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BATTERED WOMEN AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF SANCTITY

Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Nancy Nienhuis

The April 27, 1994, *L'osservatore romano* reports the canonization of Elizabeth Canori (1774–1825), a Roman woman who, we are told, responded "with absolute fidelity" in the face of "physical and psychological violence" from her husband. The husband, a lawyer marked by "psychological fragility," deceived Elizabeth, abandoned the family, and left them destitute. Elizabeth supported her children, cared for other families in need, and joined the Trinitarian Third Order. After her death, her husband converted and then became a priest. The newspaper's subheadline does not focus on Elizabeth's service to her community but proclaims instead: "Her patience and prayer won the conversion of a faithless husband." The husband's conversion—the narrative's "happy ending"—is presented as a spiritual reward that justified the abuse and suffering Elizabeth had endured. Finally, the article moralizes that "there are no excuses, conveniences or interests that can justify any detraction whatsoever to the code of fidelity which is of love and of total surrender."[1] The implication is that the responsibility for this marriage and for the conversion rested on the woman. The account of Elizabeth Canori's canonization exemplifies the tendency to associate battering, suffering, and sanctification, and it has led the two of us into an exploration of the history of this association in narratives that praise holy women.[2]

The authors are grateful to the Lilly Endowment for a course-development grant in 1994 that began the shaping of this research and to Constance Buchanan, then at the Harvard Divinity School, and Margaret Miles, Graduate Theological Union, for comments that helped to shape the initial proposal. We also thank anonymous reviewers; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and participants in the Harvard Divinity School fall 1999 Colloquium on Religion, Gender, and Culture for their valuable recommendations; and students in our course, "Holiness, Patience, and Suffering," for their fresh insights and illuminating questions. An earlier version of this article was presented in 1996 at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, New Orleans, Louisiana.

[1] *L'osservatore romano* (Vatican City), no. 17 (1338), April 27, 1994, p. 2.

[2] For others who suggest an association between battering, suffering, and sanctification, see Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Sharing Her Word: Feminist Biblical Interpretation in Context*

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The association of patient suffering with salvific rewards has deep roots in Christian theology and profound consequences for women. Over the centuries, women in abusive relationships have felt the burden of a theology that enjoins wives to endure suffering and maintain stable marriages. Moreover, wife beating was long an acceptable Christian practice, and Christian preachers and writers reminded women of their responsibility for obedience and their liability for punishment. A fifteenth-century Sienese friar advised husbands to beat a wife who committed "serious wrongs," "not in rage but out of charity and concern for her soul, so that the beating will redound to your merit and good." Martin Luther wrote: "The rule remains with the husband and the wife is compelled to obey him by God's command." Luther explained that his own wife, when "saucy," got "nothing but a box on the ear." John Calvin advised an abused woman that "we do not find ourselves permitted by the word of God . . . to advise a woman to leave her husband . . . even when he beats her."[3] In the rise of Christian fundamentalism in the late nineteenth century, an identical belief in the theology of suffering was espoused. Betty DeBerg notes that T. DeWitt Talmage, a popular evangelical preacher, wrote in 1886 that "the death of a good wife in sacrifice and love [is] her final and greatest glory, 'a queen's coronation.' "[4] A theology of women's suffering, obedience, and subordination emerges clearly from these and many other similar statements, both historical and contemporary.[5]

(Boston: Beacon, 1998), 137–59; and Marie M. Fortune, "The Transformation of Suffering: A Biblical and Theological Perspective," in *Violence against Women and Children: A Christian Theological Sourcebook*, ed. Carol J. Adams and Marie M. Fortune (New York: Continuum, 1995), 85–91. Many feminist scholars have examined the appearance of violence in religious texts and traditions. Some useful references include Elizabeth Clark, *Women in the Early Church* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1990); Elizabeth Clark and Herbert Richardson, eds., *Women and Religion: A Feminist Sourcebook of Christian Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977); Pamela Cooper-White, *The Cry of Tamar* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995); Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1984); Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Religion and Sexism: Images of Women in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974); Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone* (Boston: Beacon, 1984); and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Mary Shawn Copeland, eds., *Violence against Women*, Concilium no. 1 (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1994).

[3] Original citations, respectively, are from Cherubino da Siena, *Regole della vita Matrimoniale*, cited in Julia O'Faolain and Lauro Martines, *Not in God's Image* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 177; *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, vol. 1, *Lecture on Genesis* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing, 1955), 68–69; Preserved Smith, ed., *The Life and Letters of Martin Luther* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), 180; Johannes Calvin, *Opera quae Supersunt Omnia*, trans. Hughes, col. 539. All four citations are quoted in Joy Bussert, *Battered Women: From a Theology of Suffering to an Ethic of Empowerment* (Kutztown, Pa.: Kutztown Publishing, 1986), 11–14.

[4] Betty A. DeBerg, *Ungodly Women: Gender and the First Wave of American Fundamentalism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 47, quoting T. DeWitt Talmage, "The Choice of a Wife," *Christian Herald and Signs of Our Times* 9, no. 9 (January 1886): 21.

[5] The contemporary Promise Keepers movement, for example, offers a "kinder, gentler Patri-

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This article explores historical attitudes toward violence against women in saints' lives *(vitae)* written in medieval Latin. We are convinced that the analysis of violence against women in historical narratives enlightens our understanding in the present.[6] The saint's life is the primary genre of historical hagiography, writing that contributes to the historical reconstruction of a holy person. The saint functioned as a moral model, a heroine to inspire the imagination, an intermediary between heaven and earth, and an exemplar for a group. Because both the saint and the paradigms of holiness are socially constructed within a given narrative, the *vita* reveals much more about the attitudes and values of the society in which the text was composed than about the actual events of the saint's life.[7]

The clear majority of persons recognized as saints in the Middle Ages were men.[8] It was very difficult for women to achieve recognition as holy persons, because their physical bodies were associated with temptations and the demonic in a way that men's bodies were not. In addition, women were perceived as innately inferior, an idea rooted in exegesis of scripture, particularly Genesis and the Pastoral Epistles. Achieving holiness was all the more problematic

archy"; leaders such as Bill Bright claim that, although men should respect women, men are "the head of the household and women are the responders." See Michael S. Kimmel, "Promise Keepers: Patriarchy's Second Coming as Masculine Renewal," *Tikkun* 12, no. 2 (1997): 48. The movement promotes male entitlement and female submission, and thus a theology of obedience, "for the sake of your family and the survival of our culture," according to Tony Brown's essay in the best-selling text *Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper*, ed. Al Janssen and Larry K. Weeden (Colorado Springs: Focus on the Family, 1994). Ironically, the right of men to assert leadership over women is rationalized by an appeal for men to become "servants of Christ" at home, meaning that they administer or head their families as Christ heads the church. Here, "submitting to Christ," when done by a man, means claiming his proper role as head of the family. Of course, for women, submitting to Christ means simply submitting to the patriarchal order.

[6] We agree with Mary Potter Engel's assessment that "we need to open ourselves to the possibility that discoveries of the interconnection of the ideology of gender inequality and the practice of violence against women in the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Reformation may inform our understanding of patriarchy and our practice toward women in the present." "Historical Theology and Violence against Women: Unearthing a Popular Tradition of Just Battery," in Adams and Fortune, 242–61, at 258.

[7] Guy Phillipart, introduction to *Les hagiographies* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 1996), 1:13–14; Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," in *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 106. Robert Sweetman, in his use of hagiography, notes: "The motifs common to the *vitae* of women who lived centuries apart and in different cultural milieus mark out a continuity of imaginative project, namely the effect which medieval religion . . . had on the social structures and relationships of 'this world.'" "Christianity, Women, and the Medieval Family," in *Religion, Feminism, and the Family*, ed. Anne Carr and Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 127–47, at 128.

[8] André Vauchez finds that between 1198 and 1431, 85.7 percent of the saints recognized by the church were men. *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, trans. Jean Birrell (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 269.

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for the married woman, whose husband and children gave evidence of her sexuality. A woman's familial ties thus stood as an encumbrance to holiness, unless her physical ties to her family could be dissolved and replaced by spiritual ones.[9]

Among the married women who were venerated for their holiness, one group are remarkable for patiently and obediently undergoing psychological or physical abuse inflicted by their husbands. The stories of women abused by their spouses merit special consideration apart from, but informed by, scholarship on late medieval women's piety and their views of the body.[10] These narratives constitute a profoundly disturbing body of hagiographic literature that leads us to examine the links between holiness, violence, and suffering: How does the hagiographer deal with battering to construct a model of sanctity? How does the suffering of violence depicted in the text contribute to the victim's holiness? How is the importance of abuse accentuated and that of good works diminished? What is the author's attitude toward violent action and its perpetrator? What theological message do these textual models convey?

To address these questions, we shall examine the *vitae* of four representative women: Monica, the mother of Augustine of Hippo; Godelieve of Gistel; Dorothy of Montau; and Catherine of Genoa.[11] We identify the virtues that the authors exalt and the scriptural passages that they highlight as keys to the theology underlying the texts, or imposed upon them by the author, and as a foundation for the role violence plays in the construction of holiness. We analyze the passages that discuss battering, elucidating the author's point of view and searching to reconstruct the woman's perspective as much as possible. In doing this, we read the stories "against the grain," not accepting the hagiographer's narrative at face value and thus furthering a "hermeneutics of proclamation" that will challenge Christian theological complicity in practices that have colluded in domestic and political violence.[12] Our goal is to analyze the valorization that suffering violence from a spouse plays in the construction of holiness

9 See Rosemary Radford Ruether on the theological inferiority of women ("Christian Understandings of Human Nature and Gender," in Carr and Van Leeuwen, 95–110); and Sweetman on the subordination of social and biological bonds to spiritual ones (127–47 passim).

10 Within the rich scholarship on medieval women, see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987); Caroline Walker Bynum, "The Female Body and Religious Practice in the Later Middle Ages," in *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone, 1991), 181–238; and Elizabeth Petroff, *Body and Soul: Essays on Medieval Women and Mysticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

11 More women will be included in our book-length study, but space does not allow for considering them here.

12 See Schüssler Fiorenza, *Sharing Her Word*, 152–59, for the role a hermeneutic of proclamation may play in challenging misogynist theological interpretation and practice.

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and to elucidate how a theology of suffering relates to a theology of obedience and ownership.[13] We challenge this construction of holiness out of abuse. When the hagiographers use abuse to highlight each woman's holiness, they valorize the abuser and lower the importance of the agency that the woman exerted in seeking to live a holy life.

By adopting a strategy of critical feminist interpretation, we intend both to show how medieval women's agency was constrained by certain theological interpretive strategies and to unearth a clearer sense of what these saints' lives may actually have been like.[14] In this we refuse to leave unchallenged assertions in the hagiographic literature that would have readers believe that all suffering sustained by the women therein was ultimately good for them and even endured with joy. The fact that hagiography served particular ecclesial, theological, and political purposes underscores how obscured the actual voices of the women in our saints' lives probably are. At the same time, adhering to certain religious practices of their time probably provided the only avenues for agency open to them. Indeed, they may have achieved a desire for religious life and theological inquiry by compromising with certain practices of their day. For example, for some women the opportunity to escape the hardships of marriage or to devote themselves to a life of the mind may have been worth the restrictions that accompanied a religious life.[15]

Theology of Suffering in Early Christianity

Before beginning our analysis of saints' lives, let us explore briefly the source for Christian glorification of suffering and examine the theological grounding for conflating patient suffering with salvific reward in the early Christian community.[16] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza has argued powerfully that early decisions among those within the Christian community have had a

[13] Our goal is not to suggest that these four lives alone demonstrate the development of a theology of suffering or that they are connected to or build on each other in some way. Rather, it is to examine distinct instances of a theology of suffering in the construction of holiness in order to begin to understand both the origins of that theology and the role it has played and continues to play in theological responses women receive regarding the violence done to them.

[14] As Schüssler Fiorenza explains: "Historical and religious meaning is always socio-politically constructed insofar as biblical interpretation is located in social networks of power/knowledge relations that shape society, university, and biblical religion. Hermeneutical theological discourses that remain unconscious of their rhetorical functions and abstracted from their socio-political-ecclesial contexts . . . hide and deny the social constructedness and relativity of their claims to divine revelation." *Sharing Her Word*, 86.

[15] The brevity of this article does not permit that we fully investigate the varying forms women's agency may have taken in the medieval period and in each of the saints we investigate.

[16] Here we look primarily at research on the connection of battering and the theology of suffering. For a view of the perception of the self as sufferer in early Christianity, see Judith Perkins,

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powerful and long-lasting impact on kyriarchal power relationships, including domestic violence.[17] One of the key texts in this tradition is 1 Peter, which exhorts the new Christian community to adopt Greco-Roman household codes in order to minimize their trials and thus enhance the community's opportunity for survival. The codes require submission of humans to governors, slaves to masters, and wives to husbands (2:13–25). Such reinforcement of kyriarchal power relationships stood in marked contrast to how the early Christians had arranged themselves, where distinctions of slave and free and of male and female were understood to be equalized in Christ. Such equality across class and gender was dangerous for a new and illegal minority religious group, because it made the group stand out and appear to be disrupting the whole sociopolitical order of the day.[18] By suggesting that members of this alienated group adopt the Greco-Roman household codes common in their day, the writer of 1 Peter offers them a "strategy for survival" in the midst of a tumultuous political time.[19] The author makes his argument on the basis of the example of Christ: "For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps" (2:21 NRSV). Thus, the early community was encouraged to adopt a "kyriarchal politics of submission" to lessen its own suffering and enhance its chances of survival. This theology of suffering explicitly claims that the reward for forbearance in the face of persecution and abuse will be compensation from God—if not in this life, then in heaven.

The legacy of this theological politics has constrained efforts to resist domination and abuse. As Schüssler Fiorenza explains, "By ritualizing the suffering and death of Jesus and by calling the powerless in society and church to imitate his perfect obedience and self-sacrifice, Christian ministry and theology do not interrupt but continue to foster the cycle of violence which is engendered by kyriarchal social and ecclesial structures as well as by cultural and political

The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era (London: Routledge, 1995).

[17] Schüssler Fiorenza uses the term *kyriarchy* to designate rule of the master, lord, father, or husband, a rule that is "a socio-cultural, religious, and political system of elite male power, which does not just perpetrate the dehumanization of sexism, heterosexism, and gender stereotypes but also engenders other structures of women's oppression, such as racism, poverty, colonialism, and religious exclusivism." See Schüssler Fiorenza, ed., *The Power of Naming: A "Concilium" Reader in Feminist Liberation Theology* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1996), xxi.

[18] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 260–61. See also Schüssler Fiorenza, *Sharing Her Word*, 150; and the excellent analysis of 1 Peter by Kathleen E. Corley, "I Peter," in *Searching the Scriptures*, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 2:350–55.

[19] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 261.

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disciplining practices."[20] Indeed, the ethic of submission advocated in 1 Peter not only leads to a reification of kyriarchy, it also leaves those who suffer without the hope of ultimate justice.[21] Further, it sets the stage for the development of a theology of suffering and of obedience that effectively prohibits women from taking action to confront and change the abuse they experience.

Monica

The first saint we encounter in this context is Monica, mother of Augustine of Hippo. Although in his *Confessions* Augustine praises Monica for succeeding in avoiding physical abuse, she belongs in our study because her son's articulation of her obedience and silent, patient suffering sets the stage for the rest of the literature we will examine. She serves as a model for the wife's role in a Christian marriage. Although Monica's cult was not popular until the later Middle Ages, most Christian Latin authors would have been familiar with the *Confessions* and hence with Augustine's moral portrait of Monica because of the wide-reaching influence of his works throughout the centuries.[22] Augustine devotes one short section of book 9 in the *Confessions* to his mother's reaction to her husband's anger.[23] The passage in question belongs to Augustine's account of Monica's life and virtues, a sort of flashback framed by two statements of her death. The mystical experience of mother and son at Ostia follows, where she reveals to him that the end is near. Her holiness, demonstrated in obedient, patient suffering and in active care for her family, is enhanced by this contemplative experience. Her earthly work has been accomplished with Augustine's conversion, and the spiritual bonding of mother and son reaches its apex.[24]

[20] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Sharing Her Word*, 151.

[21] In Corley's excellent discussion of these dynamics (355–57), she cites a survey from the late 1980s of pastors who agreed that "if a woman submits to her husband as God desires, God will eventually honor her and either the abuse will stop or God will give her the strength to endure it" (quoted in Corley, 356). One-fifth of these pastors believed that no amount of abuse ever justified a woman leaving her marriage. These statistics are a powerful indicator of the practical implications of misogynist theological readings of scripture.

[22] On Augustine's influence, Margaret R. Miles remarks: "The influence of the *Confessions*, its role in forming Western institutions—like monasticism, church, and marriage—cannot be overestimated. What is subordinated in the *Confessions* has largely been undervalued also in Western culture—for example, women, and the natural world of bodies and senses." *Desire and Delight: A New Reading of Augustine's "Confessions"* (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 12.

[23] Augustine, *Confessiones*, bks. 9–13, trans. Pierre de Labriolle, 2 vols. (Paris: Société d'Edition *Les belles lettres*, 1969), 9.9.19–22, vol. 2, pp. 225–27.

[24] Ibid., 9.8.17, vol. 2, p. 222: "Et cum apud Ostia Tiberina essemus, mater defuncta est." 9.10.26, vol. 2, p. 230: "Unum erat, propter quod in hac vita aliquantum inmorari cupiebam, ut te christianum catholicum videre, priusquam morerer." 9.11.28, vol. 2, p. 231: "Ergo die nono aegritu-

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Augustine observes that his father, Patricius, was as extraordinary in his goodwill as he was heated in his anger.[25] Monica knew that she should not resist an angry husband, even with words. Augustine recounts what he calls Monica's method ("institutum suum"): waiting until Patricius calmed down and then reasoning with him. This quiet posture, her son explains, kept her face from suffering the disfigurement that other women bore from their husbands' blows.[26] Monica's practice was not only efficacious but also rooted in righteous obedience. Elsewhere Augustine comments that his mother always obeyed her husband, "because by obeying him she obeyed your [God's] law, thereby showing greater virtue than he did." Thus, obedience to God and to husband were one and the same for Augustine.[27]

Scholars have disagreed about Patricius's character. On the one hand, Kim Power objects to the characterization of Augustine's father as brutal and the implication that Monica was caught in Patricius's violence against his son. She asserts: "Patricius never raised a hand to Monica."[28] On the other hand, Brent Shaw assumes that Monica "bore up stoically under the quarrels and beatings."[29] Certainly beatings were a frequently used tool of the Roman paterfa-

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dinis suae, quinquagesimo et sexto anno aetatis suae, tricesimo et tertio aetatis meae, anima illa religiosa et pia corpore soluta est."

[25] Ibid., 9.1.11-12, vol. 2, p. 225: "Erat uero ille praeterea sicut beniuolentia praecipuus, ita ira feruidus."

[26] Ibid., 9.19.12-18, vol. 2, p. 225: "Sed nouerat haec non resistere irato uiro, non tantum facto, sed ne uerbo quidem. Iam uero refractum et quietum cum oportunum uiderat, rationem facti sui reddebat, si forte ille inconsideratius conmotus fuerat. Denique cum matronae multae, quarum uiri mansuetiores erant, plagarum uestigia etiam dehonestata facie gererent."

[27] Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin (London: Penguin, 1961), 1.11, p. 32. *Confessiones* 1.11.26-29, vol. 1, p. 16: "Et in hoc adiuvabas eam, ut superaret virum, cui melior serviebat, quia et in hoc tibi utique iubenti serviebat." Obedience and hierarchy are key to Augustine's understanding of the universe, as he states in *City of God:* "Peace between mortal man and God is an ordered obedience, in faith, in subjection to an everlasting law . . . ; the peace of a home is the ordered agreement of those who live together about giving and obeying orders; the peace of the whole universe is the tranquillity of order—and order is the arrangement of things equal and unequal which assigns to each its proper position." *Concerning the City of God against the Pagans*, trans. Henry Bettenson (London: Penguin, 1984), 19.13, p. 870. According to Augustine, in the family, the burden of maintaining order by obedience falls clearly and heavily on the wife, thereby reinforcing patriarchal structures.

[28] Kim Power, *Veiled Desire: Augustine's Writing on Women* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1995), 76. Still, Power agrees that Monica is a model of obedience and subordination: "Augustine is clearly offering his mother as a model to other Christian wives whom he perceives as at best ill-judged, and at worst contentious and haughtily defiant of legitimate authority. Wives who followed Monica's advice thanked her for its value. The dire alternative was to be abused into submission" (76).

[29] Brent D. Shaw, "The Family in Late Antiquity: The Experience of Augustine," *Past and Present* 115 (May 1987): 31–32.

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milias, a practice confirmed by considerable research on the Roman family and apparent in Augustine's other works.[30]

Augustine may not be the most reliable chronicler of the relationship between his parents, for two reasons. He was only sixteen when Patricius died, and for part of his early years he was away at school. Any beatings Monica endured could have occurred during his absence, or even before he was born. Clearly Monica was fearful of Patricius, as Augustine recalls her efforts to avoid her husband's unpredictable rage. The fact that Augustine did not witness beatings does not mean they did not occur. Second, Augustine's aim in his remembrance of his mother is in part ideological. He intends to portray her as a saintly woman, and her avoidance of beatings—especially given that he understands beatings to be the fault of the women who receive them—is critical in his portrayal of Monica as one whose submissive behavior far exceeded that of the women around her. If she had acted in ways that provoked beatings, as Augustine believed her peers did, she would have been no better than them. We must ask whether Augustine's memory was selective, especially since he wrote the *Confessions* thirty years after his father's death and with an ideological program in mind.[31] Even if his recollection that his father never struck his mother

[30] For general discussions of the Roman family, see Peter Garnsey and Richard Saller, *The Roman Empire: Economy, Society, and Culture* (London: Duckworth, 1987), 126–47; and Jane F. Gardner, *Women in Roman Law and Society* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 67–80. Power points out that in Roman *sine manu* marriages, husbands did not have the right to beat their wives (26, 76). In *sine manu* marriages, the wife was not subject to an oath of obedience to the husband's authority, symbolized by his hand. However, Garnsey and Saller echo Shaw's conclusion on Augustine's family and make this general observation: "The fact that the wife was not in her husband's legal power may not always have exempted her from such domination. In his *On Anger* (3.35) Seneca asked how man could complain of the state being deprived of liberty when he in his own household became angry at his slave, freedman, client and wife for answering back to him. The inclusion of the wife in this series of inferior members of the *domus* is suggestive" (134). The authors go on to repeat Shaw without Augustine's disclaimer: "Much later St. Augustine wrote more explicitly that his mother meekly suffered regular beatings at the hands of his father and that most other wives in the small African town of Thagaste had similar bruises to show" (134). Shaw (6, 17–32) includes references to Augustine's sermons and other works that reveal the prevalence of physical punishment. Power (263 n. 60) also acknowledges the prevalence of physical punishment in Roman families and refers to Augustine's *Speculum: De libro legis*, 21, *Patrologia Latina cursus completus*, ed. J. P. Migne (Paris: 1849), 34:890C. There Augustine enumerates cases of offense against the laws, mostly dealing with the striking of slaves, but he includes this as well: "Si rixati fuerint viri, et percusserit quis mulierem praegnantem, et abortivum quidem fecerit, sed ipsa vixerit; subjacebit damno, quantum expetierit maritus mulieris, et arbitri judicarint: sin autem mors ejus fuerit subsecuta; reddet animam pro anima, oculum pro oculo, dentem pro dente, manum pro manu, pedem pro pede, adustionem pro adustione, vulnus pro vulnere, livorem pro livore."

[31] On Augustine's ideology, see Shaw: "All the formative years of his life up to the age of thirty, when he was part of his parents' family, are . . . seen through the prism of a later ideological commitment that profoundly distorted his conception of his own earlier life" (7). Moreover, Miles observes that Augustine evaluates all the women in the *Confessions* in accordance with their role in his "heroic

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is correct, his references to Patricius's rage and to Monica's efforts to avoid it nonetheless convey a sense of a household living in anticipation of potential outbursts and indicate probable psychological, if not physical, abuse.

Eventually Monica won over her husband for God, an outcome that made her obedient silence worthwhile in Augustine's view, and probably in her own. The ability to move others to conversion was a hallmark of sanctity; the advice for wives to convert their non-Christian husbands through silence, obedience, and virtue appears in 1 Peter 3:1–6: "Wives, . . . accept the authority of your husbands, so that, even if some of them do not obey the word, they may be won over without a word by their wives' conduct, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives" (NRSV).[32] According to Augustine, after Patricius's conversion, near the end of his life, Monica never mentioned his infidelities to him. Augustine follows that observation with praise for Monica as the servant of servants ("serva servorum tuorum"), the feminization of a standard formula.[33] He continues, summarizing her virtues with scriptural phrases that capture her worth as a faithful wife, a dutiful daughter, and a wise manager of her household whose actions spoke on her behalf.[34]

Augustine voices no concern for the predicament that battered wives in his society faced, although he lamented his own beatings in school.[35] Instead he makes his mother a spokesperson for the subservient obedience necessary from chaste Christian women.[36] In Augustine's text, it is she who reminds other

epic" (70). She states that "Monica plays the supporting role to which he assigns her" (83), and "his understanding and literary treatment of actual women is limited by the female figures that inhabit his psyche: the good mother and the sexual object" (92).

[32] Thanks to Patricia Blanchette for locating this passage. On the household codes and particularly 1 Peter, see Corley (cited in n. 18).

[33] Cf. Paul Meyvaert on Gregory the Great's usage of this phrase, and its application to a twelfth-century Cistercian lay-brother, Pons of Léras, in Beverly Mayne Kienzle, "The Works of Hugo Francigena: *Tractatus de conversione Pontii de Laracio et exordii Salvaniensis monasterii vera narratio: Epistolae* (Dijon, Bibliothèque Municipale MS 611)," *Sacris Erudiri* 34 (1994): 300, ll. 476–77.

[34] Augustine, *Confessiones* 9.22.4-11, vol. 2, p. 227: "Quisquis eorum noverat eam, multum in ea laudabat et honorabat et diligebat te, quia sentiebat presentiam tuam in corde eius sanctae conversationis fructibus testimonibus. Fuerat enim 'unius viri uxor,' 'mutuam vicem parentibus' reddiderat, domum suam pie tractaverat, 'in operibus bonis testimonium' habebat." Scriptural references are from 1 Tim. 5:9, 4, 10, which give instructions to church leaders on the proper treatment and conduct of widows. Verses 9 and 10 pertain to older widows enrolled in Christ's service.

[35] Augustine, *Confessiones*, 1.9.14, vol. 1, p. 13: "Deus, deus meus, quas ibi miserias expertus sum et ludificationes. . . . Et tamen, si segnis in discendo essem, vapulabam. Laudabatur enim hoc a maioribus, et multi ante nos vitam istam agentes praestruxerant aerumnosas vias, per quas transire cogebamur multiplicato labore et dolore filiis Adam." The beatings are described as "plagae meae, magnum tunc et grave malum meum" (vol. 1, p. 13). Augustine also speaks of the terror felt by children (1.9.24-25, vol. 1, pp. 13–14). The same subject appears in *City of God*, 21.14.

[36] For a discussion of the historical impact of Monica's life on the construction of motherhood,

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women that through the marriage contract they are made servants of the masters who are their husbands.[37] The son tersely remarks that the women who heeded his mother's advice were grateful to her, whereas those who did not were mistreated.[38] Augustine equates opposition to husbands with a defiance of the social order that deserves punishment. Thus, he places the blame for beatings squarely on women themselves, and without any apparent compassion.[39] If Augustine had recounted an episode of his father's physical violence against his mother, he would have undermined his attempt to portray her as a model wife, able to avoid beatings because of her patient and godly obedience.

The theology at work in this passage is clear: religion is in harmony with social forces of subordination. Augustine was influenced by the Stoic conception of the family, and he clearly viewed marriage as paralleling the social order. In the text, then, marriage is the microcosm of the relationship between God and the church, and concord in marriage mirrors the divine order.[40] Monica is described as a young woman subservient first to God, then to her parents, and later to her husband.[41] Her principal communication is with God, and in the relationships of this world she acts as God's instrument, speaking in conform-

see Clarissa W. Atkinson. "'Your Servant, My Mother': The Figure of St. Monica in the Ideology of Christian Motherhood," in *Immaculate and Powerful: The Female in Sacred Image and Social Reality,* ed. Clarissa W. Atkinson, Constance H. Buchanan, and Margaret R. Miles (Boston: Beacon, 1985), 173–200.

[37] Augustine, *Confessiones*, 9.19.19-25, vol. 2, p. 225: ". . . inter amica conloquia illae arguebant maritorum uitam, haec earum linguam, ueluti per iocum grauiter admonens, ex quo illas tabulas, quae matrimoniales uocantur, recitari audissent, tamquam instrumenta, quibus ancillae factae essent, deputare debuisse; proinde memores conditionis superbire aduersus dominos non oportere."

[38] Ibid., 9.19.1-3, vol. 2, p. 226: "Quae obseruabant, expertae gratulabantur; quae non obseruabant, subiectae uexabantur."

[39] Rosemary Radford Ruether argues that historically, Christianity defined women as inferior and subordinate to men, and even prone to the demonic. Particularly, Christianity assumed that if a woman experienced physical and/or emotional abuse, she was responsible for that abuse. See "The Western Tradition and Violence against Women in the Home," in *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse: A Feminist Critique,* ed. Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn (New York: Pilgrim, 1989), esp. 35–38.

[40] Shaw notes the influence of Stoic ideas on Augustine (the household was "accepted as part of the natural order of society as a whole, represented at its pinnacle by the state") and stresses that, for Augustine, the "atom of society" was not the family but the union of man and woman (10). See also Power (236–37) on Augustine's view of the church; and the references cited in n. 18 on the household codes. Margaret Miles (120) explains Augustine's theory of authority, in which he sorts "all the contrasting opposites he has found" into "hierarchically arranged pairs." Miles observes that Augustine fits his theory of society into this scheme, as seen in *City of God*, 19.13–15.

[41] Augustine, *Confessiones*, 9.19.1-4, vol. 2, p. 225: "Educata itaque pudice ac sobrie potiusque a te subdita parentibus quam a parentibus tibi, ubi plenis annis nubilis facta est, tradita uiro seruiuit ueluti domino."

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ity with God's will and not with a separate voice of her own.[42] Patient, obedient, and voiceless, she endures her husband's anger and infidelity without opposition.[43] Indeed, her endurance and her quiet reserve, obvious survival strategies in a marriage to a man prone to violent rages, enhance the path to holiness for herself and her husband.

For Augustine, women who are battered have defied their husbands' rule in marriage and the household. Therefore, they deserve their punishment—an echo of the theme that Eve (and hence women in general) disobeyed and should be punished.[44] In Augustine's eyes, Monica was ultimately subservient because of Eve's culpability, but because Monica avoided punishment, she stood closer to Mary here than to Eve.[45] Monica, like Mary, humbly acquiesced to the will of God. Rather than acting independently, as Eve did, Monica suffered in patient silence. Accounts of Mary's silence serve as the paradigm for much literature claiming that women should keep silent in a range of contexts.[46] Thus, by paralleling Monica's behavior with that of Mary, Augustine simultaneously reinforces Monica's holiness and a specific order as exemplary of the divine. In Eve's case, God emerges as the rightful castigator, whereas in the case of the unsubmissive wives of Augustine's day, it is the husband who plays that role. The rule of the paterfamilias, whom Augustine himself apparently feared, is thus held up as the appropriate mode of family relations.[47]

In Augustine's text, Christian servanthood, for Monica, includes obedient patience in suffering, but it also leads to another important mark of saintliness: conversion. Monica influences her husband's conversion, just as her patient love for her son also brings about his turning to Christ.[48] Conversion provides

[42] Monica is described as speaking about God through her actions: "loquens te illi moribus suis" (ibid., 9.19.4-5, vol. 2, p. 225).

[43] Ibid., 9.19.6-8, vol. 2, p. 225: "Ita autem tolerauit cubilis iniurias, ut nullam de hac recum marito haberet umquam simultatem."

[44] Ruether, "Christian Understandings" (cited in n. 9), 99.

[45] Power presents parallels between Monica and Mary (91), but she does not include silence.

[46] A complete survey of exegesis on Mary's silence lies beyond the scope of this article. For an early example, based on Luke 2:19, see Ambrose of Milan, *Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam* (*Patrologia Latina* 15:1560), where women are advised to learn modesty and humility and not to speak in public. Beverly Mayne Kienzle discusses late-twelfth-century usage of Luke 2:19 in "The Prostitute-Preacher: Patterns of Polemic against Medieval Waldensian Women Preachers," in *Women Preachers and Prophets through Two Millennia of Christianity*, ed. Beverly Mayne Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 105.

[47] Power, 122ff.; Shaw, 28 n. 104. From a different perspective, Leo C. Ferrari examines the prevalence of the theme of scourging in Augustine's works and briefly treats Patricius's anger. See "The Boyhood Beatings of Augustine," *Augustinian Studies* 5 (1974): 1–14, at 4.

[48] Augustine, *Confessiones*, 9.22.1-4, vol. 2, p. 227: "Denique etiam uirum suum iam in extrema uita temporali eius lucrata est tibi nec in eo iam fideli planxit, quod in nondum fideli tolerauerat. Erat etiam serua seruorum tuorum." Clarissa Atkinson notes that Augustine "saw

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a spiritual "happy ending" that affirms Monica's conduct and minimizes Patricius's sinfulness. Moreover, the husband's conversion accentuates the spiritual ties between husband and wife, thereby de-emphasizing the physicality of the marriage bond, which often proved to be an obstacle to holiness for women. It is realistic to suppose that, by making the physical bond more burdensome, a difficult marriage would increase the ascetic holiness of the woman who endured it and transformed it through conversion. When Patricius converts, Monica keeps complete silence about his past wrongs, thus winning praise from Augustine, who sees her behavior as a perfect model of obedient servitude.

To summarize this portrayal of Monica as wife, we see that Augustine likens her servitude to the earlier obedience of the child. The obligations of motherhood, marriage, and childhood are combined for him when he states: "She took care, as if she had engendered all, just as she served as if she had been begotten by all."[49] Thus, Monica represents the model mother and wife to the extent that she exhibits the dependent obedience that befits the model child or the slave. Augustine praises her lifelong obedience and servitude as the perfect model of a Christian life. Patient obedience, as Augustine presents it, not only reflects personal holiness but has the added potential of evoking conversion. By acclaiming Monica's obedience and servitude, Augustine reinforces what gradually became a hallmark of Christian theological understanding: that self-sacrifice and obedience are characteristic of Christian virtue in women and may be used by God to elicit the conversion of others.[50]

Godelieve of Gistel

The next woman in our study also constitutes a paradigm of obedience, and her total compliance with that model led to her murder at the hands of her husband's henchmen. She is Godelieve of Gistel, born in 1052, married at age fifteen, and murdered a few years later, in July of 1070.[51] Her cult still thrives

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Monica as the agent of his conversion and perhaps of his salvation." Clarissa W. Atkinson, *The Oldest Vocation: Christian Motherhood in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991), 75–76.

[49] Augustine, *Confessiones*, 9.22.15-17, vol. 2, p. 227: ". . . ita curam gessit, quasi omnes genuisset, ita seruiuit, quasi ab omnibus genita fuisset."

[50] Joanne Carlson Brown and Rebecca Parker, "For God So Loved the World?" in Brown and Bohn (cited in n. 39), 2.

[51] See Renée Nip, "The Canonization of Godelieve of Gistel," *Hagiographica* 2 (1995): 145–55; and "Godelieve of Gistel and Ida of Boulogne," in *Sanctity and Motherhood: Essays on Holy Mothers in the Middle Ages*, ed. Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker (New York: Garland, 1995), 191–223. The best edition of the Latin *Vita Sanctae Godeliph* is Maurice Coens, "La vie ancienne de sainte Godelieve de Ghistelles par Drogon de Bergues," *Analecta Bollandiana* 44 (1926): 125–37. Passages here are

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in Belgium, where an abbey is dedicated to her and an annual July festival commemorates her death with a procession of her relics and a large-scale drama including more than one thousand participants. Actors represent episodes from Godelieve's life and death, and local people honor her service to the poor, which is praised in an oratorio.[52]

Godelieve's life and death took place against the background of eleventh-century Flanders, where feudal violence was erupting in conflicts between north and south. The Peace of God movement strove to unite clergy and laity across Europe against warring feudal lords; and the Gregorian Reforms, initiated by Pope Gregory VII (1073–1085), endeavored to impose moral reform of the clergy, to establish the church's freedom from control by lay power, and to sanctify all of society in conformity with monastic ideals. Both movements also attempted to harness the intense power of the growing cult of the saints.[53] Godelieve's cult probably arose among the people who venerated her after her murder, and the regional church hierarchy intervened to gain control of her cult and use it for political advantage.[54]

A native of the region of Boulogne, now in France, Godelieve married Bertolf, lord of Gistel, which was located farther north, near Bruges, in present-day Belgium. The marriage was probably arranged by the counts of Boulogne and Flanders in an attempt to form an alliance to promote peace. Furthermore, the composition of the *Vita Godeliph* was influenced by the church's efforts to create stability. Bishop Radbod II of Noyon-Tournai (1068–1098), who elevated Godelieve's relics on July 30, 1084, probably was co-

taken from the Coens edition. A Flemish edition was published by Nicolaas N. Huyghebaert and Stefaan Gyselen, *Drogo van Sint-Winoksbergen, Vita Godeliph* (Tielt: Lanoo, Belgium, 1982), 34–71. Later versions of the text, edited by J. B. Sollerius, are in the *Acta Sanctorum [AA.SS.]* (Antwerp: Joannem Mevrsium, 1643), Iul. II (1867): 359–444 (BHL 3592); and 414–36 (BHL 3593).

[52] Information on the feast-day commemoration is found in "Sint-Godelieveprocessie," Gistel, Sunday, July 5 (leaflet produced by the Komitee Sint-Godelieveprocessie). The oratorio is by Edgar Tirel.

[53] On the Peace of God movement and the Gregorian Reforms, see Georges Duby, *The Chivalrous Society*, trans. Cynthia Postan (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977), 123–33; Barbara Abou-El-Haj, *The Medieval Cult of Saints: Formations and Transformations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 13–14; and Giles Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 4–5, 300–328.

[54] See Georges Duby, "The Matron and the Mismarried Woman," in *Love and Marriage in the Middle Ages*, trans. Jane Dunnett (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 44–54; Nip, "Canonization of Godelieve of Gistel," 146–48, and 154, where she concludes: "From the life of Drogo it is evident that the veneration of Godelieve as a martyr originated from the people." See also Nip, "Godelieve and Ida," 192–97.

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operating with the count, who was trying to consolidate his power in Flanders after a revolt in the south in 1083.[55]

The relics' elevation in 1084 provided the occasion for the composition of the earliest extant version of Godelieve's *vita* by Drogo, monk of the abbey of Saint Winocsbergen. Drogo composed the text under his bishop's request in order to assert the primacy of episcopal authority through the martyrdom of a young woman who demonstrated complete obedience to it. He addressed the text to Radbod II, praising him for his learning and outstanding reputation. The final version of the text depended on the bishop's authority, because he had the ultimate responsibility to edit and improve it as needed. If Radbod were to find the *vita* worthy, it would gain authority before it reached a wider audience. The account is termed both a life and passion and also simply a passion, accentuating its heroine's martyrdom.[56]

From the *vita*, we learn that the relationship between Bertolf and Godelieve was marked by conflict even before the marriage took place. As the hagiographer puts it, the future husband, Bertolf, came under the devil's influence,[57] and he did not even attend the wedding ceremony. His mother stood in for him.[58] To make matters worse, the mother insulted the bride-to-be by referring to her as a dark-haired foreign crow.[59] After the three-day wedding observance, Bertolf returned but went to live at his father's house,[60] leaving

[55] When Baldwin, count of Flanders, died in July 1070, two camps vied for his authority. Boulogne, Godelieve's region, supported the count's widow and sons; Bertolf's area, maritime Flanders, supported the count's brother, Robert the Frisian, the eventual successor to Baldwin. Godelieve presumably was murdered around the time of Baldwin's death; the dates are not entirely sure. See Nip, "Canonization of Godelieve of Gistel," 148; and Duby, "Matron," 52.

[56] See Nip, "Canonization of Godelieve of Gistel," 154. See also Nicolaas Huyghebaert, "Un Moine Hagiographe: Drogon de Bergues-Saint Winoc," *Sacris Erudiri* 20 (1971): 191–256, but especially 221–25, where he suggests that Drogo's abbot, Englebert, a descendant of Baldwin IV, had connections with a powerful family that sought to glorify Godelieve after her death.

[57] *Vita Sanctae Godeliph*, 128: "Sed ipse eadem die qua sponsam detulit domum, iaculatus mentem ab inimico, eam odio habere coepit, tum interdum paenitere coepti [*sic*], nonnumquam etiam se ipsum ob peractam rem incusare."

[58] Ibid., 129: "Celebrat mater ipsius quamquam invita nuptias; ea loco sponsi adest; maestam frontem serenat occultans virus quod animo gestabat."

[59] Ibid., 128: "Nam et verbis suae matris cogitur ad odium, quae more bonae genitricis congaudere deberet maritati filii auspiciis. . . . 'Num, inquit, in tua patria, care fili, cornices haud poteras reperire, qui cornicem unam ab alia patria domum voluisti deferre?' . . . His ergo et aliis genitricis dictis exagitatus maerore gravabatur et magis in dies etiam nimis magna per se aegritudo animi augebatur."

[60] Ibid., 129: "Per totos tres dies filius eius abfuit dum ymenei a matre et ab inimicis celebrati sunt. Et revertitur post diem tertium; dimissa propria domo cum coniuge una cum familia, patris aedem ivit habitatum."

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Godelieve alone. He undertook a deliberate plan to harm her,[61] first ordering the servants to provide her with only bread and water,[62] and later cutting that meager ration in half.[63] Godelieve escaped once and appealed for justice through her father, whereupon Bertolf was ordered by the local count and bishop to take back his wife. The count voices the Gregorian Reforms' view of the distribution of authority between secular and ecclesiastical power: "It is the office of a bishop . . . to rule Christendom as well as correct anything deviating from holy practice. . . . Episcopal authority should compel this man to take back what is his. If he refuses, and considers the bishop's order of little significance, then I will address the matter and demand satisfaction for your cause with every resource available to me."[64] Angry at that verdict and frustrated at his failure to break Godelieve's spirit, Bertolf was driven to even greater evil and plotted with two of his servants to have his wife murdered.[65] His deceit reached its peak when, the night before the murder, he came home, kissed Godelieve, sat down next to her, and expressed the desire for a reunion of their minds and bodies. He tricked her into agreeing that his two servants could lead her to a go-between, who purportedly would ensure that the love between the two spouses be cemented.[66] Instead, the two servants led her to a gruesome death and then placed her back in her bed, where she was discovered in the morning by the members of her household.[67]

Drogo portrays Godelieve as a model of Christlike suffering and compares

[61] Ibid.: "Cum id quidem videret vir suus, cum utroque parente tractare coepit quomodo vivendo deturparet eam, quod scilicet illi dedecori vitaeque detrimento esset."

[62] Ibid.: "Famulus suus sibi proponitur qui ei male serviret quique illi panem unum in die et in statuta hora nichilque aliud offeret. . . . Utebatur vero ea solo pane cum sale et aqua semel in die. Vir enim suus servo illi famulanti indixit ut nichil aliud acciperet."

[63] Ibid.: "'Auferam itaque ab ea colorem quo viget, mentem tollam ut ne quidem de Deo neque de se ipsa queat cogitare.' Haec siquidem meditatus est sponsus; dixit ac pariter cum dicto factum indixit. Datur ei panis dimidius."

[64] Ibid., 131: "Episcopi est, inquit, christianitatem regere, tum si qua sunt extra viam sancti ordinis corrigere; meum vero habetur in his quae per se superare non quit hunc ipsum adiuvare. Hunc primum episcopalis auctoritas suam resuscipere adigat. Qui si noluerit episcopique iussum parvipenderit, tunc ego ipse ad id veniam et quantum in me erit rem tuae utilitatis exigam." On the count's speech and the goals of ecclesiastical reform, see Nip, "Canonization of Godelieve of Gistel," 145, where she argues that, in summary, "the canonization of Godelieve of Gistel formed part of the well-timed political efforts of Count Robrecht the Frisian (1071–1093) in close cooperation with Bishop Radbod of Noyon and Tournai (1068–1098) to bring peace to, and to consolidate his power in, Flanders"; and 147–48, where she discusses the address and its amplification in the thirteenth-century version of the text.

[65] *Vita Sanctae Godeliph*, 133: "Tunc duos servos, sciliet Lantebrtum et Haccam, vocat; consilium quaerit quod super ea conari queat, quo tormentorum genere dederet eam neci. . . . Statuunt diem, inveniunt genus tormenti quo facilius perire queat et factum occultius fiat."

[66] Ibid., 133–34.

[67] Ibid., 135–36.

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the deceitful Bertolf to Judas. The author addresses the husband directly in an emotional apostrophe: "You imitate Judas, betrayer of the Lord in your crime for he brought to the meek lamb kisses composed of deceit; you offer kisses to your wife, and you speak to that innocent woman with a deceitful heart. Driven by a price, he [Judas] betrayed the king and lord of all to hateful crowds; you [betray] your wife to servants whom you pay with a reward."[68]

Drogo articulates his message in his praises for Godelieve and in the words he has her utter. Ridiculed, despised, starved, deceived, and finally murdered, Godelieve is depicted as patient, God-loving, and God-loved (as her name is translated in German). Her biographer underscores her patience, obedience, and subservience, having her echo scriptures such as Romans 12:14, saying, "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them."[69] He also establishes a textual parallel to Mary, based solely on obedience, when he has Godelieve, isolated and starved by her husband, paraphrase the Magnificat (Luke 1:46–55): "For I am exalted over all the women of the whole of Flanders. . . . Indeed, let him who is the most powerful do what he wills to me, he who enriches whomever he wills with his virtues and raises the needy from the ground of misfortune."[70] Furthermore, the night before Godelieve's murder, in the face of her husband's treacherous plan to have his henchmen lead her to death, Godelieve replies to him: "I am the servant of the Lord; I entrust all things to him. If this can be done without any wrongdoing, I agree to it."[71] Thus, God's will is inextricably tied to the husband's plan. Then, before leaving the house with the murderers, Godelieve says: "I commend myself to the Almighty. I am his creature; . . . I surrender myself to faith in [him]."[72]

The hagiographer controls the text through the words he places in

[68] Ibid., 134: "Imitaris Iudam traditorem Domini in scelere. Fert ille agno miti oscula composita fraude; tu tuae coniugi basia porrigis et doloso corde innocentem alloqueris . . . tu servis coniugem a te remunerandis quovis muneris praemio."

[69] Ibid., 131: "Benedicite persequentibus vos, benedicite et nolite maledicere."

[70] Ibid., 132: "Etenim super omnes mulieres totius Flandriae quae hodie vitales auras carpunt extollar. . . . Id quidem erga me faciet qui potentissimus habetur, qui quem vult suis virtutibus ditat quique egenum ab humo suae infelicitatis elevat." Although these passive declarations of obedience certainly represent the theological message of patient, obedient suffering that the author wants to convey, it is interesting to note that contemporary studies on battered women discuss their language of passivity and submission and point out its roots in the continual fear that the women experience. See Ann Jones, *Next Time She'll Be Dead: Battering and How to Stop It* (Boston: Beacon, 1994), 94–95, and 167–98 on "traumatic bonding" and the case of Hedda Nussbaum; and Marie Fortune, *Keeping the Faith: Questions and Answers for the Abused Woman* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 13–20, 28, and 46, where she provides examples of this sort of passive, religious language.

[71] *Vita Sanctae Godeliph*, 134–35: "'Famula Domini sum; ipsi omnia mea committo. Attamen si sine aliqua ammixtione sceleris id valet fieri, concedo.'"

[72] Ibid., 135: "'Omnipotenti me commendo. Creatura illius sum; quod de me fiat elementissimus videat.'"

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Godelieve's mouth and the emotional interjection of his own words. He carries on a sort of running commentary on the heroine, whom he molds to fit his aim. Drogo underscores the obedience a wife owes a husband: "O woman blessed and devoted to God! . . . You comply with your spouse so that you may not lose the Lord, the joiner of marriage."[73] He also links patient perseverance with obedience to God's will, which is equated with obedience to the bishop's will for her marriage, even unto death: "O love of holy will! O patience persevering whole and the same, united in a woman! Your husband curses you, but you bless him. He casts an evil eye on you; you may reconcile him to God by your prayers and your intention, if the good may be reconciled to the wicked. He threatens to choose even death for you; you always pray to God that he may live."[74] Godelieve appears to be the antithesis of the wicked Bertolf. The patience, suffering, and obedience unto death that she demonstrates cast her as a Christlike figure.

For Bertolf, there is neither remorse nor punishment in the story, and the hagiographer raises no questions about justice. A later version of the story claims that Bertolf converted,[75] but Drogo's does not. Although Bertolf is described as similar to Judas because of his betrayal, the treacherous husband meets no unfortunate end; he simply disappears from the narrative.

It is difficult to retrieve Godelieve's voice in this text or to reconstruct any aspect of her life other than those Drogo emphasizes. Early signs of sanctity, a hagiographical commonplace, are limited to one sentence, which explains that Godelieve began to be devoted to God as a child, "obeying her parents' instructions to pity the oppressed and strive to keep her childhood pure and righteous."[76] Godelieve keeps her vow to aid the poor, sacrificing one half of her meager ration of bread, and she foretells her death (a sign of the gift of prophesy). However, her holiness is based almost exclusively on her death. To make her murder into a martyrdom, she must die for the faith. Here that con-

[73] Ibid.: "O felix Deoque devota femina! . . . Ea ratione optas coniugium, ne perdas coniugii coniunctorem Dominum."

[74] Ibid., 130: "O piae voluntatis affectus, o patientia una ac eadem perseverans in femina! Eadem semper in contrariis perseveras. Te maledicit sponsus tuus; tu illum benedicis. Tibi hic invidet, tu ei et precibus et mente Deum concilias, si valeat bonus impio conciliari. Quin etiam tibi mortem optat, minatur; tu, ut vivat, semper Deum oras."

[75] BHL 3593, *AA.SS.* Iul. II, pp. 414–36. On dating the *vita*, see August Keersmaekers, "Het leven van de H. Godelieve in handschriften," *Vlaanderen* 200 (1984): 12–16, cited by Nip in "Canonization of Godelieve of Gistel" (cited in n. 51), 146 n. 4.

[76] *Vita Sanctae Godeliph*, 127: "Verum educanda adhuc in teneris pueritiae suae annis coepit esse devota Deo, obediens parentibus, tum omni oppresso compati, tum aetatulam suam mundam et pro posse rectam agere."

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stitutes dying for the ecclesiastical authority upheld by the Gregorian Reform movement and for its view of the indissolubility of marriage.[77]

Drogo emphasizes the sanctimony of marriage, which Godelieve upholds with complete obedience even while her spouse violates it throughout the marriage. Godelieve is martyred because she maintains to the death the ideal of marriage as it was viewed and imposed by the ecclesiastical authorities. In Drogo's eyes, Godelieve is perfectly obedient to God because she obeys her husband, her father, her bishop, and her count. Her story, born from popular legend, is appropriated and recast by a clerical biographer to illustrate that a heavenly reward follows a martyrdom incurred out of obedience to the church.

Dorothy of Montau

With Dorothy of Montau (1347–1394) we enter the fourteenth century, remarkable for its calamitous events and, in the history of spirituality, for its female mystics and intense devotion to the passion. Dorothy, although not affiliated with a religious order, was in several other ways typical of fourteenth-century German women saints through her mystical experiences, membership in the urban middle class, strongly emotional religious expression, and strong ties to a spiritual director.[78] Dorothy began, at the age of seventeen, a marriage that lasted thirty years, the last ten of which were lived in sexual abstinence. Dorothy and her husband, Adalbert, a weaponsmith in Danzig, had nine children, only one of whom survived infancy. Dorothy undertook a series of pilgrimages in 1382, accompanied begrudgingly by Adalbert until ill health prevented him from travel. Adalbert died while Dorothy was in Rome for the Jubilee year of 1390, when Birgitta of Sweden's canonization was approved. After her husband's death, Dorothy embraced the advice to widows in 1 Timothy, as her biographer is careful to note.[79] She then vowed obedience to a confessor, John Marienwerder, and with his approval became an anchoress attached to the cathedral at Marienwerder during the last year of her life. There she recounted her revelations to John, who composed four *vitae* and other works within a decade after her death, intending to promote her canonization

[77] Georges Duby discusses Godelieve's story and the principle of indissolubility in *The Knight, the Lady, and the Priest: The Making of Modern Marriage in Medieval France*, trans. Barbara Bray (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 133.

[78] See Richard Kieckhefer, *Unquiet Souls: Fourteenth-Century Saints and Their Religious Milieu* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 17–19, 55, 89–121; and Atkinson, *Oldest Vocation* (cited in n. 48).

[79] *Vita B. Dorotheae Lindana*, *AA.SS.* Oct. XIII, p. 530: "Hujus venerabilis apostoli regulam summo studio Dorothea vidua jam et discipula amplectens, soluta a lege viri, magnifice in illius justificationibus exercebatur, omnem perfectionem quaerens, qua Deo posset perfectiore charitatis apice famulari."

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as Prussia's first native saint. That process, begun swiftly, was relinquished in 1525, but she was beatified in 1976.[80]

From her early years, Dorothy's life was marked by various signs of holiness. An early spiritual experience pointed to later states of ecstasy and then revelations in the last years of her life. She undertook works of charity, pilgrimages, daily confession, and communion, and she endured much suffering—both through severe ascetic practices and through her husband's cruel and violent treatment.[81] Adalbert resented Dorothy's religious activities—whether ecstasies, ascetic practices, or pilgrimages—because they resulted in a lack of attention to him and to her household chores. For Dorothy, religion must have offered a way of resisting some of Adalbert's demands. Angered on one occasion by Dorothy's absence from the house and from the marriage bed, Adalbert threatened to chain her in the house for three days and promptly followed his threat with action.[82] Interpreting her silent reaction to confinement as impudence or rebellion, Adalbert picked up a chair and struck her forcefully on the head.[83] Two other instances of Adalbert's violence concern household

[80] The various versions of Dorothy's *vita* and her biography are discussed by Dyan Elliott in "Authorizing a Life: The Collaboration of Dorothea of Montau and John Marienwerder," in *Gendered Voices: Medieval Saints and Their Interpreters*, ed. Catherine M. Mooney (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 170–72; Ute Stargardt, "Male Clerical Authority in the Spiritual (Auto)biographies of Medieval Holy Women," in *Women as Protagonists and Poets in the German Middle Ages: An Anthology of Feminist Approaches to Middle High German Literature*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Göppingen, Germany: Kummerle, 1991), *Göppinger Arbeiten zur Germanistik* 528: 209–38; Kieckhefer, 205; Hans Westpfahl, "Dorothée de Montau," in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1957), 3:1664–68; and Hans Westpfahl, ed., *Vita Dorotheae Montoviensis magistri Johannis Marienwerder* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1964), 1–11. Stargardt provides useful political background on the Prussian motives for the canonization (214) and discusses the influence of Birgitta of Sweden on Dorothy and her biographer (224–25). References in this article are from the so-called *Vita Lindana*, having been studied by A. A. de Linda, in *AA.SS.* Oct. XIII, pp. 499–560. We are grateful to Cynthia Col for summarizing Westpfahl's German introduction and table of the events in Dorothy's life. Dorothy was beatified but not canonized, although proceedings took place from 1396 to 1404. Her beatification was opposed during the Reformation. Westpfahl, 1667–68.

[81] Kieckhefer comments on three aspects of Dorothy's piety: asceticism, pilgrimages, and mystical experiences (22–33). Dyan Elliott discusses her severe ascetic practices, including her piercing her feet with needles and burning her breasts (*Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993], 230–31) and her abstinence and scrupulosity ("Authorizing a Life," 171–75). Dorothy's revelations aroused suspicions of heresy, possibly related to the Free Spirit movement; these are discussed by Elliott in "Authorizing a Life," 186–87 and 254 n. 110.

[82] *Vita B. Dorotheae Lindana*, 514: "'Nisi, inquit comminando, discursus tuos omiseris, diligentiamque domui tuae adhibueris, te compescam vinculis et catenis.' Qui victus inconsulto iracundiæ calore, per triduum in domo sua catenis venerabilem hanc constrixit."

[83] Ibid.: "Unde maritus ejus patientiam sanctam hujus mulieris et silentium pacificum bene existimans rebellionem seu proterviam, venerandam illam valide ad caput suum percussit cum una sede."

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chores. In one case, Dorothy was so absorbed in her contemplation that she failed to prepare dinner—fresh fish—at the appropriate hour. Adalbert hit her in the mouth so hard that her teeth nearly pierced her upper lip, which swelled and disfigured her face.[84] In the second case, when Dorothy forgot to buy straw, her enraged husband punched her so hard in the chest that blood was drawn and Dorothy spit it out for days in her saliva.[85]

Although the biographer does not directly denounce Adalbert's battering, he does include a passage wherein the confessors of Dorothy and Adalbert intervene. After Adalbert punched Dorothy repeatedly in the chest, the confessors are said to have approached the husband "of the same mind" ("concorditer") in their aim: to bring him to contrition.[86] They reproached him strongly about what the hagiographer calls "his wicked cruelty."[87] Rebuking the battering husband, they said: "What have you done? Inflamed by quick fury, you have struck excessively a woman devoted to God, totally caught up in God's love and not having power over her own body because of the bonds of charity [her love of God]."[88] The confessors reportedly uttered these and "many other things" out of their zeal to correct the husband.[89] Adalbert's will was broken, and subsequently he fell into serious illness. Although his physical violence toward Dorothy apparently subsided, he continued to exert control over her during his illness. He wanted the ministrations of no one but his wife, and she cared for him day and night, often going without sleep.

Although Dorothy's biographer brings to light clerical concern about abuse, it was not the unanimous sentiment of contemporary clergy. From the testimony of witnesses, we learn that two priests threatened to burn Dorothy. This was probably due to her unpopularity among local husbands who feared that Dorothy's piety would influence their own wives to disobedient absence

[84] Ibid., 523: "Vir ejus impatiens, quamquam hæc beata mulier diligeret eum, et sedulo pro eo devotissime oraret, imo rigorem et verbera ejus patienter toleraret, ipso ad mulieris benignitatem non attendente, percussit os ejus tam valide, ut superiora oris ejus labia quasi per dentes penetrata, versaque in tumorem ipsam notabiliter deformabant."

[85] Ibid., 523: ". . . ad quam vir ejus furibundus accedens, pectus ejus pugnis validis percutiens, cruorem extraxit, qui multis sequentibus diebus cum saliva ejectus apparuit."

[86] The hagiographer recounts that the confessors went to the husband after "hearing about the event from others" ("Confessores tamen amborum casum ab aliis audientes" [ibid., 523–24]), who are not identified. Clearly they did not hear from Dorothy, at least according to her biographer, for he states: "And she uttered nothing of murmur or complaint to others about these things" ("nec quicquam murmuris ac querimoniæ de his ad alios deducebat" [ibid., 523]).

[87] Ibid., 524: "concorditer pro contritione facienda virum accesserunt, fortiter super sua improba crudelitate eum arguerunt."

[88] Ibid.: " 'Ecquid egisti? Mulierem Deo devotam, ejus amore totaliter raptam, nec sui corporis potestatem habentem propter vincula charitatis, percussisti excessive, furore rapido inflammatus.' "

[89] Ibid.: "Hæc et multa alia zelo correctiones objecerunt."

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from the household. One angry husband denounced Dorothy as a heretic.[90] Furthermore, we note that the clerics who did intervene did not denounce *all* beatings but only their excess.

According to Marienwerder, Dorothy accepted the episodes of battering patiently, silently, and even joyously. The hagiographer underscores the battering episodes by commenting on his heroine's acceptance of suffering at the hands of her spouse. Dorothy endured her chaining "armed with the shield of patience," her biographer tells us.[91] She underwent blows and disgrace without a murmur or a complaint—conduct described by the hagiographer as "holy patience and peace-making silence."[92] We recall Monica's strategy of keeping silent to avoid beatings. Silence did not protect Dorothy, but perhaps it prevented more severe violence or offered one of the few available paths of resistance.

Marienwerder portrays his heroine as embracing suffering with sweetness and joy. This response brought her inner consolation from God that was sweeter than any transitory sweetness, he explains.[93] After being punched in the mouth, the holy woman laughed, an action that is interpreted as a sign of her joyous heart; and then she hastened mildly and joyously to boil the fish for dinner. Unidentified witnesses reportedly marveled at her patience, joy, goodwill, and even temper. After receiving the blows in the chest, Dorothy again remained silent, and her biographer reports that she endured these things joyously.[94] Again suffering is welcomed in the text as a path to holiness. Faced with her husband's insistence on her service during his illness, Dorothy ministered to him faithfully and loved him "out of love for God."[95] As with Monica, Augustine's mother, in this text marriage appears as a microcosm of the divine order: service to the husband grows from and demonstrates service to God. However, Dorothy is not represented, as Monica is, as merely enduring suffering because of her husband; instead, her biographer would have us believe that she welcomed that suffering joyously.

[90] On the suspicions of heresy that Dorothy's revelations aroused, possibly related to the Free Spirit movement, see Stargardt, 226; Elliott, "Authorizing a Life," 186–87 and 254 n. 110; and Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage*, 259–60 nn. 250–53.

[91] *Vita B. Dorotheae Lindana*, 514: "Quæ armata clypeo patientiæ, ictus furoris et opprobria, postpositis omni murmure et querimonia, sustinuit patienter." Cf. Eph. 6:11–17 and Ps. 17:36 (35).

[92] *Vita B. Dorotheae Lindana*, 514: "ejus patientiam sanctam hujus mulieris et silentium pacificum."

[93] Ibid.: "Quæ utrumque gaudenter amplectens et dulciter sufferens, ob hoc tunc internam a Domino habuit consolationem, omni dulcore transitorio suaviorem."

[94] Ibid., 523: "sed hilariter sustinebat."

[95] Ibid., 524: "nullius desideravit habere ministerium, nisi solius suæ conjugis, sibi fideliter, quantum valuit, obsequentis. Ipsa maritum diligens ex amore Dei, die noctuque sollicita fuit pro marito, noctes insomnes ducendo, et viro fideliter ministrando."

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Still, there is tension evident even in the text of Dorothy's life. In one well-known episode, Dorothy and Adalbert arrived at a pilgrims' hospice, but Dorothy, in a state of communion with God, refused to step down from the cart. She weighed God's will against her husband's and for a while placed God's first. When her husband began to rage against her disobedience, Dorothy appealed to Jesus to help her make a decision. She received the message that she should obey her husband's command. Marienwerder sums up the moral of the episode by asserting the primacy of obedience in marriage, even in the face of abuse: "And so it was necessary for her to leave the Lord's soft conversation and gentle consolation, and to follow her husband and faithfully serve him. She endured harsh words and blows in his service on account of the good of obedience, by which she was bound to her husband, because obedience is better than sacrifices (1 Samuel 15.22)."[96] The contrast between Dorothy's gentle discourse with Christ and her harsh married life is striking. Yet, for her biographer, the bond of marriage clearly subordinates the wife, and compliance to it surpasses even sacrifice as a mode of piety. For Marienwerder, God in the person of Jesus weighs obedience to a husband more highly than divine communion.

Dorothy's biographer goes beyond Augustine's linking of obedience and the supposed absence of abuse. Marienwerder justifies obedience in the face of clear abuse and glorifies the pain that allows his heroine to imitate the passion of Christ. Marienwerder was following contemporary standards of piety in order to promote canonization and to gain personal recognition.[97] What we know about the world of fourteenth-century piety would indicate that the exaltation of suffering received popular esteem. One scholar even suggests that Marienwerder demonized Adalbert to further sanctify his female protagonist.[98] Whether or not Dorothy herself saw her suffering at the hands of her spouse as an avenue for sanctity is something the text does not tell us. It is clear, however, that she was determined to pursue a path to holiness in spite of Adalbert.

Catherine of Genoa

Catherine of Genoa is representative of the holy women in late medieval and Renaissance Italy who worked for the poor and sick in their cities.[99] She

[96] Ibid., 524–25: "Et ita oportuit eam sepe Dominum suaviter loquentem ac blande consolantem delinquere, maritum vero sequi, et ei fideliter ministrare duraque in eius ministerio verba et verbera sustinere propter bonum obediencie, qua erat alligata viro suo, quia melior est obediencia quam victima."

[97] Elliott, "Authorizing a Life."

[98] Stargardt, 209–38.

[99] Karen Scott, "Urban Spaces, Women's Networks," in *Creative Women in Medieval and Early Modern Italy: A Religious and Artistic Renaissance,* ed. E. Ann Matter and John Coakley (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 105–19.

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was an urban saint devoted to urban service, notably in hospitals. Catherine's life (1447–1510) is set against the background of fifteenth-century Italy with its feuds among powerful families. Her father was from the Fieschi family, which included two popes and the viceroy to René of Anjou, king of Naples. Catherine desired to enter the religious life when she was thirteen, but she was refused because of her age. After her father's death, she reached the marriageable age of sixteen, and her family arranged her marriage to Giuliano Adorno in the hopes of solidifying peace between the two families. The family counted on Catherine's obedience, but she was crushed by the thought of the marriage, which represented to her what her anonymous biographer calls a "heavy cross." She nonetheless complied with her family's wishes and married Giuliano, which caused her ten years of serious depression. Five of those years she spent in near isolation while her husband mistreated her, gambled, and pursued other women. After those ten years, Catherine underwent an intense spiritual experience, which occurred after an appeal to Saint Benedict. Although she would never realize her desire to enter the religious life, she displayed various marks of holiness as a layperson. She undertook extensive fasts, practiced self-mortification, demonstrated great scrupulosity and devotion to the Eucharist, and dedicated her services to the sick in hospitals. After Giuliano's bankruptcy, he was persuaded to accept chastity in the marriage and to join Catherine in her hospital work. He also became a Franciscan tertiary. Giuliano and Catherine moved near the hospital and then into two rooms within it, where Giuliano contracted an illness that led to his death. (The plague had struck Genoa in 1493.) After Giuliano's death, Catherine ceased her fasting and accepted a spiritual director and confessor who recorded the events of her life and her mystical insights. She was beatified in 1675 and canonized on April 30, 1737.[100]

In contrast to the vivid episodes of abuse in the *vita* of Dorothy of Montau, Catherine's biography remains somewhat vague about her husband's behavior. The author describes Giuliano as of "harsh and disquieting mind," given to "sport, sensual pleasure, and arrogance."[101] Catherine had no recourse against Giuliano's behavior, he says, for whether she struggled against him or

[100] *Vita*, *AA.SS.* Sept. XV, p. 152: "qui in hisce nuptiis gravissimam illi crucem præparaverat." Biographical material on Catherine is given in Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage*, 223, 243, 255–56; and Catherine of Genoa, *Purgation and Purgatory: The Spiritual Dialogue*, trans. Serge Hughes, Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist, 1979). See also Marcel Viller and Umile da Genova, "Catherine de Gênes," in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1953), 2:290–325; and Donald Weinstein and Rudolph M. Bell, *Saints and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 95–96. On Catherine and the redaction of her works, including the *vita*, first published in 1551, see Viller and da Genova, 294. On Catherine's fasting and food metaphors, see Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast* (cited in n. 10), 182–85.

[101] *Vita*, 152: "Erat is ingenio aspero et irrequieto, studens placere seculo, cœtus hominum frequentare ambiens, totusque ludo, voluptatibus fastuique deditus."

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changed herself to please him, she would attain nothing but insults and reproaches. Catherine withdrew from human company and conversation, and she was so consumed with distress that she looked emaciated and deprived of her senses.[102] Other oblique references are made to Giuliano's "disordered ways," his insults and anger, the harshness of his disposition, and his prodigal tendencies. Because of his "bothersome nature," Catherine is said to have avoided every occasion on which her husband might be disturbed.[103] The effects of Giuliano's behavior on Catherine emerge clearly; a victim of insults and reproaches, she experienced sorrow, loss of sleep and appetite, and profound distress. Nonetheless, the biographer gives no moral assessment of the husband's wickedness. Giuliano is never directly reproached for his conduct, nor does he ever actually admit that it was wrong.

Catherine's biography emphasizes her obedience at important and sometimes difficult steps in her life: her conduct as a child, her disappointment at being refused entrance to the convent, her distress at her family's decision to arrange a marriage. In the young Catherine's spiritual training, obedience accompanies prayer, silence, and contemplation of the pietà image. Her biographer reports that, "instructed by God in the school of perfection . . . she made stupendous progress in the practice of blind obedience toward her parents and the observation of severe silence, abstaining from every word that was not from God."[104]

Schooling in obedience and silence prepared Catherine for an eventual abusive marriage. Her biographer describes her subjection and patience at the moment she learned that she must marry:

> She carried out what was customary in accordance with their will, so that she not allow anything contrary to the reverence toward her elders and to the subjection with which she had been brought up. She recognized the plan of the Most High in her, who in this marriage had prepared a very heavy cross for her. It was necessary that she, burdened with it, follow in the footsteps of her divine Redeemer.[105]

[102] Ibid.: "eam tamen de die in diem consumpserunt adeo, ut, præterquam quod eam notabiliter macie confecerint, eo etiam redegerint, ut sui similis amplius non appareret, tamquam si sensibus fuisset orbata."

[103] "Inordinatos mariti mores" (ibid.); "indolis ejus asperitatem" and "studebatque iracundiam ejus restinguere modo verbis pleni humilitate ac dulcedine, modo taciturnitate; atque ab omni vel minima querela abstinens, perferebat molestum ipsius ingenium, evitans omnem, qua turbaretur, occasionem" (ibid., 166).

[104] Ibid., 150: "adeo ut in schola perfectionis a Deo instructa brevi stupendos fecerit progressus in exercitio cæcæ erga parentes obedientiæ, et severi silentii observatione, abstinens omni sermone, qui de Deo non esset."

[105] Ibid., 152: "ne quid tamen reverentiæ erga majores suos, subjectioneque, quacum fuerat enutrita, contrarium admitteret, patienter eorum voluntati morem gessit, agnoscens in ipsa Altissimi

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Thus, the hagiographer compares Catherine's suffering directly to Christ's passion, and he associates God's will with the marriage and its abuse. Moreover, Catherine's marriage, in her biographer's eyes, freed her from love of the world,[106] and her charity was purified by "long-lasting afflictions which God allowed that she endure from her own husband."[107] For the biographer, obedience was the one holy solution to her plight: "Earnestly she obeyed him in all matters, however arduous and difficult, so long as her own conscience did not resist."[108] Although this latter statement (reminiscent of Godelieve's reservations about going to the sorceress)[109] implies that there is some limit to a wife's obedience to a husband, namely the violation of her own conscience, we do not see that limit put to the test.

Responsibility for Giuliano's conversion is laid squarely on Catherine, as Patricius's conversion was on Monica. Catherine's biographer identifies and sanctifies her role when he asserts: "Clearly any sort of change in Giuliano, observed in him for a period of time, can not be ascribed to another thing than the meekness and holiness of Catherine, who continuously was a strong and sweet stimulus for changing his behavior."[110] Catherine receives the credit for her husband's conversion, but had he not converted, her meekness and holiness would have to be judged deficient. If Catherine's suffering was part of God's plan to bring about Giuliano's conversion, then, the text implies, the suffering itself was justified.

Thus, the hagiographer's theological overlay in Catherine's *vita* emphasizes obedience and suffering. Schooled, like Monica, in obedience as a child, Catherine also models suffering through her contemplation of the pietà. She reportedly embraced both obedience and suffering when she, like Godelieve, was compelled to accept a marriage arranged for political reasons. Like Monica and Dorothy, she brought about the spiritual reward of her husband's conversion. The hagiographer's portrait foregrounds Catherine's personal piety, but he allows a glimpse of the tension she felt between her marriage and her

consilium, qui in hisce nuptiis gravissimam illi crucem præparaverat, qua onustam divini Redemptoris sui vestigia sequi oporteret."

106 Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage*, 229.

107 *Vita*, 166: "multo magis fuerit emundata inter diuturnas afflictiones, quas Deo ita permittente, a proprio marito sustinuit."

108 Ibid.: "Impense illi obtemperabat in omnibus quantumque arduis ac difficilibus, dummodo propria non obsisteret conscientia . . ."

109 Godelieve's biographer says that Godelieve consented to her husband's wish that she meet with the go-between provided that it could "be done without any involvement of wrongdoing"; see n. 71.

110 *Vita*, 166: "Nec sane omnimoda Juliani immutatio, lapsu temporis in eo observata, alteri adscribi potest, quam Catharinæ mansuetudini ac sanctimoniæ, quæ continuo fortis ac suavis fuit stimulus ad morum ejus commutationem."

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calling, as well as the heavy physical and emotional toll that Giuliano's abuse took on her. Frustrated in her attempt to enter the religious life, Catherine succeeded, despite the abuse her husband inflicted, in leading a life of service to the poor and sick.

Conclusion

The hagiographical narratives of Monica, Godelieve of Gistel, Dorothy of Montau, and Catherine of Genoa demonstrate the complex theological interplay between holiness, patience, and suffering in the eyes of these women's hagiographers. Although Augustine, Monica's son and biographer, asserts that Monica was not physically abused, he attributes the absence of beatings to her obedience and patience, thereby implicitly blaming other women who were beaten by their husbands. Godelieve's husband ordered her deprivation, abuse, and murder. In her *vita*, her death is transformed into a martyrdom resulting from her obedience to the church, and that act sanctifies her. Dorothy of Montau reportedly welcomed any and all hardship as an opportunity to show patient endurance of suffering. Although her confessors intervened and reproached her husband, the hagiographer still underscores Dorothy's joyful obedience and not the injustice of her suffering. Catherine of Genoa endured her suffering with quiet patience and obedience, which ultimately brought about her husband's conversion. In the stories of all four women, their biographers count their suffering of abuse as a factor that contributes to their holiness. For Godelieve, moreover, the hagiographer constructs a holiness from her murder, which he represents as a martyrdom for the sake of the church.

In each case, the hagiographer overlays a theological message that comments on the woman's behavior in the face of her husband's abuse. A reaction to the husband's cruelty is sometimes given and sometimes not, but the abuse is never condemned. Even when the author denounces the husband, as when Drogo compares Bertolf to Judas, the overriding message is that of the wife's superior conduct in the face of her suffering. When the hagiographers praise the endurance exhibited by the women but do not condemn the husbands' cruelties, they reinforce the dictum that suffering is salvific. Moreover, a theology of patient obedience emerges from the biographers' comments about the lives of these women. Marriage is a microcosm of the social and divine order, and the woman is bound to obedience to her husband just as she is to God. In the face of abuse, that obedience allows for nothing but acceptance. When hagiographers combine compliance with the glorification of suffering, the result is that patient, obedient suffering represents an important avenue to sanctification for women.

The view that suffering has "intrinsic moral value" has long been part of the Christian theological tradition, as we have shown. In particular, we have

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demonstrated how interpretations of Christ's suffering were used to encourage the adoption of restrictive Greco-Roman household codes within early Christian communities. Because the codes were based on kyriarchal practices of power, their theological justification and reinforcement sustained particular unjust sociopolitical relationships. By providing theological justification for these codes, the author of 1 Peter left us with the components necessary for a theology of suffering and obedience to grow and strengthen; that is, suffering in patience constituted the exemplary path for modeling Christ, and such suffering ultimately would be rewarded by God. The theology of obedience and suffering at work in the lives of the holy women we have discussed depicts them as believing that through suffering they could become imitators of Christ. Moreover, this theology, both then and now, testifies that patient obedience in the face of such suffering is the appropriate response of a virtuous woman. Such a theology holds God responsible for the suffering and assumes that God allowed it for some good cause. As Kathleen Norris states, "The glorification of suffering in days past was nothing more than the woman-as-doormat school of theology which was used to keep women in abusive relationships."[111]

Such a theology of suffering effectively negates the possibility that the source of the abuse may be eliminated. The abuser, as an instrument of suffering, participates in God's plan and escapes blame. According to this message, if suffering is of God, then surely it serves a divine purpose and should be welcomed and embraced. As long as God is held responsible for suffering, it need not be changed, and the injustice that causes the suffering is left intact.[112] Women's acceptance of pain and suffering, even unto death, becomes evidence of their love of and devotion to God. Thus, in the texts we have surveyed, the biographers represent patient, obedient suffering as a key element in the construction of the women's sanctity. It is critical to realize that this theological valuation of obedient suffering functioned to glorify the women's suffering, to ensure that they remained in abusive situations, and to reinforce the hierarchical sociopolitical power relationships prevalent in their day. Hence, a theology of suffering and obedience worked, in practice, as a theology of domination. Finally, such a theology of domination is not confined to the past. Contemporary women report that they encounter the same attitudes from clergy; some churches issue statements on the theological subordination of women in mar-

[111] Kathleen Norris, *The Cloister Walk* (New York: Riverhead, 1996), 223. We are grateful to Robert Reiser and his Th.M. thesis, "Misogyny and the Discipleship of Women" (Harvard Divinity School, 1997), for bringing Norris's comments to our attention.

[112] Fortune, "Transformation of Suffering" (cited in n. 2), 139–47.

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riage; and Elizabeth Canori was canonized in 1994 for "total surrender" to an abusive husband.[113]

[113] Those who staff battered women's shelters agree that women with strong religious backgrounds have the greatest difficulty leaving abusive marriages. Christianity reinforces passive obedience in women, even to abusive husbands. See Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, "Every Two Minutes: Battered Women and Feminist Interpretation," in *Weaving the Visions: New Patterns in Feminist Spirituality*, ed. Judith Plaskow and Carol P. Christ (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), 302–13, especially 305.

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