishes the healings of women and children as being less important than healings of men.

Dyan Elliott, in the titillatingly-titled *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell: Metaphor and Embodiment in the Lives of Pious Women, 200-1500*, discusses deaconesses as inhabiting a "grey

[132] Coon, *Sacred Fictions*, 120.
[133] Edwards, *Superior Women*, 132.
[134] Edwards, *Superior Women*, 120.
[135] Lynda Coon, *Sacred Fictions*, 141.

zone that accommodated the formerly married woman,"[136] and argues that "Radegund's consecration by Médard marks the end of her old life without exactly inaugurating a new one, epitomizing her anomalous spiritual condition." Christ, she asserts, "was perceived as no more concerned about his bride's consent than was Clothar when he married Radegund."[137] Of Fortunatus and Radegund she says their relationship is an example of what she calls "heteroasceticism: a man and a woman, each committed to the celibate life, manifest an intense attachment to one another."[138] Of marriage generally Elliott writes that "the age-old mistrust of sex still ensured that but a handful of marriages were extolled, and these tended to be sexually abstinent or even unconsummated unions."[139]

Elliott argues that Fortunatus's descriptions of the agonies Radegund inflicted on herself are meant to "suppress the bride in favor of the martyr," but are actually "more convincing as penance" for having the "long shadow" of a sexual past.[140] Elliott opens her book with a caustic description of consecrated virginity: "A young woman eschews all mortal ties to unite herself irrevocably with a man who has been dead for centuries, yet has nevertheless managed to lure countless women into this suspect arrangement: a polygamist on a grand scale."[141] *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell* is ultimately a polemical book which looks at the bridal mysticism of Christianity through the lens of one kind of radical feminism that sees the whole of the patristic tradition as a distilled embodiment of misogyny.

Simon Coates explores how "gender, a constructed rather than a physiological form of sexual differentiation, may illumine Radegund's sanctity."[142] Coates never actually defines gender, only saying that it admits "the social into the sexual"[143] and claiming that "the Fathers

[136] Elliott, *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell*, 66.
[137] Elliott, *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell*, 113.
[138] Elliott, *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell*, 150.
[139] Elliott, *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell*, 156.
[140] Elliott, *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell*, 99.
[141] Elliott, *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell*, 1.
[142] Coates, "Regendering Radegund, 37.
[143] Coates, "Regendering Radegund," 38.

constructed an ideal of virginity based upon the cultivation of masculine virtues. In rejecting their sexuality women transcended their gender and gained the souls of men."[144] In arguing this latter claim, Coates seems to fuse the meanings of "gender" and "sex."

Lynda Coon, author of *Sacred Fictions: Holy Women and Hagiography in Late Antiquity*, argues that "the hagiographers who created the corpus of female *vitae* in early medieval Gaul employed biblical rhetoric to achieve … the empowering and bridling of female sanctity."[145] She offers that religious life may have been attractive to Frankish queens because it "provided them the opportunity to expand their diplomatic, financial, and administrative skills."[146] Coon argues that Fortunatus "uses the theology of the cosmetic to feminize the spirituality of his saint."[147] A sample size of two, however, seems insufficient for such a study, particularly since we have Radegund's own writing, as well as that of another man, Gregory of Tours, to see how her achievements were emphasized.

Coon further notes that since Radegund is described by both male (Fortunatus) and female (Baudonivia) hagiographers, there is "a rare opportunity to compare gendered accounts," and suggests that "the female version emphasizes Radegund's pastoral and administrative achievements whereas the male-authored text dismisses the queen's authority outside of the cloister and emphasizes her domestic duties within the convent."[148]

It is true that Baudonivia writes of how she, sitting "persistent and unmoved" on her horse as she had the temple of the Franks burned;[149] of how she built her monastery with Clothar's money and at his order after humiliating him several times and became "a light-armed footsoldier, in the footsteps of Christ";[150] how "it was not enough to be drenched in fasting unless she could

[144] Coates, "Regendering Radegund," 40.
[145] Coon, *Sacred Fictions*, 121.
[146] Coon, *Sacred Fictions*, 122.
[147] Coon, *Sacred Fictions*, 132.
[148] Coon, *Sacred Fictions*, 127.
[149] *Vita II*, 109.
[150] *Vita II*.5, 111.

conquer her own body"[151]; how "one of her servants who through reckless presumption dared to sit on the blessed queen's cushioned chair after she had died" suffered divine punishment;[152] how she obtained the relics of the Lord Mammas[153] and the Holy Cross;[154] and how after death, the sea was miraculously calmed by appealing to the prayers of the saint.[155]

Baudonivia does not fail, though, to use "gendered" descriptions as well, such as: how Radegund "reared [Baudonivia] from childhood";[156] how she had a vision in which she was sitting on the knee of "a ship in the form of a man" and how he told her that she would one day "have your place to sit in my heart";[157] how the thought of having to return to her husband so terrified her that she had suicidal thoughts;[158] how her surrender "to the love of the heavenly Bridegroom" was so complete "that by embracing God in her pure heart she was able to feel Christ dwelling within her";[159] how she was the object of pursuit;[160] how she did every chore herself that she would impose on others, and how she preached "with devout concern and motherly affection… [gathering] flowerets of the spirit" from her followers;[161] how sick people who called on her would be healed;[162] how "[w]hat Helena accomplished in the East, blessed Radegund accomplished in Gaul";[163] and finally, how before her death she had a mystical vision of Christ as the divine lover.

> The year before she died she saw in a vision the place that was prepared for her. There came to her a very beautiful and richly dressed man who seemed youthful in age. As he addressed her he touched her sweetly and spoke caressing words to her, but she, zealous about her virtue, sought to repulse his blandishments. He said to her, "Why then are you inflamed with desire for me, and why do you seek me with tears, petition me with groans, beg me with lavish prayers? Why have you suffered so many torments for my sake, for me, who am always with you? You, precious jewel, you know that you are the foremost jewel in the diadem on my head." There is no doubt that he himself visited her, and that she

[151] *Vita II.*8 113.
[152] *Vita II.*12, 114.
[153] *Vita II.*14, 115-16.
[154] *Vita II.*16, 116-19.
[155] *Vita II.*17, 119-120.
[156] *Vita II.Prologue.*4, 107.
[157] *Vita II.*3, 109.
[158] *Vita II.*4, 110.
[159] *Vita II.*5, 111.
[160] *Vita II.*7, 112.
[161] *Vita II.*9, 113.
[162] *Vita II.*15, 116.
[163] *Vita II.*16, 117.

> surrendered herself to him with total devotion, even while she was still alive in body, and that he showed her the glory that she was to enjoy.[164]

Fortunatus pushes back against a male-female dichotomy as he describes her, and so does Baudonivia, who presents Radegund as master over herself, as a human being who owns herself, not as someone defined by gender roles.

> Who could ever emulate the burning charity with which she loved all people! Within her glowed so many virtues: modesty with seemliness, wisdom with simplicity, sternness with mercy, erudition with humility. Hers, all told, was a life without spot, a life beyond reproach, a life in every way perfect unto itself.[165]

"The Rule of Caesarius, Her Guide of Conduct"

> Happy are they who have won the right through the love of Christ to have their names inscribed in the eternal book! Among these companions as one of the Caesaria shines brightly, the glory of Arles in our own time. Through the precepts of Caesarius she enjoys perpetual light, by virtue of virginity, if not of martyrdom. Liliola in like conduct brings both of them to mind, and a similar palm awaits her, their glorious heir. Whatever woman attentively imitates their actions will share with the two of them their lofty status. With the receptiveness of faith, impelled by the love of Christ, Radegund laps up whatever the rule of Caesarius contains, she collects the honey that flows from the breast of that bishop and drinks the streams of his eloquence without being filled. The more she draws from that spring, the more her thirst intensifies and grows, and she becomes more ardent as she is moistened by God's dew. Though one person, she lives not for herself but in common for all, and happily reveals the narrow way to the stars.[166]

In 1960, Mother Maria Caritas McCarthy provided the first and, so far, the only complete English translation and critical introduction of the *Rule for Nuns* by St. Caesarius of Arles.[167] The *Rule* was meant by St. Caesarius to be "especially adapted" to the needs of women at the time.[168] Some requirements were of a clearly spiritual nature, but many had to do with protecting the time, privacy, reputation, and physical safety of women in monastic life. It was completed by the Bishop of Arles in 534.[169]

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[164] *Vita II*.20, 120.
[165] *Vita II*.1, 114.
[166] *Carmina*, VIII.3.37-54, 501.
[167] *Regula*.
[168] *Regula*.1, 171.
[169] Sister Mary Magdeleine Mueller, O.S.F., "Introduction," in *Caesarius of Arles, Saint, 470-542. Sermons, Volume 1 (1-80) The Fathers of the*

Caesarius had "a particular interest in the monastic lives of women,"[170] having written the *Rule* for his sister, Caesaria the Elder. Caesaria the Elder was succeeded by "Caesaria the Younger, a close relation of Caesarius (possibly his niece), who served as abbess of the nunnery he had founded in Arles."[171] Saint Cyprian of Toulon, the hagiographer of Saint Caesarius, said of the sisters that "in the midst of psalms and fasts, vigils and readings, the virgins of Christ beautifully copy out the holy books, with their mother herself as teacher."[172]

St. Caesarius is criticized by some for his emphasis on the cloistering of women for the protection of their chastity. This critique must be addressed by someone else at another time, but it might be noted that in a time when women lacked any meaningful control over their reproductive processes, such a system might be seen as the only guarantee against undesired pregnancy, which could be accompanied by poverty, ostracism, and death in childbirth. The *Rule* required women to sign over all private property under their control,[173] thus rendering them less attractive as objects of political manipulation. Likewise, accepting young girls was strongly discouraged unless they were old enough to learn how to read, and this was never to be done for the sake of educating them for an eventual return to their families.[174] Radegund chose a *Rule* that required full autonomy; even clothing must be made by the sisters themselves, rather than being imported from the outside.[175] The requirement for autonomy was extended even to the local bishop, under whose authority the sisters must by no means allow themselves to fall.[176] All the women in the monastery must listen to readings during mealtimes, and all of the women must learn to read.[177] Each sister was to spend two hours in the morning reading;[178] one of the sisters

Church: A New Translation (Washington: CUAP, 2010), xvi.
[170] Cyprian, *Caesarius of Arles: Life, Testament, Letters*, translated by William Eugene Klingshirn. *Translated Texts for Historians* 19, (Liverpool: LUP, 1994), 127.
[171] Cyprian, *Caesarius of Arles*, 4.
[172] Cyprian, *Caesarius of Arles*, Vita I.58, 39.
[173] *Regula.*5-6, 172.
[174] *Regula.*7, 173.
[175] *Regula.*28, 179.
[176] *Regula.*64, 191-192.
[177] *Regula.*18, 175.
[178] *Regula.*19, 175.

was to read aloud during work until mid-morning prayer;[179] and this is in addition to the extensive biblical readings required by the *Ordo*.[180]

"Bishop Caesarius of Arles was the first bishop to use the title abbess, in the rule which he wrote together with his sister Caesarea between approximately 512 and 534."[181] Radegund, though sometimes called an abbess, was technically the founder of the monastery at Poitiers, where she installed her young protégée Agnès, "the dear foster-child she brought up at her knees,"[182] as the Abbess. The actions Radegund took allowed her the freedom to live a monastic life while still legally being Clothar's wife.

Radegund found a way around her marriage, in much the same way as she had succeeded in being ordained as a deacon, which did not require a vow of chastity. Becoming one of the sisters in the cloister would be quite impossible if she was married. Not having taken the same vows as the sisters in her monastery, Radegund was free to have her own cell, although this was forbidden by the Rule (R9).[183] Fortunatus alludes to her use of this cell for silent annual retreats: "Radegund… in performance of your yearly vows today you return to seclusion; my spirit will wander astray in search of you."[184] His many poems attest to the frequency of Radegund's gifts to him of flowers and food, but always with the approval of her daughter cum Mother Superior, Agnès.

This deep friendship stretched to its limits the most generous interpretation of the *Rule*, which forbade feeding men, or cultivating intimate friendships with them. It is a spiritual friendship, though, lest any doubt: "Eager for Martin I have attached myself to the wishes of Radegund…"[185] As he writes to Agnès, "it is as if Radegund, our mother, in a single birth had

[179] *Regula.*20, 176.
[180] *Regula.*66-70, 192-201.
[181] Katrinette Bodarwé, "Abbesses," in *WGMEAE*, 1.
[182] *Carmina*, 8.I.60, 501.
[183] *Regula*.9, 174.
[184] *Carmina*, 8.IX.1, 533.
[185] *Carmina*, 8.I.21, 491.

born us both from her chaste womb, and as if the blessed woman's sweet breasts had nourished the two of us with one flood of milk."[186]

Did Radegund Have Greek?

In a rather scathing anonymous 1837 review of Hallam's *Introduction to the Literature of Europe*, a strong defense is made of Early Medieval literacy against Hallam's view that the Middle Ages were "dark" ages:

> We cannot, therefore, but repeat, that in our opinion Mr. Hallam is unjust to the age. That schools, for instance, were established in Gaul long before "the sixth century," is undoubted, from the express authority of Caesarius of Arles, and Gregory of Tours, writers whom Mr. Hallam disparages, —simply, we believe, because he has not read them, or not read them attentively. Had he done so, he would have found that, by the conventual rule of the former, the study of the Latin, we think also of the Greek fathers, was rendered obligatory even on nuns. Certainly the nun Radegund, of Poitiers, was, as we are incidentally informed by Fortunatus, in the habit of perusing Athanasius, Basil, and Gregory of Nazianzen, no less than Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine. We have no reason to infer that these Greek fathers had been translated into Latin; still less that Radegund was much superior to the rest of the sisterly community. Had Mr. Hallam read attentively these writers, he would have found that a school was attached to every cathedral and to every monastery.[187]

Briand points to how scholars interpret facts from within their context, which bears on the assumptions often made today concerning Radegund's degree of literacy. For Briand in 1887, there is no reason to doubt the primary sources: « Initiée à la connaissance de la langue latine et probablement de la langue grecque, Radegonde fit de tels progrés qu'elle parvint en peu de temps à lire dans les textes originaux les écrits des Pères et des docteurs de l'Église.»[188]

Published only three decades after Briand's work, René Aigrain's *Sainte Radegonde (Vers 520-587)*[189] is still the primary reference for many contemporary scholars. He writes, "Radegonde, outre l'initiation aux travaux de son sexe, reçut une formation littéraire presque

[186] *Carmina*, 11.VI.10, 731.
[187] Anonymous, "Review," 59.
[188] Briand, *Sainte Radegonde,* 8-9.
[189] Aigrain, *Sainte Radegonde*.

unique chez les femmes de son temps."[190] Throughout the biography, his disdain for Fortunatus shines through, and Aigrain attributes the list of theologians provided by Fortunatus to poetic license, though it is clear that he has little regard for Fortunatus as a poet. The basic lines of his argument are that even Gregory of Tours and Fortunatus couldn't read Greek, so it is impossible to imagine how Radegund could have acquired it at Athies; furthermore, he says, there were far more things written in Latin that would be suitable for a woman's interest for Radegund to read, and although he appears willing to accept the idea that Radegund could have encountered Athanasius, Gregory, and Basil, he assumes that this would have been in Latin.[191] Nor does Aigrain suggest that Radegund had received any education before her capture by Clothar.

Taken on their own, these evaluations of Radegund's literacy in Greek are inconclusive; all opine, but what they have to say is filtered through their contexts. Of Radegund's literary prowess, similar arguments or claims are made, and we will look at these shortly. We do have one person, though, who writes clearly and unequivocally that Radegund did read the Fathers. Fortunatus wrote of her that in addition to the Scriptures and the Rule of Caesarius, she read "whatever Gregory and Basil teach, the writings of fierce Athanasius," as well as the great Latin theologians of the day. This is a man who knew her for decades, and it is to him and other contemporaries of Radegund that we will soon turn.

Disputed Authorship: The Epistolary Letters

In 1888, Charles Nisard argued that the poems *De excidio Thoringiae* and *Ad Artachin*, which had previously been attributed to Fortunatus, were written by Radegund alone: « Quant aux deux autres, la Ruine de la Thuringe [*De excidio Thoringiae*] et Artachis [*Ad Artachin*], Radegonde en

[190] Aigrain, *Sainte Radegonde*, 29.

[191] Aigrain, *Sainte Radegonde*, 30

est, selon moi, l'unique auteur. »[192] In his literary and stylistic analysis, he compared them with Fortunatus' poem in honour of the murdered Galswintha. Like Aigrain, his estimation of the literary qualities of Fortunatus was quite low. Nisard posited that the abundant examples of "mauvais goût" in Fortunatus are nowhere to be found in *De excidio Thoringiae* and *Ad Artachin*. and that Radegund wrote them with the clarity and facility of Ovid:

> ...where there is delicacy, nobility even in the vivacity of lament, and where, at times, poetry itself possesses the clarity and ease of Ovid, these two poems, I say, in my humble opinion, were not only conceived but were written in their entirety by Radegonde.[193]

He found in them evidence of a different, more refined poetic style, saying, "A woman, I repeat, is its sole author, and that woman is Saint Radegund."[194] Nisard had nothing to say about the *Letter to Justin and Sophia*, another work attributed to Fortunatus sometimes attributed to Radegund, written in thanks after having received a piece of the True Cross from them as a gift. However, he reminds the reader that Fortunatus himself, in his surviving letters to Radegund, writes of her charming poetry.[195]

Like Nisard, Édouard de Fleury argued in 1843 that Radegund's prose was to be preferred to that of Fortunatus for its clarity, simplicity, and elegance.[196] He argued for a very literate community, one in which the sisters would have been responsible for producing books. He cites Cyprian's *Vie de Saint Caesaire*,[197] which says that the nuns of Arles were trained in the transcription of books.

Wallace-Hadrill comes to a different conclusion from Nisard about *De excidio Thoringiae*; he says it "is written as if by Radegundis… Basically the story must be Radegundis' own; but the dream-world is the poet's."[198] In *Sources and Analogues of Old English Poetry: The Major Latin*

[192] Nisard, "Poésies de Sainte Radegonde," 54.
[193] Nisard, "Des Poésies de Sainte Radegonde," 56.
[194] Nisard, "Poésies de Sainte Radegonde," 57, translation mine.
[195] Nisard, "Poésies de Sainte Radegonde," 50.
[196] De Fleury, *Histoire de Sainte Radégonde,* 179.
[197] De Fleury, *Histoire de Sainte Radégonde,* 180n.
[198] Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*, 84

Texts in Translation, Calder and Allen attribute the poem to Fortunatus with no further comment.[199] Michael Roberts takes the same approach in his new complete Latin-English side-by-side translation of the poetry of Venantius Fortunatus, not only with *De excidio Thoringiae*,[200] but also with the *Letter to Justin and Sophia*[201] and *Ad Artachin*.[202] This volume also includes all of the letters written by Fortunatus to and about Radegund.

In *The Writings of Medieval Women,* Marcelle Thiébaux discusses literary culture at Sainte-Croix (88-89) and the expectation that Radegund would have been highly literate. She presents *De excidio Thoringiae* and *Ad Artachin* as being written by Radegund, without giving any indication whatsoever that there might be scholarship to the contrary. Thiébaux's anthology is useful for its translation of Baudonivia's *Vita*, as well as a translation of Caesaria of Arles' letter to Radegund and Richild. Dyan Elliott also suggests that Radegund may have authored or co-authored *De excidio Thoringiae*.[203]

There are several relevant observations about Radegund's literary contributions. In "Women Authors: Latin Texts," Phyllis Brown attributes *De excidio Thoringiae* and *Ad Artachin* to Radegund.[204] Steven Stofferahn challenges the idea that women's literacy was rare:

> To be sure, most women in positions of authority (particularly abbesses or widows) made sure to wield adequate Latin skills, as the settlement of legal disputes often came down to which side was more adept at using the written word to back up its claims."[205]

In "Sermons and Preaching," Beverly Kienzle reminds us that the verb *praedicare* was used by Baudonivia to describe Radegund as a preacher.[206] Finally, Jane Jeffrey writes of her:

> Radegund was well educated in Latin, rhetoric, the writings of the church Fathers, and the lives of female martyrs and saints. Royal status combined with literacy provided Radegund

[199] Venantius Fortunatus, "The Destruction of Thuringia," in *Sources and Analogues of Old English Poetry: The Major Latin Texts in Translation*, (Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1976), 137-40.
[200] *Carmina*, 760-771.
[201] *Carmina*, Appendix.II, 772-779.
[202] *Carmina*, Appendix.III, 778-783.
[203] Elliott, *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell*, 66.
[204] Brown, "Women Authors: Latin Texts," in *WGMEAE*, 849.
[205] Stofferahn, "Literacy and Reading," in *WGMEAE*, 470.
[206] Kienzle, "Sermons and Preaching," in, 736.

> an advantage few early medieval women had. She could make her voice heard in domestic, political, and church affairs. A prolific writer, she authored an epic lament on the destruction of her Germanic homeland, *The Thuringian War [De excidio Thoringiae]*, an elegy on a cousin's murder, *Letter to Artachis [Ad Artachin]*, and numerous letters to kings, emperors, and bishops advocating peace. Her most influential letter is the *Letter of Foundation*, which Gregory of Tours includes in his *History of the Franks [Decem libri]*.[207]

Ian Fielding discusses the authorship of the three poems as well. He is not dismissive of Nisard's arguments. Cherewatuk only finds room in a couple of footnotes, perhaps because her arguments over a century later bring very little that is new to Nisard's position. Despite his clear respect for her education, acknowledging the *Letter of Foundation*, in which Radegund lays out "this document in which I have set out all my plans" and clearly lays out a number of solutions to solve legal problems in the case of unforeseen future events.[208] "Radegund was, at the very least, a competent writer of Latin…the notion that *De excidio Thoringiae* might be Radegund's own work is not completely implausible."[209] Fielding suggests, however, that owing to the Ovidian literary devices used, Fortunatus should be viewed as a "ghost author."[210]

Jo Ann McNamara is undecided about the authorship of *De excidio Thoringiae*, acknowledging its authorship "either by Radegund herself or by her friend Venantius Fortunatus (d. 609) with her verbal collaboration."[211] McNamara eschews decision here, suggesting that "it is likely that she composed the poem, or Fortunatus composed it for her."[212]

Karen Cherewatuk ascribes three verse epistles to Radegund: *De excidio Thoringiae*, *Letter to Justin and Sophia*, and *Ad Artachin*.[213] Cherewatuk makes no reference to Nisard's original claim, nor does she acknowledge the scholarship that disagrees with her assessment that

[207] Jeffrey, "Radegund," in *WGMEAE*, 693.
[208] Radegund, "Letter of Foundation," in *Decem libri*, IX.42, 536.
[209] Fielding, "The Ovidian Heroine," 184.
[210] Fielding, "The Ovidian Heroine," 184.
[211] McNamara, "Radegund, Queen of the Franks," 61.
[212] McNamara, "Radegund, Queen of the Franks," n22.
[213] Cherewatuk, "Radegund and Epistolary Tradition," 20.

Radegund authored these works, although at the time of her writing this it was clearly a bone of contention for scholars of Radegund and Fortunatus. She discusses the three poems from a feminist perspective, examining "how Radegund explores available female personae to project her concern" and analyzing "the presentation of self Radegund constructs from classical and Germanic traditions."[214]

Brian Brennan cross-examines the attribution by Nisard and Cherewatuk of poetry to Radegund. He writes that "Fortunatus' works reveal him writing to bishops on Radegund's behalf, poetically reinforcing those guarantees of episcopal support that she had obtained for her convent,"[215] and that "we have no evidence that she had Greek," although he is willing to concede some evidence of a literary tradition in the convent. [216] Brennan believes that when Fortunatus describes her "great poems," he is doing so in a purely ironic sense.[217] Brennan goes to the passage cited by Cherewatuk from Baudonivia's *Vita*[218] alluding to letters of thanks sent by Radegund,.[219] He finds that "when we examine the cited passage in Baudonivia's *Vita Radegundis* we discover that there is in fact no mention there of Radegund ever having sent "letters of thanks" to the emperor."[220] Brennan further notes that Fortunatus is characterised by having "an excessive [addiction to] alliteration and a liking for polyptoton and paronomasia,"[221] illustrated by drawing a connection to the *Letter to Justin and Sophia*. Brennan argues that "Cherewatuk's attribution of the poem *De excidio Thoringiae* to Radegund is based primarily on a confusion between the author of the work and the female persona deployed by the author within the work itself" and he points to the common use of female personae by Fortunatus.[222]

[214] Cherewatuk, "Radegund and Epistolary Tradition," 20.
[215] Brennan, "Disputed Authorship," 336.
[216] Brennan, "Disputed Authorship," 338.
[217] Brennan, "Disputed Authorship," 440.
[218] *Vita II*.17, 119.
[219] Brennan, "Disputed Authorship," 341.
[220] Brennan, "Disputed Authorship," 341.
[221] Brennan, "Disputed Authorship," 342.
[222] Brennan, "Disputed Authorship," 442.

Brennan states categorically that Cherewatuk fails to back up her argument, that "there is no evidence, stylistic or otherwise, that would lend support" to Cherewatuk's theory,[223] which he also labels "rash and unconvincing."[224] He cannot imagine how poets like Virgil, Claudian, and Ovid would be known by Radegund, because we don't know enough about her education and it would be strange for Gregory of Tours and Fortunatus to be less well-read than she. This is the same argument made by Aigrain: how could Radegund possibly possess literary mastery superior to that of her male contemporaries? It would be a shame to miss important points made by Brennan because of an adverse reaction to his tone, but his arguments on this attribution are unconvincing and perhaps even patronizing, considering the evidence we have seen and will continue to examine for education among elite women. Brennan argues against the literary acumen of Radegund by referring to a poem written about Radegund by Fortunatus, asking for works of Christian literature on her behalf, to argue:

> While it cannot be established with any precision whom the recipients of this poem might have been, it is probable, given the way that they are addressed, that they are bishops. They are deemed by the poet to be learned in Greek and Latin literature: their ears take in the refreshment of the Castalian spring, the granaries of Demosthenes enrich them and they bathe in the waters of Homer. They have Cicero to give them food and Vergil to give them drink. Balancing all this they also take Christian nourishment in the form of apostolic teaching.[225]

The difficulty here is that Fortunatus is describing Radegund as an epitome of virtue and a towering intellect at least equal to their own. The force of her erudition is what will convince them to be generous with their gifts of poetry. If Brennan's argument is good for the gander, it must surely be good for the goose as well.

Jennifer Edwards argues that we cannot treat any of the texts about Radegund as objective[226] because they are simply being used as tools of propaganda to establish power; Radegund's

[223] Brennan, "Disputed Authorship," 345.
[224] Brennan, "Disputed Authorship," 345
[225] Brennan, "Disputed Authorship," 338.
[226] Edwards, *Superior Women*, 33.

persona is used as it suits those with a vested interest in gaining or maintaining power. Edwards claims that the reading stipulated by the *Rule of Arles* required "that the women spend two hours a day learning to read",[227] a rather ungenerous interpretation of the *Rule*. It is true that the eighteenth rule ends with "all shall learn to read,"[228] but the requirement to give two hours each morning "to reading" is in the following rule.[229] One can see from this rule that unlettered women were accepted in the community if they committed to acquiring the ability to read, but Edwards seems to imply that such a lack of literacy would have been the default.

Sr. Maria del Fiat Miola opposes such a position, arguing that the first female monastic community in Arles was a scriptorium.[230] Their "hidden pastoral labor"[231] made them collaborators "in a material way to the Christianization of the area."[232] If we accept the arguments of del Fiat Minola, Radegund chose a *Rule* whose true authors, or at least co-authors, were Caesaria the Elder and Caesaria the Younger,[233] with whom Caesarius shared mutual respect and "love based not simply on common ideals but on a shared work."[234] These rules had already been tested and formed in a community[235] of "highly literate women."[236]

Edwards alludes to Fortunatus' authorship of the three epistolary poems on several occasions, particularly her correspondence with Justin and Sophia. Citing Baudonivia's *Vita.16*, she writes that Radegund sent them "a gift of eloquent poetry, courtesy of Fortunatus." [237] A difficulty here is that Baudonivia mentions Fortunatus only once in the introduction of her *Vita*.[238] In the passage used by Edwards, Baudonivia says this:

> What Helena accomplished in the East, blessed Radegund brought about in Gaul. Since she wanted in no way to act without consultation as long as she was living in the world, she

[227] Edwards, *Superior Women,* 43.
[228] *Regula*.18, 175.
[229] *Regula*.19, 175.
[230] Del Fiat Miola, "The Female Monastery," 95.
[231] Del Fiat Miola, "The Female Monastery," 95.
[232] Del Fiat Miola, "The Female Monastery," 87.
[233] Del Fiat Miola, "The Female Monastery," 90.
[234] Del Fiat Miola, "The Female Monastery," 95.
[235] Del Fiat Miola, "The Female Monastery," 90-91.
[236] Del Fiat Miola, "The Female Monastery," 95.
[237] Edwards, *Superior Women,* 62.
[238] *Vita II*.4*,* 107.

> sent a letter to the most excellent lord King Sigibert, under whose sovereignty the country was ruled. She asked his permission, for the sake of the whole country's well-being and the stability of his realm, to try to obtain the wood of God's Cross from the Emperor Justin. The king very graciously gave his approval to the holy queen's request.
>
> Full of devotion and kindled with ardent longing, Radegund did not send any gifts to the emperor, since she needed such moneys to serve God's poor. Instead she occupied herself with prayer in the company of the saints, whose relics she called on continually, and she dispatched messengers to the emperor. She obtained what she prayed for: the holy wood of God's Cross, ornamented with gold and jewels, in addition to the many saints' relics that had been preserved in the East. Now they would reside together in one place, and she gloried very much in this.[239]

There is no mention here of Fortunatus or his work. Since Baudonivia knew him and had already referred to his *Vita*,[240] it would be strange not to make any connection with him in this account. As Brennan observes of Cherewatuk, Edwards seems to have drawn connections that are not obvious to others who investigate the primary source material.

Julia Hillner looks at attribution of letters differently. She considers the veracity of attributed authorship in letters by Galla Placidia, whose letters are usually attributed to Cassiodorus, Radegund, and Amalasuentha,[241] examining them through a socio-political lens and finding that these letters played a role in deeply complex political processes:

> …most letter-writing processes, and certainly at this highest government level, were collective events. Authorship in this period was a multi-layered concept, of which women could only claim a part, even though we should not forget that it was ultimately the lending of an imperial or royal woman's name to a letter that provided it with authority.[242]

Hillner also obliquely acknowledges the difficulty of being able to ascertain the historical facts for certain, while pointing to the fact that male writers would often adopt a female persona or "female register," explicitly gendering "the content, on mutually agreed and conventional cultural norms on how women felt, behaved and spoke."[243]

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[239] *Vita II*.16, 117.
[240] *Vita II*, 107.
[241] Hillner, "Empresses, Queens and Letters," 355.
[242] Hillner, "Empresses, Queens and Letters," 373.
[243] Hillner, "Empresses, Queens and Letters," 369

The only way to arrive at a definitive answer as to the authorship of *De excidio Thoringiae*, *Letter to Justin and Sophia*, and *Ad Artachin* would be to discover completely new evidence that would help to shed light on some of the difficulties. There is a divergence of perspective among highly qualified experts. I am content to leave this question unanswered in any objective sense, even while noting that there is already enough evidence of Radegund's erudition, and that if the literary imagination of Cassiodorus did nothing to diminish the public perception of Theodoric the Great, there is no reason to imagine that the talents of Fortunatus would diminish the public image of Radegund. This is particularly true when what has been indisputably preserved of Radegund's capacities for self-expression, notably in the *Letter of Foundation*, demonstrates the titanium strength of her intellect, and when Fortunatus has been so lavish in his praise of her many strengths.

Reading Radegund

A clear majority of scholarship attributes the three epistolary poems to Radegund. My own examination of the evidence leads me to think that these epistolary poems were probably written, or co-authored at the very least, by Radegund herself.

Without making an appeal to authority, it is prudent for the time being to set them aside as being of inconclusive authorship, without negating the importance they have in providing the reader with a sense of Radegund's lived experience, be they penned by Fortunatus or by her. My experience in the artistic milieu also make it very easy for me to imagine such a collaborative effort. If I were to be convinced that Fortunatus had indeed scripted all three, however, it would need to come down to a question of style, and not of eloquence. The authorship of Radegund's *Letter of Foundation* is not questioned by scholars, and it demonstrates her erudition.

A majority of scholarship also suggests that Radegund had been highly educated, to the point of having Greek. There are dissenters, but their arguments, when they make any, boil down to the idea that a woman could not have been more educated than her male contemporaries. This is unconvincing when placed side by side with evaluations from the very men in question, who shower fulsome praise on her abilities. Baudonivia, too, writes of Radegund's passion for taking in the word:

> When the singing of psalms in her presence came to a close, she would conduct her reading. She never stopped, day or night, even while she was taking some scanty refreshment for her body…. Even during the night or whenever she appeared to seize an hour's nap, she always had someone read the lesson to her. If the reader felt herself growing sleepy and thought that Radegund was resting a little, she might stop reading. But Radegund's mind was absorbed in Christ, as if she were saying, "I sleep but my heart is wakeful" (Song of Songs 5.2). She would ask, "Why are you speechless? Read, don't stop!"[244]

Here are a few of the descriptors of Radegund offered by Fortunatus: "Holy and honoured Radegund";[245] "an enduring temple of God;"[246] "my mother;"[247] [Lord Germanus] is more distinguished in status, she is dearer to my soul;"[248] "powerful queen";[249] "Radegund, mind fertile with God, life itself for the sisters;"[250] "my sweet, gracious, and excellent mother;"[251] and "my blessed mistress, your [Bishop Gregory's] daughter, or rather mother, the lady Radegund."[252]

If we must place supposition beside what has been documented by people who knew her when she was alive, if we must compare opposing opinions drawn from the same evidence with the evidence itself, I believe we must conclude that at the very least, Radegund was deeply familiar with Latin theology and had translations which are unknown to the world today, or,

[244] *Vita I*.9, 113-114.
[245] *Carmina*, 11.III.10, 725.
[246] *Carmina*, 8.I.68, 495.
[247] *Carmina*, 8.II.4, 495.
[248] *Carmina*, 8.II.9, 497.
[249] *Carmina*, 8.VIII.8, 531.
[250] *Carmina*, 8.IX.1, 533.
[251] *Carmina*, *Appendix*.XXVIII.1, 817.
[252] *Carmina*, 8.XII, 541.

more likely, that she did have Greek as well as Latin. Fortunatus said of Hilary, Gregory, Ambrose, and Augustine that "even if they became known to me by observation, it was when I was drowsy."[253] He said of Radegund, in contrast, that Gregory and Basil, Athanasius and Hilary, Ambrose and Jerome, Augustine, Sedulius, Orosius, and Caesarius "are the foods she feeds on when she is hungry; her flesh is never indulged until her spirit is already full first."[254]

[253] *Carmina*, 5.I.7, 285.

[254] *Carmina*, 8.I.61, 495.

CHAPTER TWO: WHAT RADEGUND READ

Which Gregory?

The banquet at which Radegund feeds her soul, says Fortunatus, is "whatever the holy canon prescribes: whatever Gregory and Basil teach," as well as the writings of Athanasius (*c.*296 – 373);[255] Hilary of Poitiers (*c.*315 – *c.*368), "the Athanasius of the West;"[256] Ambrose (*c.*339 – 397) of Milan with roots in Gaul;[257] Jerome (*c.*345 – 420), the biblical scholar and translator who spent time in Gaul;[258] the great theologian Augustine of Hippo (354 – 430);[259] Sedulius (5th century) the priest and author of *Paschale Carmen*, a poetic rendering of the Gospel;[260] and Orosius of Braga (*c.*385 – 418), priest and historian.[261] In this list, the names of the Fathers could only refer to individuals, with the exception of Gregory. To which Gregory was Fortunatus referring?

In *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, there are eight Saints with the name of Gregory whose dates would hypothetically allow them to be included in Fortunatus' list. The first is Gregory Thaumaturgos (*c.*213 – *c.*270), a Greek Church father and disciple of Origen.[262] He is followed chronologically by Gregory the Illuminator (*c.*240 – 332), the "Apostle of Armenia."[263] There is Gregory of Nyssa (*c.*330 – *c.*395), brother of Saint Basil of Caesaria,[264] and also Gregory of Nazianzus (*c.*330 – *c.*390), known as "the Theologian," a friend of Saint Basil, whose father, the Bishop of Nazianzus in Cappadocia, was also named "Gregory." The

[255] "Athanasius St," in *TODCC*, 119.
[256] "Hilary of Poitiers, St," in *TODCC*, 796.
[257] "Ambrose, St," in *TODCC*, 49.
[258] "Jerome, St," in *TODCC*, 867.
[259] "Augustine, St, of Hippo," in *TODCC*, 128.
[260] "Sedulius," in *TODCC*, 1478.
[261] Craig L. Hanson, "Introduction", in *Iberian Fathers*, volume 3, 97.
[262] "Gregory Thaumaturgus, St," in *TODCC*, 713.
[263] "Gregory the Illuminator, St," in *TODCC*, 711.
[264] "Gregory of Nyssa, St," in *TODCC*, 712.

saint and bishop Gregory of Elvira (died after 392), among "the most intransigent opponents of Arianism," might also be included in our list of Gregories.[265] There is, of course, Gregory of Tours (*c.*538 – 594), Bishop and historian of the Franks;[266] Pope Gregory the Great (*c.*540 – 604), sometimes known as "Gregory Dialogos";[267] and even Saint Gregory (late 6th century), Bishop of Agrigentum in Sicily.[268] Of these eight Gregories, there are some important connections to be made that may help narrow down the choice.

Gregory of Tours knew Radegund personally and officiated at her funeral.[269] Besides writing of her in his *History of the Franks*,[270] he also recounts in *The Glory of the Martyrs* the moment at which he became an advocate for the relic of the Holy Cross in her possession.[271] Fortunatus knew Gregory of Tours personally as well, writing to him and regarding him;[272] we even have correspondence by Fortunatus to and about Gregory in connection with Radegund herself.[273] Although Gregory of Tours was a bishop, and his writings are soaked in the belief systems of his time, he is better known for his work as a politician and historian than as a theologian, and so I think it unlikely that Fortunatus would be referring to him.

Analysis of their dates shows that those of Gregory of Tours, Gregory the Great and Gregory of Agrigentum are all much later than any of the other names on the list Fortunatus gives, which ranges from *c.*296 to *c.*499. Gregory the Great was a contemporary of Radegund. He was also "the fourth and last of the traditional Latin 'Doctors of the Church'," [274] along with Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine, all of whom are named by Fortunatus in the list of Fathers read by

[265] "Gregory of Elvira, St," in *TODCC*, 711.
[266] "Gregory of Tours, St," in *TODCC*, 714.
[267] "Gregory Dialogos, St," in *TODCC*, 711.
[268] "Gregory, St," in *TODCC*, 710.
[269] *Decem libri*, IX.2, 481-482; Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Martyrs*, translated by Raymond Van Dam, Vol. 4, *Translated Texts for Historians* (Liverpool: LUP, 1988), I.104, 78-81.
[270] *Decem libri*, Index, 684-685.
[271] Gregory of Tours, *Glory of the Martyrs*, translated by Raymond Van Dam, Vol. 4, *Translated Texts for Historians* (Liverpool: LUP, 1988), I.5, 6.
[272] *Carmina*, *Praef.*4, 5; I.5.23, 23; II.3.13, 75; *ff.*
[273] *Carmina*, V.3.14, 295; VIII.12a, 541; IX.7.78, 589.
[274] "Gregory I, St," in in *TODCC*, 706.

Radegund.[275] However, his papacy did not begin until three years after her death in 587.[276] It seems unlikely that Fortunatus would refer to someone still alive in a list of thinkers who had all been dead for more than a generation without making a special observation or acknowledgement of this fact.

There are few details that connect Gregory Thaumaturgos, Gregory the Illuminator, and Gregory of Elvira to Radegund in any meaningful way, although all them fall within a chronological period that would not specifically exclude them. Gregory Thaumaturgos instructed Macrina the Elder, grandmother of Gregory of Nyssa;[277] but in a contest of contextual relevance, Gregory of Nyssa would win over Gregory Thaumaturgos, because Gregory of Nyssa is connected to Macrina the Younger, the reason for her grandmother's enduring fame.[278] Gregory the Illuminator (*c.*240 – 332), was exiled in his youth for a time to Cappadocia, but was not known as one of the Cappadocian Fathers.[279] Gregory of Elvira did write a commentary on the Song of Songs,[280] just as Gregory of Nyssa did;[281] but Gregory of Nyssa is connected to Basil of Caesarea as his brother and as a Cappadocian Father, while Gregory of Elvira is not. The Gregory paired with Basil by Fortunatus could well be either Gregory of Nazianzen or Gregory Nyssen. We will now explore these two possibilities.

Gregory of Nyssa

Philip Levine writes of Gregory Nyssen that his *De opificio hominis* is "the first extensive treatment by a Christian writer of the anthropological problem."[282] Gregory meant it as a

[275] "Ambrose, St," in *TODCC*, 49.
[276] *Decem libri*, IX.2, 481; "Gregory I, St," 706.
[277] "Gregory Thaumaturgus, St," in *TODCC*, 714.
[278] Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Saint Macrina*, translated by Kevin Corrigan (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2005), 22. Hereafter *Macrina*.
[279] "Gregory the Illuminator, St," in *TODCC*, 711.
[280] "Gregory of Elvira, St," in *TODCC*, 711.
[281] Gregory of Nyssa, *Homilies on the Song of Songs*, translated by Richard A. Norris, volume 13, *Writings from the Greco-Roman World* (Atlanta: SBL, 2012).
[282] Philip Levine, "Two Early Latin Versions of St. Gregory of Nyssa's *Περὶ Κατασκευης Ἀνθρώπου,"* in

conclusion to his brother Basil's unfinished set of sermons on the first six days of creation,[283] *In Hexaëmeron*.[284]

According to Franciso Bastitta-Harriet, "[i]t can be argued that the conception of human nature is the cornerstone of Gregory of Nyssa's entire system of thought."[285] Bastitta-Harriet describes Nyssen's anthropology as found in *De opificio hominis*[286] in this way: the human position in creation is one of "lordship over the whole earth;"[287] the condition of human being as *imago Dei* is one of royalty, wisdom, and virtue, allowing humans "to unite and associate with their Creator;"[288] the human body is good,[289] reflecting its position at the apex of the creation narrative;[290] in the human body, "the earthly is elevated together with the divine (συνεπαρθείη τῷ θείῳ τὸ γήινον), in equality of honour (κατὰ τὸ ὁμότιμον)"[291] and intended to exist in unity before the fall;[292] the human is "the bond between the material and spiritual worlds;"[293] humanity is indeed "a little world,"[294] but this refers to a microcosm, not of the created order alone, but of the Creator as well.[295]

This understanding of the human is further developed, according to Bastitta-Harriet, along the lines of human sovereignty: the human is capable of self-determination;[296] and the human as *imago Dei* is a mirror "filled with power and vitality, truly representing its model"[297] in a way that is appropriate to her status as a created being.[298] Furthermore, human freedom is rooted in

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Harvard Studies in Classical Philology 63 (1958): 482, n2.

[283] Francisco Bastitta-Harriet, *An Ontological Freedom: The Origins of the Notion in Gregory of Nyssa and Its Influence unto the Italian* Renaissance, volume 5, *Patristic Studies in Global Perspective* (Paderborn: Brill Schöningh, 2023), 81.

[284] Basil of Caesarea, *Exegetic Homilies*, translated by Agnes Clare Way, *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation* 46 (Washington: CUAP, 2003).

[285] Bastitta-Harriet, *An Ontological Freedom*, xv.

[286] Bastitta-Harriet, *An Ontological Freedom*, 14.

[287] Bastitta-Harriet, *An Ontological Freedom*, 8.

[288] Bastitta-Harriet, *An Ontological Freedom*, 9.

[289] Bastitta-Harriet, *An Ontological Freedom*, 13.

[290] Bastitta-Harriet, *An Ontological Freedom*, 11.

[291] Bastitta-Harriet, *An Ontological Freedom*, 15.

[292] Bastitta-Harriet, *An Ontological Freedom*, 16.

[293] Bastitta-Harriet, *An Ontological Freedom*, 19.

[294] Bastitta-Harriet, *An Ontological Freedom*, 19; Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, in *A Select Library*, volume V, series 2, 428. Hereafter *De anima*.

[295] Bastitta-Harriet, *An Ontological Freedom*, 20.

[296] Bastitta-Harriet, *An Ontological Freedom*, 24.

[297] Bastitta-Harriet, *An Ontological Freedom*, 26.

[298] Bastitta-Harriet, *An Ontological Freedom*, 27.

the ontology of *hypostasis*,[299] in which the very essence of the human self is always personified.[300] Through the spiritual birth of baptism, a human being is empowered with agency and freedom.[301]

Bastitta-Harriet's summary of Nyssen's anthropology does not, however, include any analysis of woman or womanhood, except to acknowledge that Gregory did indeed have something to say about the two sexes, obliquely referencing "the suspicion of heterodoxy regarding some of Gregory's doctrines, such as his understanding of *apokatastasis* or the division of the sexes."[302]

Reading *De opificio hominis*, Radegund would surely have noted that all of these characteristics of humanity outlined by Nyssen, and summarised above by Bastitta-Harriet, apply to humanity as a whole. But she would also have read Gregory affirming that humanity as a whole was created in the image of God, in whom "there is neither male nor female."[303] Humanity as *imago Dei* "finds its resemblance to the Archetype in being filled with all good."[304] All humanity bears within itself the Divine image, regardless of sex,[305] which Gregory writes was created because God knew that humanity would sin, and therefore gave them the capacity to procreate, thus creating new souls, even in their fallen state, whereas if they had not sinned, they would have increased sexlessly, in some angelic and spiritual way.[306] When he refers to Eve's eating of the forbidden fruit, he does not call her the mother of death, but he writes, "that eating became the mother of death to men."[307]

[299] Bastitta-Harriet, *An Ontological Freedom*, 29.
[300] Bastitta-Harriet, *An Ontological Freedom*, 36.
[301] Bastitta-Harriet, *An Ontological Freedom*, 44.
[302] Bastitta-Harriet, *An Ontological Freedom*, 245.
[303] *De opificio hominis*, XVI.9, 405.
[304] *De opificio hominis*, XVI.10, 405.
[305] *De opificio hominis*, XVI.17, 406.
[306] *De opificio hominis*, XVII.4, 407.
[307] *De opificio hominis*, XX.4, 410.

Reading further in *De opificio hominis*, Radegund would surely have seen how Gregory compared how God nourishes the human mind with the way a mother gradually weans her child from breastmilk, to soft food, "to more solid nourishment," allowing the Christian to minister to others by removing the illness of original sin as in the healing of Simon Peter's mother-in-law through the knowledge of resurrection.[308] She "served" Jesus,[309] Simon, Andrew, James and John after being healed: Jerome's Latin, *ministrabat*, related to the Latin word "minister," or "servant" or "attendant;" and in the original Greek, *διάκονος*, from whence comes the English word "deacon."

Gregory continues this argument with allusions to Jairus' daughter[310] and the healing of the woman with the issue of blood.[311,312] In like fashion, the widow of Nain[313] is the true recipient of the miracle of resurrection for her son.[314] After having made it very clear that he views women and men as participating equally in *imago Dei*, Nyssen concludes *De opificio hominis* by writing that "the true and perfect soul is the human soul"[315] and enjoining all people to "return to that Divine grace in which God at the first created" human beings in His own image.[316]

Fortunatus tells us that Radegund is "a Thecla in her endurance."[317] By the time of Radegund, Thecla had been "extolled as an exemplary virgin and martyr" in Gaul for several generations.[318] Thecla was a woman of great independence and courage, a saint who eschewed marriage for virginity and martyrdom, a colleague of the Apostle Paul; her story, although apocryphal, can be found in *The Acts of Paul and Thecla*.[319] From Sulpicius Severus (*c.*316 –

[308] *De opificio hominis*, XXV.7, 415.
[309] Matthew 8:14-15; Mark 1:29-31; Luke 4:38-39.
[310] Mark 5:21-43; Matthew 9:18-26l Luke 8:40-56.
[311] Matthew 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-34; Luke 8:43-49.
[312] *De opificio hominis*, XXV.9, 416.
[313] Luke 7:11-17.
[314] *De opificio hominis*, XXV.10, 416.
[315] *De opificio hominis*, XXX.33, 427.
[316] *De opificio hominis*, XXX.34, 427.
[317] *Carmina*, IX.6.5, 583.
[318] Stephen J. Davis, *The Cult of Saint Thecla: A Tradition of Women's Piety in Late Antiquity*, *Oxford Early Christian Studies* (Oxford: OUP, 2008), 83.
[319] "The Acts of Paul and Thecla," in *The Apocryphal New Testament* (OUP: Oxford, 1993), 364-374.

420), a devotee of Martin during the lifetime of the saint,[320] we have not only a hagiography,[321] but also letters[322] and dialogues[323] on Saint Martin. In the *Dialogues*, Severus testifies that Martin experienced visitations by Agnes, Thecla, and Mary.[324]

Martin, whose "cult reached its zenith under the Merovingians,"[325] was a disciple of "gentle Hilary," one of the illustrious Fathers on Fortunatus' list.[326] Fortunatus turned to Severus "for material for his metrical life of St. Martin… dedicated to his friends, Agnes and Radegunda."[327] From Gregory of Tours, we learn that Fortunatus was a devotee of Saint Martin because he witnessed miracles attributed to the power of Saint Martin,[328] and because Fortunatus himself had "confessed that eyesight had returned to him and to Felix, his fellow scholar in the school of rhetoric at Ravenna, when they touched their eyes with the oil which was burning in a lamp under an image of the picture of the blessed Martin."[329]

Meehan writes in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* that the cult of Macrina "in the West is late since the life was not translated into Latin until the 16th century."[330] It is Gregory Nyssen, not Gregory Nazianzen, who makes known to the world the secret name of his sister Macrina:

> And when the time came when she was to be freed from her labour pain by giving birth to the child, she fell asleep… someone in supra-human majesty of form and shape appeared to address the little child by the name of Thekla, that Thekla of great fame among maidens…. And so that was Macrina's secret name.[331]

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[320] Alexander Roberts, "Life and Writings of Sulpitius Severus," in *A Select Library*, translated by William Moore and Henry Austin Wilson, volume XI, series 2, (NY: CLPC, 1894), 1.
[321] "Sulpitius Severus on the Life of Saint Martin," in *A Select Library*, volume XI, series 2, 3-17.
[322] "The Letters of Sulpitius Severus," in *A Select Library*, volume XI, series 2, 18-23.
[323] "The Dialogues of Sulpitius Severus," in *A Select Library*, volume XI, series 2, 24-54.
[324] "The Dialogues of Sulpitius Severus, Chapter XIII" in *A Select Library*, volume XI, series 2, 45.
[325] "Martin, St," in *TODCC*, 1044.
[326] *Carmina*, VIII.1.55, 495.
[327] William C. McDermott, "Introductory Note to 'The Miracles of Saint Martin'," in *Gregory of Tours: Selections from the Minor Works* (Philadelphia: UPP, 1949), 29.
[328] *Gregory of Tours: Minor Works*, 44-46.
[329] *Gregory of Tours: Minor Works*, 44-46.
[330] D. Meehan, "Macrina, Ss.," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., vol. 9 (Detroit, MI: Gale, 2003), 25.
[331] *Macrina, 22.*

Radegund, on reading Nyssen's account of his sister Macrina's life in Greek, may have learned about the deaconess Lampadion there.[332] She who so loved relics and acquired her own piece of the True Cross[333] may well have been struck by Vetiana's assertion that the ring worn by Macrina contained a piece of the True Cross, "a fragment of the wood of life."[334] More importantly, though, she could not have failed to notice his deep admiration for the oldest child of the family, who acted as a guide for their mother,[335] a mentor for their brother Basil,[336] and a spiritual director for Gregory himself.[337] Reading the opening lines of *The Life of Macrina*, Radegund would have understood that for Gregory, there was nothing in her womanhood that made her less of an image-bearer.

> … in the course of our conversation we recalled the life of an honoured person; it was a woman who prompted our narrative, if, that is, we may call her a woman, for I do not know if it is appropriate to apply a name drawn from nature to one who has risen above nature.[338]

Gregory of Nyssa not only recounted the life and passing of his sister in his *Life of Macrina*, but also wrote of her wisdom in *De anima et resurrectione*, in which his sister, whom he calls "the Teacher," helps him to understand better the soul and the resurrection.[339]

Animal needs and failings such as feeding, aging, and sexual intercourse are not essential to humanity in its resurrected state, says Macrina.[340] As Gregory tells us in *De opificio hominis*, so says the Teacher in *De anima*:

> [When all the evil, fallen parts of our nature have been] utterly removed by the healing processes worked out by the Fire, then every one of the things which make up our conception of the good will come to take their place; incorruption, that is, and life, and honour, and grace, and glory, and everything else that we conjecture is to be seen in God, and in His Image, man as he was made."[341]

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[332] *Macrina, 45.*
[333] *Vita II.*16, 116-119.
[334] *Macrina, 47.*
[335] *Macrina, 29.*
[336] *Macrina, 26.*
[337] *Macrina, 39.*
[338] *Macrina, 21.*
[339] *De anima*, 430.
[340] *De anima*, 463-466.
[341] *De anima*, 468.

Not only would Radegund have understood from Gregory Nyssen that women and men are both made wholly in the image of God, but she may have read some of the most eloquent words on the subject as coming from the mouth of a woman, the Teacher, Macrina. Jesus is often addressed as "Teacher" in the Gospels.[342] Giving this title to his sister Macrina is a striking way for Gregory to portray her as being in the image of the Word, who is the Wisdom of God:

> Now if the existence of the world in its totality depends on the power of the Word, as our argument has shown, it follows logically that we cannot ascribe the combination of the various parts of the world to any other cause; it too must be due to the Word himself, through whom everything received its entry into being. Whether people choose to call him Word or Wisdom or Power or God or any other sublime and honorific title is a matter of indifference to us. Whatever term or name is produced to indicate this reality, the meaning of the various phrases used is identical - namely, that eternal power of God which creates what exists, contrives what does not yet exist, sustains what has been brought into being and foresees what is to come. The logic of the argument shows that this reality - the divine Word, Wisdom, Power - is the creator of human nature. He was not compelled to make man by any kind of necessity; it was the overflowing of love which led him to fashion the existence of a living creature of this particular kind. It was not right that his light should remain without anyone to see it, his glory without anyone to witness it, his goodness without anyone to enjoy it and all the other attributes of deity that we apprehend lie useless with no one to share in them or to enjoy them.[343]

For Gregory of Nyssa, women and men alike bear the image of God. In God's Providential foreknowledge of sin, sex differentiation came about so that humanity could be co-creators, with God, of new human life. The God Nyssen worshipped was maternal, spiritually weaning humans from milk to solid food. Gregory regularly underlined women from the biblical narratives as positive role models for all of humanity. He considered his sister Macrina to be a great philosopher and teacher. For Gregory, women are *eikones* of God just as men are; when they are at their best, they are bearers of royalty, wisdom, and virtue.

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[342] Jesus is often addressed as "Teacher" in the Bible, or addressed himself that way. See Matthew 8:19; 13:38; 19:16; 22:16, 34, 36; 23:8; 26:18; Mark 4:38; 9:17; 9:38; 10:17, 20, 35; 12:14, 19, 32; 13:1; 14:14; Luke 3:12; 7:40; 9:38; 11:45; 12:13; 18:18; 19:39; 20:21, 28, 39; 21:7; 22:11; John 1:38; 3:2; 8:4; 11:28; 13:13-14; 20:16.

[343] Gregory of Nyssa, "Catechetical Oration 5-8," in *Documents in Early Christian Thought* (Cambridge: CUP 1975), 102. Hereafter *DIECT*.

Gregory of Nazianzus

Gregory Nazianzen was the brilliant speaker and theologian whose "elegant preaching in the Church of the Anastasis was a great influence in restoring the Nicene faith and leading to its final establishment at the Council of Constantinople in 381."[344] Fortunatus writes:

> May [Bishop Gregory of Tours] live … in the company of brave Athanasius and famous Hilary, rich Martin and sweet Ambrose, where Gregory shines and holy Augustine pours his learning, Basil glitters and Caesarius gleams.[345]

This Gregory referenced does not specify whether the reader to infer is meant to infer Nyssen or Nazianzen. Nor this one, although it does serve as a demonstration that Fortunatus recognised Radegund as his theological superior:

> For while Plato Aristotle, Chyrysippus, and Pittacus are scarcely known to me by reputation, without my having read them, as for Hilary, Gregory, Ambrose, and Augustine, even if they became known to me by observation, it was when I was drowsy.[346]

In his Hymn on Bishop Leontius, Fortunatus gives a little background information about Gregory:

> Foolish is he who by his own efforts seeks to win preferment in the church, for the assumption of a sacred office should be a choice made by God. The beloved bishop Hilary did not contend for office, Martin positively fled from it, and Gregory reluctantly endured it.[347]

This reference provides some identifying details, but that information is not as helpful as might appear. Unfortunately, neither Nyssen nor Nazianzen can be said to have done anything more than endure their bishoprics. Anthony Meredith writes:

> Basil's sphere of influence was greatly reduced and, in order to compensate for this reduction in authority, he created at least two new dioceses at Sasima and Nyssa, to which he appointed his friend and his brother respectively. It can hardly be said that either appointment was 'happy'.[348]

[344] "Gregory of Nazianzus, St." in *TODCC*, 711.
[345] *Carmina*, V.3.35-40, 297.
[346] *Carmina*, V.1.7, 285.
[347] *Carmina*, I.16.33-40, 49-50.
[348] Anthony Meredith, "Introduction," in *Gregory of Nyssa* (Taylor & Francis Group, 1999), 4.

While defending Fortunatus' authorship of this poem, Brennan argues for Nazianzen over Gregory of Tours:

> The attribution of [*Hymnus de Lontio episcopo*] to Fortunatus has been questioned by Geneviève de Maillé, who claims that the reference to the Gregory who could 'scarcely bear' the episcopacy (1.16.40) is anachronistic for the time of Venantius' visit to Bordeaux in the late 560s, since Gregory of Tours did not become bishop till 573. I would argue, however, that this need not be read as a reference to Gregory of Tours. A much more likely candidate, in the context, is Gregory of Nazianzus, who boasted, in both his poetry and his letters, of how much he disliked the burden of the episcopacy. Venantius knew of Gregory of Nazianzus and respected him greatly as a monastic figure (5.3.39-40, 8.1.54, 9.6.5-6), so that the reference could well be to him.[349]

It is clear from the above passage that for both Brennan and de Mallé, Gregory of Tours cannot be the Gregory in question here, but Brennan does not give any consideration to the idea that it might actually be Gregory of Nyssa.

The reviewer of Hallam's *Introduction to the Literature of Europe* discussed earlier believed that Athanasius, Basil, and Gregory of Nazianzen had not been translated into Latin during the time of Radegund.[350] However, Tyrannius Rufinus (*c*.345-411) did in fact translate some works of Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus:[351] Basil's monastic rule, eight of his homilies, and ten works of Gregory Nazianzen.[352] Gregory of Nyssa's *Περὶ Κατασκευης Ἀνθρώπου* (commonly known as *On the Making of Man*) was translated by Dionysius Exiguus (5th to 6th century)[353] into Latin as *De opificio homini*.[354] Finally, Athanasius' *Life of Antony* had been translated once anonymously

[349] Brennan, "The Career of Venantius Fortunatus." *Traditio* 41 (1985): 64.
[350] Anonymous, "Review," 59.
[351] "Rufinus, Tyrannius," in *TODCC*, 1423.
[352] W. H. Fremantle, "Rufinus," in *A Dictionary of Christian Biography and Literature to the End of the Sixth Century, A.D., With an Account of the Principal Sects and Heresies*, edited by Henry Wace and William Piercy (London: Murray, 1911), 877.
[353] "Dionysius (7) Exiguus," in *TODCC*, 486.
[354] Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man*, in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, translated by William Moore and Henry Austin Wilson, volume V, series 2 (NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917), 387-427. Hereafter *De opificio hominis*.

and once in its well-known paraphrase by Evagrius.[355] On the reception history of Gregory Nazianzen into Latin, Christos Simelidis writes:

> Gregory was also well known in the Latin West. Apart from Rufinus' translations (already mentioned), it is suggestive that in a letter of about 600, written by Bishop Licinianus of Cartagena to Pope Gregory the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus is the only eastern father who joins Hilary of Poitiers, Ambrose and Augustine as being 'the holy ancient Fathers, the teachers and defenders of the Church'.131 Moreover, the only work of Gregory of Nyssa which was translated into Latin (Περὶ κατασκευῆς ἀνθρώπου) was attributed to Gregory of Nazianzus: Gregory of Nyssa 'was almost unknown in the Latin Middle Ages'.[356]

Despite Radegund's likely knowledge of Greek, it is possible that Nazianzen is the Gregory whom Fortunatus had in his mind's eye in lists that include such luminaries as Hilary, Ambrose, and Augustine. Let us now consider that Radegund may have been reading Nazianzen and examine what might have been added to her anthropology of womanhood through that reading.

In *The Image of God in the Theology of Gregory of Nazianzus*, Gabrielle Thomas argues that while some early church fathers did not allow the possibility of women imaging God,[357]

> (a) Gregory presents women as *eikones* of God, since Gregory takes care not to represent God according to gender; (b) Gregory argues that women should be treated justly on the basis that they are God's *eikones*; (c) women reveal the eikon dynamically in both body and soul and (d) defacing this *eikon*, for example, by means of cosmetics, reduces the *eikon* of God to an idol (εἴδωλον). [358]

"Gregory includes women when he speaks of human persons imaging Christ," writes Thomas.[359] This can be seen particularly well, as she notes, in his Poem I.2.29: "The race of Pandora are

[355] L. W. Barnard, "The Date of S. Athanasius' 'Vita Antonii,'" in *Vigiliae Christianae* 28, no. 3 (September 1974): 169.
[356] Christos Simelidis, "Gregory's Poetry in Byzantium," in *Selected Poems of Gregory of Nazianzus I.2.17; II.1.10, 19, 32: A Critical Edition with Introduction and Commentary*, Hypomnemata, 177 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 59.
[357] Gabrielle Thomas, *The Image of God in the Theology of Gregory of Nazianzus* (NY: Cambridge UP, 2019), 78.
[358] Thomas, *The Image of God*, 77.
[359] Thomas, *The Image of God*, 82.

shameless, but you, *eikon* of Christ, [m]ust shine with wisdom and understanding.[360] Nazianzen also argues for equality for women in divorce:[361]

> The question which you have put seems to me to do honour to chastity, and to demand a kind reply. Chastity, in respect of which I see that the majority of men are ill-disposed, and that their laws are unequal and irregular. For what was the reason why they restrained the woman, but indulged the man, and that a woman who practises evil against her husband's bed is an adulteress and the penalties of the law for this are very severe: but if the husband commits fornication against his wife, he has no account to give? I do not accept this legislation; I do not approve this custom. They who made the law were men, and therefore their legislation is hard on women, since they have placed children also under the authority of their fathers, while leaving the weaker sex uncared for…. God doth not so; but saith Honour thy father and thy mother…. See the equality of the legislation. There is one Maker of man and woman; one debt is owed by children to both their parents.[362]

Radegund's "innocent brother was killed"[363] by her husband and captor Clothar,[364] who "had seven sons by his various wives."[365] Bishop Médard had hesitated to consecrate her to diaconal ministry because she was bound in marriage.[366] She may also have been encouraged by Nazianzen's argument for equality of the sexes further on in the same sermon:

> The woman sinned, and so did Adam. The serpent deceived them both and one was not found to be the stronger and the other the weaker. But dost thou consider the better? Christ saves both by his Passion. Was He made flesh for the Man? So He was also for the woman. Did he die for the Man? The Woman also is saved by His death. He is called of the seed of David; and so perhaps you think the Man is honoured; but He is born of a Virgin, and this is on the Woman's side. They two, He says, shall be one Flesh; so let the one flesh have equal honour.[367]

Perhaps Radegund read Nazianzen's eulogy for his sister Gorgonia, where he praises his mother as a teacher and guide for his father[368] and says of Christian womanhood: "O nature of woman overcoming that of man in the common struggle for salvation, and demonstrating that the distinction between male and female is one of body not soul!"[369]

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[360] Thomas, *The Image of God*, 82.
[361] Thomas, *The Image of God*, 83.
[362] Gregory of Nazianzus, "Select Orations," in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 7, series 2 (Oxford: CLPC, 1894), XXXVII.6, 339-340. Hereafter *Orations.*
[363] *Vita I.*12, 75.
[364] *Decem libri*, III.7, 168.
[365] *Decem libri*, IV.3, 197.
[366] *Vita I.*12, 75.
[367] *Orations,* XXXVII.7, 340.
[368] *Orations*, VIII.5, 239.
[369] *Orations*, VIII.14, 242.

> For that which he has not assumed he has not healed; but that which is united to his Godhead is also saved. If only half Adam fell, then that which Christ assumes and saves may be half also; but if the whole of his nature fell, it must be united to the whole nature of Him that was begotten, and so be saved as a whole.[370]

The idea that Christ's assumption of humanity is required for our healing and salvation is certainly not unique to Gregory Nazianzen, but he is the one who formulated the notion so pithily. "Half of Adam" in the above quote does not refer to woman, but was meant to argue against the idea that Jesus Christ assumed only the animal part of humanity without assuming a human mind. Still, as Verna Harrison notes, "Christ brings salvation to every aspect of the human condition by uniting it to God within himself in the incarnation. It follows from this that if Christ saves as male, half of the human race is excluded from salvation."[371] We can ask with Augustine,

> So as long as each of us is trying to discover in the Holy Scriptures what their author meant, how is it objectionable if someone interprets them as meaning something that you, the Light of all truthful minds, show to be true, even though that is not what the author meant—when what the author meant was also true, just not that particular truth?[372]

Brian Daley notes that Gorgonia was "the head of a substantial household," whose Christ-centred life touched those closest to her and was "closer, perhaps, to the image of a desert ascetic than to that of a middle-class Christian wife and mother."[373] Nazianzen's "eulogy of his sister is really a discourse on Christian holiness."[374] Gregory applauds Gorgonia's modesty, reticence and ability to adhere to contemporary expectations of womanhood, while simultaneously writing of her wisdom:

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[370] "To Cledonius the Priest Against Apollinarius. (Ep. CI.)," in *Orations*, 440.
[371] Harrison, "Male and Female," 458.
[372] *Confessiones*, XII.18.27, 237.
[373] Brian E. Daley, "Oration 8: Funeral Oration for His Sister Gorgonia," in *Gregory of Nazianzus*, *The Early Church Fathers* (London: Routledge, 2006), 63. See also *Orations*, VIII.12, 241.
[374] Daley, "Oration 8," 63.

> What could be keener than the intellect of her who was recognized as a common adviser not only by those of her family, those of the same people and of the one fold, but even by all men round about, who treated her counsels and advice as a law not to be broken?[375]

In her ascetic practices, Nazianzen affirms that

> …she was seen to surpass not only women, but the most devoted of men…. In all these or in any one of them, is there man or woman who can boast of having surpassed her? … Such was her success in all points, as none else attained even in a moderate degree in one: to such perfection did she attain in each particular that any one might of itself have supplied the place of all.[376]

The words about Gorgonia that spilled from her brother's plume paint her as a woman of strength and great faith. In times of illness, "she imitated the woman whose fountain of blood was dried up by the hem of Christ's garment" in her prayers for healing.[377] She refused to guild the lily with jewelry, fashion and cosmetics, so as not to hide or shame her beauty as a creation of God, made in God's image.[378] In speaking of her domestic situation, Nazianzen writes that

> [Gorgonia] was able to avoid the disadvantages of each, and select and combine all that is best in both… blending the excellence of the married with that of the unmarried state, and proving that neither of them absolutely binds us to, or separates us from, God or the world …: but that it is mind which nobly presides over wedlock and maidenhood, and arranges and works upon them as the raw material of virtue under the master-hand of reason.[379]

It is difficult to see how woman's full humanity could be in question for Gregory Nazianzen. One must conclude from his writings that Christ assumed womanhood, or that femininity is not something about humanity in need of healing any more than masculinity.

Gregory of Nazianzen held a view of women that emphasized their equal participation in the image of God and their potential for spiritual excellence. He avoided gender-specific representations of the divine and argued for the just treatment of women, emphasizing their status as God's images and rejecting laws that affected women more harshly than men. He

[375] *Orations*, VIII.11, 241.
[376] *Orations*, VIII.13, 242.
[377] *Orations*, VIII.18, 243.
[378] *Orations*, VIII.10, 241.
[379] *Orations*, VIII.8, 240.

praised his sister Gorgonia as a woman of strength, wisdom, and ascetic devotion, whose life exemplified Christian holiness. His writings reflect a positive view of women's capabilities and virtues.

Basil

> But without reopening here the entire quest for the historical Socrates, it does seem to be at least permissible, if perhaps not obligatory, to take Gregory of Nyssa at his word about Macrina's philosophical learning and about her doctrinal orthodoxy, and therefore to link her name with those of her two brothers and Gregory of Nazianzus as the Fourth Cappadocian. It can be argued, moreover, that if Macrina as a historical personage had not been in fact as she was portrayed in the biography, it would have been extremely difficult for a fourth-century Greek Christian writer, even if he was her brother and a bishop of the church, to make up such a portrait and to claim that a real woman had been not only as pious but as learned and as articulate as this if she had not been. All of this, in turn, makes it all the more curious, as Peter Brown has noted, that "it is possible to read all the works of Basil of Caesarea without being able to guess, for a moment, that he had a sister, much less that that sister was none other than the great Macrina."[380]

Jaroslav Pelikan wants to call Macrina "the Fourth Cappadocian;" one might consider her to be the first, as she was the elder sister to Basil, the eldest son;[381] but perhaps we can give her this distinction in the way we give John the distinction of being "the Fourth Gospel."[382] Malone writes that Basil "is acknowledged by history as a great monastic founder, but who was bullied into the ascetic life of Macrina. His later famous rule was probably based on hers."[383] Their younger brother Gregory Nyssen writes that, upon Basil's return from a secular education, "Macrina took him in hand" because "he was monstrously conceited about his skill in rhetoric" and she persuaded him to embrace the monastic way of life. Morrison writes in *St. Basil and his Rule: A Study of Early Monasticism* that the monastic movement

[380] Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture: The Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism*, in *Gifford Lectures at Aberdeen, 1992-1993* (London: YUP, 1993), 9.

[381] *Macrina*, 22, 26.
[382] "John, St," in *TODCC*, 880.
[383] Malone, *Women & Christianity*, 141.

> Had no lack of supporters, but it required regulation and a proper surveillance, if it was to be of real permanent value to the cause of Christianity. It was Basil who undertook this task for Cappadocia, and by so doing eventually became both 'the Father of Eastern Monasticism' and a powerful influence upon St. Benedict when he drew up his rule for the monks of the West.[384]

McCarthy, the translator of Caesarius' rule, writes:

> Cenobitic life for women began, as it did for men, in the deserts of Egypt early in the fourth century and soon spread to Asia Minor under Basil, to Palestine and Rome under Jerome, and, near the end of the century, to Gaul under Martin.[385]

Basil's neglect of Macrina the Younger in his writings is a mystery, and while it may be owing to Macrina's private influence, Basil receives the credit for the work he undertook in the public sphere, although Harrison notes that he was inducted into monastic life "by his Sister Macrina, who thus appears to be the true founder of what is sometimes called 'Basilian' monasticism."[386] In any case, Harrison notes that Basil acknowledged women as his teachers:

> Two strong women were major influences in Basil's spiritual development, so that from childhood he had experience of exemplary female conduct that transcended the functions of subservient domesticity and child-rearing to which women were usually confined in his social context.[387]… In another letter, he says he has preserved the same understanding of God he received from his mother [Emmelia] and grandmother [Macrina the Elder],[388] not replacing one doctrine with another but completing what they passed on to him.[389]

It is true that, as Harrison writes, "Basil's literal and rigorist interpretation of biblical precepts combines with his strong sense of the closeness of eschatological realities to prevent his drawing many social conclusions from his ontology of gender."[390] This is made clear in his *Morals*,

[384] E. F. Morison, *St. Basil and His Rule: A Study in Early Monasticism*, *S. Deiniol* (London: OUP, 1912), 4.
[385] McCarthy, "Fifth- and Sixth-Century Convent Life," in *regula, 28.*
[386] Harrison, "Male and Female," 445.
[387] Harrison, "Male and Female," 443.
[388] Basil of Caesarea, "204. To the Neo-Caesareans," in *Letters*, translated by Agnes Clare Way, volume 28, *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation* (Washington: CUAP, 2008), 130.
[389] Harrison, "Male and Female," 444.
[390] Harrison, "Male and Female," 452.

where Basil interprets Scripture[391] as enjoining women to be submissive,[392] modest,[393] silent,[394] cover their heads,[395] restricting themselves to the domestic sphere.[396] These instructions are only very slightly mitigated by Basil's acknowledgement "that ready service, according to our ability, even in very small things and even if it be rendered by women, is acceptable to God."[397]

Thus, as Harrison writes, on some occasions "the social conservative in Basil seems to have won out over the moral rigourist, and chooses Roman law over the precept of Christ."[398] Following Karl Vogt,[399] Harrison argues that "this gender language is not meant literally but represents aspects of the human condition that every person shares."[400] Following Elizabeth Clark,[401] she writes that

> patristic language that speaks of exemplary women as somehow male needs to be understood in its social as well as its philosophical context.… Thus, the language of women 'becoming male' is a way of transcending culturally entrenched misogyny, not a reaffirmation of it.[402]

Understanding the Cappadocian movement towards seeing women as full participants in humanity may well be a bigger stretch for some of us than for Radegund, who could doubtless see the implications for her own life. Harrison has pointed to a number of places in which Basil himself transcends "the culture's traditional female anthropology," pointing away from this rigid social prison with his own words. His "Homily on the martyr Julitta"[403] "—if, indeed, it is proper

[391] Ephesians 5:22-26; I Timothy 2:9-15; I Corinthians 11 :3-5, 14:34-35.
[392] "Herewith Begins the *Morals,*" in *Basil of Caesarea, Ascetical Works*, edited by Mary Monica Wagner and Roy Joseph Deferrari, volume 9, *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation* (Washington: CUAP, 1999) 73.3, 190. Hereafter *Morals*.
[393] *Morals*, 73.4, 190.
[394] *Morals*, 73.5, 191.
[395] *Morals*, 56.7, 140.
[396] *Morals*, 73.6, 191.
[397] *Morals*, 37.1.4, 116.
[398] Harrison, "Male and Female," 453.
[399] See Kari Vogt, "'Männlichwerden'— Aspekte einer urchristlichen Anthropologie." *Concilium* 21, no. 6 (1985): 436, 441.
[400] Harrison, "Male and Female," 447.
[401] Elizabeth Clark, "Devil's Gateway and Bride of Christ: Women in the Early Christian World," in *Ascetic Piety and Women's Faith* (Lewiston: E. Mellen, 1986), 23-26.
[402] Harrison, "Male and Female," 447.
[403] Basil of Caesarea, "Homily on the martyr Julitta," translated by Stephen M. Hildebrand, in *Basil of Caesarea*, 130–34. *The Early Church Fathers*. NY: Routledge, 2018.

to call her a woman when she has hidden the weakness of the female nature behind such greatness of soul"[404] — points towards this. Basil places these words in Julitta's mouth:

> we are from the same stuff as men, and we have been made in the image of God, just as they. Women are capable of virtue and made by the Creator as honorably as men. Why? For we are of like kind with men in every way. It was not only the flesh [of man] that was taken for the creation of woman, but also bone from bones. Consequently, strength, vigor, and endurance are owed by us, just as by men, to the Lord.[405]

Basil entreats those listening to his sermon:

> Men, do not allow yourselves to be seen as inferior to women in piety. Women, do not leave behind this model, but without hesitation cling to piety and meet trials with industry, because the weakness of your nature is no hindrance to what is good.[406]

In his exegetical homily "On Psalm 1," Basil writes:

> Why, you say, does the prophet single out only man and proclaim him happy? Does he not exclude women from happiness? By no means. For, the virtue of man and woman is the same, since creation is equally honored in both; therefore, there is the same reward for both. Listen to Genesis. 'God created man,' it says, 'in the image of God he created him. Male and female he created them.'[407] They whose nature is alike have the same reward. Why, then, when Scripture had made mention of man, did it leave woman unnoticed? Because it believed that it was sufficient, since their nature is alike, to indicate the whole through the more authoritative part.[408]

Harrison argues,

> This text unequivocally affirms an ontological and moral unity and equality between male and female. In Cappadocian thought, each nature has its corresponding ἐνέργεια, a term whose meaning includes faculty of acting, mode of activity, and the action itself. It is nature's self-manifestation through action, i.e. 'energy as well as 'operation'. Basil is saying that what men and women are and also the essential way in which they function in life are the same, as are the works produced by their activity.[409]

For Harrison, "virtue and the *imago Dei* are much more significant than gender in Basil's anthropology."[410] Harrison's argument is supported by the words of Jesus:

[404] Basil, "Julitta," 130.
[405] Basil, "Julitta," 131.
[406] Basil, "Julitta," 132.
[407] Genesis 1:27.
[408] Basil, "On Psalm 1," in *Exegetic Homilies*, translated by Agnes Clare Way (Washington: CUAP, 1963), 151-164.
[409] Harrison, "Male and Female," 449.
[410] Harrison, "Male and Female," 451.

> Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.[411]

In the *Morals* alone, Basil refers to the love of one's neighbour several times.[412] Two stand out in the context of this discussion: Basil writes

> That to wrong one's neighbor in any way or to cause him such disedification that his faith is destroyed is a sure sign that one does not possess the love of Christ for one's neighbour, even if what is done is allowed by the Scripture for a special reason.[413]

At the conclusion of *Morals*, Basil asks,

> What is the mark of charity toward God? To observe His commandments with a view to His glory. What is the mark of charity toward one's neighbour? Not to seek what is one's own but that which is to the advantage of the loved one both in body and soul. What is the mark of a Christian? To be born anew through baptism of water and the Spirit.[414]

In *Morals*, Basil writes that "the multitude of sinners does not arouse the solicitude of God, but he who is acceptable to Him, whether man or woman."[415] In *Concerning Baptism*, he writes,

> The case is the same with one who is baptized, whether he be Jew or Gentile, male or female, slave or free, Scythian or barbarian, or anyone else bearing the name of any other race.[416] As soon as he has put off the old man with his deeds in the blood of Christ and, by Christ's teaching in the Holy Spirit, has put on the new, created according to God in justice and holiness of truth, renewed unto knowledge according to the very image of the Creator, he becomes worthy to win the divine approval…[417]

In baptism, all are renewed and re-formed by God to be as they were created to be. Thereafter in *Concerning Baptism* Basil speaks almost entirely in the words of Scripture concerning the commandment to love one's neighbour: "The Apostle says: 'Let no man seek his own, but that which is another's.'[418] The love which is according to Christ seeks not its own."[419] Then follows a discussion of how Christ gave himself up for the Church in obedience to the Father.[420] Paul

[411] Matthew 22:37-39
[412] *Morals*, 3.1, 76; 5.2, 78; 9.4, 85; 80.22, 204.
[413] *Morals*, 5.2, 78.
[414] *Morals*, 80.22, 204.
[415] *Morals*, 11.4, 88.
[416] Galatians 3:27-28.
[417] *Concerning Baptism*, I.2, 380.
[418] I Corinthians 10:24.
[419] I Corinthians 10:24, 13:5; *Concerning Baptism*, II.12, 428.
[420] *Concerning Baptism*, II.13, 429-430.

also wrote, "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself."[421]

Reading Basil through this charitable lens, treating him as a neighbour despite the distance of centuries and the changes in society, one could consider anew the text from Ephesians that Basil quotes *Concerning Baptism*.[422] Paul is speaking of Jews and Gentiles in this passage, but, as Harrison notes, this passage also speaks beautifully to those differentiated by sex:[423]

> For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.[424]

How does this temple grow? Through prayer, which can be done by male and female alike. Basil writes,

> Prayer is good when it imprints in the soul a clear conception of God. This is in fact the indwelling of God - to have God established in oneself by means of the memory. Thus we become God's temple, when no earthly concerns interrupt the continuity of this memory, no unexpected emotions disturb the mind, and the worshipper escapes from everything to retire to God.[425]

Despite the significant influence Macrina had on Basil's spiritual development and the growth of monasticism, his extant writings neglect her. Basil held a limiting interpretation of biblical precepts regarding women, one which emphasized their submission and domestic roles. There are, however, several places where Basil speaks positively about women's capabilities, virtues,

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[421] Ephesians 5:28.
[422] *Concerning Baptism*, I.2, 379.
[423] Harrison, "Male and Female," 450-451.
[424] Ephesians 2:14-22.
[425] Basil, "Letter 2," in *Documents in Early Christian Thought* (Cambridge: CUP 1975), 214.

and their creation in the image of God. Radegund may have given Basil a sympathetic reading, because of the esteem in which he was held as one of the great teachers of the Church. The implications of his theological anthropology, taken to its full conclusion, affirm an ontological and moral unity between male and female. In writing *De hominis opificio* "with the specific purpose of completing his brother's work,"[426] his brother Gregory Nyssen may even have given Radegund the tools to see these implications better.

Athanasius

> Athanasius was not a scientific theologian. He contributed almost nothing speculative, nor did he develop any system nor invent new terminology. Yet the history of dogma in the fourth century is identical with the history of his life…. [A]rmed with an inflexible logic, he knows how to separate Greek thought and Christian revelation whenever there is danger that the truth of the Gospel might be darkened or falsified.[427]

Johannes Quasten calls Athanasius "one of the most imposing figures in all ecclesiastical history, and the most outstanding of all Alexandrian bishops."[428] It is Saint Athanasius who, for the first time, gave to the Church a list of the twenty-seven canonical books of the New Testament and lived in Rome during the preparation of the early 4th-century *Codex Vaticanus*: the "Athanasian list is in content and sequence of the biblical books identical with the Canon of the most valuable of all the manuscripts of the Greek Bible."[429]

Athanasius wrote the *Life of Saint Antony*,[430] which Quasten calls "a model for all subsequent Greek and Latin hagiography."[431] Radegund could have read this in either Greek or Latin, as Jerome mentions "the original and the Latin version, and specifies Athanasius as the

[426] Johannes Quasten, *The Golden Age of Greek Patristic Literature, from the Council of Nicaea to the Council of Chalcedon,* 6th edition, volume III, *Patrology* (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1992), 217. Hereafter *Patrology III*.
[427] *Patrology III*, 66.
[428] *Patrology III*, 20.
[429] *Patrology III*, 54.
[430] Athanasius, *The Life of Saint Antony*, translated by Robert T. Meyer, volume 10, *Ancient Christian Writers* (NY: Newman, 1978).
[431] *Patrology III*, 20.

author and Evagrius, his own friend, as the translator," and an even earlier, more literal but less successful translation, exists as well.[432] In the *Life*, Athanasius writes of the Son of God that "He is the eternal Word and Wisdom of the substance of the Father."[433]

Nazianzen wrote of him, "Such was Athanasius to us, when present, the pillar of the Church,"[434] and encouraged "men and women alike"[435] to share his virtues. As she considered her own call to religious life, it is hard to imagine that Radegund would not have read this work, of which Nazianzen said that it "set forth, in the form of a narrative, the laws of the monastic life."[436]

Elliott writes that "for Athanasius, as for the North African theologians before him, the *sponsa Christi* offered possibilities as a vessel of containment."[437] The difficulty here is that Elliott may have built a house of cards. Elliot's work relies heavily on three of David Brakke's translations found in his 1995 work, *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism*.[438] Although Brakke acknowledges that the authenticity of these writings "is a matter of scholarly debate,"[439] he argues for their authenticity in "The Authenticity of the Ascetic Athanasiana."[440] It is important for scholars to uncover the experiences of women in these ancient writings, but balance is also important.

Although Elliott uses these writings to implicate Athanasius, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, and Hilary in misogyny,[441] she does not mention that in one of these doubtful writings of

[432] *Patrology III*, 40.
[433] Athanasius, *The Life of Saint Antony,* translated by Robert T. Meyer, volume 10, *Ancient Christian Writers* (NY: Newman, 1978), I.69, 78.
[434] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orations,* XXI.26, 276.
[435] *Orations,* XXI.10, 272.
[436] *Orations,* XXI.5, 270.
[437] Elliott, *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell*, 39.
[438] David Brakke, "App. A. First *Letter to Virgins*," 274-291; App. B. Second *Letter to Virgins*," 292-302; App. C *On Virginity*," 303-309; in *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism*, *Oxford Early Christian Studies* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995).
[439] Brakke, *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism*, 273.
[440] Brakke, "The Authenticity of the Ascetic Athanasiana," in *Orientalia*, *Nova Series*, 63, no. 2 (1994): 17–56.
[441] Elliott, "The Church Fathers and the Embodied Bride," *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell*, 30-62.

Athanasius, men like Elijah, Elisha, Jeremiah and John the Baptist are also extolled as virgins.[442] In this *First Letter*, women who are virgins and married women are also compared to the male servants who are respectively given ten and five talents in Luke's Gospel.[443] If one wishes to find examples of how religious women are addressed within the social context of their contemporary society in ways that seem unfair to us in the third millennium, one will find them; but another valuable approach might also be to imagine how, today, male clergy and men who take orders might benefit from the instructions given to their sisters.

Athanasius served as the bishop of Alexandria's secretary at the Council of Nicaea in 325.[444] In the original Nicene Creed, which preceded the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed of 381 which has come to replace it,[445] Jesus Christ is called "the Son of God, begotten of His Father, the Only-begotten, that is, of the Substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God. Begotten, not made; being of one substance with the Father, by Whom all things both in heaven and on earth were made. Who for us men and for our salvation came down, and was incarnate, and was made man."[446]

When Athanasius writes of divination, he writes of a possibility that is open to all human beings. Because Christ put on the flesh, he writes in *Against the Arians*, human beings can hope to "become the flesh of the Word."[447] He writes there, too, that if the Word Incarnate had not been embodied, "man would not have been deified,"[448]

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[442] David Brakke, "App. A. First *Letter to Virgins*," in *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism*, (1) 274, (7) 276.
[443] Luke 19:17-19.
[444] "Athanasius, St," in *TODCC*, 119.
[445] Alexander Forbes, *A Short Explanation of the Nicene Creed, for the Use of Persons Beginning the Study of Theology*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Parker and Co., 1866), 3.
[446] Forbes, *Nicene Creed*, 8.
[447] Athanasius, "Against the Arians," in *DIECT*, III.34, 57.
[448] Athanasius, "Against the Arians," in *DIECT,* III.32, 55.

> For as the Lord became man by putting on the body, so we [human beings] are deified by the Word, by the fact that he has made us his own through his flesh; and henceforward we inherit eternal life.[449]

The woman Mary has a crucial role to play in this Christian hope:

> So when the flesh is born of the God-bearing Mary, the birth is attributed to him who bestows on all else the beginning of their existence. Thereby he has transferred our beginning to himself, and we no longer return as mere earth to earth but are joined with the heavenly Word who carries us up with him into heaven…. The flesh is no longer earthly, but from now on has been made into word by God's Word who for our sake became flesh.[450]

In his "most famous work," *De Incarnatione*, Athanasius explained how the *Logos* (God the Word) restored fallen humanity to its original purpose in creation of being *imago Dei*, "and by His death and resurrection met and overcame death, the consequence of sin."[451]Athanasius makes no distinction between the sexes when he writes that God made humans rational after his own Image and "brought them into his own garden" before they fell,[452] and that only God the Word, who is Life, could undo death by taking humanity, which he created, unto himself and giving humanity the hope of eternal life.[453] Marcus Plestud writes that this is how Wisdom manifests the unity of Father and Son, a unity in which humans may participate by grace."[454]

The images in *De Incarnatione* are rich and plentiful: one gets the sense that Christ is the only one who can undo what happens when the finger of death pushes that first domino; that He is both the inoculant and the soil into which it is seeded. The *Logos* prepares his own body from the body of the Virgin,[455] and Athanasius shows how everything the *Logos* encounters is made holy, including the body in which he dwells.

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[449] Athanasius, "Against the Arians," in *DIECT,* III.34, 57.
[450] Athanasius, "Against the Arians," in *DIECT,* III.33, 56.
[451] "Athanasius, St," in *TODCC*, 120.
[452] Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, translated by Archibald Robertson. (London: David Nutt, 1891), III, 6. Hereafter *De incarnatione*.
[453] *De incarnatione*, XX, 34.
[454] Marcus Plested, *Wisdom in Christian Tradition: The Patristic Roots of Modern Russian Sophiology*, (OUP, 2022), 137.
[455] *De incarnatione*, XVII, 30.

The Virgin, from whose body he makes His own Body, and in whom he dwells for nine months, is thus the only material source of his humanity, and she is a woman. As he grows in her womb or is suckled at her breast, Mary is enough; she has "sufficed without man for the conception of humankind."[456] Reading between the lines, one can deduce that for Athanasius, Mary's lack of maleness in no way diminishes her humanity, which is assumed in its entirety by the *Logos*. If Athanasius believes that Mary's humanity is good enough for Christ, the new Adam, it is hard to see how he would see Mary as being somehow less than human. Indeed,

> It is, as we have frequently said, the characteristic aim of holy Scripture to present the Saviour in a two-fold manner. First, in that he is Word, effulgence and wisdom of the Father, he always was and is God and Son. Subsequently, by taking flesh for our sake from a virgin, the God-bearing Mary, he became man.[457]

Plested argues,

> [Athanasius] uses wisdom to inform his understanding of creation as the iconic self-revelation of God, a self-revelation that is fulfilled and surpassed in the saving incarnation of the divine wisdom himself. Christology is presented in terms of the union between uncreated and created wisdom, a union which bridges the ontological gap between the universe and its maker.… Through the incarnation, knowledge of the unity of God is manifested and human participation—through faith—in that primal unity made possible.[458]

Furthermore, for Athanasius, the Christian is a temple of God:

> Moreover, as he who has seen the Son sees the Father [John 14:9], so he who has the Holy Spirit has the Son and, having him, is a temple of God. For Paul writes, 'Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?' [1 Cor. 3: 16]. John says: 'By this we know that we abide in God and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit' [1 John 4: 13]. But if we have confessed that the Son is not a creature, because he is in the Father and the Father in him, then the Spirit likewise cannot possibly be a creature; for the Son is in him and he is in the Son. That is why he who receives the Spirit is called a temple of God.[459]

[456] *De incarnatione*, XXXV, 60.
[457] Athanasius, "Against the Arians," in *DIECT*, III.29, 102.
[458] Plested, *Wisdom in Christian Tradition*, 139.
[459] Athanasius, "Third Letter to Serapion," in *DIECT*, 86.

It is hard to imagine Athanasius claiming that Mary did not have the Holy Spirit, the woman who was "highly favoured" and to whom the angel Gabriel said, "The Lord is with you."[460]

Athanasius underscores the transformative potential for all humanity through Christ's incarnation. By putting on flesh, Christ, as the sole remedy for the consequences of sin and death, allows humanity to attain deification. Mary, as the God-bearing woman, holds a crucial role in this process. Her lack of maleness is irrelevant to her humanity, which suffices for the conception of the True Man, the True Human, the Christ. A woman brought forth the Word and Wisdom of God. A woman can clearly be the temple of God.

Hilary

> St. Hilary of Poitiers is one of the greatest, yet least studied, of the Fathers of the Western Church. He has suffered thus, partly from a certain obscurity in his style of writing, partly from the difficulty of the thoughts which he attempted to convey.[461]

So we read in the 1902 introduction to Hilary in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*. Hilary was not always so neglected, though. Fortunatus, who also wrote a *Vita Hilarii*,[462] as well as an account of Hilary's miracles,[463] describes Hilary in these words:

> I live in Poitiers, a city where once the saintly Hilary was born, though famed as a father throughout the world. On the rolling wheel of his eloquence he reached all the way to India and far-distant Thule reveres the powers of his intellect. With his name he spread abroad of very country like the sun, and Persian and Briton received his gifts with rejoicing. He melted Scythian frosts with his love for Christ; with the heave of his teaching chill hearts grew warm.[464]
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> Reader, if you wish to discover who Hilary is, the Allobroges report that he was born in Poitiers. When with a divine spirit he ruled over his people as bishop, he conscientiously

[460] Luke 1:28.

[461] W. Sanday, "Introduction," in *Hilary of Poitiers. John of Damascus*, translated by E. W. Watson and L. Pullman, volume IX, *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church 2* (Oxford: Parker and Co., 1902), *i*.

[462] Brennan, "The Career of Venantius Fortunatus," in *Traditio* 41 (1985): 61.

[463] Fortunatus, "The Miracles of St. Hilary," in *Saints and Their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul*, translated by Raymond Van Dam (Princeton: PUP, 2011), 155–161.

[464] *Carmina,* VIII.1.13-20, 491.

> observed the ordinances of the law. When he saw that wicked error was dividing the people, he exposed the venom of the Greeks, who always spew poison from their serpentine heart, saying that the Son is the creation of God. Worldly wisdom provided them with further reinforcement, in denying that one born of one unborn is God; this Arius unwisely embraced, eager to trample the prophets, for the wretched man, in clinging to it, burst asunder. The noble teacher, following writings of old, demonstrated that it was God that Stephen saw. Possessed by the love of God, scorning the prince of the world, his faith unshaken, he endured an exile. That the Son is to be recognized in the Father, who is God all-powerful, he taught by relying only on divine pronouncements. That Christ is perpetual light, Lord, and God he laid out for the people in twelve books.[465]

The "Athanasius of the West"[466] came to the bishopric a married man, and fathered a daughter named Abra.[467] While he was in exile, Hilary learned that his thirteen-year-old girl had marriage prospects[468] and may have written a letter to her extolling the merits of a religious life.[469] One of Hilary's responses to Arian teachings was to render his theological insights accessible to the faithful by writing hymns.[470] *Lex orandi, lex credendi*; *bis orat qui bene cantat*.[471] He is best known for *De Trinitate*, *De Synodis*, and *Opus Historicum*, none of which treat womanhood directly.[472]

This having been acknowledged, the words of Paul remind Christians that "for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."[473] The only acceptable agenda for a theological anthropology of womanhood that can align itself with the Body of Christ is one that seeks Truth and wholeness for all humans of either sex. Hilary, whose arguments explaining the Greek theologians in Latin were "singularly effective in

[465] *Carmina,* II.15, 107.
[466] "Hilary of Poitiers, St," in *TODCC*, 769.
[467] John Gibson Cazenove, *St. Hilary of Poitiers, St. Martin of Tours*, in *The Fathers for English Readers*. (London: SPCK, 1883), 13.
[468] Cazenove, *St. Hilary*, 122.
[469] The authorship of the letter is disputed. See Cazenove, *St. Hilary*, 122, n1.
[470] A. J. Mason, "The First Latin Christian Poet," in *The Journal of Theological Studies* 5, no. 19 (1904): 422.
[471] The law of prayer is the law of belief." "The one who sings well prays twice."
[472] "Hilary of Poitiers, St," in *TODCC*, 769.
[473] Galatians 3:27-28.

reclaiming the Gauls for the Nicene faith,"[474] underlines this when he writes that all Christians "have the one baptism and all have put on the one Christ" although there is "so great a diversity of peoples, states in life, and sexes."[475]

Hilary's *De Trinitate* was "the basis of the reflections of many others, including the holy Doctors Ambrose (d. 397), and Jerome (d. 420) and above all, Augustine himself."[476] Although Hilary wrote his treatise entitled *De Trinitate* first, it is Augustine's work that is remembered many centuries later. Hilary is sometimes criticized for the incompleteness of his Trinitarian thought: Davidson and others even accuse him of developing a "Christology which is essentially docetic"[477] in his zeal to demolish the Arian heresy; he is also charged with neglecting the Holy Spirit.[478] However, as "a pioneer in speculative theology in the West,"[479] incompleteness should be expected.

The need for his work to have been "taken up and perfected"[480] in Augustine is not a mark of theological ineptitude but exactly the opposite; and although he is a giant upon whose shoulders other theologians stand, his own work still speaks for itself. As Jarred Mercer notes in *Divine Perfection and Human Potentiality*, "it is easy for a figure whose ideas are in some ways less developed than later thinkers to be seen as a stepping stone, which can perhaps hinder one from fully acknowledging the figure in his or her own right and time."[481]

Mercer argues that Hilary's theological work has, until now, been largely misunderstood by historians and theologians who have failed to take his writing on its own terms: he argues that "if

[474] Daniel H. Williams, "The Anti-Arian Campaigns of Hilary of Poitiers and the 'Liber Contra Auxentium," in *Church History* 61, no. 1 (1992): 7.
[475] Hilary of Poitiers, *The Trinity, The Fathers of the Church*, volume 25 (Washington: CUAP, 2002), VIII.8, 281. Hereafter *Hil.Trin*.
[476] Mauro Gagliardi, in *Truth Is a Synthesis: Catholic Dogmatic Theology,* (Steubenville: Emmaus Academic, 2020), 440.
[477] Davidson, "Later Theologians of the West," 611.
[478] Davidson, "Later Theologians of the West," 611.
[479] C. F. A. Borchardt, *Hilary of Poitier's Role in the Arian Struggle*, (Dordrecht: Springer Science+Business Media, 1966), *viii*.
[480] Gagliardi, *Truth Is a Synthesis*, 441.
[481] Jarred A. Mercer, *Divine Perfection and Human Potentiality: The Trinitarian Anthropology of Hilary of Poitiers*, (New York: OUP, 2019), 3.

superimposed category errors are not taken as viable reference points for understanding Hilary, and fourth-century theology generally," a new clarity can be found in understanding Hilary's "trinitarian anthropology."[482]

Mercer critiques the tendencies of modern theologians to read Hilary through lenses that render his thought difficult to understand or even, as Mercer contends, distort his meaning altogether. Hilary understood the complexities of language and he knew how to use the fluidity of language to transform it; he acknowledged the need for analogical thinking on several occasions, saying "that human analogies do not afford an adequate description of their divine counterparts; yet it is through material images that our mind acquires some knowledge of them."[483] Again, Hilary writes, the "perfection of learning is to know God in such a manner that, although you realize He is not unknown, you perceive that He cannot be described."[484] He is extremely careful to note the limitations of his approach, even while noting that it is the only linguistic possibility available to him. Hilary writes that "the thing exists in the Word; the thing of the Word is expressed in the name. The name 'Word' belongs to the Son of God from the mystery of the birth just as do the names of wisdom and power."[485] The birth to which he refers is that ineffable eternal birth of the Son from the Father.

> Neither our reason nor our understanding allows anything to be between the birth of the Son of God and the generation of God the Father, because the birth is in the generation and the generation is in the birth. Thus, each takes place without any interval between them, because neither one takes place without the other.[486]

A Hilarian understanding of God as the divine giver of birth has implications for woman as *imago Dei*. Hilary asks, "will anyone deny that a birth gives rise to an identical nature? From this alone can come that which is true equality, because only birth can bestow an equality of

[482] Mercer, *Divine Perfection and Human Potentiality*, 6.
[483] *Hil.Trin*, VII.28, 257.
[484] *Hil.Trin*, II.7, 41.
[485] *Hil.Trin*, VII.11, 234.
[486] *Hil.Trin*, XII.21, 516.

nature."[487] Hilary comes to an understanding of "image" that weaves together an intertextual reading of John 10:30[488] and 14:9b.[489] The divine nature of the Son is invisible just as the Father is, since they share the same divine qualities. It is in the *incarnate* Christ that we see a visible image of the invisible God, so that "The Father is not seen in the physical body of Jesus, but in the divine works that are accomplished in that physical existence."[490]

Christ, "the begotten God, who is Life and received his birth from Life,"[491] is the ladder by which finite humanity can approach the infinite God. God's infinite nature and humanity's finite nature come together in Christ, so that humanity can attain that "infinite progression into the infinite life which is its origin."[492] Christ "is the Lord who has come into being by the mystery of the natural birth from the womb of the incorporeal God; the "Virgin, the birth and the body, and later the cross, death, and hell are our salvation."[493]

Hilary of Poitiers wrote of Christ that He received "the nature of our flesh from the Virgin when he became man, and through this commingling and fellowship the body of the entire human race (*universi humani corpus*[494]) might be sanctified in Him."[495] Mercer, following Scully, interprets this from a pre-Nicene Latinate Stoic theology to mean all of humanity rather than "a generalized human nature."[496] He writes that "For Hilary, Christ is the human par excellence, and no one else is"; our own humanity must be evaluated in the light of his

[487] *Hil.Trin*, VII.15, 239.
[488] "I and my Father are one."
[489] "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?"
[490] Mercer, *Divine Perfection and Human Potentiality*, 144.
[491] Mercer, *Divine Perfection and Human Potentiality*, 147.
[492] Mercer, *Divine Perfection and Human Potentiality*, 263.
[493] *Hil.Trin*, II.24, 54.
[494] Mercer, *Divine Perfection and Human Potentiality*, 232.
[495] *Hil.Trin*, II.24, 55.
[496] Mercer, *Divine Perfection and Human Potentiality*, 230.

humanity.[497] If this is a faithful interpretation of Hilary's understanding of the assumption, then all the women of humanity have been assumed in Christ as well as all the men.

Hilary's understanding of the Divine Birth has implications for women as *imago Dei*. This birth, in which the Son is eternally born from the Father, and where birth and generation occur simultaneously, without any temporal or spatial distinction, is a profound mystery beyond human comprehension, but Hilary uses analogical thinking as a linguistic tool. If, as Hilary argues, birth gives rise to an identical nature, then Christ's birth from the Virgin Mary in time and space mirrors the eternal birth from the incorporeal God. If Christ's divine nature comes from God, then His human nature comes from Mary, whose salvific role in the redemption of humanity is then undeniable.

Ambrose

> May the meditation of Wisdom always be in our heart and on our lips, and may your tongue speak justice….So then, let us speak of the Lord Jesus, because He is Wisdom, He is the Word, and the Word of God.[498]

Ambrose (*c*.339-397) of Milan, together with Jerome, Gregory the Great, and Augustine, his protégé and convert, is "one of the four traditional Doctors of the Church."[499] Some scholars attribute to him the Athanasian Creed.[500] When Fortunatus wrote his poems on virginity,[501] he

[497] Mercer, *Divine Perfection and Human Potentiality*, 218.
[498] Sit ergo nobis semper in corde et ore meditatio sapientiae et lingua tua loquatur iudicium… loquamur ergo dominum Iesum, quia ipse est sapientia, ipse est uerbum et uerbum dei. Ambrose of Milan, "Explanatio Psalmi XXXVI," *Ambrosii Opera, Pars VI: Explanatio Psalmorum XII*, edited by Academiae Litterarum Caesareae vindobonensis, volume LXIV, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinoruma* (NY: Johnson, 1962), 65.22-27, 123. Translation mine.
[499] "Ambrose, St," in *TODCC*, 49.
[500] A. E. Burn, "The Authorship of the 'Quicumque Vult,'" in *The Journal of Theological Studies* 27, no. 105 (October 1925): 28.
[501] *Carmina*, VIII.3, 497; and VIII.4, 525.

was enriching a genre to which Ambrose had given five examples: *De virginibus*, *De viduis*, *De virginitate*, *De institutione virginis*, and *Exhortatio virginitatis*.[502]

Acknowledging that "aspects of Ambrose's exegesis of the Canticles remain true to the traditional reading of the soul's marriage with Christ,"[503] Elliott argues nonetheless that it was "Ambrose who hijacked the symbols of carnal marriage and appropriated them for its spiritual counterpart."[504] Power notes that one reason for the importance of Ambrose is the way in which he "was instrumental in setting out the parameters of Christian anthropology."[505] In order to do this, Ambrose "used allegory and intertextual interpretation to explain Scripture."[506] "Ambrose lived in a world that believed that it had scientific grounds for treating men as ontologically superior to women."[507]

Within this paradigm, Ambrose used gendered language to talk about the soul's relationship with God. For Power,

> It is not stretching Ambrose's texts too far to say that for him, the Virgin Bride is a quasi-Platonic form, never pre-existent with the Father but created before the universe. Ambrose built on earlier understandings of the church as the historical manifestation of the Bride. Origen, the first to articulate this explicitly, had also extended the symbol to each individual soul because the church was composed of souls. A modern analogy would be to see each soul as a hologram of the ecclesial body.[508]

Schüssler Fiorenza, too, finds the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle to be at the root of a vision that saw people like women and slaves as "not fit to rule or govern because of their deficient natural powers of reasoning."[509] Judith Butler, seeking to "pillage the *Logos* for its useful

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[502] Maria Grazia Mara, "Ambrose of Milan," *The Golden Age of Latin Patristic Literature, from the Council of Nicea to the Council of Chalcedon*, edited by Di Berardino, Angelo, and Istituto Patristico Augustinianum, 7th Printing, volume IV, *Patrology* (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1994), 167-169.

[503] Elliott, *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell*, 48.

[504] Elliott, *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell*, 47.

[505] Kim E. Power, "Ambrose of Milan: Keeper of the Boundaries," in *Theology Today* 55, no. 1 (April 1998): 21.

[506] Power, "Ambrose of Milan," 21.

[507] Power, "Ambrose of Milan," 23.

[508] Power, "Ambrose of Milan," 22.

[509] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her* xxviii.

remains,"[510] analyses Plato's "receiving principle" (*hypodochê*):[511] "taken as a figure, the nurse-receptacle freezes the feminine as that which is necessary for the reproduction of the human, but which itself is not human."[512] According to Butler, "Plato's discourse on materiality (if we can take the discourse on the *hypodoche* to be that), is one which does not permit the notion of the female body as a human form."[513] For Butler, "the binary framework for both sex and gender" results in "regulatory fictions that consolidate and naturalize the convergent power regimes of masculine and heterosexist oppression."[514]

Following Nietzsche and Foucault, Butler asserts that "the foundational categories of sex, gender, and desire" are "effects of a specific formation of power."[515] She uses the discourse of "substance" to argue that "within the inherited discourse of the metaphysics of substance, gender proves to be performative— that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be."[516] Not only gender, but sex itself is constructed through a derivative power, established through rhetorical and performative repetition.[517] Reality itself can be reshaped through the use of language and behaviours, and it may be fair to say that any grand narrative, any claims to objectivity or truth can ultimately be understood in terms of power, which is, in a sense, the ability to manipulate knowledge.

> Humpty Dumpty took the book, and looked at it carefully. 'That seems to be done right~' he began. 'You're holding it upside down!' Alice interrupted. 'To be sure I was!' Humpty Dumpty said gaily, as she turned it round for him. 'I thought it looked a little queer…. There's glory for you!' 'I don't know what you mean by "glory,"' Alice said. Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. 'Of course you don't— till I tell you. I meant "there's a nice knock-down argument for you!"' 'But "glory" doesn't mean "a nice knock-down argument,"' Alice objected. 'When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean— neither more nor less.' 'The question is,'

[510] Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), ix.
[511] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 40.
[512] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 42.
[513] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 53.
[514] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 44.
[515] Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1999), xxix.
[516] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 33.
[517] Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 13.

> said Alice, 'whether you CAN make words mean so many different things.' 'The question is,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master— that's all.'[518]

Schüssler Fiorenza addresses this issue of language and power: "The androcentric linguistic sex/gender system that uses gender classifications rooted in biological sex cannot but reify and naturalize socio-political gender constructs" in which male language encompasses humanity in addition to maleness, while female language excludes all but the specifically female.[519] From a faith stance, there is a difficulty here, as N.T. Wright points out:

> Those who worship power define themselves in terms of it, and treat other people as either collaborators, competitors or pawns. These and many other forms of idolatry combine in a thousand ways, all of them damaging to the image-bearing quality of the people concerned and of those whose lives they touch.[520]

Wresting theological concepts from the minds of great teachers of the church such as Ambrose must involve historical sensitivity. With Hans-Georg Gadamer, "I would oppose the suspicion that language is an ideology" while still acknowledging the challenges of its use in trying to discover something real.[521] Advocating for a sympathetic reading of the text, he writes:

> The call to leave aside the concepts of the present does not mean a naive transposition into the past. It is, rather, an essentially relative demand that has meaning only in relation to one's own concepts. Historical consciousness fails to understand its own nature if, in order to understand, it seeks to exclude what alone makes understanding possible. To think historically means, in fact, to perform the transposition that the concepts of the past undergo when we try to think in them. To think historically always involves mediating between those ideas and one's own thinking. To try to escape from one's own concepts in interpretation is not only impossible but manifestly absurd. To interpret means precisely to bring one's own preconceptions into play so that the text's meaning can really be made to speak for us.[522]

The feminist critique which has contributed so richly to contemporary conversations awakens us to the necessity of re-visiting our story with a view to discovering more about half of humanity.

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[518] Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* (Minneapolis: First Avenue Editions, 2014), 58.
[519] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, xix.
[520] Tom Wright, *Surprised By Hope* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2007), 195.
[521] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London: Continuum, 2004), 548.
[522] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 398.

It correctly notes that often, when the male is understood to represent universal humanity, this can be interpreted to mean that only males are fully human. Malone explains how feminist historians approach their goal of "restoring women to history and restoring history to women,"[523] a task which needs to be undertaken because conventional history "has been presented as normative history, as if, having described the situation of the male, the whole has been attended to."[524] Malone notes that a good deal of "feminist Christian history" is still in the second stage, "almost entirely compensatory in nature."[525] Righting the wrongs of intentional and unintentional neglect is certainly an essential part of restoring dignity and humanity, wherever it has been historically denied, to women.

There is certainly Scriptural precedent for incorporating additional understanding and corrective measures from the mouth of Christ himself:

> I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.[526]

The words of Paul remind Christians that through baptism, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."[527] The only acceptable agenda, then, for a theology that can align itself with the Body of Christ, is one that seeks Truth and wholeness for all humans of either sex and any gender. Words do, indeed, hold great power. If they are wielded in the service of truth, they are wielded in service to God. If they are used as a weapon to upset the balance of power so as to achieve

[523] Malone, *Women & Christianity*, 31.
[524] Malone, *Women & Christianity*, 37.
[525] Malone, *Women & Christianity*, 37.
[526] John 16:12-13.
[527] Galatians 3:27-28.

dominance, they are under the sway of the *libido dominandi*, the form of love that characterizes Augustine's *civitas terrena*.[528]

It remains possible to use the female as an archetype while applying said archetype to the behaviour of any human, regardless of sex. The Apostle Paul wrote, "neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God."[529]

Feminist critiques awaken us to the necessity of re-visiting our story with a view to discovering more about our humanity. When the male is understood to represent universal humanity, this can be interpreted to mean that only males are fully human, which will inevitably result in neglecting the concerns of those with whom we fail to identify.

Ambrose breathed the air of a time in which women were understood and treated differently. So did Radegund, despite her prestige, power, and education. As she read his work, she may have come across his exegesis of Psalm thirty-six, where his own words provide a way of applying his work in the service of the human relationship with God regardless of sex.

> It is also written, "*Open your mouth with the word of God*."[530] Whoever echoes God's words and meditates on them is breathing forth God's very being. Let us always speak this Word. When we speak of wisdom, it is God; when we speak of virtue, it is God; when we speak of justice, it is God; when we speak of peace, it is God; when we speak of truth and life and redemption, it is God.[531]

The God to whom Ambrose surrendered his life in baptism is synonymous with the Word, the Truth. This Divine Simplicity is Wisdom, Virtue, Peace, Life, and Redemption. We can enter

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[528] Aurelius Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, translated by R. W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998). XIV.28, 632. Hereafter *Civitate Dei*,

[529] 1 Corinthians 11:11-12, *NRSV*.

[530] *Proverbs 31:8-9

[531] nam et hoc scriptum est: *aperi os tuum uerbo dei*. ipsum spirat qui sermones eius resonat et uerba meditatur. ipsum semper loquamur. cum de sapientia loquimur, ipse est, cum de uirtute loquimur, ipse est, cum de iustitia loquimur, ipse est, cum de pace loquimur, ipse est, cum de ueritate et uita et redemptione loquimur, ipse est. Ambrose, *Explanatio Psalmi XXXVI*, 65.1-6, 27, 124. Translation mine.

into the mystery of what Ambrose wanted to share with his readers, including his sister Marcellina,[532] by seeing how he makes space in a world where men hold power.

Ambrose praises the young virgin and martyr Agnes, whom "old men and young and boys chant. No one is more praiseworthy than he[533] who can be praised by all."[534] He praises the Virgin Mary and those who follow her example:

> Virginity has brought from heaven that which it may imitate on earth. And not unfittingly has she sought her manner of life from heaven, who has found for herself a Spouse in heaven. She, passing beyond the clouds, air, angels, and stars, has found the Word of God in the very bosom of the Father, and has drawn Him into herself with her whole heart.… Then a Virgin conceived, and the Word became flesh that flesh might become God.[535]

Ambrose lifts up a man's virginity as an example, too: that of Elijah. "And therefore was he carried by a chariot into heaven,[536] therefore he appeared glorified with the Lord, and therefore he is to come as the forerunner of the Lord's advent."[537] Miriam is lifted up as "a type of the Church, who as a virgin with unstained spirit joins together the religious gatherings of the people to sing divine songs."[538]

Women who choose virginity, argues Ambrose, are free from the burdens of childbearing and childrearing;[539] they are free from having to serve a husband;[540] and they are free from trying to change their appearance to please others.[541] Like the Church, who "weds the Word of God as her eternal Spouse, free from all injury, full of reason,"[542] women who choose not to marry have all the advantages of being loved by a God "Who loves even in less beautiful bodies the more

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[532] Ambrose of Milan, "Three Books of Saint Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, Concerning Virgins, to Marcellina, His Sister," in *St. Ambrose: Select Works and Letters*, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, translated by H De Romestin. Vol. X. *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 363. Hereafter *Ambrose*.

[533] In this context, "he" refers to any person, and could be translated, "the one."

[534] "Concerning Virgins," in *Ambrose*, I(2).6, 363.

[535] "Concerning Virgins," in *Ambrose,* I(3).11, 364.

[536] II Kings 2:2.

[537] "Concerning Virgins," in *Ambrose*, I(3).12, 364.

[538] "Concerning Virgins," in *Ambrose*, I(3).12, 364.

[539] "Concerning Virgins," in *Ambrose*, I(6).26, 367.

[540] "Concerning Virgins," in *Ambrose*, I(6).27, 367.

[541] "Concerning Virgins," in *Ambrose*, I(6).28, 367.

[542] "Concerning Virgins," in *Ambrose*, I(6).31, 368.

beautiful souls" and who can count as theirs the benefits of "the offspring of a pious soul, which esteems all as its children, which is rich in successors, barren of all bereavements, which knows no deaths, but has many heirs."[543] Ambrose was speaking to a world in which women were completely at the mercy of their weaker bodies and reproductive systems, and he tells them to choose freedom!

In a time when writing to clergy was writing to men, Ambrose told ministers of the Church that they should imitate the example of Susannah in her discretion, silence,[544] and modesty.[545] "It is not sex, but valour which makes strong,"[546] Ambrose says of Deborah, who is another type of the Church whose weapons are faith and prayer:[547]

> And so according to this history a woman, that the minds of women might be stirred up, became a judge, a woman set all in order, a woman prophesied, a woman triumphed, and joining in the battle array taught men to war under a woman's lead. But in a mystery it is the battle of faith and the victory of the Church.[548]

What is beautiful about virginity? Ambrose tells us: "Christ was before the Virgin, Christ was of the Virgin. Begotten indeed of the Father before the ages, but born of the Virgin for the ages."[549] It is not only Mary's virginity that Ambrose praises, though. He writes:

> Christ is the spouse of the Virgin, and if one may say so of virginal chastity, for virginity is of Christ, not Christ of virginity. He is, then, the Virgin Who was espoused, the Virgin who bare us, Who fed us with her own milk, of whom we read: "How great things hath the virgin of Jerusalem done! The teats shall not fail from the rock, nor snow from Lebanon, nor the water which is born by the strong wind."[550] Who is this virgin that is watered with the streams of the Trinity, from whose rock waters flow, whose teats fail not, and whose honey is poured forth? Now, according to the Apostle, the rock is Christ.[551] Therefore, from Christ the teats fail not, nor brightness from God, nor the river from the Spirit. This is the Trinity which waters their Church, the Father, Christ, and the Spirit.[552]

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[543] "Concerning Virgins," in *Ambrose*, I(6).30, 368.
[544] "On the Duties of the Clergy," in *Ambrose*, I(3).9, 2.
[545] "On the Duties of the Clergy," in *Ambrose*, I(18).68, 13.
[546] "Concerning Widows," in *Ambrose*, (8).44, 399.
[547] "Concerning Widows," in *Ambrose*, (8).49, 399.
[548] "Concerning Widows," in *Ambrose*, (8).50, 399.
[549] "Concerning Virgins," in *Ambrose*, I(5).21, 366.
[550] See Jeremiah 18:13
[551] I Corinthians 10:4.
[552] "Concerning Virgins," in *Ambrose*, I(5).22, 366-367.

Christ is the Virgin *par excellence*; the one who gives birth to us, who feeds us from breasts that never fail. The Church Christ's "body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all;"[553] the Church as the Bride of Christ is typified by women like Miriam, Deborah, and Ruth;[554] *and* the soul of every Christian, male or female, is a *sponsa Christi*. In his sermon on Psalm 36, Ambrose writes to an audience of women and men alike:

> When you arise, or rise again, speak of Him, so that you can fulfill what has been commanded of you. Listen to how Christ awakens you: your soul says, "*The voice of my brother is knocking at the door*," and Christ says, "*Open to me, my sister, my bride*."[555] Listen to how you awaken Christ: the soul says, "*I have solemnly charged you, daughters of Jerusalem, to awaken and revive Love*."[556] Love is Christ.[557]

Feminist critiques prompt a re-evaluation of historical narratives, recognizing the need to restore women to history and history to women. If we exercise care and historical sensitivity, we can do this with the work of Ambrose while giving him a sympathetic reading. We may discover truths that speak into the present moment. Radegund, reading Ambrose in a time much closer to his than to ours, surely gleaned strength from his portrayals of strong female characters of the Bride of Christ, his portrayal of the Christian soul as feminine, and of the model for humanity, Christ, our Mother.

Jerome

The biblical scholar Eusebius Hieronymus (*c*.345-420) is better known today as Jerome, the cardinal with the red hat who translated the bible from Hebrew and Greek into the *Biblia Sacra*

[553] Ephesians 1:23.
[554] "Of the Christian Faith," in *Ambrose*, III(10).70, 253.
[555] *Song of Songs 5:2
[556] *Song of Songs 3:5, 8:4.
[557] cum surges ergo uel resurges, ipsum loquere, ut impleas quod iuberis. audi quomodo te Christus excitet. anima tua dicit: *uox fratris mei pulsat ad ianuam* et Christus ait: *aperi mihi, soror mea sponsa*. audi quomodo tu exsuscites Christum. anima dicit: *adiuraui uos, filiae Hierusalem, si suscitaueritis et resuscitaueritis caritatem.* caritas Christus est. Ambrose, "Explanatio Psalmi XXXVI," 66.20-26, 125. Translation mine.

Vulgata.[558] Jerome's *Vulgate* was undoubtedly the Bible from which Radegund learned to read, and it was the source[559] for Sedulius' rendition of the Gospel narrative into the Virgilian hexameters of *Carmen Pascale*,[560] which we will discuss in a few pages. Jerome had personal and ecclesiastical connections with Gregory Nyssen and Gregory Nazianzen.[561] He is one of the three Doctors of the Church named by Fortunatus on Radegund's reading list, together with Ambrose and Augustine.[562]

One can easily imagine Radegund's reading Jerome's translation of the Bible, but more, in *De viris illustribus*, Jerome includes Basil,[563] together with Athanasius,[564] Ambrose,[565] Hilary,[566] Gregory of Nyssa[567] and Gregory Nazianzen.[568] All of the Fathers on Fortunatus' list, then, are represented in *De viris illustribus* and other writings of Jerome, with the exception of Sedulius and Orosius, both of whom were much younger. Radegund was surely educated using "the standard universal history" of Orosius,[569] and one can imagine her, in the relentless pursuit of wisdom, perusing *De viris illustribus* for new things to enrich her mind and spirit, "however slim the books."[570] Perhaps this list of great theologians and historians provided to us by Fortunatus has Jerome's "intellectual inventory of early Christianity"[571] as its ultimate source.

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[558] "Jerome, St," in *TODCC*, 867; *Biblia sacra: iuxta vulgatam versionem*, translated by Eusebius Hieronymus, edited by Roger Gryson and Robert Weber (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2013).
[559] H.H. Howorth, "The Influence of St Jerome on the Canon of the Western Church. III," in *The Journal of Theological Studies* 13, no. 49 (1911): 16.
[560] Carolinne White, "Sedulius," in *Early Christian Latin Poets*, *The Early Church Fathers* (London: Routledge, 2000), 105
[561] *Patrology III*, 257.
[562] "Doctors of the Church," in *TODCC*, 494.
[563] Jerome, *On Illustrious Men*, translated by Thomas P. Halton. Vol. 100. *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation* (Washington: CUAP, 1999), LXXXIX, 122. Hereafter *De viris illustribus*.
[564] *De viris illustribus*, LXXXVII, 120.
[565] *De viris illustribus*, CXIV, 158.
[566] *De viris illustribus*, C, 132.
[567] *De viris illustribus*, 161.
[568] *De viris illustribus*, CXVII, 151.
[569] Eva Matthews Sanford, "The Study of Ancient History in the Middle Ages," in *Journal of the History of Ideas* 5, no. 1 (1944): 26.
[570] *Carmina* VIII.1.47-62, 492-495.
[571] Irene SanPietro, "The Making of a Christian Intellectual Tradition in Jerome's *De Viris Illustribus*," in *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 62, Special Issue: National Narratives and the Medieval Mediterranean (2017): 231.

Malone argues that Jerome used women in his life "for his own personal agenda,"[572] and that, "his deeply rooted misogyny comes to the fore" when he writes about marriage.[573] Jane Barr ascribes "anti-feminist propaganda"[574] to Jerome, writing that he "was particularly ready to quote from the Roman poets when he needed some anti-feminist ammunition"[575] and that even his translation of the Bible was infused by his misogyny.[576] On the other hand, E. Ann Matter writes of Jerome that "perhaps the ultimate irony of his life is that his writings on gender and sexuality were later used to restrict women rather than to give them the spiritual freedom he had in mind."[577]

One thing we know for certain is that Jerome spent a great deal of time and energy corresponding with women. At least "one-fifth of Jerome's letters are addressed to women," and his relationships with women included Marcella,[578] Marcellina, Asella, Lea,[579] Titiana, Furia, Fabiola, Paula,[580] Blesilla, Julia or Eustochium,[581] Paulina,[582] Rufina, Laeta,[583] and Paula's "niece, the youner Paula," who "nursed the aged Jerome in his last illness."[584] Radegund may have taken comfort that in her close friendship with Fortunatus, she was not alone in cultivating a relationship with a member of the opposite sex. Rather than speculate on whether or not Jerome hated women, we can look at his own writings.

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[572] Malone, *Women & Christianity*, 139.
[573] Malone, *Women & Christianity*, 166.
[574] Jane Barr, "The Influence of Saint Jerome on Medieval Attitudes to Women," in *After Eve: Women, Theology and the Christian Tradition*, edited by Janet Martin Soskice, *Women and Religion* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1990), 89. The question of whether feminism can even be said to have existed in Late Antiquity is beyond the scope of this work, but it must be asked.
[575] Barr, "The Influence of Saint Jerome," 90.
[576] Barr, "The Influence of Saint Jerome," 94.
[577] E. Ann Matter, "Jerome, Influence of," in *WGMEAE*, 423.
[578] Frederick A. Write, "Appendix I: On Jerome's Correspondence with Roman Women," in Jerome, *Select Letters*, translated by Frederick A. Wright, volume 262. *The Loeb Classical Library* (London: HUP, 2010), 483. Hereafter *Epistolae*.
[579] Write, "Appendix I," in *Epistolae*, 485.
[580] Write, "Appendix I," in *Epistolae*, 486.
[581] Write, "Appendix I," in *Epistolae*, 487.
[582] Write, "Appendix I," in *Epistolae*, 490.
[583] Write, "Appendix I," in *Epistolae*, 496.
[584] Write, "Appendix I," in *Epistolae*, 497.

When we do this, however, we must keep in mind that the women in Jerome's life were limited in ways that women today might have difficulty fathoming. A married woman risked a life of domestic servitude, the loss of many children or the stigma of childlessness, and the loss of her own life in childbirth. A young woman alone was at the mercy of a weaker body and a reproductive system over which she had no control except to prevent conception by remaining sexually inactive. Knowing how marriage could limit women in Late Antiquity, Jerome's emphasis on virginity and widowhood can be interpreted as the desire to protect the women in his life from being at the mercy of men, society, and their own bodies.

To Innocentius, Jerome writes of his traumatic experience watching the torture of a woman falsely accused of adultery who "showed a courage superior to her sex"[585] despite the efforts of the governor, who "threatened the executioner with a like fate, unless he made the weaker sex confess a crime which manly strength had not been able to conceal."[586] There is undeniable irony in referring to this woman as "the weaker sex" when the man who accused her did so because he had not been able to endure his own torture. Jerome compares this woman's courage to that of Daniel and Susannah,[587] and delights in recounting how the clergy lied about her burial to protect her[588] after she was spirited away to a convent and dressed in men's clothes[589] until she was healed and the "Emperor restored to freedom the woman who had thus been restored to life."[590]

In his letter to Chromatius, Jovinus and Eusebius, Jerome calls their sisters "worthy of universal respect"[591] and of their mother, he writes:

> I send my greetings to your mother, who is a mother to us all, with the deep respect which you know I feel. She is your close associate in holy life; but she has one advantage over you in that she is the mother of such sons as yourselves.[592]

[585] *Epistolae*, I.3, 5.
[586] *Epistolae*, I.4, 7.
[587] *Epistolae*, I.9, 13.
[588] *Epistolae*, I.13, 15.
[589] *Epistolae*, I.14, 17.
[590] *Epistolae*, I.15, 19.
[591] *Epistolae*, VII.6, 27.
[592] *Epistolae*, VII.6, 27.

Jerome encourages them to support their new sister in Christ:

> You know yourselves how treacherous is the path of youth, a path where I fell and which you are now traversing not without fear. At this moment, when she is entering upon it, she needs to be supported by all men's encouragement, confirmed by all men's advice; in other words, strengthened by such frequent letters as your saintliness will suggest. Love endureth all things; and I therefore beg you to get a letter from Pope Calerian also, so that her courage may be increased. You know that a girl's spirit is often fortified by the thought that her elders are interested in her.[593]

Jerome acknowledges that both women and men have real sexual urges, writing to Eustochium, to encourage her to remain steadfast in her newly consecrated virginity so that she doesn't give in to physical desires, which he notes may result in abortion or the mother's death.[594] He says of the devil:

> The words are used for decency's sake, but the male and female generative organs are meant… In his assaults on men therefore all the devil's strength is in the loins: against women his force is in the navel.[595]

Jerome knows that this path is difficult for women as well as men, and he gives Eustochium the respect of acknowledging her very human desire for sensual pleasures. He also refers to Elijah, Elisha, and Jeremiah, as well as "many of the sons of the prophets:"[596]

> In the old days, as I have said, the virtue of continence was confined to men, and Eve continually bore children in travail. But now that a virgin has conceived in the womb a child, upon whose shoulders is government, a mighty God, Father of the age to come, the fetters of the old curse are broken. Death came through Eve: life has come through Mary. For this reason the gift of virginity has been poured most abundantly upon women, seeing that it was from a woman it began.[597]

A woman can be like James and John, following Christ and forsaking all else: "For no soldier takes a wife with him when he is marching into battle… So you must not complain if you are scantily lodged."[598] She should "see how Mary sitting at the feet of the Lord is preferred to the

[593] *Epistolae*, VII.4, 25.
[594] *Epistolae*, XXII.13, 79.
[595] *Epistolae*, XXII.11, 77.
[596] *Epistolae*, XXII.21, 99.
[597] *Epistolae*, XXII.21, 99.
[598] *Epistolae*, XXII.21, 101.

busy Martha."[599] In embracing a life completely devoted to God, without the constraints of married life, Eustochium "too may be perhaps the Lord's mother."[600]

> Then the little ones – of whom in Isaiah the Saviour says: 'Behold I and the children whom the Lord hath given me'[601] – shall lift up palms of victory and with one accord shall sing… And no man shall be able to sing that song save the appointed company: 'These are they which were not defiled with women – for they are virgins; these are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."[602]

To Asella, Jerome writes of his friendship with many women.

> …frequently I was surrounded by a throng of virgins: to some of them I often discoursed on the Scriptures to the best of my ability: study brought about familiarity, familiarity friendship, friendship confidence.[603]

Jerome does not limit a life with value, choices and leadership to virgin women. David Hunter writes:

> …closer to the time of Ambrosiaster, that is in the early 380s, Jerome wrote a treatise *Against Helvidius*, in defence of the perpetual virginity of Mary. In this work, we find Jerome again arguing that there is an abolition of sexual differences (and thereby of male dominance) for a woman who adopts a life of continence or virginity. But here he goes one step further. In one biblical example he finds evidence of female dominance over the male: that of Sarah over Abraham. Once Sarah is no longer able to have children, Jerome argues, Abraham is told by God, 'Do all that Sarah asks you to do' (Gen. 21: 12). Jerome comments on this verse that the woman who is not subject to the anxiety and pain of childbearing is freed from the curse of God. Likewise, echoing the biblical penalty decreed against Eve in Gen. 3:16 ('Your desire will be for your husband and he will dominate you'), Jerome notes that Sarah's desire 'was not for her husband, but on the contrary, her husband became subject to her'.[604]

About the education of a young girl, Jerome writes: "Thus must a soul be trained which is to be a temple of God."[605] She should be given beautiful carved letters as toys and taught to love reading and writing. [606] she must be given prizes for spelling and encouraged to win through praise and

[599] *Epistolae*, XXII.24, 107.
[600] *Epistolae*, XXII.38, 147.
[601] Isaiah 8:18.
[602] Revelation 14:4; *Epistolae*, XXII.41, 157.
[603] *Epistolae*, XLV.2, 181.
[604] David G. Hunter, "The Paradise of Patriarchy: Ambrosiaster on Woman as (Not) God's Image," in *The Journal of Theological Studies* 43, no. 2 (1992): 461.
[605] *Epistolae*, CVII.4, 345.
[606] *Epistolae*, CVII.4, 347.

the rivalry of other children.[607] She should learn from someone who is eloquent, so that she acquires the same habit of speech. [608]

> When Paula begins to be a big girl, and like her Spouse to increase in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man, let her go with her parents to the temple of her true Father, but let her not come out from the temple with them. Let them seek her upon the world's highway, amid crowds and the company of their kinsfolk, but let them find her nowhere save in the shrine of the Scripture, inquiring there of the prophets and apostles concerning her spiritual nuptials.[609]

This young girl should memorise Scriptures in Greek and Latin,[610] and learn how to spin wool.[611] She should be given the books of the Bible as they become appropriate to her age, beginning with the Psalms and ending with the Song of Songs.[612] And then,

> …let her peruse the letters of Athanasius and the treatises of Hilary without fear of stumbling. She may take pleasure in the learned expositions of all such writers as maintain in their books a steady love of the faith. If she reads others, let it be as a critic rather than as a disciple.[613]

The young woman is not limited by her womanhood, if she is given the support she needs:

> When you have weaned Paula as Isaac was weaned, and when you have clothed her as Samuel was clothed, send her to her grandmother and her aunt. See this most precious jewel in Mary's chamber, and place her on the cradle where Jesus cried.[614]

Are Jerome's words dripping with misogyny? He promises her mother that if Paula is sent to live with his community, he will undertake her education as though he had been given the responsibility, like Aristotle, of tutoring Alexander the Great.

> I will undertake to be both her tutor and her foster-father. I will carry her on my shoulders, and my old tongue shall train her stammering lips. And I shall take more pride in my task than did the worldly philosopher; for I shall not be teaching a Macedonian king, destined to die by poison in Babylon, but a handmaid and bride of Christ who one day shall be presented to the heavenly throne.[615]

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[607] *Epistolae*, CVII.4, 347.
[608] *Epistolae*, CVII.4, 349.
[609] *Epistolae*, CVII.7, 355.
[610] *Epistolae*, CVII.9, 359.
[611] *Epistolae*, CVII.10, 361.
[612] *Epistolae*, CVII.12, 365.
[613] *Epistolae*, CVII.12, 365-367.
[614] *Epistolae*, CVII.13, 367.
[615] *Epistolae*, CVII.13, 371.

If Radegund read Jerome's letters, she would have encountered a man who respected women, who cultivated deep friendships with women, who wanted them to be free from the shackles of marriage and childbearing so that they could follow Christ in complete liberty. She would have become acquainted with a man who understood that women experienced very real challenges and cared for their well-being. She would have read his words praising women as leaders and role models, promoting their intellectual formation, their spiritual education, their agency, and their equality.

Augustine

> Far more than most other thinkers in the tradition, Augustine is the man whom feminists love to hate. He has been portrayed (and in many cases, rightly so) as the single most important thinker whose highly negative and problematic views of human sexuality continue to haunt Western Christianity to this day.[616]

In these times, it is almost a truism that the Bishop of Hippo, Aurelius Augustine, baptised into pro-Nicene catholic Christianity in 387,[617] hated women: a cursory internet search will leave the uninformed convinced that the saint saw them as unfortunately necessary vessels for procreation only. Philip Vivian, in a 1911 book *The Churches and Modern Thought: An Inquiry Into the Grounds of Unbelief and an Appeal for Candour*, was doing some creative representation of Augustine when he attributed to him the words "Why was woman created at all?"[618] In a bid to argue that the Church has never been the friend of women, Vivian wove these words in with those of other Early Fathers, sadly failing to include any reference or context for them.

[616] Stark, "Introduction," in *Feminist Interpretations of* Augustine, 21.
[617] "Augustine, St, of Hippo," in *TODCC*, 128.
[618] Philip Vivian, *The Churches and Modern Thought: An Inquiry into the Grounds of Unbelief and an Appeal for Candour*, (London: Watts & Co., 1911), 281.

In "Augustine: Sexuality, Gender, and Women," Rosemary Radford Ruether writes that "Augustine considered that God's only purpose in creating women was for reproduction, since for any other task a man would have made a more fit companion than a woman."[619] Augustine's actual writings about the equality of the sexes paint a different picture. In *The City of God*, he acknowledges that "as appears most clearly from the fact that there are bodies of different sexes, it would be a great absurdity to deny that male and female were created for the purpose of begetting children."[620] The choice to include males and females in the passage would belie the claim that he wants to single out women as being essentialized in this way. "I do not see, therefore, in what other way the woman was made to be the helper of the man if procreation is eliminated, and *I do not understand why it should be eliminated*," he wrote.[621] He struggles to interpret passages that might imply in any way that women are not bearers of the divine image to the same extent as men:

> So how are we to take what we have heard from the apostle, that the man is the image of God, and so he is forbidden to cover his head, but the woman is not and so she is told to do so?[622] In the same way, I believe, as what I said when I was dealing with the nature of the human mind, namely that the woman with her husband is the image of God in such a way that the whole of that substance is one image, but when she is assigned her function of being an assistant, which is her concern alone, she is not the image of God; whereas in what concerns the man alone he is the image of God as fully and completely as when the woman is joined to him in one whole.[623]

The main thrust of Augustine's argument around this passage is in stark contrast with Ruether's claim that he sees women as inferior. Ruether's harsh portrayal also seems to contrast with how Augustine discusses reproduction in *De Trinitate*, where he explains that

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[619] Ruether, "Augustine: Sexuality, Gender," 51.
[620] Aurelius Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, translated by R. W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), XIV.22. Hereafter *Civitate Dei.*
[621] Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, translated by John Hammond Taylor, volume 2, *Ancient Christian Writers* 42 (NY: Newman, 1982), IX.12, 77. Emphasis mine.
[622] I Corinthians 11:3-12.
[623] *Aug.Trin,* XII (3).10, 329-330.

> …we must see how what the apostle says about the man and not the woman being the image of God avoids contradicting what is written in Genesis: God made man to the image of God; he made him male and female; he made them and blessed them.[624]

Similarly, Edmund Hill, in the notes to his translation of *De Trinitate*, remarks upon the fact that the whole reason Augustine makes the argument of Book XII using this imagery, is to reconcile Paul with Genesis, and not the other way around:

> …[Augustine's] whole effort in this chapter is to maintain the equality of women as human beings with men, and their equal status as made to the image of God. That is why he insists on interpreting Paul here symbolically. The reader must therefore bear continually in mind that the author is not talking about man and woman in themselves or about their real personal relationships, but about man and woman as symbols of two aspects or functions of the human mind. What woman symbolizes as female is subordinate to what man symbolizes as male. It does not follow that what woman is as person is subordinate, let alone inferior to what man is as person, or that men do not engage as much, if not more, in the "feminine" function of mind as do women.[625]

Kim Power, in *Veiled Desire: Augustine on Women*, explains these two aspects as follows:

> [Augustine] names these two functions of the rational soul not mind and sense-perception but *Sapientia* (Wisdom) and *Scientia* (Knowledge/ skill/science). *Sapientia* is concerned with the contemplation and knowledge of God, Scientia with the administration of the corporeal and the temporal. Although both are linguistically feminine, analogically, *Sapientia* is masculine and *Scientia* is feminine. Like Philo and Ambrose, Augustine uses Adam and Eve as the paradigmatic couple, and as in their texts, *Sapientia* relies on *Scientia*, for even the most spiritual of beings must live in, and interact with, the world. Consequently, just as Eve was created as a helpmeet for Adam, so *Scientia* was created a helpmeet for *Sapientia*…[626]

Augustine argues that "the apostle Paul had worked out a symbolism of something more mysterious in the obvious distinction of sex between male and female" by referring to I Timothy 2:14 and 5:5. If true widows must be childless, and if women can only be saved through childbearing, why would Paul encourage such a one to hope or pray? No, says Augustine: "what we call good works are like the children of our life, in the sense in which one asks what sort of

[624] *Aug.Trin*, XII (3).10, 329; Genesis 1:27.
[625] Edmund Hill, *Aug.Trin*, XII (3).10, 330, n28.
[626] Power, *Veiled Desire*, 135.

life a man lives, that is, how he conducts his temporal affairs—the life which the Greeks call *bios* not *zoe*—and these good works most frequently consist of services of mercy."[627]

Ruether argues that Augustine believes the woman "should veil herself to prevent her from causing" the sinful penile erections of men. Augustine, presented with Paul's strange requirement for women to veil themselves on account of the angels, argues that "if this does not refer to some hidden sacramental or symbolic meaning, it will remain quite pointless."[628] This sort of symbolism makes the angels happy, says Augustine, but God doesn't seem to care much about head coverings for women or when some other "temporal and transitory action is performed, in the way that such actions affect either the fleshly senses of animals and men, or even the celestial ones of angels."[629]

In Ruether's intertextual reading of I Corinthians 11, Genesis 1:27 and *De Trinitate*, she presents Augustine as understanding women to be inferior from the beginning, in a kind of "total androcentrism":[630]

> …in the actual production of the human being, God created the male first and then made the female from the man's side to indicate the relationship of superiority and subordination by which the genders are to relate to each other in the social order. Although women too have the intellectual soul, socially they represent sense knowledge (*scientia*), which is activated only under the command of the male ruling mind. For Augustine gender hierarchy is a part of the original design of creation, not something that happened only after the Fall.[631]

Stark interprets Augustine as holding in *Civitate Dei* that "as an embodied creature, woman is 'physically subject' to man, just as the natural impulses should be subject to reason... women was created as inferior to man."[632] However, the passage to which she alludes refers both to the

[627] *Aug.Trin*, XII (3).11, 331.
[628] *Aug.Trin*, XII (3).11, 331.
[629] *Aug.Trin*, XII (3).10, 330.
[630] Ruether, "Augustine: Sexuality, Gender," 56.
[631] Ruether, "Augustine: Sexuality, Gender," 53.
[632] Stark, "Augustine's Rhetoric of the Feminine," in *Feminist Interpretations of* Augustine, 104; *Civitate Dei*, XIV.13, 608.

man and his wife as having sinned, and the following passage makes it clear that the sin to which he refers is that of pride: the pride of both the man and the woman.

> But even worse and more damnnable is the pride which seeks refuge in an excuse even when the sins are pain to see, as with the first human beings…. The woman's pride blames the serpent, the man's pride blames the woman.[633]

Augustine himself contradicts this interpretation, when he writes that God "did not intend that His rational creatures, made in His own image, should have lordship over any but irrational creatures: not man over man, but man over the beasts."[634] Hill's position is stronger than Ruether's here, especially given the other male-female dichotomy Augustine used in *De Trinitate* to demonstrate allegorical meaning in scripture wherein Christ is "harmonized with each part of us by becoming in that flesh the sacrament for the inner man and the model for the outer one."[635]

> That the Lord's bodily resurrection is a sacrament of our inner resurrection is shown by the place where he said to the woman after he had risen, Do not touch me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father (Jn 20:17) …. Not to touch Christ until he has ascended to the Father means not to have materialistic thoughts about Christ…. Likewise the resurrection of the Lord's body is found to serve as the model for our outer man's resurrection, since he said to the disciples, *Handle and see that a spirit does not have bones and flesh as you see that I have* (Lk 24:39).[636]

This, the only other instance in *De Trinitate* in which Augustine contrasts men and women for analogical purposes, references Mary Magdalene, the apostle to the apostles. It looks as though Augustine interprets Mary Magdalene as being capable of receiving the lesson of Christ's resurrection as the sacrament of her own interior spiritual resurrection, while the male apostles still need to be convinced that Christ has been raised from the dead at all. Not only this, but in passages treating the resurrection, Augustine does not specify that the risen bodies of women might be in some way less like the body of the risen Saviour. Instead, he cites Philippians 3:21,

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[633] *Civitate Dei*, XIV.14, 611.
[634] *Civitate Dei*, XIX.15, 943.
[635] *Aug.Trin*, IV (1).6, 157.
[636] *Aug.Trin*, IV (1).6, 158.

an encouraging word to women that "the body of their lowliness" will *also* "match the body of his glory." Ruether does not agree with my reading of Augustine's understanding of women's resurrection. Citing *Civitate Dei*, she writes:

> Augustine insists that women will be resurrected in a female body, since male and female is part of the original creation of humans, but those parts of the female body that have to do with sex and childbirth will be transformed, so they become 'fitted to glory rather than to shame.' What Augustine had in mind is not clear. Are woman's womb, vagina, and breasts incompatible with bodily resurrection?[637]

My examination of this passage renders me incapable of reading anything but precisely the opposite meaning into the text. Augustine's own words insist that

> the sex of a woman is not a vice, but nature. They will then be exempt from sexual intercourse and childbearing, but the female parts will nonetheless remain in being, accommodated not to the old uses, but to a new beauty, which, so far from inciting lust, which no longer exists, will move us to praise the wisdom and clemency of God, Who both made what was not and redeemed from corruption what He made.[638]

Augustine is saying that those parts of woman which are now specifically female will, in the resurrection, be glorified, because God already had them in mind when He made humanity from nothing. The implication is that nothing God has made is less than good, and that everything has a purpose in the mind of God. Following these words, there is a beautiful recapitulation of the doctrine of mystical marriage, in which the Church is conceived as the Bride of Christ. While this is not the theme of the present paper, a parenthetical observation is perhaps indicated here: when the Church is allegorised in this way, all of Her members, including men, can be seen as possessing some sort of feminine identity. Finally, the section ends in Augustine's reminder of the words of Jesus in Matthew 22:30 to argue that in the resurrection, "they neither marry nor are given in marriage," referring to both men and women.[639]

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[637] Ruether, "Augustine: Sexuality, Gender," 64; *Civitate Dei*, XXII.17.

[638] *Civitate Dei*, XXII.17.

[639] *Civitate Dei*, XXII.17.

Ruether underlined the "need to critique [Augustine's] views, not superficially, but through a deep evaluation of their underlying assumptions, to salvage what is helpful in Augustine's views, freed from the biases that have distorted the humanity of both women and men."[640] In this, Ruether and I are in full agreement. It is beyond doubt that Augustine was, in many ways, a man of his time and influenced by a society in which women and men generally occupied very different roles. Sexist assumptions and patriarchal normativity can be gleaned from many of his writings if one is looking for them.

In a world when the biology of women placed them at a distinct physical disadvantage, such attitudes might be expected. This being said, a careful, sympathetic reading of Augustine's later works indicate that when he read the words, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus,"[641] he was seeing them through the lens of other biblical passages that would suggest women were not less than men in the eyes of God: "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them;"[642] and "Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all."[643]

Ruether argues that in his later works, Augustine finds it "inconceivable to think of God as in any way feminine. God is wholly masculine-spiritual."[644] She observes further that

> In the *Confessions* Augustine appears to make God motherlike. Like a mothering parent God chose him from conception, sought him out, pursuing him until he was converted and came into his true home, the church, as did his own mother. But in his later writings Augustine will strictly purge his imagery of God of any mothering traits.[645]

[640] Ruether, "Augustine: Sexuality, Gender," 64.
[641] Galatians 3:28.
[642] Genesis 1:27.
[643] Colossians 3:11.
[644] Ruether, "Augustine: Sexuality, Gender," 63.
[645] Ruether, "Augustine: Sexuality, Gender," 63.

It must be said that Augustine makes no reference whatsoever to the idea that he would wish to reconsider his portrayal of God in *The Confessions*. *Au contraire*, upon reconsideration he was able to say that when he read them again, they could still "lift the human mind and heart to God;" His only self-criticism[646] in this work were of a bit of grandiloquence[647] in Book IV and some thoughtlessness[648] in Book XIII.

Ruether acknowledges Augustine's portrayal of God in the *Confessions* as motherlike, but does his image of God in *De Trinitate* exclude any feminine qualities? It is true that in *De Trinitate*, Augustine explicitly underlines "what an error it is to think of the Holy Spirit as the mother of the Son and the wife of the Father."[649] However, he refutes this notion specifically because it would imply that man only, and not woman, is truly made in the image of God.[650] A few paragraphs later, he insists again that "man was not made to the image of God as regards the shape of his body, but as regards his rational mind (*animus*). It is an idle and base kind of thinking which supposes that God is confined within the limits of a body with features and limbs."[651] Women do not need to have "lost their bodily sex"[652] to be in the image of God, "seeing that together with us men they are fellow heirs of grace."[653]

Augustine acknowledges there is something to be solved here: how can the sexual dichotomy of humanity be made in the image of the selfsame God? He has an answer: it is "because they are being renewed to the image of God where there is no sex, it is there where there is no sex that man was made to the image of God, that is in the spirit of his mind."[654] Here,

[646] *Confessiones*, "Appendix D: *Reconsiderations*," 282.
[647] Augustine, *Confessions* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2019), IV.6.11, 49. Hereafter *Confessiones.*
[648] *Confessiones*, XIII,32.47, n27, 275.
[649] *Aug.Trin*, XII (2).5, 325.
[650] *Aug.Trin*, XII (3).10, 329.
[651] *Aug.Trin*, XII (3).12, 331.
[652] *Aug.Trin*, XII (3).12, 332.
[653] I Peter 3:7
[654] *Aug.Trin*, XII (3).12, 332.

in the spirit of their minds, is where he and his mother experience the mystical encounter with Christ as Wisdom (*Sophia* in Greek, *Sapientia* in Latin),[655] although their bodies are at Ostia:

> Step by step we traversed all bodily things, and even the heavens from which the sun and moon and stars shed their light upon the earth. And we climbed higher still in our inner thoughts and speech and in wonder at your works: and we entered into our own minds and passed beyond them until we reached that land of unfailing plenty where you feed the flock of Israel for ever with the food of truth, where life is the Wisdom by whom all things were made, both those that once were and those that are yet to be; but Wisdom is not made: she is as she always was and always will be. Or rather, there is no "was" or "will be" in Wisdom, but only *is*: for she is eternal, and what was or will be is not eternal. And while we were speaking and gazing at her with eager longing, we touched her—just barely—with the utmost energy of our hearts.[656]

Ruether claims that for Augustine, "women represent and incarnate the lower realm of sense knowledge,"[657] and Augustine can muster his own response:

> Well, it is only because she differs from the man in the sex of her body that her bodily covering could suitably be used to symbolize that part of the reason which is diverted to the management of temporal things, signifying that the mind of man does not remain the image of God except in the part which adheres to the eternal ideas to contemplate or consult them: and it is clear that females have this as well as males. So in their minds a common nature is to be acknowledged; but in their bodies the distribution of the one mind is symbolized.[658]

The God Augustine wants to praise is neither male nor female, but it is incorrect to imply that there is no feminine imagery for God in his later works. "The divine scriptures then are in the habit of making something like children's toys out of things that occur in creation, by which to entice our sickly gaze and get us step by step to seek as best we can the things that are above and forsake the things that are below."[659] Augustine then references I Corinthians 3:1-2 to explain why it can be difficult to talk about matters of faith with those who do not believe, and continues: "the human mind with its weak eyesight cannot concentrate on so overwhelming a light, unless it has been nursed back to full vigour on *the justice of faith* (Rom 4:13)."[660]

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[655] *Confessiones*, 155, n29.
[656] *Confessiones*, IX,10.24, 155.
[657] Ruether, "Augustine: Sexuality, Gender," 63.
[658] *Aug.Trin*, XII (3).12, 332.
[659] *Aug.Trin*, I (1).2, 66.
[660] *Aug.Trin*, I (1).4, 67.

From whom are new, young, "fleshly" believers nursing? Perhaps Augustine is thinking here of Psalm 131: "O Lord, my heart is not lifted up, my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvellous for me. But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; my soul is like the weaned child that is with me." Is this a feminine image of the divine in late Augustine? Or perhaps the young believers are nursing from the Scriptures? After all, the scriptures seem to be mothering them, making children's toys and helping these spiritual infants to avoid light that is too bright and might permanently wound their weak sight.[661] Of one thing we can be sure: Augustine believed that we learn about God through creation and the scriptures.[662] If women are made in God's image, and if the Scriptures nurture young babes, Augustine's theology would seem to indicate that God can be understood with maternal analogies. Augustine makes one other oblique reference to human participation in a maternal God:

> This body is governed by the soul breathed into it; this soul is rational, and so although it is subject to change, it is capable of sharing in that wisdom which is changeless. In this way *its sharing is in the selfsame*, as the psalm says of all the saints, who go like living stones into the building of that eternal Jerusalem *in heaven which is our mother* (Gal 4:26; Heb 12:22). The psalmist sings, *Jerusalem which is built as a city, whose sharing is in the selfsame* (Ps 122:3). "The selfsame" here is to be understood of that supreme and changeless good which is God, and his wisdom and his will.[663]

At the end of Book IX of *De Trinitate*, Augustine references I John 5:8 after having begun his exploration of the psychological image of the Trinity, in the light of love: "There are three that testify: the Spirit and the water and the blood, and these three agree." The Spirit, is being referred to as a kind of midwife here. In the psychological trinity, "when mind knows itself it is the sole parent of its knowledge, being itself the thing known and the knower."[664] The Holy Spirit works not only allegorically, but anagogically, so that things which existed already but had

[661] *Aug.Trin*, XIV (2).7, 375.
[662] *Aug.Trin*, II (Prologue).1, 97.
[663] *Aug.Trin*, III (1).8, 131.
[664] *Aug.Trin*, IX (3).18, 284.

not been understood are made known and held to the light. In Book XV, there is a delightfully clear recapitulation of Augustine's reasoning:

> [The faithful] perceive in our memory, understanding and will that God is a trinity. Anyone who has a lively intuition of these three (as divinely established in the nature of his mind) and of how great a thing it is that his mind has that by which even the eternal and unchanging nature can be recalled, beheld and desired—it is recalled by memory, beheld by intelligence, embraced by love—has thereby found the image of that supreme trinity.[665]

The things that are brought to light by this desire, or appetite,

> are as it were squeezed out and formed. Even if the things we have found out by inquiry already existed, still knowledge of them did not yet exist, and it is this that we reckon as the offspring coming to birth…. So parturition by the mind is preceded by a kind of appetite which prompts us to inquire and find out about what we want to know, and as a result knowledge itself is brought forth as offspring; and hence the appetite itself by which knowledge is conceived and brought forth cannot appropriately itself be called brood or offspring.[666]

The Trinity can be understood on one level as "the lover, and what is being loved, and love,"[667] says Augustine, although our human experience of love is imperfect and fragmented. The Holy Spirit is uniquely and specially Love, although God the Trinity is also Love. "While love is referred to the mind loving, whose love it is, nonetheless it is also love with reference to itself, so that it is also in itself, because love too is loved, nor can it be loved with anything but love, that is with itself. Thus each of them is in itself."[668] Like a midwife bringing forth a beloved child

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[665] *Aug.Trin*, XV (5).39, 431.
[666] *Aug.Trin*, IX (3).17, 285.
[667] *Aug.Trin*, IX (1).2, 272. Augustine is neither the first nor the last to think of God in this way. He was exegeting I John 4:7-9: "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." Four centuries later, Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā) would write that all things have their being in Love, the Most Perfect Cause of all existence, and they become more like the Divine in their love for Love, and Love's love for them. See Emil L Fackenheim and Ibn Sīnā, "A Treatise on Love by Ibn Sina. Translated," in *Mediaeval Studies* 7 (January 1945): 208–28. Avicenna's treatise would in turn give rise to the Courtly Love of the troubadors in the 12th century. See G. E. Von Grunebaum, "Avicenna's Risâla Fî ʾl-ʿišq and Courtly Love," in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 11, no. 4 (October 1952): 233–38. In the 14th century, Dante would allude to God as a Courtly Lover. See Dante Alighieri, *The Comedy of Dante Alighieri III: Paradise*, Translated by Dorothy L. Sayers and Barbara Reynolds (London: Penguin, 1991), especially *Canto XXXIII*, 343-349.
[668] *Aug.Trin*, IX (1).8, 276.

into the light of day, "love, like something in the middle, joins together our word and the mind it is begotten from, and binds itself in with them as a third element in a non-bodily embrace, without any confusion." How beautiful that as Augustine, with his brilliant intellect, tries to understand the *Idipsum* as Trinity, he might choose to envision these relationships with such a powerful feminine image; not sentimental, but strong and primal.

Ruether cites Augustine's treatment of I Corinthians 11:3-12[669] in both the article I have so far discussed and in *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology*.[670] She imputes to Augustine a vision of woman "so overbalanced by her bodily representation of inferior, sin-prone self that he regards her as possessing the image of God only secondarily."[671] She argues that Augustine acknowledges the possession of an intellect, but only one that "women could not use autonomously as an agent in her own right. In her bodily, sexual, and social nature woman is not *homo,* but *femina* … as *femina*, women are not the image of God, but represent the sense world that should be dominated by male headship."[672] And this is true for Augustine: woman *qua* woman represents something in addition to her humanity, but she is still an image-bearer:

> we have been looking for a kind of rational couple of contemplation and action in the mind of everyman, with functions distributed into two several channels and yet the mind's unity preserved in each; all this of course without prejudice to the historical truth of what divine authority tells us about the two first human beings, to man and woman from whom the human race has been propagated. The point of staging this discussion has simply been to help us understand why the apostle attributes the image of God to the man only and not to the woman as well, and to see that he did it because he wanted to use the distinction of sex between two human beings to signify something that must be looked for in every single human being.[673]

If this were not clear enough, and perhaps foreseeing a conversation of the very nature we are having, he goes on to note, "I did not think the woman should be made to stand for the senses of

[669] *Aug.Trin,* XII (3).10, 329-330. See Gauthier, 93.
[670] Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, 95.
[671] Ruether, "Augustine: Sexuality, Gender," 95.
[672] Ruether, "Augustine: Sexuality, Gender," 55.
[673] *Aug.Trin*, XII (3).19, 336.

the body which we observe to be common to us and the beasts. I wanted her to stand for something the beasts do not have."[674] It remains possible to use the female as an archetype while applying said archetype to the behaviour of any human, regardless of sex. Even Paul, who wrote the challenging passage[675] that Augustine worked so hard to understand in a way that would not diminish women's humanity, followed those lines with the reminder that regardless of what he had just written, "Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God."[676]

The contrast being made by Augustine is not between women and men, but between wisdom (*sapientia*) and knowledge (*scientia*), contemplation and action. Augustine operates with an understanding that it is possible for woman to be *imago Dei* while at the same time signifying other roles. He had alluded to this partnership of contemplation and action midway through the first book, where he described Mary and Martha of Bethany. Martha, "busy doing what had to be done," represents action, while Mary, "sitting at the Lord's feet, … foreshadowing that joy which is going to last forever," represents contemplation.[677]

> We said about the nature of the human mind that if it is all contemplating truth it is the image of God; and when something is drawn off from it and assigned or directed in a certain way to the management of temporal affairs, it is still all the same the image of God as regards the part with which it consults the truth it has gazed on; but as regards the part which is directed to managing these lower affairs, it is not the image of God.[678]

The reward for a life well lived is "the direct contemplation of God"; "the part which is played in ministering to need will be taken away when need comes to an end, and in fact the reward of good works that are going to come to an end is a rest that will endure."[679] Prudence Allen

[674] *Aug.Trin*, XII (3).20, 336.
[675] 1 Corinthians 11:3-10
[676] 1 Corinthians 11:11-12.
[677] *Aug.Trin*, I (3).20, 83.
[678] *Aug.Trin*, XII (3).10, 330.
[679] *Aug.Trin*, I (3).20, 83.

interprets Augustine here as arguing "that both women and men, when engaged in temporal things, would not be, properly speaking, in the image of God."[680] For Allen, "a belief in the resurrection of male and female bodies" requires a view of sex complementarity, rather than one of "sex polarity, that man is naturally superior to woman."[681] By "sex complementarity," Allen means the theory "that women and men are significantly different and that they are equal."[682]

The worth, dignity, and identity of women *qua* human beings who are made in the image of God is not to be found in their service to men. The thing that makes women human is what they share with God; it is contemplation of the truth, and the Incarnate Son Himself has given them his blessing to cast off the shackles of servitude so that they may sit at His feet with Mary and the other disciples. For Augustine, "what was made to the image of God is the human nature that is realized in each sex, and it does not exclude the female from the image of God that is meant."[683]

Indeed, Christ is Wisdom for Augustine, Christ is that Lady Wisdom personified as female in Scripture:[684] he writes that "we distinctively call the only Word of God by the name of wisdom, although the Holy Spirit and the Father are also wisdom in a general sense:"[685]

> But the Word of God, that is the only-begotten Son of God, is openly called wisdom by the mouth of the apostle where he says, *Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*[686]

Augustine has more to say. On Christ as Wisdom, he writes that

> in this sense Christ is made wisdom, because he was made man. Is it perhaps to commend to us for our imitation the wisdom by whose imitation we are formed, that wisdom in those books never speaks or has anything said about her but what presents her as born of God or made by him, although the Father too is wisdom itself? For the Father utters her to be his Word, not like a word spoken aloud from the mouth, or even thought of before it is pronounced – such a word is completed in a space of time, but this other Word is

[680] Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, 221.
[681] Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, 219.
[682] Allen, *The Concept of Woman*, 3.
[683] *Aug.Trin*, XII (3).10, 329.
[684] Proverbs 3:19; 7:4; *ff.*
[685] *Aug.Trin*, XV(5).31, 423.
[686] *Aug.Trin*, XV(5).31, 424; I Corinthians 1:24.

> eternal; and she by enlightening us utters to us whatever needs to be uttered to men about herself and about the Father.[687]

For Augustine, Christ is not only understood as the personification of God's Wisdom, but as the actual mother of the Church. Just as Eve emerged from the side of sleeping Adam,[688] Christ's holy spouse, the Church, emerges from his side: the "second Adam bowed His head and fell asleep on the cross, that a spouse might be formed for Him from that which flowed from the sleepers side."[689] Where Jesus has been penetrated by a spear, blood and water gush out,[690] and he gives birth to the Church.

Jesus is Sapientia, Sophia, Lady Wisdom. Jesus is the Mother of his Bride, the Church. Augustine reminds us that Eve "was 'built,' to use the mysterious language of Scripture."[691]

> In building his temple God does not use you like stones which have no power of self-movement. They are simply picked up and put in place by the builder; but it is not like that with living stones - and you are being built like living stones into a temple of God.

In Eve, God "made what was not"[692] – the Church, the Bride of Christ. God has "redeemed from corruption what He made"[693] through the Church, and Eve is redeemed: she is a living temple, the Church. In Eve's redemption, Radegund can find her own redemption; a woman such as herself can be "an enduring temple of God."[694]

Augustine emphasized the equal status of men and women as human beings created in the image of God with rational minds by using symbolic and allegorical interpretations of difficult biblical passages that some have interpreted as portraying womanhood in a negative light. He argued that sex differentiation symbolizes the two aspects or functions of the human mind, with

[687] *Aug.Trin*, VII(2).4, 223-224.
[688] Genesis 2:21-23.
[689] Augustine, "Tractate CXX," in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, edited by Philip Schaff, volume VII, series 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 435.
[690] John 19:34.
[691] Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, IX.15, 88.
[692] *Civitate Dei*, XXII.17.
[693] *Civitate Dei*, XXII.17.
[694] Carmina, VIII.1.62, 495.

Sapientia (masculine analogically) representing contemplation of God and *Scientia* (feminine analogically) representing the administration of temporal affairs. This is balanced by how Augustine uses feminine imagery for God and the Church. Christ himself is Wisdom. Christ gives birth to His Bride, the Church, with the Holy Spirit acting as midwife.

Sedulius

The Sedulius of the early fifth century to which Venantius Fortunatus makes reference is not to be confused with Sedulius Scotus, an Irish-Scot[695] thinker from the late ninth century. It is unclear whether he was a presbyter[696] or "a layman who lived at first in Italy and was devoted to the study of philosophy;"[697] indeed, very little is known about his life at all.[698]

> In Venantius Fortunatus, *Carm*. 8.1.59, Sedulius alone of the canonical Christian poets (cf. Fortunatus, Vita Martini 1.14– 25), is included in the company of such distinguished ecclesiastical authorities as Athanasius, Basil, Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine.[699]

"Sedulius' work is quoted by poets and writers of the second half of the fifth century and it would seem that he himself was writing in Italy around the year 430."[700] We also know that his works "were edited as early as the fifth century by Turcius Rufius Aterius (consul in 494)."[701] Paul LeJay wrote in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* that "the best edition of Sedulius is that of J. Huemer" from 1889;[702] this is the edition used by Carl Springer for his 2013 side-by-side

[695] *Cœlius* or *Cœlius,* "a praenomen of doubtful authenticity" in either case. See "Sedulius," in *The Encyclopædia Britannica*, 24 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 191), 580. See also Carl Springer, "Introduction," in Sedulius, *The Paschal Song and Hymns,* (Atlanta: SBL, 2013), *xvii*. Hereafter *Carmen paschale*.
[696] "Sedulius," *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 580.
[697] Paul Lejay, "Sedulius," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, 13 (NY: Encyclopedia Press, 1913), 680.
[698] Caroline White, "Sedulius," in *Early Christian Latin Poets, The Early Church Fathers* (London: Routledge, 2000), 105.
[699] Springer, "Introduction," in in *Carmen paschale*, *xx*.
[700] White, "Sedulius," 105.
[701] Paul Lejay, "Sedulius," 680.
[702] Sedulius, *Sedulii Opera Omnia*. *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, 10 (Vienna: C. Geroldi filium, 1885).

translation of Sedulius' complete works, some of which had never previously been made available in English.[703]

Springer writes that "Sedulius has had an enormous influence on the later literary tradition" and then proceeds to name almost fifty authors and works, "among others."[704] Springer is not the first to comment on the grandiloquence of Sedulius,[705] and he notes that literary tastes have changed since Sedulius juxtaposed piety and witticism as he did so well.[706]

> High rhetoric and flamboyant verbal effects combined with simple declarations of biblical truths may have little appeal for many readers of poetry today, but we should remember that for centuries Sedulius was considered one of the great literary *auctores* of the ancient world.[707]

Fortunatus said of Radegund that Holy Scripture, Gregory, Basil, Athanasius, Hilary, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, Sedulius and Orosius "are the foods she feeds on when hungry; her flesh is never indulged until her spirit is already full first."[708] What would an educated woman of the sixth century such as Radegund have taken away about how Sedulius understood the fairer sex from reading the *Paschal Song*? As Radegund read the Preface to the *Paschal Song* (*Paschale carmen*), Sedulius invited her to settle in for a feast and set the table thus:

> O dinner guest, whoever you are, who have come to partake of my paschal feast,
> Having deigned to recline on my dining couch,
> Do not be scornful, if you acknowledge yourself to be my friend,
> And do not seek here a literary masterpiece,
> But contentedly approach the solemnities of a modest table,
> And delight more to fill yourself with things of the mind than with food.
> Or, if you are more taken with the sweetness of great things,
> And you are a voluptuary who prefers riches,
> Feed yourself on the splendid meals offered by noble men of learning,
> Whose vast wealth cannot be calculated.
> There you will find to eat whatever grows in the sea,
> Whatever the earth brings forth, whatever flies up to the stars.
> Waxen honey gleams in jeweled containers,
> And golden vessels glow with the same color as the honeycomb within.

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[703] Carl Springer, "Introduction," *xxvi*.
[704] Springer, "Introduction," *xxx*.
[705] Springer, "Introduction," *xx*, *xxxii*, *xlii*.
[706] Springer, "Introduction," *xxxi-xxxv*..
[707] Springer, "Introduction," *xlii*.
[708] *Carmina,* VIII.1.53-63, 492-495.

But I have picked a few greens from a poor man's garden,
And placed them for serving on a red earthen potsherd.[709]

The first book of *Paschale carmen* "contains a summary of the Old Testament; the four others a summary of the New Testament."[710] When and how did Sedulius reference womanhood in this work? One thing Sedulius does not do is to open the story by placing the blame on the first woman, who is neither mentioned nor named.

You restored dying man after he ate the sweet forbidden fruit
By providing him with better food; with a drink
Of holy blood you expelled the serpent's venom.[711]

The Virgin Mary is alluded to, in terms that mirror those used to describe Christ himself, who, as the Good Shepherd,

Watches over his happy flock, where the lamb with white fleece,
Born of a virgin ewe, leads the way, and all his shining flock enters.[712]

In the narrative of Sedulius, Sarah is mentioned before Abraham. For the great poet, her pregnancy with Isaac[713] foreshadows the birth of Christ as much as Abraham's near-sacrifice and God's provision of a ram for the offering in Mount Moriah[714] foreshadows the redemptive work of the cross at Golgotha.[715] The demise of Lot's wife[716] is made to correspond[717] with a male would-be follower of Jesus, who puts his hand to the plough and looks back.[718]

Finally, and only in the second book, Sedulius alludes to Eve's part in the fall of humanity.

Nor did this reckless man alone feel the well-deserved wrath
When subjected to the law of death, but descending straight from him,
The entire human race was affected as well. Alas, guilty wife!
Were you, wife, or that faithless serpent more to blame?
That serpent was faithless, but you also, wife, were to blame…[719]

[709] *Carmen paschale,* I.1-16, 2-3.
[710] Paul Lejay, "Sedulius," 680.
[711] *Carmen paschale,* I.70-72, 7.
[712] *Carmen paschale,* I.83-84, 7.
[713] Genesis 18:9-15; 21:1-7.
[714] Genesis 22:1-19.
[715] *Carmen paschale,* I.107-120, 9.
[716] Genesis 19:15-27.
[717] *Carmen paschale,* I.121-126, 9.
[718] Luke 9:61-62.
[719] *Carmen paschale,* II.4-8, .

The account of the nativity[720] provided by Sedulius paints the picture of Mary as a necessary and willing agent in the story of salvation; she who bears the full divinity of God[721] provides the full humanity to the Second Adam[722] through her womb by atoning for Eve.[723]

> Even so, insofar as holy Mary came from the stock of Eve,
> The latter virgin was to atone for the misdeed of the earlier one…[724]

For Sedulius, womanhood is not only represented by Eve and Mary. Where John the baptizer is mentioned, allusion is made to his mother Elizabeth, whose understanding that John was leaping in her womb because he recognised his Saviour in the womb of Mary, brings about Mary's singing of the *Magnificat*.[725] In his description of the massacre of the innocents,[726] almost an inversion of Seneca's *Medea*,[727] a convincing argument might even be made that for Sedulius, Christ experiences womanhood vicariously through the loss of the mothers just as he experiences martyrdom in the killing of the baby boys.

> This one tore out her mangled hair from her bare scalp.
> That one scored her cheeks. Another beat her bared breast with fists.
> One unhappy mother (now a mother no longer!)
> Bereft, pressed her breasts to her son's cold mouth— in vain.[728]
> …
> Even though he was not among the children whose lives were snuffed out,
> Christ was present all the same. He always takes up his saints' dangers
> And feels the punishments inflicted on another's body.[729]

As he explores the miracles of Jesus Christ in the third book of *Paschale carmen*, Sedulius includes the stories of women healed: Peter's mother-in-law,[730] Jairus' young daughter and the woman with an issue of blood;[731] the bent-over woman;[732] and the Canaanite woman's

[720] *Carmen paschale,* II.28-69, 47-49.
[721] *Carmen paschale,* II.37-40, 49.
[722] *Carmen paschale,* II.54-62, 49.
[723] *Carmen paschale,* II.30-34, 47.
[724] *Carmen paschale,* II.30-31, 47.
[725] *Carmen paschale,* II.143-144, 53.
[726] *Carmen paschale,* II.107-133, 51-53.
[727] Lucius Annaeus Seneca, Medea, in *Tragedies*, translated by John G. Fitch, 1 *Loeb Classical Library* 62 (Cambridge, MA: HUP, 2002) 344–433.
[728] *Carmen paschale,* II.123-126, 53.
[729] *Carmen paschale,* II.131-133, 53.
[730] Matthew 8:14-15; *Carmen paschale,* III.33-39, 81.
[731] Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:40-56; *Carmen paschale,* III.193-200, 89.
[732] Luke 13:10-17; *Carmen paschale,* III.33-39, 81.

daughter.[733] The feeding of the five thousand is recounted in all four canonical gospels,[734] but Sedulius chooses to base his telling on Matthew's Gospel, the only one that mentions the uncounted women and children who were fed.[735]

> The rest of the crowd was uncounted, and no number encompasses
> The many legions of children or the many mothers.[736]

Sedulius chooses to tell the story of the Anointing at Bethany in the fourth book of *Paschale carmen*[737] from the Gospel of Luke, in which an unnamed woman with a reputation as a sinner anoints the feet of Jesus.[738] None of the other gospels tell the story in quite this way;[739] Luke's telling is unique because it is the only one in which sin is mentioned.[740] Sedulius chooses to make the woman into a model of the virtues of confession for all Christians;[741] she leaves the encounter with Jesus "washed by her own tears and wiped clean by her own hair."[742] Jesus' raising from the dead of the widow's son at Nain[743] puts into focus "his mother, Long since a widow, widowed now by a second funeral urn."[744] Christ offers his "vivifying assistance"[745] to the mother by commanding the young man to rise, which he does and goes "off alongside his mother."[746]

> … Soon the procession
> Turned around and set aside their anxious grieving, as they retraced
> Their steps and brightly recalled the happy mother home.[747]

Mary Magdalene is directly addressed by Sedulius:

> And with the Lord as your doctor, Mary, it was no minor healing
> For your mind, damaged by many a wound, to be cured,
> You, whom the harsh fury of the devil with a seven-fold army,

[733] Matthew 15:21-28; *Carmen paschale,* III.236-244, 91.
[734] Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:34-44 Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-15.
[735] Matthew 14:21.
[736] *Carmen paschale,* III.208-209, 89.
[737] *Carmen paschale,* IV.64-81, 113-115.
[738] Luke 7:36-50.
[739] Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:8.
[740] Luke 7:37, 39, 47-50.
[741] *Carmen paschale,* IV.76-78, 115.
[742] *Carmen paschale,* IV.81, 115.
[743] Luke 7:11-17; *Carmen paschale,* IV.125-141, 117.
[744] *Carmen paschale,* IV.130-131, 117.
[745] *Carmen paschale,* IV.133, 117.
[746] *Carmen paschale,* IV.136, 117.
[747] *Carmen paschale,* IV.139-141, 117.

Drawn up in demonic formation, had attacked…[748]

The man with dropsy whom Jesus heals[749] is described as

… a swollen man, his huge belly visibly distended,
Full of water, and like a womb the pregnant flesh had swelled up,
About to give birth to the death inside it.[750]

To the Samaritan woman at the well,[751] Sedulius properly imputes prophetic wisdom and agency:

She asked that the gift of ever flowing water be given her,
To quench eternal thirst, which no one will be able to avoid,
Unless, immersed in the flood of Christ the Lord,
He receives the quiet waters of the spirit, not the body.[752]

As he tells of the woman caught in adultery,[753] Sedulius implies that the sins of the men who are there to "pick up a stone to strike the polluted, foul adulteress"[754] are comparable to her own by alluding to Jesus' warning about judging others.[755]

Nor was there anyone able to pluck a small mote
From another's eye, since he knew that in his own
There was lodged a huge beam. So that furious onslaught
Gave way, and his kindly sentence forgave her fault,
Absolved on the condition that there be no more sinning.
For whoever licks up his own vomit again with the tongue of a dog,
Is eager neither for his old sins nor those in the future to be forgiven,
Retaining the guilt for the former, losing the pardon for the latter.[756]

The proverb about dogs returning to their own vomit[757] makes it quite clear that Sedulius, in recounting this story from scripture, means it to apply to all sinful humans, and not as a commentary on the sinfulness of women. The healing of the man born blind[758] adds a detail not found in Scripture, where Mary and Eve are once again juxtaposed in the salvific narrative:

What lesson this mystic miracle is teaching our souls:
We are blind offspring from the brood of wretched Eve,

[748] *Carmen paschale,* IV.142-145, 117.
[749] Luke 14:6.
[750] *Carmen paschale,* IV.175-177, 119.
[751] John 4:1-42.
[752] *Carmen paschale,* IV.229-232, 123.
[753] John 8:1-11.
[754] *Carmen paschale,* IV.242, 123.
[755] Matthew 7:3-5; Luke 6:42.
[756] *Carmen paschale,* IV.243-250, 123.
[757] Proverbs 26:11; 2 Peter 2 :22.
[758] John 9:1-41; *Carmen paschale,* IV.251-270, 123-125.

Carrying with us shadows born of our long wandering.
But since God has deigned to take on our mortal form,
The covering of a man, there has been created from the virgin
A land of salvation for us, washed clean by sacred springs
And opening up clear channels of reborn light.[759]

Again, in the story of Lazarus, Mary and Martha are used as points of contact for all of humanity, not just as admonitions for other women or warnings about women's sinfulness:

… Why do you hesitate to believe, Martha?
Or why do you groan, Mary? Do you doubt that Christ
Is able to call back one man to life from the clefts below,
When he will cause unnumbered throngs to rise after death?[760]

The final book of *Paschale carmen* contains a strong word to humans about the powerlessness of sin in the face of divine mercy:

You were brought forth by our mother's fault from serpent seed,
And now that forgiveness reigns, you perish.[761]

The importance here is not so much the sin of Eve, as the fact that everyone can become like Mary through the gifts of Christ on the cross. Sedulius puts it this way:

Body, blood, and water, the three gifts of our life.
From this fountain we are renewed; by Christ's body and blood
We are nourished. For this reason we are considered to be
The temple of divinity. May God grant us to keep it unspotted,
And, small though we be, enable us to host so great a guest.[762]

In Christ, any man or woman may become God's temple.[763] Christ puts it this way: "Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them."[764] How might Radegund, the childless escaped domestic prisoner of a man who murdered her entire family and took her as booty, have understood the narrative of Sedulius? With Isaiah, she might have sung:

[759] *Carmen paschale,* IV.264-270, 125.
[760] *Carmen paschale,* IV.279-282, 125.
[761] *Carmen paschale,* V.283-284, 157.
[762] *Carmen paschale,* V.290-294, 157.
[763] I Corinthians 3:16-17.
[764] John 6:56.

> Sing, O barren one who did not bear; burst into song and shout, you who have not been in labour! For the children of the desolate woman will be more than the children of her that is married, says the Lord.[765]

Sedulius illustrated the virtues and agency of women in his narratives. He acknowledged their wisdom, agency, and the transformative power of Christ's encounters with them. He presented Mary as a crucial figure in redemption, emphasizing her role in atoning for Eve's misdeeds through her willingness to bear the full divinity of God, providing humanity to the Second Adam. This theological poet of the fifth century did not place the full blame for the fall on Eve, recognizing shared culpability instead. He did not hold a monolithic view of women but rather depicted them as integral participants in the divine narrative, emphasizing their varied roles in the unfolding drama of salvation.

Orosius

> It is difficult to underestimate the importance of Orosius. If not the inventor of the notion of historical progress, he is its most important and influential populariser. As such, he can rightly be called the father of modern historiography.[766]

Few personal details are known about Iberian "Paulus" Orosius of Braga (*c.*385 - 418).[767] The priest and historian of the Ancient Church shows up for the first time in historical documents as a young man writing to Augustine of Hippo.[768] "To inform St. Augustine as to the actual teachings of these heretics, Orosius in 414 wrote a *Consultatio sive Commonitorium ad Augustinum de errore Priscillianistarum et Origenistarum*,[769] to which St. Augustine promptly replied with his

[765] Isaiah 54:1-3.
[766] Andrew Fear, "Orosius and Escaping from the Dance of Doom," in *Historiae Mundi: Studies in Universal History* (London: Duckworth, 2010), 183.
[767] Craig L. Hanson, "Introduction", in *Iberian Fathers*, volume 3 (Washington: The CUAP, 2010), 97.
[768] S. J. McKenna, "Orosius," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., vol. 10 (Detroit: Gale, 2003), 673.
[769] Paulus Orosius, "Memorandum to Augustine on the Error of the Priscillianists and Origenists," in *Arianism and Other Heresies*, vol. 18, *The Works of Saint Augustine* (Hyde Park: NCP, 1994).

treatise, *Ad Orosium contra Priscillianistas et Origenistas*."[770] Augustine sent him to the Holy Land to engage with the close personal influence of Jerome.[771] While there, Orosius became involved in the Pelagian question, writing his *Liber apolegeticus*[772] on human free will and Christian perfection.[773]

When the young Orosius returned from Palestine in 416, his mentor Augustine asked him "to write a book proving that greater calamities had occurred in pagan than in Christian times" which would act as a supplement for Augustine's own *City of God*.[774] By 418, Orosius had completed his final task with *The Seven Books of History Against the Pagans*.[775]

Aimee Turner writes that "[m]odern scholars have often disparaged Orosius' work as superficial, calling his use of sources sloppy, his recounting of facts unimpressive, and have criticized his lack of objectivity and use of rhetoric,"[776] but argues instead that his work should once again be taken seriously. In the Islamic world, where *Historiae* was translated into Arabic in the tenth century, it is known as the *Kitāb Hurūshiyūs*.[777] The Anonymous Cosmographer of Ravenna, who created "Ravenna's extraordinary synthesis of world geography" around the year 700,[778] acknowledged Orosius as one of his "philosopher" predecessors; and it was even Orosius who coined the term "Asia Minor."[779]

In her 2022 work, *In Defiance of History: Orosius and the Unimproved Past*, Victoria Leonard argues that Orosius used the Sack of Rome as a lens through which to view all the

[770] Roy J. Deferrari, "Introduction," in Orosius, *The Seven Books of History Against the Pagans*, vol. 50, *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation* (Washington: CUAP, 2001), xvi. Hereafter *Historiae*.
[771] Craig L. Hanson, "Introduction", 101.
[772] Ruth May Gover, "The '*Liber apologeticus'* of Paulus Orosius: A Translation and Commentary," University of NY Queens College, 1969.
[773] Roy J. Deferrari, "Introduction," in *Historiae*, *xviii*.
[774] McKenna, "Orosius," 673.
[775] Roy J. Deferrari, "Introduction," *xx*.
[776] Aimee Turner, "She Acted With Arrogance: Orosius on Women," in *Studies in Late Antiquity* 4, no. 2 (Summer 2020): 226.
[777] Christian C. Sahner, "From Augustine to Islam: Translation and History in the Arabic Orosius," in *Speculum* 88, no. 4 (October 2013): 906.
[778] Herrin, *Ravenna,* 277.
[779] H. Dressler, "Asia Minor, Early Church In," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (Detroit: Gale, 2003), 784.

preceding events of human history; this temporal focal point acts as a rhetorical device by which events can be interpreted as indications of Divine Providence.[780] Leonard speculates elsewhere that Orosius played an important role in catalyzing conflict[781] and that his purpose was "to disseminate his ideology of intolerance" as he travelled through the Mediterranean.[782] Still, Leonard notes that although Edward Gibbons may have thought the Spanish Church Historian was a "bigot," wishing him to be less ideologically driven and less polemical,[783] this didn't prevent Gibbon from having a "high estimation of Orosius."[784]

In his *Foreword* to Leonard's book, Mark Humphries writes that "it is Orosius's explicitly religious agenda in the *Historiae* that has caused numerous modern readers to distrust him."[785] Nevertheless, Orosius was held up as a model for many Church Historians in the centuries that followed, including "Gregory of Tours, Gildas, Isidore of Seville, Bede, Paul the Deacon, Otto of Freising, Peter Abelard, Honorius of Autun, John of Salisbury, Ranulf Higden, and Petrarch."[786] Dante praised him as "that pleader for the Christian age, whose learning / Provided lore from which Augustine learned."[787] Orosius puts his own agenda forward quite clearly:

> These are the relationships of blood and society between parents, children, and friends. Of such value were human and divine obligations weighed among them. Let those, indeed, blush on recalling past events who now know that by the intervention of the Christian faith alone, and only by means of the sworn oath do they live with enemies and do not suffer hostile acts. By these events it is proven beyond all doubt that, not as before 'they made treaties with the sacrifice of a sow,' but that now among barbarians and Romans, they preserve as much faith by calling to witness their Creator and Lord by oaths taken on the Gospels as in the past nature was unable to preserve between fathers and sons.[788]

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[780] Victoria Leonard, *In Defiance of History: Orosius and the Unimproved Past* (London: Routledge, 2022), 142.
[781] Victoria Leonard, "The Origin of Zealous Intolerance: Paulus Orosius and Violent Religious Conflict in the Early Fifth Century," in *Vigiliae Christianae* 71, no. 3 (2017): 265.
[782] Leonard, "The Origin of Zealous Intolerance," 283.
[783] Mark Humphries, "Foreword: Past, present, and future in Orosius and late antique historiography," in *In Defiance of History: Orosius and the Unimproved Past*, xv.
[784] Leonard, *In Defiance of History*, 3.
[785] Humphries, "Foreword," xv.
[786] Leonard, *In Defiance of History*, 2.
[787] Dante Alighieri, *The Comedy of Dante Alighieri III: Paradise*, (London: Penguin, 1991), *X.119-120*, 138.
[788] *Historiae*, *III.23,* 119.

Turner examines the use of women by Orosius as *exempla*. She notes that "in his seven books of Historiae, Orosius mentions women in only 105 passages, either individually or as part of a group, compared with well over 1000 similar references to men." Turner argues that Orosius uses women to amplify the characterization of the men in his narrative.[789]

> In this context, the identification of law and custom as masculine and nature as feminine combined with what Dixon refers to as the "sincere horror" of female power, continued a gendered discourse on leadership and power during Late Antiquity and beyond. This debate is particularly palpable in Orosius' *Historiae*.[790]
> ***
> Orosius' use of women highlights a continuity of thought regarding feminine nature—as overly emotional, prone to excess and unsuitable for public life. Regardless of their characterization, however, women serve a similar purpose in the narrative, as a reflection of their male counterparts and society.[791]

Turner's implication seems to be that the air of the patriarchal culture breathed by Orosius meant that all his references to women were contaminated by the kind of misogyny which renders women as objects, rather than as fellow humans with agency. She examines selected passages from *Historiae* to make a strong subjective case for her argument. In this hermeneutic, actions taken by or in relation to women must be grounded in an implicit power dynamic in which a woman is understood to be irrevocably and intrinsically inferior, valued only insofar as she can be used as a tool to further the aims of the more powerful men in whose lives she plays a role.

There are contemporary scholars for whom primary sources can only legitimately be read through the lenses of identity and power, but I am not one of them. I want to ask: is it possible that Radegund herself, reading Orosius, might have synthesized something rather different about womanhood? In the following paragraphs, I will point to a few instances in the *Historiae* in which Radegund might see a positive female role model to inhabit, some aspect of womanhood

[789] Turner, "She Acted With Arrogance," 205.
[790] Turner, "She Acted With Arrogance," 207.
[791] Turner, "She Acted With Arrogance," 227.

admired by Orosius (and, arguably, the thought-world in which he existed) that she herself might wish to realize.

Nothing can be found that speaks of womanhood in the *Commonitorium* except for the reference Orosius makes to Priscillian's teaching

> that all the good things in this world are done by art, not by the power of God. For it says that light was a certain virgin and that, when God wanted to give rain to men, he showed her to the prince of wetness. When he wanted to take her, he perspired in his passion and produced rain, and when he was deprived of her, he stirred up thunder by his roar.[792]

Orosius allows this allusion to speak for itself and says no more on the matter. Nor is there much said about womanhood in *Liber apolegeticus*. Adam's sin is mentioned, but not Eve.[793] Orosius uses the Susannah as an example of a case in which a person's silence should not imply any wrongdoing on her part.[794] He also uses the treatment of a young woman as a shameful rebuke:

> For, I repeat, you, a most shy man, you are not ashamed to write to Demetria, who I hear is a religious and holy girl, teaching her, I believe, reverence for chastity subject to the artifice of Joseph and his dissolute lady; where you said that the vile mistress is visited frequently, (and) for that youth she spreads rather intimate traps; in private, and without witnesses, she embraces him without shame, an untimely story you were constructing in a most obscene manner! And yet, we ought not to hold this (tale) against you, which is not stated either decorously or elegantly (in manner), since your birth has not made it possible for you to be enlightened through more noble studies, nor does it turn out that by nature you are wise…[795]

In his prologue to *Historiae* in the form of an address to Augustine, Orosius begins by comparing himself to a canid companion looking forward to the approval of his master; in this case, the master is Augustine, who requested that he undertake this labour. Orosius then links his faithful obedience to the woman in Matthew's gospel.[796] He writes, "the woman of Canaan was not ashamed to say that little dogs were eating crumbs under their master's table nor did our Lord

[792] *Commonitorium,* 3, 98.
[793] *Liber apologeticus*, XXVI, 43.
[794] *Liber apologeticus*, XI, 15.
[795] *Liber apologeticus*, XXIX, 47.
[796] Matthew 15:21-28.

disdain to listen."[797] The very first biblical reference Orosius makes in the introduction to *Historiae* is to a woman whose personal and spiritual quality he seeks to emulate.

Semiramus is described as an incestuous woman who surpassed her dead husband Ninus in both sexual depravity and the desire to conquer, "burning with lust and thirsting for blood," who "added Ethiopia to her empire" and entered India to wage war for the first time since Alexander the Great.[798] If there is any doubt that Orosius believed women could sin and wield tyrannical power, Semiramis removes it for his reader. When Orosius describes women behaving with depravity, his narrative carries accompanying descriptions of the evil behaviour of their male contemporaries; Oedipus is paired with Medea, for example.[799]

Orosius describes the Scythian soldiers whose pre-emptive strike against King Vesozes of Egypt result in fifteen years of absence from their homes as being "recalled finally by the demands of their wives who declared that unless they returned they would seek offspring from their neighbors."[800] He recounts an origin story of the warlike Amazon women in which, at the root of their violence and hatred of men, is their desire to obtain vengeance "for the slaughter of their husbands;" he recounts the courage of their queens, particularly that of Sinope, the virgin queen, and Penthesilea, for her actions in the Trojan war.[801] Violence and extreme cruelty are not the domain of women or men alone in *Historiae*. They are not praised as Christian traits by Orosius, in any case: he says of the Goths, who were dreaded by Alexander, Pyrrhus and Caesar, that it was because of their Christianity "that those men, whose wives destroyed the greater part of the earth with boundless slaughter, became subject to [Rome] without a battle."[802]

[797] *Historiae*, *I.Prologue,* 3.
[798] *Historiae*, *I.4,* 22.
[799] *Historiae*, *I.12,* 34.
[800] *Historiae*, *I.14,* 35.
[801] *Historiae*, *I.15,* 35-37.
[802] *Historiae*, *I.16,* 37.

Murder or sexual violence against women is worthy of retribution, as in the cases of the Sabine women,[803] the rape of Lucrecia,[804] the attempted rape, slander and subsequent honour-killing of Verginia,[805] and the young women of Sparta (Lacedæmon).[806] Orosius describes how a Gallic man and woman are buried alive together with a Greek woman in Rome, and opines that the ensuing slaughter of Roman soldiers in a battle with the Gauls is a just outcome for their superstitious act of human sacrifice.[807] Women who can protect themselves from rape by going to extraordinary lengths, such as Cloelia, are noted for their "admirable daring."[808] They are not, however, held responsible by Orosius for sexual violence perpetrated on them, if his account of King Ptolemy is to be considered:

> In the same year, the wretched life of Ptolemy, the king of the Alexandrians, came to an end still more wretchedly. For after seducing his sister and then receiving her in marriage, he finally cast her aside, a more disgraceful act than the marriage. Then, he took as his wife his own step-daughter, that is, the daughter of his sister and wife, and he killed his own son whom he begot of his sister in addition to a son of his brother. Thus, because of such incests and parricides, he became detestable and was driven from the kingdom by the Alexandrians.[809]

On the other hand, women's essentiality to the continuation of humanity is acknowledged with his description of a disease that "became so widespread that it was believed that the continuation of the human race would fail and that the life of living things would cease, since birth in the natural manner was brought to a close."[810] Women suffer consequences and are held accountable for their crimes as well: Minucia, the Vestal Virgin who committed incest, is buried alive;[811] after a wave of poisonings by Roman matrons in 331 B.C., the guilty women are made to drink their own poison.[812]

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[803] *Historiae*, *II.4,* 48.
[804] *Historiae*, *II.4,* 49.
[805] *Historiae*, *II.13,* 63.
[806] *Historiae*, *I.21,* 41.
[807] *Historiae*, *IV.13,* 147.
[808] *Historiae*, *II.5,* 50.
[809] *Historiae*, *V.10,* 191.
[810] *Historiae*, *IV.2,* 125.
[811] *Historiae*, *III.9,* 90.
[812] *Historiae*, *III.10,* 90.

Women demonstrate battlefield acumen in *Historiae*. When the Medes and the Persians are at war, the Persian women, seeing their men in danger of defeat, "raised their dresses and exhibited their private parts, asking whether they wished to take refuge in the wombs of their mothers and wives," shaming them into victory.[813] Queen Thamyris of the Scythians executes both revenge and poetic justice when Cyrus slaughters her son along with her army.[814] Orosius recounts how Gallic women would fight until all hope was gone, preferring to kill themselves, each other, and their children to avoid rape and scalping.[815] Orosius further says that the bravery of the Cherusci, Suebi, and Sugambri men can be deduced from the fact that if their women were ever cornered, they would use even their children as weapons, hurling them at the enemy.[816]

As she read of these ancient Germanic women, one can only imagine whether or how Radegund the Thuringian might see the potentiality for that kind of behaviour within herself. Arriving, finally, at Book Seven of *Historiae*, Radegund would then have begun to encounter other role models: Christian women with a royal heritage.

There is Helena, "the queen of the Adiabeni, a convert to the faith of Christ, ministered most generously to the needs of the Christians in Jerusalem by importing grain from Egypt."[817] There is Mamea, the mother of Aurelius Alexander, twenty-third Emperor of Rome, who arranged for his Christian education.[818] Helena is mentioned as the mother of Constantine,[819] the thirty-fourth Emperor of Rome.[820] There is the unnamed elderly consecrated virgin in Rome who faithfully and courageously guarded "the sacred vessels of the Apostle Peter" during the sack of Rome by Alaric.[821] And finally, there was the Christian noblewoman Placidia:

[813] *Historiae*, *I.19,* 39-40.
[814] *Historiae*, *II.7,* 55.
[815] *Historiae*, *V.16,* 203-204.
[816] *Historiae*, *VI.21,* 279.
[817] *Historiae*, *VII.6,* 296.
[818] *Historiae*, *VII.18,* 313-314.
[819] *Historiae*, *VII.25,* 323.
[820] *Historiae*, *VII.26,* 323.
[821] *Historiae*, *VII.39,* 353-353.

> In this attack, Placidia, the daughter of the princely Theodosius and sister of the emperors, Arcadius and Honorius, was captured and taken to wife by Athaulfus, a kinsman of Alaric's, as if, by divine decree, Rome had given her as a hostage and special pledge; thus, by her marriage with this most powerful barbarian king, she was of great benefit to the state.[822]

> [Athaulf] strove to refrain from war; for this reason, to be eager for peace, being influenced in all the works of good government, especially by the persuasion and advice of his wife, Placidia, a woman, indeed, of a very keen mind and very good religiously.[823]

Orosius also tells us that Wallia, a successor of the widowed Placidia's dead husband, held her "in the highest honor and respect."[824]

What, then, might Radegund have gleaned about the position Orosius held on womanhood? She would have seen that for Orosius, women are human beings with souls. They can sin and be evil, but they can also be holy and virtuous. They can be weak and in need of protection, but they can also be powerful benefactors. They can be violent and warlike, but they can also be wise peacemakers. He acknowledged the agency of women in historical events, illustrating their political impact. Orosius portrayed Christian women like Helena, Mamea, and Placidia as benefactors, educators, and peacemakers. He portrayed women as essential to the continuity of humanity while holding them accountable for their crimes. Orosius did not reduce women to a singular stereotype; they could embody both positive and negative qualities. His approach reflected a recognition of women's complexity and the multifaceted nature of their contributions throughout history.

[822] *Historiae*, *VII.43,* 352.
[823] *Historiae*, *VII.43,* 362.
[824] *Historiae*, *VII.43,* 362.

CHAPTER THREE: CONCLUSION

Radegund: "An Enduring Temple of God"

> Her banquet is whatever the holy canon prescribes: whatever Gregory and Basil teach, the writings of fierce Athanasius and gentle Hilary, whom a single light holds as twin allies in the cause, the thunder of Ambrose and Jerome's lighting flash, the flowing spring of Augustine's abundant waters, the words of sweet Sedulius and incisive Orosius. The rule of Caesarius is her guide of conduct…. Let all sacred poets, who can, send their verses, a generous offering, however slim the books; let all who send her holy writings as she wishes believe that in so doing they enrich an enduring temple of God.[825]

A woman of exceptional charisma and influence, Radegund had exceptional literary training, and she came from a long line of powerful women. She drew inspiration and support from the writings of the Church Fathers concerning women. These texts provided her with a clear perspective on women as reflections of the *imago Dei* and as exemplars of leadership and strength. The theological dimension of her womanhood had been fleshed out by patristic writings. Radegund feasted on words, and the Word. She drank from the breast of Christ himself. Christians worship a God whose "weakness is stronger than human strength"[826] and whose "power is made perfect in weakness."[827] She learned from the Fathers that Christ is the Word of God, the God Who is Power itself, Wisdom itself, Truth itself, Life itself, Resurrection itself. Eve's being formed from Adam's body means that even though the first human is, in fact, made from inanimate clay, brought into being by Word, woman is built of the stuff of humanity itself.

We have attempted to show that there has been a lack of contemporary attention to Radegund in certain academic contexts. She has proven to be of great significance to discussions of the political, social, and theological dimensions of womanhood in the theology of Late Antiquity. The *Rule* she chose aimed to address the spiritual and practical needs of women in

[825] *Carmina*, VIII.1.47-62, 492-495.
[826] I Corinthians 1:25.
[827] II Corinthians 12:9.

monastic life and emphasized education as a priority. It provided her with autonomy in her unique situation as a wife who navigated monastic life without taking vows of celibacy.

Radegund's life and devotion to learning was well documented by her friends Fortunatus, Baudonivia, and Gregory of Tours. She was an author in her own right, although the societal context, the role of propaganda, and the challenges of assessing literacy in medieval women all provide difficulties in assessing the extent of her writings. The majority view supports Radegund's extensive education, including knowledge of Greek, countered by dissenters suggesting gender-based skepticism. Her *Letter of Foundation*, uncontested in authorship, showcases her erudition.

Radegund was nourished by Gregory and Basil, Athanasius and Hilary, Ambrose and Jerome, Augustine, Sedulius, Orosius, and Caesarius. Analyzing historical and contextual details, it is possible to say that the Gregory to which Fortunatus referred was either Nyssen or Nazianzen, but this question has not been definitively settled. From Gregory of Nyssa, Radegund would have understood women to be *eikones* of God, just as men are. Human beings are meant to reflect the *imago Dei* in royalty, wisdom, and virtue. Gregory portrayed his sister Macrina as a philosopher and teacher, illustrating his belief in women as image-bearers of God. In Gregory of Nazianzus, too, she would have seen a theologian who viewed women as *eikones* of God who deserved just treatment, as evidenced in his arguments for equality in divorce and in his praise for his sister Gorgonia as a paragon of Christian holiness.

Despite his sister Macrina's pivotal influence on his monastic endeavors, Basil's writings lack explicit mention of her, although she came to be called the "Fourth Cappadocian." There is a tension in Basil's views on women between his literal interpretation of biblical precepts and his acknowledgment of his mother and grandmother as spiritual guides. His references to martyr

Julitta highlight a more egalitarian perspective. Additionally, Basil's focus on love, charity, and the shared reward for men and women in the eyes of God underscores a broader theological equality of the sexes. Basil's broader theological stance may have empowered Radegund to transcend the social roles women were expected to play.

While not a speculative theologian, Athanasius played a pivotal role in shaping Christian theology, and he is hailed as one of the most imposing figures in ecclesiastical history. One of his notable achievements was to provide the Church with a list of the twenty-seven canonical books of the New Testament; he also served as the secretary at the Council of Nicaea. Athanasius's theology highlighted the transformative power of Christ's incarnation for all humanity. He emphasized the role of Mary as the God-bearing woman and the essential source of Christ's humanity. Athanasius's teachings stress God's unity and Christ's redemptive work, in which human beings in Christ, including women, are understood to be "temples of God".

St. Hilary of Poitiers is an insufficiently studied Father of the Western Church, whose style and complex thought have contributed to his relative obscurity. His *De Trinitate* laid the foundation for subsequent theologians, including Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine. Radegund founded her monastery in the town from whence he hailed. Hilary's trinitarian anthropology revealed the limitations of language in expressing divine complexities. He conceived of God as the divine birth-giver, and this carries implications for women as *imago Dei*. Hilary argued that birth gives rise to an identical nature, emphasizing Christ's two natures derived from the Father and Mary. Christ assumed of the nature of all humanity, both male and female.

Hilary's theological insights intertwine the mystery of the Divine Birth with the profound significance of Mary in the salvation narrative, portraying her as the conduit through which humanity is sanctified. Jesus redeemed humanity through her motherhood, and he took it on for

himself in the anguish of his labour in the garden."[828] For Hilary, Christ births us "unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,"[829] and "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."[830] Each of us may become an enduring temple of God;[831] "built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."[832]

Ambrose showed Radegund that, in the mystical marriage with Christ, all of us are women. He argued that choosing a religious life granted women freedom from societal expectations, and his teachings would have provided strength to her in a world where women were often at the mercy of their bodies. In his portrayals of strong female figures, the feminine Christian soul, and Christ as the model for humanity, there is no point in the story of Christian faith at which woman is not human. The Genesis narrative situates humanity within womanhood, whatever the gender or sex. Just as a woman can "become male," a man must learn to become a virgin, a bride, in order to allow the Divine Lover into his body and soul, to give birth to Christ.

Jerome's writings show evidence of his respect for women, promotion of their spiritual freedom, and efforts to address the challenges they faced. Radegund's education was grounded in his Latin translation of the Bible. Jerome cultivated close friendships with women, showing Radegund that friendship with the opposite sex was possible. He wrote of his admiration for the strength of women, and encouraged the education of young girls, emphasizing their intellectual and spiritual development. With Jerome and Christ, even in childlessness, Radegund could joyfully proclaim: "Behold I and the children which God hath given me."[833]

[828] Luke 22:44.
[829] I Peter 1:3.
[830] I Peter 1:23.
[831] I Corinthians 3:16
[832] I Peter 2:4-5
[833] Hebrews 2:13.

Like Jerome, Augustine is often criticized for alleged misogyny and disdain toward women. However, Augustine's writings indicate a more nuanced perspective. He argued that God created both sexes for procreation, not just women, and explored the symbolism of male-female distinctions, connecting them to the mind's dual functions: *Sapientia* (contemplation) and *Scientia* (administration). For Augustine, both sexes are image-bearers. He emphasized the symbolic, rather than the literal, nature of passages that might be used to subordinate women. His portrayal of God was not exclusively masculine. The Word made Flesh redeemed the Second Adam, who was reborn as Christ's Spiritual Body, the Church, the Second Eve. Christ is able to take a multiplicity of identities and embrace what the human mind perceives as paradox. He is the Bride-Groom[834] to his own Body, the Church,[835] which is His Bride,[836] and also our Mother.[837]

On the cross, Eve's curse is suffered and redeemed by Christ, arms outstretched in an embrace that welcomes all to his breast. The pelican pecks at her breast to feed her children. Water and blood flow from his body, penetrated by a Roman spear, and the Church is born. "As newborn babes," he feeds us on "the sincere milk of the word,"[838] and we "taste and see that the Lord is good."[839]

Sedulius had a significant impact on literary traditions for centuries. His was a nuanced understanding of womanhood. Rather than blaming Eve for the fall, he emphasized the redemptive role of Mary, who, coming from Eve's stock, atoned for her misdeeds. Sedulius portrayed women as crucial agents in salvation, referencing their role in salvation history. In narrating miracles, he highlighted Jesus healing women, emphasizing their importance.

[834] Luke 5:34.
[835] 1 Corinthians 12:27.
[836] Ephesians 5:25-32.
[837] Galatians 4:26.
[838] I Peter 2:2-3.
[839] Psalm 34:8.

Radegund, an educated woman of the sixth century, might have found Sedulius' perspectives enlightening, especially in portraying women's virtues, wisdom, and transformative encounters with Christ. Sedulius wove the agency and significance of women into his narrative, offering a nuanced understanding of shared culpability.

Orosius, a crucial figure in the development of historiography, played a significant role in popularizing the notion of historical progress. Critics like Edward Gibbon questioned Orosius' religious agenda, but he remained influential among Church historians for centuries nevertheless. Radegund most likely found powerful role models in the *Historiae* of Orosius: there were women who showed courage, battlefield acumen, and political influence, and Christian women such as Helena, Mamea, and Placidia were depicted as benefactors and educators. Orosius created balanced depictions of women with both positive and negative qualities.

Radegund chose a *Rule* that addressed her spiritual and practical needs, prioritizing education and giving her the autonomy she needed. What she read in the Fathers underlined the roles women play in history and Scripture: women who were strong and weak, good and evil, fearless and timid. Drinking this ambrosia, she became ever more thirsty. In her reading of these Early Church Fathers Radegund learned of the soul as *imago Dei*, both male and female, and read of Mary, the God-bearing woman. She learned of the Eternal birth; she learned of the Divine midwife; and she learned of Christ, our mother.

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