English Medieval Queens and Kings in Religious Partnership: Choices, Resources, and Connections

By

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DEDICATION

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ABSTRACT

During the early Middle Ages in Britain, people struggled to survive after the Romans left to try to save their own empire. People formed groups for survival, protection and procreation; some of the successful groups grew into tribes and quasi kingdoms. The Roman empire brought Christianity to Britain but, after its fall in 409, its presence declined greatly during the invasions of Picts and Irish and during the attacks and migration of several Germanic tribes, the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes, among others (Bede, *EH* I.13-15). Eventually, however, what came to be one ruling monarchy and a strong Christian church grew to be two of the most essential institutions of England in the Middle Ages. Although movements and influences came from all parts of society, historical and literary records are most available for those leading kingdom and church. This study exams such records for evidence of how kings and queens are represented as working to some degree in partnership to benefit Christianity. Bede's *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People, The Bible, The Regularis Concordia*, and coronation records provide the history of royals and church leaders working together. Records of land donations and a small illustration from a church register show some of the gifts that provided the church its economic start from kings and queens which helped grow the church. Another unique resource explored is the practice of intercession between kings and queens, often taking place in public to benefit themselves, their subjects, and the church. In addition to historical reports, Geoffrey Chaucer's "Knight's Tale" and "Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale," as well as John Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes* are examined to assess the successes, failures, and nuances of intercessions represented as significant. Relationships between England's royal couples and those with the most influence in Christianity as its leaders are recorded in Bede, the Bible, letters, literary prayer poetry, and anonymous art depicting the Virgin Mary, and Christ crowning the Virgin Mary at her heavenly

coronation. Although limited by scarce sources, three factors related to the unique and privileged positions of rulers emerged as being crucial to the potential for success in working together to support Christianity: their ability to exercise religious choice, to use deep resources for religious patronage, and to develop relational connections between themselves and others who held ruling religious positions in Europe, in the Christian Bible, and in heaven.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASC	*Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, MSS A,B,C,D,E,F*
BT	*Bosworth Toller*
CH	*Catholic Homilies I*
DR	*Douay-Rheims* version of *The Holy Bible*
EETS	Early English Text Society
EH	*The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*
KnT	"The Knight's Tale" from *The Canterbury Tales*
MA	*Mortre dArthur*
MEC	*Middle English Compendium*
MEML	*Middle English Marian Lyrics*
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary*
OEEH	*Old English Ecclesiastical History of the English People*
PrT	"The Prioress's Tale" from *The Canterbury Tales*
RC	*Regularis Concordia*
s.a.	*sub anno* (in the year of)
ST	*Siege of Thebes*
WBT	"The Wife of Bath's Tale" from *The Canterbury Tales*

Introduction

This project has grown out of three topics of interest which my doctoral studies have allowed me to pursue: women writers and characters, Christian belief and experience, and English texts of the Middle Ages. Medieval English women have sparked an increased focus during the last five decades. The resulting research projects range from the discovery of unknown women writers to analyses of the effects of how the society's male-oriented hierarchy of the time resulted in fewer opportunities for women to become writers; from exposition of the validity and quality of women's writing to an expansion of the consideration of women's relationship to reading and writing; from the application of feminist, race, and gender literary theory to the blurring and erasing of boundaries that may harm a full appreciation and participation of medieval women and their cultural production. These broad topics branch off to consider many other important subjects which relate to medieval women in England.

My own interest began with a paper during my masters program in which I reconsidered the traditional interpretation of Geoffrey Chaucer's description of the Prioress in the "General Prologue" of *The Canterbury Tales* (*CT*). Since then, my interest in medieval women writers and characters has grown with each medieval text and related work I studied. Queens from Wealtheow to Modthryth to Hildburh in *Beowulf* show their varied roles and fates which reveal their significance to kings and warrior communities. Saints' lives, such as "The Life of St. Æthelthryth," demonstrate the connections of royalty to single and double monasteries ruled by abbesses; this led to my reading the lives of many other women saints and to my appreciation for the literate religious communities which developed in Anglo-Saxon houses at Ely, Whitby, and Wilton, and in post-Conquest convents at Barking and Shaftsbury. Custance, from Chaucer's "Man of Law Tale" in the *CT* is another literary queen whose spiritual and royal odyssey

interested me, and that led me to read “Elene,” which further confirmed the active and leading roles for royal women presented in medieval texts. In my thinking, history and literature are in many ways a single topic, and that is reflected in this project. Literary characters opened up the path to research several historical ruling spouses. Carolyne Larrington’s study of medieval siblings, *Brothers and Sisters in Medieval European Literature,* furthered my interest in the dynamics of royal family relationships.

Christian belief and practice is another topic that has long attracted me. Its development and variety are reflected in the central focus of Christianity throughout the English medieval period, and medieval texts provide abundant sources. I have enjoyed deepening and broadening my knowledge of its evolution during this project especially as an addition to my Protestant background and education. Readings and research for doctoral classes that included *Judith*, Abbess Hild, Julian of Norwich, and *Pearl* led me to research Ælfric’s homily on “Esther,” Bede’s narrative of Seaxburh in his church history of England, and letters of Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury communicating with Matilda II of Scotland (r. 1100-1118) and Henry I (r. 1100-1135). Discovering the many complex ways medieval English rulers are represented as exploring, supporting, and integrating Christianity into their reigns and lives has been one of the most satisfying aspects of my research.

My teaching, however, has probably guided me the most in key research selections and development. I followed my interest in medieval English literature to develop a research project that combined my own inclinations with an eye on its usefulness for the English majors and general education students in my classes. In particular, the spiritual relationship between the legendary St. Mary of Egypt, a desert mother, and Father Zosimus, a devout but self-satisfied monk, intrigued me for the ways that it did not follow my assumptions of the expected patterns

of hierarchy. Rather, they helped each other in spiritually significant ways that transcended gender and religious expectations of church and society (Ælfric, "Death of St. Mary"). Their experience influenced me to broaden my focus to consider the interactions between medieval English men and women rather than just on women. Eventually, I chose to focus on literature and history, partnerships between ruling queens and kings in their expressions of Christianity, and generally accessible works. My study and research have already helped me to include more women in my assigned readings, provide a much wider perspective in discussions of Christianity, and give a more nuanced consideration of medieval English history, rulership, and literature.

This project examines historical records and literary texts for evidence that English medieval queens and kings participated together in actions which established and furthered Christianity during the reigns of Anglo-Saxon, Anglo-Norman, Angevin, and Plantagenet rulers. Records indicate that royal conversions and patronage played an essential role in the eventual transformation of the Romano-Briton and Anglo-Saxon societies from worshipping multiple gods with many varied practices to societies primarily worshipping the Christian God and living within a Christian framework. Kings and queens supported this religion in many ways that led to its dominance during the Middle Ages in England. Literary texts written in Old English and Middle English reflect and reinforce this hegemony by incorporating the Bible and moral lessons based on Christian beliefs into their works. In addition, well-known literary texts enriched English culture with works that analyze, promote, extend, and create new aspects of Christianity that show a range of purposes and audiences. Many studies have examined individual medieval English kings and queens as well as the history of the development of English Christianity itself, and those projects often include informative sections about individual rulers and their relations to

each other and their relations with the church and its leaders. To build on such previous work, this study explores the question of how queens and kings are represented as acting in partnership to promote English Christianity during the centuries of the Middle Ages. Finding out the extent and effects of a few cases of significant joint partnerships can provide additional understanding of the methods of Christianizing England and the nature of spiritually-focused aspects of some royal couples. Literary texts focus on good rulership and offer negative and positive exemplars of its values. Examining relevant context, factors, and practices of royal couples reveals the unique ways they directed their Christian focus because of their ruling status. In turn, this knowledge may help reveal the impact of such partnerships on the rulers themselves, their public, the church, and England's future reigns.

I employ an eclectic methodology of close reading focusing on areas of history, literature, and church history. No one theory or lens is applied to every subject or case, except what may serve my overarching purpose of demonstrating how sources contribute to understanding medieval concepts, context, texts, and language, along with the partnerships of kings and queens in relation to the medieval English church. A wide range of genres provide evidence and opportunities for analysis. Although mention is occasionally made of a modern perspective to help explain medieval perspectives, my primary goal is to consider texts from a medieval understanding; as Brad S. Gregory explains, "'seeing things their way'" is "understanding religious people on their own terms," or "reconstructing the ways in which they viewed themselves and their world" (25).[1] This focus is undertaken with the full acknowledgement of the limitations of knowing in a documentary sense how events happened and what any given historical medieval person thought or felt.

[1] Gregory credits the phrase, "seeing things their way" to Quentin Skinner's introduction to *Visions of Politics*, vol. 1, Cambridge UP, 2000, p. 1.

Much of my thinking and work since completing my prospectus has been continually to narrow my focus. My original four categories of beneficial medieval religious relationships between men and women narrowed to one. Discovering the vast amount of research material relating to medieval queens and kings in England, I spent a large chunk of time reading to better understand the medieval English monarchs, royal practices and concepts, their major wars, and early Christianity. For practical reasons, I limited my selection of royal couples. My goal became to examine at least one—and possibly two—primary examples of couples from pre- and post-Conquest periods and others to a lesser degree. In addition, I looked for literary texts that are written in Old English and Middle English that offer insight to my areas of interest. I chose ruling couples whom the sources represent as having both largely positive relationships and particular challenges or complexity.

In addition to reducing the types of male and female religious relationships, I narrowed my focus further by eliminating my consideration of phenomenology or affect theory. While recent scholarship using these theories is relevant to my interest in spiritual experience and to the religious interests of many medieval women and men, it did not seem a manageable task when considering queens and kings as a pair. In particular, a lack of sources representing royals' religious motives or thoughts also make such an examination difficult. Exploring affect theory and spiritual experience, however, retain a high level of my interest for future research. One positive result of concentrating on royal couples is that it is a good fit for the genders and interests of my students. I find it fulfilling when students discover that issues, texts, and concepts from medieval England have current relevancy. I also hope they will be able to integrate what they learn about how medieval kings and queens engaged with Christian leaders and situations into the possibilities of leadership in their own lives.

In the first chapter, I briefly explore early English kings and queens and their religious beliefs and practices before Christianity and in slightly more depth during the Christian conversion period. Who were they and how did their status give them religious prerogatives and influence unavailable to other members of society? What factors influenced their decisions about how to respond to the Christianity brought by missionaries from other lands and that which had existed in their own distant history? What glimpses do their ancient tales and contemporary histories give of values important in their past and important to their medieval present?

Foundational sources, such as Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* preserve a record that led to the discovery of patterns and models which, because of adaptations through time and in particular cases, reveal the contributions of those in high positions to the growth of medieval English Christianity. Kings and queens chose their religious beliefs, their methods of support, and their inauguration practices. The made these decisions according to specific circumstances, for the benefit of themselves, and, sometimes, to assist in the establishment of Christianity. With the ready teachings and urgings of their bishops and archbishops, royal couples chose their religious role models and the councils they wished to support. Evidence provides a partial view of how they navigated tensions between the competing loyalties of what they believed to be both earthly and heavenly realities. Some royal couples stand out for the challenges they faced and the successes they enjoyed. One pre-Conquest royal pair, the Norman Queen Emma and her second husband, King Cnut (r. 1017-1035) show the political intricacies of their reign and their development of themselves into a representation of an exemplary Christian ruling couple. Two post-Norman Conquest ruling couples are examined for the differences in their religious choices and their impact, William I (r. 1066-1087) and Matilda I of Flanders and Henry I (r. 1100-1135) and Matilda II of Scotland.

Chapter two involves digging into the details of what exactly the rulers did to express their Christian support. Also, what were the practical effects of English medieval rulers' decisions to convert and support the church? Not surprisingly, rulers usually controlled and protected the best assets of their kingdom. Their deep resources meant that royals' financial and other gifts could substantially impact the lives of individuals, groups, and whole institutions. The church benefitted from the custom of royal, religious obligations. Kings and, increasingly, queens generously granted land, personnel, and other gifts to support various works and institutions of the church. How did such patronage benefit the king and queen who provided it? Even with few sources of documented joint patronage during the early English Middle Ages, Bede and the various versions of *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* give some specific information on how rulers' conversions often quickly developed into their providing tangible assistance to the church. A system developed in which royals provided initial support and land which then allowed church personnel and entities to become self-supporting and, sometimes, rich with assets. As kings and their officials developed better systems of law enforcement and tax collections, royal revenue increased, and patronage progressed. Pauline Stafford provides valuable context of early Anglo-Saxon ruling couples' expectations and contributions. As English Christianity grew with the help of rulers, evidence of patronage relationships appears in sources from religious foundations and secular records. Once again, the reign of pre-Conquest King Cnut and Queen Emma demonstrates a degree of patronage partnership practiced on a royal level. Art and a commissioned tribute illustrate the benefit of certain kinds of patronage. Also, the post-Conquest patronage of King Henry I and Queen Matilda II reveals more about what may have motivated their joint patronage work. Even death becomes a chance to demonstrate loyalty to Christ, which, in turn, may provide a quicker, more blessed journey to heaven. Poetry can also

be used as a royal resource. Dowager Queen Katherine of Valois (circa 1401-1437) and young King Henry VI (r. 1422-1462, 1470-1471), a mother-son royal relationship, become the subjects of public poetry in the maneuvering politics after the deaths of King Henry V (r. 1413-1422) and King Charles VI (1380-1422) of France. Finally, I examine royal intercession as another unique resource that ruling couples employed for the mutual benefit of themselves and their subjects in varied situations. Literary texts provide particular insight to understand the intricacies of intercession as demonstrated in two romance tales from Chaucer's Canterbury pilgrimage, and in the tragic tale, *The Siege of Thebes*, that John Lydgate later wrote as his own Canterbury tale.

Just as the practice of intercession depended on privileged relationships, the focus of Chapter three extends the consideration of relationships to those that queens and kings enjoyed as part of their ruling privileges and religious responsibilities. To what extent did rulers interact with Christian popes? What were some of the results of such communication? Rulers and high-ranking church leaders sent letters that reveal many strategies to influence the results of both missionary projects and serious conflicts between church proclamations and royal customs relating to the appointment of church leaders in England. Moving consideration upwards into the heavenly realm, evidence shows St. Æthelthryth to have been a female saint especially appealing to both male and female religious; she also received the advantage of royal promotion in a later century. How did her cult develop? Finally, English royal relationships reach for the highest heavenly rulers in Christianity. Christ and the Virgin Mary are presented as models of ideal rulers with whom ruling couples can identify. In these heavenly beings, kings and queens are given the most inspiring example of working together to further the spread of the gospel of Christianity and to have confidence in their eternal destination.

Medieval English kings and queens played a unique role in the growth of Christianity. They used their privilege of religious choice to introduce Christianity into their marriages which then influenced the religious decisions of themselves and their subjects. They generously committed extensive resources to support and expand the new religion in its sporadic progress to become the dominant religion worthy of their worship and their rulership. Historical documents, the Bible, prominent literary texts, and art provide both evidence and creative nuance to reveal the significance of royal couples' actions upon the religious lives of subjects throughout their realms and even of those in other lands.

Chapter 1

Royal Religious Prerogative and the Influence of Queens and Kings

Although some current scholarship assumes the time is past for examining England's medieval rulers, the top tier in the medieval hierarchy, I argue that a consideration of how medieval people themselves viewed their queens and kings as rightful rulers to guide in the religious arena lends sufficient reason to examine these leaders beyond the usual consideration of their individual Christian contributions; instead, I examine the ways queens and kings presented as a unit in historical and literary texts and furthered Christianity in a broad sense. Although often working in different spheres, they also participated in joint activities to present united Christian leadership to their court, church, and subjects. An important beginning point is to acknowledge the fact that royal rulers enjoyed unique advantages over all others in society to express their Christianity and further its aims. The English medieval conception of the three hierarchical states of society is suggested by Janet Nelson as traveling from Carolingian Auxerre to King Alfred's (r. 871-899) court; she quotes from the *Miracula Sancti Germani* which describes the currently well-known divisions: "some who fight, some who till the soil, and a third *ordo* whom God has chosen for his special service" (usually shortened to "some who pray") (*Rulers and Ruling Families* 142). Successful fighters belonged to the ruling class of which the king and queen resided at the top. These rulers enjoyed the highest level of resources usually due to their powerful families. Such families developed into groups of loyal thanes for protection and assistance and gained wealth and land. These advantages often worked with family lineage as factors which elevated kings and queens to their ruling positions. More specifically for this study, kings and queens could use these resources and more to enjoy the greatest ability to exercise religious choice, provide patronage for the church, and take advantage of access to and

influence on Christian leaders in their own and other kingdoms and lands. Because in medieval England royal rank included increased religious responsibility, these resources led to a greater impact on society than possible for those of lower status. Perhaps individual kings and queens developed inner spirituality to a degree, but they undoubtedly publicly engaged with the church for presumedly mutual benefit.

Medieval historical and literary texts record many representations of how a queen or king individually responded to Christianity. But did a royal couple's combined participation accomplish more than each one working in their separate areas of Christian effort? An examination of early medieval works, including histories, literature, letters, and records of specific patronage activities, reveals glimpses of contributions royal couples made to the gradual conversion of the developing country to Christianity and its path to religious dominance. Bede (circa 673-735), a monk writing the earliest, most extensive history of the English church in Latin, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People,* completed in 731, provides a record of the development of the Christian religion in England. He considers kings and some queens as playing crucial roles which will be explored in depth later. His narrative shows important Christian involvement of ruling Anglo-Saxon couples. He begins with Queen Bertha (c. 565-601) and King Æthelberht of Kent (circa 589/593-616/618) and reports them as the first couple who supported Christianity once the king converted in response to Bertha's own practice and Augustine's missionary trip sponsored by Pope Gregory I in 597. Another early example is Northumbrian Queen Æthelthryth and King Ecgfrith (r. 670-685) who, led by the queen and reluctantly agreed to by the king, reportedly lived in a chaste marriage, a practice that medieval Christians considered one of the highest and holy spiritual practices available. King Ecgfrith indicated his own religious leadership more clearly when he personally led a group from a

regional church council to persuade the hermit Cuthbert to become the bishop of Lindisfarne. More common acts of religious support are evident from the religious foundations and financial gifts from royals. For example, Queen Oswyth and King Æthelread (r.675-704) of Mercia are both reported as loving and enriching the Bardney Monastery in Lindsey. Another religious practice began when Queen Ælfthryth (d.999-1001) and King Edgar I (r.959-975) participated in one of the earliest recorded religious anointings of a queen. They followed that innovation by initiating direct joint responsibility over monks and nuns (*EH,* V.24*;* IV.5; IV.19; 390n126; III.11; Earenfight, *Queenship* 106). The relatively short Danish dynasty experienced multiple intentional and public presentations of Christian rulers, most notably by King Cnut (r. 1017-1035) and his third wife Queen Emma in their gifts to churches of religious icons and elaborate manuscripts. These cases reveal that, whatever pressing political and personal circumstances influenced these kings and queens, their partnerships led to a record of their religious interests and efforts.

In the high and later Middle Ages, kings and queens contributed to maintaining Christianity's central role in the face of conflicts and difficulties of many types. Following the Norman Conquest of 1066, the English church experienced deep disruption yet adapted and survived. For instance, the first Norman rulers, Queen Matilda I and King William I (r. 1066-1087), supported Christianity from before their English reign, and continued through the decline of the Anglo-Saxon church and the development of the Anglo-Norman church (Earenfight, *Queenship* 132). With the more focused practice of intercession, the Angevin rulers Queen Anne of Bohemia and King Richard II (r. 1189-1199) are reported as participating in multiple court intercessions in which the king's harshness became mitigated by the queen's pleas for moderation (Earenfight, *Queenship* 208). Queen Phillipa of Hainault and King Edward III (r.

1327-1377) also improved the lives of many subjects with several recorded successful intercessions (Earenfight, *Queenship* 11). As these examples indicate, in each era of medieval England, royal couples displayed a wide range of Christian activities working together for the benefit of their subjects, the church, and their own souls.

Such actions of rulers could produce a large impact within their kingdoms. When a new royal bride arrived in a kingdom as a practicing Christian, court members and others of the ruling class might well have been curious and observant, but when her husband, the king, converted to Christianity, its practices likely became a much greater part of public life and, perhaps, led to the subjects' own private consideration of their own religious participation. When a king no longer crowned himself and/or his queen in a coronation ritual, but rather participated in a church-led ceremony complete with a public procession, liturgy, and anointing with blessed oil, all ranks of society saw how religion might well become a larger part of government. Later, those same subjects could evaluate to what degree rulers lived up to their oaths. To a society organized around expectations that a ruler and his wife should be generous to those appointed to serve and support the reign loyally, its members likely were not shocked to see rulers taking the lead in founding and financing church personnel and properties. Gifts, large and small, smoothed the integration of Christianity into the life of the kingdom. The effects of royal rulers choosing Christianity, both intended and unintended, worked themselves out through the medieval centuries in Britain.

As most recent studies emphasize, all royal Christian activities took place within specific political, economic, and social contexts. Activities labeled *religious* occurred within these larger forces that both reflect and modify them. Royalty expressed its religious actions within political contexts. For example, Johanna Dale describes how King Henry II (r. 1154-1189) cleverly

outmaneuvered Emperor Frederick Barbarossa in 1157 in a famous tug of war over the religious relic of a disciple's hand which the emperor wanted returned to him. She notes "that a relic of the Apostle James was the subject of twelfth-century monarchical diplomacy serves to remind us of the extent to which liturgical and political concerns intermingled" (216). This somewhat dramatic instance is one small example of the constant blending of politics and religion. Although concepts and language differed greatly from what is often understood in the twenty-first century, scholars do agree on the gradual development of Christianity and its long dominance in medieval England in which it influenced almost every aspect of society.

Two religious terms, *piety* and *patronage,* demonstrate the change from a single positive meaning to broader options in the definitions available to communicators today. Even the relationship between the two terms has changed. For example, in her discussion of the relationship between religious faith and practical politics in the formation of medieval royal saints' cults, Susan J. Ridyard emphasizes that "the distinction between 'piety' and 'patronage' is one which means far more to the twenty[-first] century observer than it did to the men and women of the Anglo-Saxon period" (238). Previously, according to *Bosworth Toller Anglo Saxon Dictionary* (*BT*), both terms related to admirable religious activities. In Old English, *piety* is expressed by "árfæstnes," which is defined as: "honourableness, honesty, goodness, clemency, and mercifulness." In Middle English, the concept took an Old French word, "pīetē," and the defining terms are fewer but still completely positive: "mercy, tenderness, pity, devotion" according to the *Middle English Compendium* ("piety" *MEC*). The *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) notes the additional influence of the Latin term *pietās* and defines it as "godliness" in Old French in the tenth century and at least by the thirteenth century in Anglo-Norman ("piety"). As Anglo-Saxon monk and writer, Ælfric of Eynsham (circa 950-1010) reported from a chain of

sources, King Edmund (r. 939-946), for example, showed piety by ruling his people "mid wel-willendnysse" (with benignity) and "riht-wisnysse" (justice) and, to an even greater degree, by enduring death rather than submit to the "wælhreowan hingwar" (bloodthirsty Hingwar). Instead, King Edmund demanded that the victor become his underking and that the Viking invader convert to Christianity. This defiance earned Edmund immediate torture and death, which, in turn, helped earn him eventual sainthood (*Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, 2: 316, 320, 322). Another example from Ælfric is Æthelthryth (c.636-679), daughter of King Anna and a Northumbrian queen. According to the monk, "Heo lufode þone hæland þe hi heold unwemme" (*Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, 1: 432). (She loved the Savior who preserved her undefiled.) With God's power, she shows extraordinary piety by reportedly remaining sexually pure through two marriages—the second one to King Ecgfrith. For Christians, the great degree of the piety of Edmund and Æthelthryth became confirmed by several recorded miracles associated with them after their deaths. As these examples indicate, medieval piety was a valued religious trait which could develop to the level of the miraculous.

Only in the late sixteenth or seventeenth century does *piety* gain the ironic, negative definition of "a sanctimonious statement; a commonplace" (*OED*). Currently, the word seems used much more often in this pejorative sense. Instead, Old English offers the words "árleás" and "self-líce" for expressing "impiety" and "arrogance" (*BT*). In Middle English word options for expressing the opposite of *piety* include "simulācioun" and "trecheri" for "insincerity" and "hypocricy" (*MEC*). Understanding this term as a spiritual quality deserving of admiration in medieval England assists in correctly interpreting its use in sources of the time.

Patronage is another term that exhibits a distinction between medieval and early modern meanings. Although it can refer to a type of monetary fine, Old English "mundbyrd" is first

defined as "protection" and "aid" ("patronage" *BT).* This definition fit the situation of Northumbrian King Edwin (r.616-633), for instance, when, following his baptism, he showed the proper patronage of his rank by building a stone church and creating an episcopal see for Bishop Paulinus (Bede, *EH* II.14). The Middle English term, *patronage*, which began to be used around 1300, is again taken from Old French. It has more developed and broad definitions: "the right to present someone to hold an ecclesiastical office or living…to fill a vacancy" ("patronage" *MEC*). By 1400, it could mean the protection of someone of the nobility or aristocracy ("patronage" *OED).* According to Carole Meale, the term became more loaded with tension by the mid-fifteenth century. She cites Lucas in her analysis of the power and responsibility such relationships could exhibit: "patronage involves a complex relationship that carries implications of power [and privilege] held by one party, of superior and inferior, and of some degree of protection, as well as encouragement and material support" (8). This means that typically in the later Middle Ages, due to higher rank and more resources, the patron held a measure of power over the beneficiary while also providing various types of assistance. Still, the relationship most often formed with positive intentions and often resulted in benefits for both patron and recipient. Again, however, as with *piety*, the term developed an alternate negative meaning. While retaining both its Christian and secular meaning of advancing a person or cause, it added "favour shown with an [imperial] air or assumption of [moral] superiority." Often expressed using the verb form, "patronize," this usage became more common beginning in the eighteenth century (*OED*). Speakers of Old English, however, could use the words "pryte" or "prútung" for such attitudes of [imperial] haughtiness or pridefulness (*BT*). Middle English offers "dispising" for scorn and "straunĝenes" for aloof haughtiness (*MEC*). From a medieval English Christian

perspective, a pious ruler who provided patronage fulfilled two significant obligations of their privileged position at the top of society's estates and church hierarchy.

More broadly, a key medieval Christian belief is the traditional assumption that outward religious acts are evidence of inner religious motivation. According to Norman Tanner, there existed a general lack of distinction between inner and outer religious motivations of medieval people, especially those without literacy skills. Medieval people's "external activities … for the most part *were* their inner piety;" therefore, "institutions and activities…for the most part summarized the piety of the age" (*The Ages of Faith* 150). This means that, in general, good religious works that could be seen by others provided sufficient proof a person was a sincere Christian. Many medieval scholars conclude that a person's interior spiritual motivation is impossible to judge from the distance of centuries. In addition, that same timespan means few if any sources exist that show personal expressions of private religious thoughts (Tanner, *The Ages of Faith* 145). Such spiritual musings or confessions are more familiar to practices of modern society rather than of medieval people of any rank.

More recently, however, some scholars are beginning to explore whether exterior religious actions may be adequate evidence for a degree of inner spirituality because they are based on situations with significant personal feelings involved. For example, Louise Tingle interprets royal dynastic concerns surrounding fertility and childbirth as naturally involving interior anxieties for kings and queens over the health and life of both mother and child. As a result, when royal couples conceived and the subsequent births went well, personal feelings of great relief and much gratitude to the God to whom so many prayers had been directed could be a likely interior spiritual response. That interior part of such an experience may be part of what motivated those royals to lavish gifts on the church to express their thankfulness to God. For

example, in 1399, in honor of the birth and baptism of their son, Lionel of Antwerp, Queen Phillipa and King Edward III gave the appointment of the church of Thyngden "to the abbot and convent at Antwerp in gratitude" (*Chaucer's Queens* 132). In contrast, Tingle categorizes religious patronage as more publicly motivated when the support is preceded by the patronage of previous queens, such as Queen Philippa's support of Greyfriars, London. She interprets "Philippa's especial attention to St Katharine's through donations and her reforms [as a] demonstration that the personal and the political precedent could also combine in religious patronage" (152). Another example of overlap between congenial relations between a royal and a religious leader and personal friendship has been suggested of the relationship between Queen Matilda II (r. 1100-1118) and Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury (1033/34-1109) which will be examined later. Close spiritual relationships could form between confessors and an individual confessing. This can be seen as an understandable development when a royal discussed important matters that affected him or her personally in the present and, perhaps, in eternity. Those in close discussions concerning issues of belief, sin, penitence, and good works might develop strong affective bonds which seem to indicate inner feelings of spiritual significance and motivations which modern readers understand as personal. Chaucer's Marian prayers and miracle tales have been described as his "most obviously affective" works (*Chaucer's Biblical Poetics*, Besserman 25).[2] Although this focus of spiritual experience is a growing interest for scholars and is a good subject for a society who believed in the reality and centrality of the Christian God, it remains beyond the consideration of this study's focus on evidence of the kings' and queens' unique spiritual partnerships and their impact.

[2] Discussion of "affective strategies" are not new as Besserman recommends Rosemary Woolf's *The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages*, Oxford: 1968 and Douglas Gray's *Themes and Images in Medieval English Religious Lyric*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972.

Usually, pious demonstrations that received medieval social approval were easily observable acts. Living a biblically moral life within one's family could be attested to by family and neighbors. Attending Mass and receiving communion were easily seen when almost the whole community attended church services. The less fortunate members of society could vouch for being the recipient of alms and other acts of charity from a particular person. Payment of church tithes and taxes could be observed and recorded by religious and secular persons. Avoiding obvious sins, such as robbery, slander, loss of temper, etc. could be observed by neighbors known and unknown. For the wealthy members of the aristocracy, patronage encompassed providing generously for the church itself, demonstrated by giving gifts, donating land or rental income, building monasteries and churches, or sponsoring a saint's shrine. At the top of the hierarchy, the royal rulers bore the greatest responsibility to be exemplary Christians in all such practices. In addition, they had the most resources to provide the church with support that was most visible.

Although many of the Christian practices mentioned previously were those of the missionaries sent to convert the Anglo-Saxons and other tribes, some concepts and practices of kings originated from pre-Christian society. Understanding some of what these practices involved provides context for the Christian conversion period of the Anglo-Saxons. For example, recognizing powerful non-human deities and forming a loyal band of warriors were both early Anglo-Saxon practices of chiefs and kings that still had resonance in post-conversion society. According to Warren Hollister, the roots of their roles of mediating with gods and forming warrior groups to survive theoretically began when a particular warrior claimed ties to the god Woden after achieving great success in battle. As he inspired other warriors to fight with him, he became their leader. If his band, which scholars refer to by the Latin term c*omitatus*, grew and

experienced great victories, he could become an overlord of many bands—hence, a chief or king (221). To request divine assistance for victory from their gods and to thank them for success, pre-Christian kings financed and built temples, shrines, and offered sacrifices to curry continuing favor. They established festivals and other rites for important life events and worked with the priests who administered the places of worship and times of celebration. Good kings paid regular and public attention to the deities.

Kingship not only greatly honored the ruler but also placed him under obligations to his retainers. One of the most important ideals of pre-Christian warrior society concerned the expectation that the warrior lord generously shared any plunder won in battle with his loyal thanes. This Germanic concept of expected shareholder's generosity is fundamental to understanding how tribes survived and grew under successful warrior kings. This ancient value is illustrated in the anonymous Old English poem *Beowulf,* copied very early in the eleventh century, and recognized as the earliest heroic poem in a Germanic language (*Beowulf,* Liuzza 11-12). After the prologue, the complex plot of a young Geatish prince coming to rescue an aged Danish king begins with the significant actions of Hrothgar, a king who is frequently described as "good." After much success in battle and in forming a band of warriors, King Hrothgar decides "þonne yldo bearn ǣfre ġefrūnon, ond þǣr on innan eall ġeǣlan ġeongum ond ealdum swylċ him God sealde, / būton folcscare ond feorum gumena" and often "bēagas dælde, / sinċ æt symle" (*Beowulf,* Klaeber lines 70-74, 80b-81a). (to build a great mead hall and there share with young and old everything that God had given him, except the people's land and the lives of men; [he] gave out rings, distributed treasure at feasts.)[3] Such generosity of providing a great hall and giving gifts are key elements of what made a good king; these actions are shown more

[3] All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

specifically when King Hrothgar rewards Beowulf for killing Grendel, the monster who has destroyed all safety and fellowship for twelve long winters. The reward matches Beowulf's heroic deed: Hrothgar "Forġeaf þā Bēowulfe brand Healfdenes, / seġen gyldenne sigores tō lēane, / hroden hildecumbor, helm ond byrnan…eahta mēaras . . . sadol searwum fāh sinċe ġewurþad; / þæt wæs hildesetl hēahcyninges" (*Beowulf,* Klaeber lines 1020-23a; 1035; 1038-9). (then gave to Beowulf the blade of Healfdene, the golden war standard as a reward for victory, the battle banner, helmet and courslet…eight horses…a saddle embedded with colored gemstones, a treasure honored because that was the war seat of the high king.) This reward is not only immense but personal, with the gift of Hrothgar's own saddle.

Generous gift-giving also was expected from the queen. Queen Wealtheow fulfills her role by presenting the young hero with "wunden gold / ēstum ġeēawed, earmrēade twā, /hræġl / ond hringas, healsbēaga mǣst / þāra þe iċ on foldan ġefræġ hæbbe" (*Beowulf,* Klaeber lines 1193a-1196). (wound gold gladly bestowed, two arm ornaments, garments and rings, and the most wonderful necklace I have ever known on earth.) Both king and queen work together to build up their warrior community with generosity, fine compliments, and actions of respect.

These queenship and kingship roles began in pre-Christian warrior society, and some practices aded well to important medieval Christian values once it was introduced to the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms first by Irish and then Roman missionaries in the late sixth century. Christianity promised victory in battle and promoted leader generosity in support of its places of worship. Rulers were privileged with the ability to decide for themselves and for their kingdoms which religion to follow.

Although surviving texts written by Christians situate such decisions as choosing the right religion over a false system labeled pagan or heathen, historians have found literary and

archeological evidence to understand more objectively some aspects of the traditional religion of the Anglo-Saxons. Henry Mayr-Harting notes that pre-Christian religious practices involved festivals based on the seasons including spring, fall, and the new year. Many types of sacrifices were offered to a variety of gods depending on the particular request of the petitioner. These offerings were brought to specific centers or places of worship where a class of priests performed special duties and developed conduct rules. Non-Christians believed in an after-life and participated in burial rituals to benefit the deceased (22-23). Rulers paid for the temples, the shrines, and the festivals. From the perspective of a king, promoting cultural values and practices involving supernatural beings of both good and evil forces was already an important part of rulership before Christian missionaries arrived to propose a different set of beliefs and rites.

In fact, that entrenched cultural belief system is interpreted as a reason conversion to Christianity for the Anglo-Saxons took almost a hundred years and faced setbacks in the efforts to convert "just the kings and the greater part of their aristocracy," because "the old religious instincts died hard" (Mayr-Harting 29). Kings sometimes abandoned Christianity, such as Eadbald (r. 616/17-640) who, in the first part of his reign, rejected Christianity and married his stepmother (Bede, *EH II.5).* Even the influence of a Christian royal wife did not always result in a conversion. Damian Tyler delineates the factors that made the religious transition difficult and slow. Kings faced obstacles, such as the fact that many of their followers continued to worship the traditional gods. For worshipers used to long-practiced rituals and holding sincere belief, it could be hard to make sweeping changes even when the king and his most loyal men converted. In a related issue, many ways of the newly proposed religion went against Anglo-Saxon political and social norms. One example is the paradox of ambitions for territorial expansion based on fierce battles which contradict the peace-loving principles advocated especially in the New

Testament scriptures (146). Other factors could likely be found in the particular political circumstances of regional kingdoms.

However long the process of conversion to Christianity took, the fact that many rulers modelled ritual actions which supported a system of belief in divine gods in the pre-Christian era makes the possibility that they might choose what they believed to be a better system understandable. A new religion with one god whose power was greater—and whose attitudes toward humans may have seemed less capricious and more beneficent than the traditional gods—might sound appealing to the ruler and his witan. For example, Bede reports that King Edwin (r. 616-632) consulted with his "his loyal chief men and his counselors so that, if they agreed with him, they might all be consecrated together in the waters of life" (*EH* II.13). Only the king, however, possessed the unique responsibility and the privilege to implement that option which inherently had the greatest influence in the tribe or kingdom.

Christian Conversion

Although the new religion spread gradually and unevenly through the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, Christian religious practices and interpretations of kingship became substituted for those of paganism during the next two centuries. For example, by the ninth century, largely Christian inauguration rituals presented the coronation of a king as a sign of the Christian God's divine approval (Hollister 221). Ruling women also played key roles. Catherine Karkov emphasizes that, even though the sixth-century story of Queen Bertha's (circa 565-601) Christianity in her marriage to King Æthelberht (circa 589/593-616/618) comes through men, specifically Pope Gregory I and Bede, the queen functions as "the catalyst for the bringing of Christianity, its books, and its images to England" (20). This development occurred because of the religious efforts of church leaders and of kings and queens.

Bede (673-735), a monk and scholar writing from the monastery of St. Peter at Wearmouth-Jarrow in Northumbria and taking advantage of one of the largest libraries in the land at that time, provides most of the earliest textual information and a strong Christian perspective on the history and conversion of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Bede's contemporary audience included young men being educated in monasteries, "middle-aged or elderly men of high or comparatively high rank within the religious hierarchy" and "a broader than usual tranche of élite English society, including both religious and laity and centered on the Northumbrian royal court of the day," ruled by King Ceolwulf (r. 729-737) to whom the *Ecclesiastical History* was dedicated (Higham 44, 122, 187-88). Covering an ambitious time span from 189 to 731, Bede's history includes a variety of information from a wide range of authoritative sources; he presents a multifaceted and complex narrative with many themes, but, primarily, to "establish his own people as full participants in the Apostolic Church" (Higham 143). Because of Bede's purpose, he reports stories and history that show some of the ways kings and queens participated together.

Royal marriages played a crucial role in the entire Christianizing process from the early conversion stage of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms to the later Anglo-Norman and Angevin periods after Christianity had become the dominant religious choice. In addition to Bede's historical work and other key historic texts, famous literary texts reflect important practices by royals. In late medieval works, Geoffrey Chaucer's romances, "The Knight's Tale" (KnT), written between 1382-1386, and "The Wife of Bath's Tale" (WBT), written between 1392-1395, from his *CT*, and John Lydgate's tragic tale, *The Siege of Thebes*, (*ST),* written about 1421, provide unique insight into royal activities. Although these works are set in the ancient, pre-Christian past, they are used by their Christian authors to demonstrate the effective, and sometimes, the ineffective,

work of kings and queens who, in partnership, display values of wise government which aligned with some of the most important Christian values of their audiences.

Once converted to Christianity, medieval kings and queens used their wealth to help establish and expand the church. Bede records many examples (Higham 24). One early case is of King Æthelberht (circa 589/593-616/618) who practiced pre-Christian hospitality by giving provisions and a place to stay to the missionary group headed by Augustine of Canterbury long before he seriously considered joining the new religion. As a good king, Æthelberht said, "we willaðeow eac fremsumlice in gestliðnesse onfon, & eow ondlifen sellan & eowre þearfe forgifan" (Miller, *OEEH* I.25). (We will receive you with kindly hospitality and give you sustenance and supply your needs.) Æthelberht took care of the group's physical needs and promised them a fair hearing. Queen Bertha also made a positive impression on the monks. Pope Gregory I thanks her in a letter: [the monks] "reported . . . how much attention and what sort of charity you extended" ("Bertha," *Epistolae*). This good treatment perhaps seemed like a positive sign to the missionaries. Ruling status enabled kings and queens to provide assistance of many different types and to a much larger degree than others of lower rank. Although personal favoritism and political strategies cannot be excluded as providing a large part of rulers' motivations, to most medieval people, patronage to Christianity meant a positive action which others interpreted as admirable. In fact, such royal patronage became the principle means of advancing the Christian religion and royal influence as well.

Bede and other sources record ways in which some of the historical royal pairs chose to use their unique status to spread Christianity. For example, one such choice available in royal marriages emerges in the marriage arrangements of rulers' daughters. Their choice of unions affected many beyond the royal household. Three pre-Conquest royal pairs will be examined for

conversion and joint support of the church. Queen Bertha and King Æthelberht (circa 589/593-616/618) of Kent are the first couple described by Bede in which Christianity featured in marriage negotiations. Queen Æthelburh and King Edwin (circa 617-633/34) of Northumbria show the difficulty of a king choosing Christianity, and Queen Emma and the Danish King Cnut (r. 1016-1035) illustrate how a controversial ruling pair worked together to increase their Christian representation. Rulers' interactions during the conversion process helped Christianity to gain acceptance and dominance. After the Norman Conquest of 1066, two ruling pairs that evidence reveals important royal Christian interactions are Queen Matilda I of Flanders and King William I (r. 1066-87), who oversaw the massive overhaul of the English church, and Queen Matilda II of Scotland (r. 1100-1118) and King Henry I (r. 1100-1135) who worked to grow church institutions in practical ways even beyond England. Although other pairs also participated together to assist the church, these complex cases are backed by evidence that shows the range of both the nature and the impact of their partnerships.

These partnerships officially began with marriages but even before the weddings, during negotiations, a Christian royal family could bargain for religious tolerance and even support for its' eligible daughter's spiritual practices. The paradigmatic example of a royal family including maintaining Christian practice as part of the negotiations prior to marriage to a pagan king is that of the Christian Frankish princess, Bertha (circa 560) in the arrangements for her marriage to King Æthelberht (circa 589/593-616/618). Joanna Story explains that twentieth-century archeological finds indicate that contacts between Francia and England were not uncommon and that Christian Franks living in Kent may have played a supporting role in the Augustinian mission (28). However, when King Charibert I of Paris (r.561-567) and Queen Ingeborga, rulers over the Franks, considered marriage for their daughter, Bertha, the pool of eligible Christian

princes and kings may have seemed quite limited, especially considering the pressing political goal of expanding useful alliances by establishing kinship relationships between the royal families. Although the marriage has been analyzed for its political benefits to the Franks and to Æthelberht (some evidence indicates that he may have gained his ruling status by this marriage), Bede mentions only the consideration of religious practice (Klein 212n31; 213n39; Story 30). The Frankish rulers used the political marriage negotiation process to meet a religious aim. Bertha's parents exercised their privileged religious choice by requiring support for Bertha's continuing practice of Christianity; in addition to political concerns, they could provide for the spiritual quality of their daughter's daily life in Kent and of her eternal resting place as a significant factor in the political marriage.

Coming from a royal family, Princess Bertha would presumedly have been trained for her royal role as Æthelberht's queen. Such training better enabled the queen and king to work together successfully. John Cami Parsons notes that when marriages were arranged for political or dynastic interests, the royal daughters' education in how to be "marital ambassadors" began in childhood (69). For foreign brides marrying English or other European kings, "the cultural difference [foreign] brides confronted on arrival in their new home . . . could present baffling obstacles to progress in settling into new lives," and, since such brides were expected to serve their family of origin's interests, careful education by queens of their daughters is a strong likelihood (73-4). An important part of such training relates to a traditional concept of "peace-weaving" brides, a poetic term used for one who builds connections between parties. Although the term is used once to refer to a messenger angel from God, it is generally used for women married to make peace between feuding tribes. It is part of a long tradition for Western queens in which royal daughters were married into other tribes or kingdoms for political advantage. The

Old English word is “freoðe-webbe,” in which the first part is a form of *friðu* whose first definition is “peace;” this combines with *webbe* which means “weaver” (Hall 140, 400). Such marriages could help groups form an alliance or resolve a current hostility. The new queen’s responsibility was to take the positive strands from her marriage and to weave peaceful relations between her tribe and that of her spouse. It factored significantly in the marriage negotiation of many rulers. Ideally, such marriages would function diplomatically to create, maintain, or strengthen the peace between the two groups now connected by marriage and kinship.

In addition, however, a queen played a key role to maintain peace between warriors within the band. She could accomplish this by paying close attention to showing proper honor to her husband as king, following the correct hierarchy during feasts in serving thanes from inside and outside the group from the ritual cup, and giving generous gifts from her own wealth. This ancient practice is exemplified in its positive and negative results by the famous “peace-weaving” roles of Queen Wealhtheow and her daughter Freawaru in *Beowulf*. This difficult, important, yet seemingly self-effacing role is first starkly implied by Wealhtheow’s name which means “foreign servant,” presumedly given by the foreign family she married into that emphasizes hospitality duties (Orchard 180). However, Wealtheow is much more than a servant. She proves herself a true partner with Hrothgar in hospitality and in generosity; even more, she manages the celebration with honored rituals and keeps the family dynastic interest paramount. In phrases which match the queen’s assured and generous manner in Heorot, the Beowulf poet describes Wealhtheow as “mæru cwen, / friðusibb folca” (*Beowulf*, Klaeber lines 216b-217a). (renowned queen, peace-pledge of nations). Because King Hrothgar is described as a respected current king and an exceptional warrior in his younger years, the narrative assumes that the queen has been a successful diplomat between the Danes and her people, the Helmings.

The poet shows Wealtheow in action. At each feast, the queen uses her well-adorned presence and intelligence to follow traditional protocol and create a joyful environment within the hall. At her first appearance, Wealtheow appears, "cynna ġimyndiġ / grētte goldhroden gumanon healle, / ond þā frēoliċ wīf ful ġesealde ǣrest Ēast-Dena ēþelwearde / bæd hine bliðne æt þǣre bēorþeġ, / lēodum lēofne" (*Beowulf*, Klaeber lines 613b-18a). (mindful of proper courtesy, then the noble wife, gold-adorned, greeted the men in the hall, and then delivered the cup first to the king of the land of the East Danes, urging him to be happy at the beer drinking, well-loved of his people.) Queen Wealtheow first officially welcomes Hrothgar's thanes, appropriate because they are the ones for whom Heorot had been built. Next, she honors King Hrothgar with the first ritual drink and a reminder of how well he is loved by his warriors. She links the king to his warriors by referring to the close bond they share. Then, finally, she offers the cup to Beowulf, as the yet-untested guest, the "bēaghroden cwēn / grētte Ġēata lēod, Gode þancode / wīsfæst wordum þæs ðe hire se will ġelamp þæt hēo on ǣniġne eorl ġelȳfde / fyrena frōfre" (*Beowulf*, Klaeber lines 623b-628a). (ring-adorned queen greeted the prince of the Geats, thanked God with wise words because her wish that she could count on any earl for relief from the violence had now occurred.) The queen recognizes the rank of their guest and then directs her thanks to God for the hope that, just as she has been able to count on any earl for protection, her prayer for relief from Grendel's destruction has arrived. Her "wise words" demonstrate her skill in reminding Hrothgar's men of how she has been able to count on them in the past rather than emphasizing their failure to defeat the monster. Only once Wealtheow has established the primary bond between king and thanes in honor and joy does she honor Beowulf. She freely states that he is an answer to her prayers through the long years of terror. Much more than a hostess, Wealtheow has established the order of rank within the hall that fits the actions of each

warrior. With the highest courtesy for warriors, king, and prince, the queen creates the ideal conditions for the evening. Wealhtheow fulfills her task of intra-group diplomacy with aplomb.

After Beowulf defeats Grendel and during the next celebration to honor his feat, Wealhtheow negotiates the complex responsibility of promoting the dynastic interests of her own children and family. When she learns King Hrothgar has publicly expressed a wish to adopt and treat Beowulf as a son, she diplomatically, but publicly, reminds the king of the difference between managing a family dynasty and showing gratitude for help in stopping Grendel's slaughter: "Bēo wið Ġēatas glæd, ġeofena ġemyndiġ, / nēan ond feorran þū nū hafast . . . . Heorot is ġefælsod . . . .brūc þenden þū mote / maniġra mēdo. Und þīnum māgum lǣf / folk ond rīċe þonne ðū forð scyle, / metodsceaft s͡eōn" (*Beowulf,* Klaeber lines 1173-1174, 1176b, 1177b-1180b). (Be gracious with the Geats, remember the gifts you possess from near and far . . . . Heorot is cleansed . . .You must give many a reward. And grant to your kinsmen the people and kingdom when you must go ahead to your fate after death.) Wealtheow's reminder to Hrothgar of his nephew, Hrothulf, and sons, Hrethic and Hrothmund, as the proper heirs while also voicing admiration and generosity to Beowulf for his great deed is a diplomatic act that affects both intra- and inter-group dynamics that may potentially affect future peace between the Danes and the Geats.

The importance of "peace-weaving" is further emphasized by the negative example of Wealhtheow's daughter Freawaru. Beowulf himself ominously foretells that the plan of King Hrothgar and Queen Wealtheow to marry their daughter Freawaru to the "gladum suna Frōdan" (gracious son of Froda) will result in disaster (*Beowulf,* Klaeber line 2025). King Hrothgar had high hopes that with such an arrangement, "þæt ræd talåð, / þæt he mid ðy wife wælfæhða dæl, sæcca gesette." (*Beowulf,* Klaeber lines 2027b-2029a). (He reckoned that by this destined plan

for the woman, he could fix his part of a deadly feud and other hostilities.) Beowulf, however, notes “Oft seldan hwær / æfter lēodhyre lȳtle hwile / bongār būeð, þēah sēo brȳd duge” (*Beowulf* Klaeber lines 2029b-2031). (As a rule, after the fall of a prince seldom anywhere does the deadly spear rest a little time, although the bride be good.) In this case, her betrothed, Ingeld, is prince of the Heathobards who were previously defeated by the Danes. Ingeld will lose all of his regard for Freawaru at their marriage feast when he and his fellow Heathobards see a high-ranking Dane wearing the “gladiað gemelra lãfe, / heard and hringmæ Heaða-Bear[d]na ġestrēon” (*Beowulf,* Klaeber lines 2036-2037). (shining remnants of their ancestors’ armor, hard and decorated with a ring, of the former treasures of the Heatho-bards). Resentment of that past loss will be stirred by old warriors and grow into a jealous rage for current revenge by the young Heathobard warriors. During the “wælniðe” (deadly hostility) of Ingeld’s fight against his father-in-law, Heorot, his great mead hall, will be burned (*Beowulf,* Klaeber lines 80-85; Liuzza 51n4). Hrothgar’s hopes and Freawaru’s good lineage and training will be tragically insufficient to overcome the warriors’ grudges and fierce passions for vengeance.

This future failure of Freawaru’s political marriage is paralleled with greater details and a larger loss of family in the earlier Finnsburh episode told by the scop. This old battle shows how resentments between warriors of different tribes and generations can overwhelm even a long-time queen’s ability to build and to maintain peace. Queen Hildeburh, a Dane married to King Finn of the Frisians is first described as “ġeōmuru ides!” (*Beowulf,* Klaeber line 1075b). (a sad lady!) The reason for her anguish is that deadly conflict between the two families joined by her marriage arises due to previous battles and simmering resentments that eventually cannot be contained. Hildeburh loses brother, son, and, eventually, her husband despite the promises of a truce between the men of both tribes and her own peace-making attempts (*Beowulf,* Liuzza lines

1071-1159a). As Beowulf later observed in the case of Freawaru, queens could not always mitigate against the long feuds and warriors' desires to fight of inter-tribe interactions. When their diplomatic efforts did not work or last long, hostility often turned into battle bringing wounds, death, and sorrow for both sides.

As in the marriage of Wealhtheow and Hrothgar, "peace-weaving" likely remained a significant goal in Bede's narrative of the historical Bertha and Æthelberht. The Franks and the Kentish had political reasons to form inter-tribal marriages. In that light and in considering the adaptations expected of a foreign queen whose mission is to create and maintain peace, it seems noteworthy that Bertha's parents did not think she needed to give up her religious practices to fulfill that role successfully (Klein 4, 19). They claimed for her the religious freedom to observe Christian practices, and she arrived with her bishop along with the necessary supplies and objects needed for worship. Likely, others in her entourage were also practicing Christians who could provide the new queen with a small religious community within the larger, pagan court. Story considers the long perspective and assesses that "her marriage was undoubtedly of great importance for the introduction and ultimate acceptance of Christianity among the Kentish nobility" (30). This successfully pursued royal prerogative resulted in a significant future religious impact.

Bede gives a description of how royal couples influenced each other in their Christian journey even before marriage. He explains the marital situation for Bertha and Æthelberht and hints at the future conversion of the king:

> Swylce eac ær þam becwom hlisa to him þaere cristenan afestnesse, forþon he Cristen wif hæfde, him gegyfen of Francena cyningcynne, Byrhte was haten þæt wif he onfeng fram hyre yldrum þare arednesse, þæt hio his leafnesse hafde þæt heo þone þeaw þas Cristenan geleafan hyre afestnesse ungewemmedne healdan moste mid þy biscope, þone þe hi hyre to fultome þas geleafan sealdon, þæs nama wæs Leodheard.
> (Miller, *OEEH* I.14)

(So in addition, a report had already come to [Æthelberht] of the fame of the Christian religion because he had a Christian wife named Bertha given to him from the Frankish kingdom. He had taken that wife from her parents on condition that she had his permission after marriage, to continue to practice her Christian faith and religion completely unhindered and supported by a bishop that they then provided and entrusted to help keep her beliefs. His name was Leodheard.)

Even though Charibert and Ingeborga's own marriage was not a long success, this part of the marriage agreement may point to the seriousness that they gave to their daughter's Christian beliefs and practice. Continuing her religious routine of attending mass, saying prayers, and participating in other Christian practices led by her own bishop would provide Bertha a familiar and edifying comfort as she made her way in an unfamiliar household as a new wife and new queen. Even more important to medieval Christian parents, as well as to Bede's audience, these rituals and prayers helped ensure a future heavenly home for their daughter

This arrangement's effects benefited both members of the royal couple. The king helped improve the life of his future queen by displaying a generous attitude towards her observance of the practices of her religion, and the new wife gave the king an opportunity to observe and learn about Christianity as it was daily practiced. For example, Bede notes that Queen Bertha prays in the church of St. Martin, abandoned from the days of Roman occupation (*EH* I.26). Depending on his degree of curiosity, Æthelberht might have seen the mass, including the Eucharist, noted the vestments, and heard the bishop's prayers, all of which presented a great contrast to the practices of the traditional religion of the Angles. Presumedly, the king is informed by this experience when "Gregorius papa sende to Britene Agustinum mid wel manegum munecum þa Godes word Angla þeode godspelledan" (*ASC MS C, s.a.* 596). (Pope Gregory sent to Britain Augustine with many monks to preach God's word to the English people.) They arrive with

conversion as their purpose, and they are aided by a Christian queen. Klein analyzes Bede as depicting the cultural complexity of, on the one hand, acknowledging the roles of queens in the conversion process while, on the other, distancing the queens' actual participation in service of his agenda to foreground the role of the church (*Ruling Women,*18, 22-23, 26-29, 30-31). Although brief, Bede does, in fact, give essential information that shows Bertha's influence. As he reports Augustine's good news message to Æthelberht upon landing at Thanet, twice Bede explains the king's prior knowledge of Christianity because of Bertha. He gives details of the religious condition of her marriage, reports that the pope knows of her Christianity as well as her continuing use of a nearby abandoned church presumedly for ten years. These details seem sufficient to show that Bertha exerted at least some Christian queenly influence. Significantly, Bede uses this marriage to inaugurate a pattern of how Christian queens can affect kings' later religious choices. The process is repeated in Bede's history of later royal couples.

In the initial case, the choice of King Æthelberht to convert proves a more difficult decision than it had been to show a welcoming attitude towards the religion of his future wife. Ten years after his marriage, in response to the Roman missionaries' message of the gospel of Christ, Æthelberht uses his power as king to control the degree of participation and introduction of the Christian religion for himself and his followers. He had agreed that Bertha could fully practice her Christianity with no need to ask anyone's permission. But upon hearing the Christian gospel, he immediately limited the movements and activities of Augustine and his company. They were kept waiting on the island of Thanet for several days and were then met only outside and scrutinized for any use of magic when the king and his followers came to hear their appeal. Æthelberht showed hospitality but also caution, saying, "Faeger word þis syndom & gehat þe ge brohtan & us secgað. Ac forðon heo neowe syndon & uncuðe, ne magon we nu gen

þæt þafian, þæt we forlæten þa wisan, þe we longer tide mid ealle Ongolþeode heoldon" (Bede, *OEEH* I.14). (These are fair and promising words that you brought to us to declare. But because they are new and uncertain, we may not now consent yet to abandon the wisdom which we have held fast for a long time with all the English people.) As king, Æthelberht is not obligated to make a hasty decision about new religious beliefs, and he also points out his larger perspective as to how his consideration is situated within the traditions and practices of the English people in his own and other kingdoms. He does not label his kingdom's current beliefs as paganism but as wisdom which has served his people well. This reply emphasizes the large change which the missionaries are asking of him and his followers, to choose a different system of belief with unfamiliar practices. In addition to his private consideration, he arranges for his gesiths, his companions, to listen to Augustine and provide counsel (Bede, *EH* I.25). Royal prerogative of religious choice and careful consideration for his people are clear in Æthelberht's measured actions.

As Bede represents him, the king provides royal hospitality and only upon due consideration and consultation does he grant freedom of religious choice and practice to his followers just as he had for Queen Bertha in their marriage. Klein notes Bede as seeing forced conversions as "ineffective in the long term" (38). As a result of Æthelberht giving religious choice to everyone, some of the actual details of the conversion of himself and his people seem lost. For instance, the specific place of Æthelberht's baptism remains uncertain (Mayr-Harting 63). Also, the term *conversion* means both a single point in time and a process. Klein notes the view of modern scholars that the term in medieval times "was less a term used to denote a particular spiritual event than a broad rubric to capture a variety of religious experiences" (17). Nonetheless, *The Anglo Saxon Chronicle* (*ASC*), its multiple manuscripts valued as "the first

continuous national history of any western people in their own language," emphasizes the significance of King Æthelberht's religious decision by noting that, in 616, he is the first English king to be baptized (Swanton xx). For this king, conversion meant baptism. He exercised his royal power to choose when to convert in his own timing and did so within the contexts of the influences of previous ritual practices, counsel with his advisors, the new Christianity of his queen, and the missionary monks sent by Pope Gregory.

Bede creates a pattern of non-Christian kings converting after marriages to Christian wives when he relates in the next generation a similar marriage negotiation between King Edwin of Northumberland (r. 616-633) and King Eadbald's sister Æthelburh, a daughter of King Æthelberht and Queen Bertha. Royal freedom to exercise religious choice is shown by both sides in several details of the marriage negotiation and the beginning of the conversion process. As a sign of the Christian god's power, in 626, King Edwin requests victory over King Cwichelm, king of the West Saxons, who had sent an assassin to kill him. Bede explicitly links royalty to Christianity by presenting King Edwin's successful subduing of both Britons and English as a sign of his future acceptance of the true heavenly King (*EH* II.9). Yet, the king delays his decision for almost ten years. Mayr-Harting labels the process a "Herculean labour" with many inducements necessary to overcome Edwin's political concerns (66). Klein sees a great difference between Pope Boniface V's certainty of Queen Æthelburh's potential influence to convert her husband, as expressed in his letter to her, in contrast with how Bede typically represents queens' impact as an interesting initial element but not sufficient to seal the conversion without great prompting of church officials (*Ruling Women* 43). Although the pope's letter does assume a great influence of the queen, Bede presents the two cases very differently, which seems to explain the importance of Æthelburh's family's initial involvement rather than a

diminishment of the role of Christian queens. Klein's statement fits Bede's record of Bertha's seemingly minimal influence but does not consider the contrast in his narrative of Æthelburh and Edwin. Kings Æthelberht and Edwin react differently to the condition of Christian practice for the two future queens. Although Bede always presents the role of church leaders and bishops as an integral part of the process of kings accepting Christianity, he gives the marriage negotiation between Eadbald and Edwin significantly more prominence in both amount of details given and the language used than he did in the case of Bertha and Æthelberht.

In both situations, the negotiators show royal confidence in asking for the potential queen to be able to continue Christian practices. In his reporting of the negotiation for Æthelburh, however, Bede explicitly states that the Christian conversion of the Northumberland kingdom occurred due to the primary fact of the marriage negotiation of Æthelburh. The initial marriage offer from King Edwin is declined because, as King Eadbald explains, "þæt alyfed nære, þætte cristeno fæmne hæðnan men to wife seald wære, þy læs se geleafa & þa heryno þæs heofonlecan cyninges mid þæs cyninges gemánan aidlad wære, se ðe þæs soðan cyninges bigong ne cuðe" (Miller, *OEEH* II.8). (That a Christian maid is never allowed to pledge to marry a heathen man, because she may afterwards profane the sacraments and faith of the heavenly king through that fellowship with the king to whom the real truth and worship is not known.) This explanation shows the conflict faced by Christian rulers who believed that heaven's king—God—deserved utmost loyalty and submission from earth's kings and queens. Even with royal status, Christian rulers remained wary that a person's earthly religion and heavenly reward could be in serious jeopardy within a mixed religious marriage. They worried that a possible negative result of such a union could be a decline in the queen's Christian's practices rather than a conversion of the pagan king.

Bede gives more details of the negotiation process which show the great degree of religious freedom that King Edwin agreed to for his desired match. To assuage the fears of Æthelburh (r. 626-633/4) losing her own choice to practice Christianity, King Edwin went further than King Æthelberht in his marriage arrangement and promised Æthelburh and all the people who came with her the freedom to practice Christianity. Even more, he suggested that "Ne he ne wiðsóc þæt he seolfa eac þa ilcan æfestnisse underfenge, gif wise witan þæt funde þæt heo haligra gemeted beon meahte" (Miller, *OEEH* II.8). (Nor would he refuse to accept with zeal the same religion if wise advisors find upon comparison that it prevails as holier.) That promising potential for conversion of a powerful king is a further step that Edwin gives to sweeten his offer of marriage. Again, Bede provides greater details than he did in Bertha's case of how the royal bride's religion will be maintained and protected by her own bishop Paulinus: "þæt he þa fæmnan & hire geferan æghwæðer ge mid þa mærsunge heofonlicra geryna ge mid his dæghwamlicre lare trymede, þæt heo in þam gemanan þara hæðenra besmiten ne wære" (Miller, *OEEH* ll.8). (that he will go with the lady and her companions to celebrate the heavenly sacrament and also with daily teaching so that she will not be defiled unaware in the community of heathens.) With frequent contact and instruction, the bishop will safeguard the faith of the queen and her group. The possibility of conversion and the religious protection promised overcome Eadbald's objections to the marriage, which took place in 625 (Bede, *EH* 379n84). Eventually, Æthelburh and Edwin had a daughter whom the king consecrated to Christ in baptism once Bishop Paulinus connected Æthelburh's safe and, reportedly, pain-free delivery with the blessing of God. Eanflæd became the first baptized in Northumberland and eventually many of the Northumbrians converted (Bede, *EH* II.9). This initial baptism foreshadowed the future growth of Christianity which demonstrated that, just as political marriages could greatly

improve relations between kingdoms, so the religious influence of a royal maiden and her family could impact the religion of an entire people through her Christian sway on the actions of her husband.

Bede reports this same pattern in a third royal couple. In the mid seventh century, Peada, (r. 655-656) chief of the Middle Angles and son of King Penda (r.642-655), requested Alflæd, daughter of the Christian Northumbrian King Oswiu (r. Bernicia 642-70; Deira 655-70), in marriage. Acting more boldly than the previous two cases, King Oswiu conditioned the marriage on the baptism of not only Peada but of his entire nation. Although the accuracy of the exact interrelationships of the following are debated by some scholars, Bede reports that this requirement became accomplished in 653 with the help of Peada's friend and brother-in-law Alhfrith. Bishop Finan baptized Peada and all his gesiths and thegns; later, four priests labored for the conversion of the rest of his people (Bede, *EH* 394n144; III.21; V.24; 292n131). In another example of this initially mixed religious marriage, Bede reports in passing that Queen Eafe (d.767), daughter of Eanfrith, came from a Christian royal family in Hwicce already baptized when she married King Æthelwealh (r.680-685) of the South Saxons. Although Bede reports the king converted at the suggestion of King Wulfhere (r. Mercia 658-75) and the teaching of bishop Wilfred, Eafe's Christianity may also have had some influence (*EH* 396-97n152; IV.13). Thus, Bede establishes that the Christian queen married to the pagan king who later converted is a clear pattern during the conversion period of the Anglo-Saxons even though the depiction of specific influence of each queen varies and is not always known.

Biblical Role Models

The Christian scriptures provided counsel for believing medieval spouses of any rank, but perhaps seemed especially significant to a royal wife of a non-Christian king. The Pauline epistle

to the Corinthians advises all believers that those who have a spouse who is not a Christian should remain married if both are "content," because the believing spouse "sanctifies" the unbelieving one as well as giving a holy or "clean" status to their children. Further, Paul questions, "For how knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? Or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" (I Cor. 7: 13-14, 16).[4] This is one of the texts, for example, that Pope Boniface V used in his letter to Queen Æthelburh (r. 626-633/34) urging her to make a greater effort to convert her spouse, King Edwin (Bede, *EH* II.12). The general criteria for spouses to stay in such a marriage is to keep peace and to maintain the religious instruction of children; the potential for possible conversion, however, offers a more public, salvific element that a future ruler may have found particularly appealing. The priest or bishop of a Christian ruling family negotiating marriage arrangements may have provided this passage along with his advice about its relation to a current situation.

For a Christian royal wife, the example of the Old Testament Queen Esther is specifically applicable in some important ways although not with the same extreme circumstances and risks. As an outsider and orphan who rises to queenship, Esther is a dramatic inspiration of the difference a believing queen can make. The tradition of recommending Esther as a model for early medieval Christian queens in relating to their non-Christian husband kings is reported by Klein as occurring throughout the mid-ninth century. She reports two dedications by Hrabanus Maurus, bishop of Fulda, in his commentary on Esther to the Empress Judith, second wife of Louis the Pious, in 836, and again to the Empress Ermengard, wife of Lothar I, between 841-851. Esther is held up as a model of "piety and sanctity" (165). A letter from Pope John III in 846 to Empress Richildis, wife of Carolingian Emperor Charles the Bald (r. 843-847),

[4] All quotes from the Bible are from the Douay, 1609, and Rheims, 1582, version, translated from the Latin Vulgate, unless otherwise stated.

recommends Esther as a model for how to promote the Christian church in her kingdom just as Queen Esther had stood up for her people the Jews. Textually, two mentions of Esther in the 856 coronation *ordo* upon the marriage in 856 of Judith to King Æthelwulf (r. 839-858) include her in a list of Hebrew women for the queen to emulate (165). Obviously, church leaders interpreted Esther as a worthy exemplar of queenly piety and influence with which to inspire new empresses and queens.

Specific parallels also exist between the marriage situations and opportunities of Esther and later medieval queens. First, Esther had extremely limited, if any, choice in becoming queen. Likewise, for many medieval marriages: "Sons as well as daughters had their marriages arranged by their parents . . . Although medieval canon law demanded that both partners consent to the marriage, . . . both bride and bridegroom would have been instructed from early childhood to view marriage in the context of family economic and social advancement" (Hollister, Stacey, and Stacy 232). Political and dynastic concerns controlled most of the marital matches. Despite the queens' and kings' lack of control over whom they married, religious identity remained central for some future wives during both biblical and medieval time periods even when it was not the practice of their kings. Such religious choices were significant. Once Esther is queen, for instance, "she would not tell him her people nor her country. For Mardochai had charged her to say nothing" (Esth. 2.10). Rather than forsaking her Jewish beliefs, Esther keeps her Jewish identity secret from King Assuerus and his court so that she can hold on to her beliefs and her marriage. With the same intent on keeping true to her belief, but employing the opposite method, the previously discussed families of Queen Bertha and Queen Æthelburh used marriage negotiations and contracts to insure their daughters' full practice of their religion after marriage.

Because of the success in retaining their religious beliefs in the biblical and medieval cases, these queens later influenced their kings' religious decisions that affected the entire kingdom.

One of the most common references to Queen Esther by medieval writers and translators is the specific focus on her bold intercession with King Asseuerus to counteract Aman's plot to destroy the Jews. Intercession will be examined later, but in this biblical case, Mardochai requests Esther to intervene with the king. This is a dangerous risk, because "all the king's servants, and all the provinces that are under his dominion know, that, whosoever, whether man or woman, cometh into the king's inner court, who is not called for, is immediately put to death…except the king hold out the golden sceptre to him" (Esth. 4.11). In reply, Mardochai emphasizes the high stakes for Esther and her family, and then asks the question that relates directly to future queens: "For if thou wilt now hold thy peace, the Jews shall be delivered by some other occasion: and thou, and thy father's house, shall perish. And who knoweth whether thou art not, therefore, come to the kingdom, that thou mightiest be ready in such a time as this?" (Esth. 4.14). Esther's intercession results in the king changing the law instigated by Aman in order to allow the Jews to attack those who had plotted to destroy them.

Mardocai's question that suggests a divine influence and purpose for Esther's reign is one which medieval queens came to consider as well. According to Lois Huneycutt, queens' roles as intercessors "[were] urged upon them by prelates who cited the Biblical model of Esther" (qtd. in Parson 64). Although not usually in the service of saving an entire people group, medieval queens did participate in intercessions that could be matters of life and death. Esther's success at prayerful intercession with her king is a strong basis for Christian medieval queens to emulate the practice with confident hope for equally positive results.

At the beginning of the eleventh-century, a further resource emerged that offered an alternative to the Old Latin and Latin Vulgate versions of the biblical Esther. Ælfric of Eynsham (circa 955-1010) wrote an Old English prose adaptation of the Old Testament book probably between 1002-1005. Although S. D. Lee describes Ælfric's version as following very closely to the Latin versions, Klein interprets the changes he makes as significant, because they indicate that Ælfric is "deeply engaged with the social and political issues of [his] time." More specifically, Ælfric turns Queen Vashti and Queen Esther into role models for some of the ideas of the Benedictine reformers, "promoting stricter ideals of faith and domestic social order in a nation that found itself increasingly destabilized in the face of ever-encroaching Danish forces" (164-65). Although Klein emphasizes that Ælfric's message is for many of his contemporaries across boundaries of class, I focus on what queens could glean from his *Esther*.

In Klein's analysis, several changes in Ælfric's version affect the traits of Queen Esther that medieval queens might choose to develop. One basic change is that Ælfric reverses the pattern of how Esther is addressed in the text. Whereas the Latin Vulgate most often uses her proper name, he refers to her much more often as *cwen* (queen), thereby broadening the applicability of her actions to all medieval queens (166). Not just an ancient story of Esther in an exotic locale, the actions of a faithful and brave queen are more easily applied to current queens with the more generic term. A more consequential change is Ælfric's elimination of Esther's administrative and political activities which she and her uncle take after the amended decree is passed at the end of the story, which the Vulgate describes. Without the inclusion of such important ruling tasks, the primary focus remains on Esther's faith and on her intercession with the king for her people, as well as with its effects when her intercessory appeal is successful. Perhaps Ælfric is conveying what he believes should be the main practices and qualities of an

Anglo-Saxon queen. In addition, the question of the conversion of King Asseuerus is handled differently. The Vulgate translation reports in a letter from the king only that the Jews "are the children of the highest and the greatest, and the ever-living God, by whose benefit the kingdom was given both to our fathers and to us, and is kept unto this day" (Esth. 15.16). The king acknowledges God but does not explicitly state that he himself has converted. This suggests a parallel with the previously discussed case of King Edwin (r. 616-633) who, according to Bede, generally supported Christianity but, despite his promises, his Christian wife, Æthelburh, his dedicated daughter, and bishop Paulinus, still took at least a decade before receiving baptism. Ælfric, however, makes the king's conversion and its cause unambiguous: "& se cyning wearð gerihtlæht þurh þære cwene geleafan Gode to wurðmynte þe ealle þing gewylt" (Klein, *Esther* lines 320b-22a 167-68, translated by Klein). (And the king was corrected through the belief of the queen to worship God who controls all things.) The adaptation of Ælfric encourages queens to be assertive in their efforts to convert unbelieving kings. Esther is primarily a model as an intercessor, first for her people's physical lives, and then for the king's salvation. The model now consists of a believing queen and king who will presumedly work together to convert more of their kingdom to God.

Meanwhile, Ælfric next adds to the king's conversion a phrase describing the general rejoicing of the Jews. He explains their happiness: "þæt hi swilcne forespræcan him afunden hæfdon" (Klein, *Esther* line 17, 168, translated by Klein). (that they had found such an intercessor for themselves.) Ælfric telescopes Esther's portrait to pinpoint the spiritual activities that seem most important for an ideal queen. This can be seen because of the positive impact that Esther initiates in the community's future behavior: "and heoldon þa godes æ þæs þe glædlicor / æfter Moyses wissunge, þæs mæran heretogan" (Klein, *Esther* lines 18-19, 168, translated by

Klein). (and held the law of God the more gladly according to the instruction of Moses, the great commander.) Esther's intercession and the resulting reversal of victory for the Jews over their enemies in the kingdom of Asseuerus has a spiritual benefit. It leads them to increase their obedience to God as instructed through Moses. Agreeing with Klein's perspective, A. F. Redgate interprets Ælfric's purpose as relevant for his own time: "he probably meant the queen as a model for the English people" to respond to the Danish invasions with prayer and fasting. In particular, he may have had Queen Emma (circa 985-1052) in mind as needing his message which might have made her a greater help to her first husband King Æthelread II (r. 978-1013, 1014-1016) (144). Just as under Esther's influence the king acts to save a religious group who is then re-energized spiritually, so under medieval queens' influence, some English kings acted to support and, in several cases, to embrace the queens' Christianity.

Once kings made the decision to convert to Christianity, church leaders encouraged them to follow natural exemplars in the Bible as well. One favorite model is David, the Old Testament shepherd turned warrior, because "The Lord hath sought him a man according to his own heart" (1 Kings, 13.14b). No other biblical king illustrates so well the Anglo-Saxon Christian values of warrior band formation, successful battles, and strong leadership to unite tribe or kingdom while also submitting to the God of the universe. Similar to the Christian ruling families who raised Bertha and Æthelburh to be both queens and Christians, the youthful David belongs to a religious family and believes in God's protection and strength. Also similar to the successful Christian practices and conversions resulting from such families, once David is anointed by the prophet Samuel as the second king of Israel, "the spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward" (1 Kings 16.13b). Bede makes the connection explicit between Anglo-Saxon Christian kings and the biblical David in how God is credited for victory in battle. For example, Bede

describes the future conversion of King Edwin (r. 616-633) as, at least partially, a result of his great battle triumphs: “Þam cyninge þære onfongennisse Cristes geleafan & þas heofonlecan rices eac swelce on healsunge, geweox meahteorðlices riches, swa [þat] þæte nænig Ongolcynna aer him, eall Breotono gemæro on anweald onfeng” (Miller, OEEH II.8). (That the king there has become powerful and mighty on earth, so that he governs more than anyone before him all of the Britons and the English race, the same is an augury that he will accept Christ’s heavenly reign.) Where Bede’s narrative foretells Edwin’s conversion, David’s successful battles are a result of his present faith in God after his anointing. David, too, eventually united the Hebrew tribes. The effects of a believing ruler can be wide and deep, and the many victories and expansion of power of a warrior king in Bede’s work can be a sign that he will realize it is God who is helping him achieve such greatness.

The analogy between the biblical David and Anglo-Saxon kings continues in Old English prose sources. Rhonda McDaniel discusses several parallels between David and the first English royal martyr, Northumbrian King Oswald, (r. 635-643) in her analysis of the narratives of Bede and Ælfric, who translates and nuances Bede’s version of Oswald’s battle against the tyrant King Cædwalla of the West Saxons (r. 685-688). Like David, Oswald is presented by Bede as “a man simultaneously strong and humble, a warrior and a man of prayer, a king of one kingdom and a subject in another kingdom” (McDaniel 199). More specifically for this discussion of the religious choices of royals, McDaniel relates that Oswald’s religious practices while preparing for battle include lifting up a Christian cross before beginning the fight, prostrating himself in prayer and instructing his soldiers to do likewise, and going forth depending upon Christ to win victory. Just as David exhorts the Israelite warriors and king to rely on the Lord and quickly triumphs over the taunting Goliath, so Oswald is given the victory over the arrogant Cædwalla (I

Kings 17.26, 37, 50; McDaniel 200). This dependence on the Lord is demonstrated by concrete actions in both biblical and Anglo-Saxon cases beyond the field of battle. David attracts a band of loyal men, he humbly refuses to kill the anointed King Saul when given the opportunity, he waits for God's guidance to escape the increasingly deranged King Saul and in the timing of when he will be crowned king, and—in the beginning years of his reign—serves the Lord as warrior and as royal religious model. Even in later years, David makes preparations for building the temple (I Kings 22.1-2; 24.19; 26.23; I Paralipomenon [I Chron.] 22.14-19). McDaniel reports King Oswald's own medieval good works of humbly translating the gospel and building churches; he is valued by Bede as "cyning se betsta und se cristenesta" (the best and most Christian of kings) and he became a royal saint for future kings, such as Kings Alfred (r. 871-899) and Edward the Confessor (r. 1042-1066), to emulate (McDaniel 202, 205; Bede, OEEH II.5). Other kings Bede briefly describes as especially faithful and generous to the church who might have been inspired by King David include Wulfhere (r. 658-675) of Mercia, Oswiu of Northumbria (r. 642-670), and Egbert of Kent (r. 664-673) (*EH* III.29). Many records in *Anglo-Saxon Writs* indicate that late Anglo-Saxon rulers, King Cnut and Edward the Confessor, "were famed for their liberality to the church and . . . made throughout their reigns extensive grants to monasteries" which will be discussed in the next chapter (Harmer 105). The stories of David's warrior band and leadership of his kingdom for thirty years provide valiant, godly examples for medieval kings to identify with in the ancient Hebrew tales upon whose foundation Western Christianity developed.

The most well-known hero of ancient Anglo-Saxon tales also reveals parallels with the biblical hero David. Andy Orchard summarizes in a chart his analysis of a dozen parallels between the future Geatish king Beowulf, and his battles with Grendel and Grendel's mother and

the future Hebrew king, David, and his battle with Goliath (144). From that list, heroic bravery in the face of a seemingly unbeatable foe and gratitude to God for victory fit this study. A few of these parallels echo those previously discussed relating to King Oswald. The young David, bringing supplies to his older brothers fighting the Philistines, hears the challenge of Goliath at whose words "all the Israelites . . . fled from his face, fearing him exceedingly" (I Kings 17.24). After his boast of defeating the giant and when David is brought before King Saul and volunteers again to fight Goliath in single combat, he must overcome the king's initial refusal and then shed the overly large armor that Saul offers. Unlike the king and the Hebrew men, David displays heroic courage by facing the scorn and menacing curses of the towering warrior. After boldly answering them with his own declaration of purpose, David "prevailed over the Philistine, with a sling and a stone, and he struck, and slew the Philistine" (I Kings 17.50). With his stunning victory, all Israel celebrates, and David achieves heroic fame.

Like David, Beowulf faces a seemingly impossible foe. Displaying a similar confidence to David's, the Geatish warrior refuses conventional weaponry for his fight with Grendel. He prefers to rely on his gift of a mighty arm. After a bloody struggle in which the monster loses both claw and arm to the strong arm of the warrior, "Bēowulfe wearð / gūðhrēð ġyfeþe. / Scolde Grendel þonan / feorhsēoc fle͡ōn (*Beowulf,* Klaeber lines 818b-820a). (Beowulf possessed the glory in battle granted by fate, and Grendel had to flee from there mortally wounded.) Beowulf, too, is rewarded with victory. His fame quickly spreads and he is also celebrated by all the people. However, Beowulf must face a second, unexpected battle. He will need even more courage in the fight with Grendel's mother in her underwater lair, a much more hostile environment in which to fight than Hrothgar's Heorot. In addition to the curse of Cain that she and Grendel share, she is driven by maternal rage: "ond his mōdor þā ġȳt / ġīfre ond galgmōd

ġegān wolde / sorhfulne sīð, sunu dēoð wrecan" (*Beowulf*, Klaeber lines 1276b-1278). (and then his mother, greedy and gloomy, and yet grief-filled, desired to cry out and go avenge her son's death.) Beowulf's courage holds, and again he is victorious. Just as David celebrated many battle victories, Beowulf returns to Heorot with more glory and given an even bigger celebration. Medieval kings could look to Judeo-Christian scriptures as well as ancient Anglo-Saxon tales for instances of heroes displaying great courage when they faced battles with hopeless odds.

The second admirable practice of David and Beowulf mentioned by Orchard and applicable to Anglo-Saxon kings and later is that both young heroes are presented as acknowledging a role of God in their victories. David boldly predicts to King Saul that "The Lord, who delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear . . . will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine" (I Kings 17.37). He also seems to reference this early victory later in a chapter of the Psalms labeled "A psalm of David against Goliath." David gives praise to God: "Blessed be the Lord, my God, who teacheth my hands to fight, and my fingers to war. I will sing praises to thee. Who . . . hast redeemed thy servant David from the malicious sword" (Ps. 148.1, 9b-10). Bravery and acknowledging God's power not only give him victory over Goliath, but they will lead to David's future survival from the attacks of the jealous King Saul and to eventual kingship. Beowulf also understands God's role. In a comment he makes before his fight with Grendel just after a bedtime boast, he acknowledges who will control the outcome of the battle: "'ond siþðan wītiġ God / on swā hwæþere hond, hāliġ dryhten / mǣrðo dēme, swā him ġemet þinċe'" (*Beowulf*, Klaeber lines 685b-687). (and then wise God, the holy Lord, will assign glory into whichever hand seems to him as most proper.) Just as King David, Beowulf survives many more battles and enjoys a long reign as king. Kings in medieval England

could also use great courage and the practice of dependence on God to work for battle success and long reigns.

Although often used as exemplars for positive heroic or godly qualities, Beowulf, David, and another famous literary hero, King Arthur, also serve as a warning of the vast damage that results when kings make poor, immoral, or indefensibly evil decisions. Besserman connects King David to King Arthur as he is presented in Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur.* Besserman notes first one significant and complimentary parallel between King Arthur and King David—both are named by Malory as one of the "Nine Worthies," a later medieval creation of three sets of heroes from Jewish, pagan, and Christian periods (Shepherd 13). Many chronicles provide evidence for why Arthur is included in that list. For example, Arthur single-handedly gains victory at the Battle of Badon against huge odds, ranging from seventy enemies up to eight-hundred-forty. He is also interpreted by them as a Christian king based on his encouragement, as presented in Layamon's *Brut*, to his men to fight in Christ's name against Christ's enemies (Dean 10-12). Arthurian tales present Christianity as an integral part of the kingdom.

As David and Arthur age, however, neither can live up to the highest ideals of their positions. Just as the moral contradictions of David's life developed, especially concerning his adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, Uriah, so King Arthur demonstrates the "moral complexity" of demonstrating both admirable and unadmirable qualities. King Arthur, himself born illegitimately from a deceit-based affair between King Uther and Queen Igrayne, wife of the Duke of Tyntagil, repeats the adultery in his generation of Mordred with Morgawse, the wife of King Lott. He adds the sin of incest since she is also his half-sister. Both David and Arthur show the complications and negative results of being known adulterers (Besserman 23, 115-120, 132; Malory 30). In response to his sin, King David deeply repents and humbly submits

to the penance prophesied by Nathan which results in their child's death, family disruption, and rebellion by Absolom. Although King Arthur does not repent, he suffers severe consequences as well, when Mordred's treason results in the downfall of the kingdom.

Following the example of David, some medieval kings offered penance for their sins of excessive violence and disloyalty to kin in the form of donations of lands to the church. Stafford cites two such possible examples. The Anglo-Saxon King Æthelread founded or re-founded Cholsey in the early 990s at least partly "for the soul of his murdered brother, King Edward" and in response to rumors of the involvement in that death of the dowager queen—who was also his mother. A second case is that of the Norman King Henry I (r. 1100-1135) who lost his only son and heir, William, in the wreck of the White Ship. Several near contemporary sources reported the tragic loss of the heir "as a punishment for sin," ranging from the drunken behavior of those on board the ship to the multiple illegitimate children and multiple cruelties of Henry. Though not naming Henry, William of Malmesbury "explicitly connects [the foundation of Reading Abbey] to the king's penance in 1121" (Stafford, "*Cherchez la femme*" 20-22). Moral models of piety and reward as well as lessons in penance and consequences for failures are clear in these stories that kings and queens could apply to themselves in the ruling choices they faced.

Royal Inaugurations

Once Christian kings and queens were married, royal coronations provided them with powerful occasions to present themselves as worthy Christian rulers for their kingdoms. As in marriage negotiations, medieval church leaders and rulers looked to biblical precedents for authorization and practices of coronation services. Johanna Dale reports various interpretations by commentators as to how the Bible imbues the concept of inaugurations with religious significance. One of the earliest and most direct parallels is when the prophet Samuel, following

the clear instruction of the Lord, bypasses all the elder sons of Jesse to choose the youngest son, David, as Israel's next king. In recognition of God's selection, Samuel "took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward" (I Kings 16.12-13). For both the Jews and medieval Christians, this ritual anointing transformed a person from his or her previous status to that of a ruler with divine appointment.

A New Testament biblical parallel developed from the sacrament of baptism. In answering his own question to the Romans about whether they understand that baptism involves death and new life, the apostle Paul explains, "For we are buried together with [Christ] by baptism unto death: that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6.3-4). Here, the miracle of new life that baptism provides through God's grace to the new believer is applied to the coronation anointing which elevates a king or queen into a divinely approved new life with an elevated status and new responsibilities. Perhaps the most obvious intention of the church to centralize the religious aspect of king- and queen-making is seen in how the church shaped the inauguration through the following centuries. As reported by Dale, church leaders developed the coronation consecration service as a presentation of a religious ceremony with "striking similarities" to episcopal inaugurations (29-30). The biblical examples of being chosen by God and entering a new life as a ruler acting in submission to God helped give the ceremony its rationale and form.

In their inauguration ceremonies, queens received gender-specific role models from the Hebrew bible. For instance, in the coronation guide of 855 for the marriage of Judith (circa 844-870) to Æthelwulf (r. 839-855), Queen Esther is mentioned twice as an exemplar to the new queen. First, she is part of a list of other biblical women whom the queen should consider as chaste wives including Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Judith, Anna, and Naomi. Later, a prayer

celebrates Esther for her own prayers which "inclined the savage heart of the king towards mercy and salvation" (Klein, *Ruling Women* 165, 250n9). The direct mention of biblical role models in the queen's rite demonstrates the strong religious leadership that the queen promised. A queen should see herself and is presented to the contemporary audience of ecclesiastics and nobles as continuing the faith demonstrated by the heroines and holy women of biblical renown.

The affirmations from scripture, exposition from church leaders, and the ruler's participation in a ritual centered on his or her divine appointment was important. But approval from lay people remained significant as well. The group of lay witnesses, including knights and barons, shouted an acclamation of agreement and allegiance as part of the inauguration ceremony that became a standard practice (Nelson, "Early Medieval Rites" 118). Thus, people of all classes could consider the inauguration as valid. Royal subjects could see their support of the new ruler as following the will of the church and the will of God. The many religious elements of the service encourage such an interpretation.

Parts of the ceremonies developed with many additions over the centuries, but at their core, the consecrations remained a political and religious promise between ruler and ruled and, at least in most cases, were the last official step to be approved by their subjects and their church to begin an official reign. L. G. W. Legg illustrates the importance of the ceremony and the confusion that can result from the mix of several terms: "It is the consecration, or, as Adamnan calls it, an ordination. Henceforth, by virtue of his unction, the King was not merely a layman as before, but what Lyndewode calls a *persona mixta*, for he partakes of the character of a clerk as well as a layman" (xvi). For more clarity, a few terms understood by medieval leaders need to be defined to help understand the different elements of the ceremony. Although the term *coronation* has come to refer to the entire process of the ritual of king- and queen-making, some medieval

writers used that term interchangeably with *consecration* and sometimes *anointing.* In this study, as suggested by Dale, *consecration* refers to the service held inside the church which includes, among other rituals, liturgy, prayers, anointing and crowning which emphasize the religious transformation of the king or queen. It was often used as such by many medieval writers. An *ordo* or *ordine* is a rubric or guide for the church leader in charge of the service and different versions were created and adapted during the Middle Ages. *Anointing*, also called *unction*, is the act of a bishop or archbishop pouring oil that has been blessed by the bishop onto the heads of the rulers and dabbing it on other places, such as their shoulders and hands (Dale 141). Unlike in France, an English queen was not excluded from the most sacred act of anointing (Earenfight, *Queenship* 155). Dale, who has extensively researched the twelfth-century ceremony, uses the term *inauguration* when referring to the overall ritual that first declared the king and queen rulers (141). I follow her recommendation in this analysis.

She explains the specific consecration as a liturgical "framework" composed of the "building blocks" of prayers, blessings, and descriptive rubrics that could be variously arranged and to which other elements, such as music and comments, could easily be added (26-7). Dale reports that early and later secondary sources, such as Legg and Nelson, emphasize that just because an item is listed in an ordo did not guarantee that it was performed at each consecration. Each version is generic enough that it could be used for multiple ceremonies and officiants could adapt freely. Also, many elements familiar to all participants might not be included (233-34). As the development of additional *ordine* recensions indicates, the royal inauguration became ever more important for rulers during the Middle Ages.

Available records show that inauguration practices developed unevenly during the early medieval period. Two examples of early yet unusually extravagant inaugurations of

Northumbrian kings are reported by Story. In 781, King Ecgfrith, son of King Offa (r. 757-796) is reported in the *ASC* as having a more developed ceremony than was usual, but that was also patterned after that of Charlemagne. The reason appears to be an unsuccessful attempt to secure his future succession while his father, Offa, was still alive. Later, King Eardwulf (r.796-808) had "an elaborate kingmaking ceremony held in the presence of the four highest-ranking clergymen of the kingdom . . . complete with ideological overtones of the divine confirmation of kingship" (57-58). In later centuries, inaugurations evolved into frequent grand occasions including political, social, and religious allusions. Whether simple or complex, whenever the ceremonies did occur, rulers' participation in the religious service demonstrated their support of Christianity and agreement with partnering with the church for their ruling authority.

Although the archbishop of Canterbury had traditional rights to officiate at coronations, the circumstances of a particular king's coronation were often dictated politically by the speed with which he could find a suitably high church official to agree to crown him before a rival claimant became crowned. For instance, King William I (r. 1066-1087) was crowned by Archbishop Ealdred of York, because Archbishop Stigand of Canterbury had not yet received the pallium from the pope (Chibnall 39). William also did not wait for his wife, Matilda I of Flanders to be anointed. She joined him more than a year after his victory over England for her own bigger celebration of crowning and consecration. Taking place on Whitsunday in May, 1068, Matilda's inauguration is described as "an elaborate ceremony at Westminster presided over by the archbishop of York (Huneycutt, *Matilda of Scotland* 50-51, 53). Another example shows both church and timing concerns; King Henry I (r. 1100-1137) needed to be crowned while Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury remained on the continent in self-imposed exile. However, the king knew society's expectations for approval by the church (Chibnall 67). In his

case, the king arranged for a speedier consecration from Bishop Maurice of London (Brett 69). Four months later in November 1100, Edith/Matilda II of Scotland became Henry's wife and his queen at Westminster Abbey, both ceremonies officiated by Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury (Huneycutt, *Matilda of Scotland* 29). For kings securing the throne, both urgency to claim the throne along with a desire to obtain church approval often seem uppermost in their minds.

The rite of consecration of a king and queen developed in England with strong influences from church leaders there in Britain and on the continent. For instance, the *Laudes regiae* of the Anglo-Norman kings' coronations showed similarities with earlier manuscripts from Rouen in Normandy (Kantorowicz 171n62). Nelson concludes that the Anglo-Saxon *ordine* is the earliest coronation text of the western continental kingdoms, but she also discusses its connection to Frankish *ordines.* She describes the "distinctive and purpose-built" English features of the *First Ordo* used for King Æthelwulf and his Frankish Queen Judith, and his four sons: Æthelbald (855/856/858), Æthelberht (856/858), Æthelread (865), and Alfred (871). In this relatively early guide, the coronation sounds straightforward—the available church leader of highest rank placed a helmet on the head of the king, the people affirmed their approval with a shout, and leading church officials kissed the new king. Legg demonstrates the similarities of early Christian consecrations of kings and bishops (xvii). Later recensions demonstrate new developments. Nelson argues for a first use of the *Second Ordo* for the consecration of King Æthelstan in 925. Differences include a crown which replaces the helmet and the addition of the regnal ring, sword, and rod. Interestingly, an *ordo* for the queen appears in this same *Second Ordo* even though King Æthelstan was not married when he was consecrated; scholars believe that could have been added as a supplement. ("First Use" 118, 122, 125; Dale 31). This and later *ordine* recensions are part of the evidence that kings and, increasingly, queens deliberately sought

approval of the church. The church played a crucial part of demonstrating kings' and queens' worthiness and legitimacy to rule.

Of all the specific rituals practiced during an inauguration, the anointing is traditionally viewed as the specific act which creates a king or queen. Medieval belief was that the ritual literally and symbolically elevated a ruler to a unique position of honor and responsibility. One indication of the importance of anointing is indicated by the myth created by King Alfred (r. West Saxon 871-886, Anglo-Saxon 886-899) that he had been anointed by the pope when he was only four years old in about 856 (Nelson, "Early Medieval Rites" 56, 45). If true, the blessing of the pope could have helped him claim the West Saxon throne even though his brother and immediate predecessor, Æthelread I, had two underage sons, Æthelhelm and Æthelwold. In addition, Alfred had three other older brothers who had previously stated no desire to be king, but attitudes could change as circumstances changed. When Alfred did succeed, the story of an early anointing by the pope could only enhance his claims and perhaps provide justification for his change of mind.

The king's coronation oath, probably recorded by Archbishop Dunstan of Canterbury (d. 988) but likely based on previous oaths and copied in the mid-eleventh century manuscript, included three promises: "First, that the Church of God and all the Christian people preserve true peace at all times. Secondly, that he forbid rapacity and all iniquities to all degrees. Thirdly, that in all judgments he enjoin equity and mercy, that therefore the clement and merciful God may grant us his mercy" (Legg 13). The church and the people are promised that the king will work toward peace which will provide both groups with the protection and stability to flourish. The second promise encompasses words that imply secular crimes and religious sins. The king will work to reduce both types of offenses which harm other subjects and the individual subject. Dale

notes that religious focus is given first place in the order, and the two other promises connect to religious practices by prohibiting sins harmful to self and others (46). The final item of the king's oath includes the biblical and secular values of justice and mercy. Germanic custom used vengeance, wergild, and political marriages for harm suffered as forms of justice and peace-making within and between tribes. Previous examples discussed from *Beowulf* of the failure of these methods with fatal consequences, such as Hildburh's and Freawaru's inadequate diplomatic and political marriages, illustrate the limits of that custom. The English king's oath, however, makes it clear that both justice and mercy are the king's responsibility. The third promise is for "equity and mercy" in the king's rulings; it also specifically ties their fulfillment as required in order for God to show his mercy to the kingdom and its ruler.

As Christianity was introduced in late sixth and seventh centuries in England, the Bible offered its ten commandments given to Moses as a model for justice. Meanwhile, the English medieval king's leadership role meant he was responsible for establishing it. Bede describes the law of King Æthelberht as a code modeled on that of the Romans, but the one he actually describes is the rule of punishment for those who steal from the church (*EH* II.5). This demonstrates the effect that the king's conversion had on the laws he made. As Christianity spread, biblical models for kingly traits became common. Once again, following great success in defeating the tribes surrounding Israel and upon the blessing of the prophet Nathan, King David is a role model for kingly justice: "So David reigned over all Israel, and executed judgment and justice among all his people" (I Paralipomenon [I Chron.] 14.1-2, 14). As seen in kings' charters, oaths, and ceremonies, the power to establish and maintain justice often seems a foundational request and expectation of medieval society. Mercy is another secular practice as seen in the pardons granted by medieval kings, but also develops more precedence from examples in the

Bible. Again, it is David who pleads with God to "Remember, O Lord, thy bowels of compassion: and thy mercies that are from the beginning of the world" (Psalm 24.6). For rulers who looked to God's treatment of his people, the scriptures show that justice and mercy are described as two of the Lord's fundamental qualities.

In pre-Christian works such as *Beowulf*, swords were considered literally and symbolically to be weapons for justice and victory in battle. Christianity developed the idea that the sword could also possess religious meaning. Swords could be used for secular and religious justice. Textual confirmation of the developing significance of both virtues for rulers comes in the reports of medieval coronations in the fifteenth-century procession charter roll and an eighteenth- or nineteenth-century transcript from the procession of King Henry VI. One short, blunted sword called *Curtana* is mentioned at the coronation of Queen Eleanor in 1154. As its lack of length and rounded shape demonstrate, it is a sword representing mercy. In 1189, the three swords that are carried in front of King Richard I upon his entry into Westminster represent the king's mercy, the king's justice, and the king's protection of the church's spiritual values. The 1399 record of the consecration of King Henry IV, however, mentions only two, a symbolic sword of justice and a sword of the church. Only in the 1429 consecration of King Henry VI are the meanings of the swords reported as settling into what became the standard display of three swords for the three primary responsibilities (Legg xxv). These swords in the inauguration ceremonies took a weapon of battle and expanded its meaning to represent both secular and religious rule.

The promise of leading the spiritual needs of the kingdom is also modeled in records of King David. He shows the importance of a king fully supporting the work of God when he is enormously generous in the preparation for the building of a permanent temple for the Lord.

Following a chapters-long list of specific donations, David declares, “I, with all my ability, have prepared the expenses for the house of my God,” and all of the gathered leaders follow his generosity in giving “for the works of the house of the Lord” (I Paralipomenon [I Chron.] 29.2a, 6-7a). Although these few mentions of coronation reports and of biblical texts do not give a clear picture of how the swords’ usage developed nor the extent of the biblical exhortations for justice, mercy, and Christian generosity to the church, they do make clear that these virtues featured prominently from the beginning of many English kings’ reigns as their duty and responsibility. As the practice of royal intercession will demonstrate in a later discussion, queens became important in helping the kings to balance justice with mercy.

Queens’ coronation ceremonies seem to have religious meaning from the beginning of their use. Klein notes that the content of queens’ coronations in the early Middle Ages were modeled after rituals used for establishing an abbess; she interprets the ceremony as a prominent way queens affirmed and promoted Christianity in its early development (2). Not all queens were officially inaugurated. For example, Nelson cites Asser, the *ASC*, and the West Frankish *Annals of St. Bertin* to show that King Æthelwulf’s (r. 839-858) first wife, Osburh, did not have the status of queen although she came from a noble lineage. But for his second wife: “‘Æthelwulf…conferred on Judith the title of queen’” (*Rulers and Ruling Families in Medieval Europe* 54-55). This particular case appears to be influenced by conflicting situations pitting a long Wessex tradition of not crowning queens against the insistence of twelve-year-old Judith’s father, Charles the Bald, that the great age disparity between Judith and Charles required additional status for the bride’s protection.

Other courts took notice and began to use inaugurations for queens more frequently. In the ninth century, kings and queens staged “more elaborate coronations, and the practice of

anointing a queen began to take hold" (Earenfight, *Queenship* 19). In the tenth century, the zeal to reform the monasteries based on the Benedictine rule had a marked effect on the role of queenship in the church. Debate remains on whether and to what extent these reforming changes helped or hindered a queens' agency and power, but the increasing size of the audience for rituals of consecration and anointing proclaimed to contemporaries the importance of a queen's public role generally. Klein explains that part of queens' piety included "proseltyzing" for Christ. She cites the prayer of late Anglo-Saxon *ordines* which begins "receive this ring of faith" and specifies its meaning as a call for the queen to reject heresy and to call "barbarian peoples to the power of God" (68). In an earlier reference to a ring of faith, in Ælfric's "Life of St. Agnes," the thirteen-year-old Agnes claims that her heavenly lover, Christ, has given her "his geleafan hring me let to wedde" (*Lives of Saints*, 2: 172). (His ring of faith to me as a pledge to marry.) This claim is part of her sermon-like rejection of the son of Sempronius, prefect of Rome, as an earthly suitor. Her rejection eventually leads to her martyrdom. Although a medieval queen did not reject marriage to an earthly king, the consecration ring of faith can refer to her solemn pledge of being faithful to God and his command to spread the gospel in her new capacity as queen. This century also saw the queen's role specified as the guardian of monastic nuns agreed to at a church synod in Winchester and confirmed in the text of the *Regularis Concordia* which is discussed next. In her coronation, the role of queen is repeatedly described as being grounded in Christianity and for a religious purpose.

As the number of coronations gradually increased, they also grew in complexity with the addition of more religious elements. In 973, King Edgar participated in a second consecration at Bath, with its Roman imperial resonance, at the same time as the inauguration of his third wife Queen Ælfthryth (Stafford, *Unification and Conquest* 53). Anointed by Archbishop Dunstan, the

couple's ceremony is described as a clear development with more "formality and liturgical significance of ceremonies" (Huneycutt, *Matilda of Scotland* 35n16). These trends indicate that both kings and queens agreed to follow the church leaders' encouragement and direction to publicly tie their rulership to sacred responsibility, all presided over by the church.

As time passed and potential rulers came from foreign lands, the significance of inauguration increased. Post-conquest, Chibnall notes that "for a hundred years after the Norman Conquest it was doubly important for the reigning king to uphold the legitimacy of his rule. . . . Coronation and unction, long important to set the seal on succession to the throne, might seem in [certain] circumstances actually to make a king" (57). By 1100, the queen was regularly crowned and consecrated in a religious ceremony (Earenfight, *Queenship* 120). As an indication of the importance of producing an heir, by the late medieval era, English queens' coronation rites also included official duties of maternity and intercession (Earenfight, *Queenship* 7). Considering the broader western tradition including the continent and eastern Europe in countries such as Poland, Earenfight concludes that in "most . . . parts of Europe, the queen's coronation became the key to legitimizing a king's family as a dynasty" (*Queenship* 239). Both kings and queens were naturally concerned with producing an heir, but queens' consecration services focused more on this aspect post-Conquest than those of the Anglo-Saxon period.

The queens themselves contributed to the development of their inaugurations. By the fourteenth-century, the queens' wealth became more stable with the formalization of the "queen's gold." What had begun as a payment to queens in return for their intercessions became a so-called voluntary, ten percent tax paid to the queen on top of fines paid to the king. This essentially transformed their intercessions into a revenue stream (Tingle, "*Aurum"* 78). Also, a queen's wealth, such as property and goods, became more regularly passed down to the next

queen. These developments meant the queens could contribute to their own coronation ceremonies as they became more public, more "elaborate," and lasted over multiple days (Earenfight, *Queenship* 187). The duty of producing an heir continued to play a large part of the queen's inauguration to emphasize that this most desired of divine, royal blessings relied on an officially blessed queen. To the public, such extravagant productions and processions displayed king and queen as the inevitable, chosen and approved couple whose family should rule the kingdom.

Although the church bishops and archbishops led the increasingly religious parts of the coronation, the royals chose to cooperate with the dramatic rituals that publicly and visibly initiated them into sacred rulership. For example, when Matilda II was crowned immediately following her marriage to Henry I (r. 1100-1135), she prostrated herself before the altar, accepted anointing with oil and a ring of faith—all religious actions which Henry himself had undergone at his own coronation. Mathilda's promise to be a good queen included many religious duties, such as loyalty to and financial support of the church, care for the poor and sick, and intercessions with the king for her subjects. As a result of her pious decisions, her religious influence spread far beyond the influence she likely could have exerted as the royal nun that some had accused her of being before her marriage (Klein 14). Taking on multiple spiritual roles increased the importance of the queen in maintaining a harmonious reign. As the coronation ceremonies became more open to observation by members of the aristocracy and to ever more rulers from other kingdoms who came to observe and celebrate, the importance of the rulers' religious responsibilities became ever more obvious and formal.

Throughout the Middle Ages in England, any coronation, consecration, or anointing ceremony featured a much larger part for the king than the queen as it grew to include more

music and prayers. In the English *Second Ordo,* composed in the late ninth century, according to David Pratt and Janet Nelson, the king performs eleven rituals including prostration before the altar and the oath while the queen participates in three. In the *Third Ordo,* composed sometime in the first third of the twelfth century, the king's ritual has grown to fifteen elements while the queen's ritual has added only one additional blessing The three elements both royals share, however, are the ones that are central to the meaning of the consecration. Both king and queen are anointed with blessed oil, receive the ring of faith, and are crowned by the archbishop or other high church leader. The anointings indicate that both king and queen have been divinely chosen by God and miraculously changed to live on a higher, spiritual level. The rings of faith connect both spouses to Christ as *the* beloved spouse. Their crowns of gold and jewels indicate the honor they deserve and which they also promise to uphold during their reign (Dale 229-231, 233-34). Coronation *ordines* provide textual evidence that its rites grew in religious rhetoric and in increased responsibilities for kings and queens which commonly followed traditional gender expectations. The inclusion of public processions meant that the performance helped to establish royal rulership and to create its legitimacy and influence. By both king and queen participating in an increasingly religious inauguration, more of their subjects could understand that their rulers committed themselves as protectors and sustainers of Christianity.

Royals as Religious Leaders

In spite of such growing cooperation between rulers and church, Viking invasions seriously disrupted church operations in the ninth and early tenth centuries. As a result, many aspects of church life declined. In the mid-tenth century, however, King Edgar (r. 959-975) and Archbishop Dunstan of Canterbury exemplify a close working relationship between ecclesiastic leadership and king in matters both secular and religious in order to address the growing

frequency and length of the invaders' disruptions. Following other reformers on the Continent, they formulated a plan to build up and reorganize regular monasticism, choosing to base many modifications upon the sixth-century rule of St. Benedict of Nursia (480-487) (Brown 118-119). This transformation was the result of a "potent combination of kingly and archiespiscopal power" and "even revived again post-Conquest in the latter quarter of the eleventh century under the Conqueror and Archbishop Lanfranc of Canterbury" (Brett 65). Such powerful king and church relationships illustrate the way that the Christian church survived and grew even during attacks from abroad.

Queens came to provide more visible Christian influence as well. Written evidence provides one key document that records how both kings and queens became situated as Christian leaders. As the church organized and formed groups, some created guides for rituals and customs; this type of instruction was called a *consuetudinary*. These guides provide information on the forms of worship and the aspirational values of the group for which they were written. One of the most recognized of the English guides is the *De Regularis Concordia Anglicae Nationis Monachorum Sanctimonialiumque* (*The Monastic Agreement of the Monks and Nuns of the English Nation*) (*RC*), written most likely between 970-973. Bishop Æthelwold wrote the text in the name of King Edgar (r. 959-975), but it is generally considered largely to be influenced by the thoughts of Archbishop Dunstan (Symon, *RC* 1n3). The text of the *RC* provides its own history as well as being a unique contribution to the genre. The text presents monarchy and church in the most positive terms. King Edgar is described as having felt a strong sense of divine matters beginning at a young age, which he retained as an adult and acted upon during his rule. He called for a Synod at Winchester in 970 to continue the reforming of monasteries under the Benedictine rule. This rule became the most influential of the monastic rules in the Christian

west and was known for its moderate simplicity and maintaining of a schedule that included work as well as prayers (Hollister 43). In addition to the rule itself, the Winchester council happened because the king and his church leaders desired an oral and written agreement of a standard rule for religious communities to follow. The *Regularis Concordia* is the resulting official document. It is filled with practical details for conducting liturgical services and articulating the roles for benefactors and rulers.

The key passage for examining the relationships of kings and queens is in the *RC's* designation of rulers' responsibility for the religious. In the forward, the king is represented as positioning himself and his queen over monks and nuns, respectively:

> Cynelicre witudlice gebrocen þinunge swa swa hydra hyrde carful from reaflum ortrywra geaglum swylce gynigendum wulfa gomum + gracum þa sceap þe drihtnes forgyfendre gyfe geornfull he gega derude bewerigende he generude & his gemæccean Ælfþryþe mynecyna mynsterclusan swa unearges mid gewunan hyrdes heo bewerude swyþe wærlice he bebead þæt witudlice wæpnmann wifmann wifmannum buton ænigre wenan twynunge gehelpe. (*RC*, Kornexl, sec. 3 lines 25-33)[5]

(Fittingly, just as the guardian king is anxious to use intercession to protect the place they [monks] live from the plunder and treacherous gaping jaws of the wolves' mouths those sheep of the Lord that he gave you to gather, in like manner, he is desirous of and commands his consort Ælfthryth to protect the monastic enclosures of the nuns so that she, together with the shepherd king protecting the men, will truly defend and preserve the women without any doubt of their morals.)

This short passage sets out the king's responsibility to actively protect the monks of the Lord and their dwellings from robbery and deadly enemies. Likewise, Queen Ælfthryth is ordered to guard the nuns' dwellings and their reputations. As part of his royal position, King Edgar claims authority to set the rulers at the top of the church's hierarchy to guard and provide

[5] All Old English passages from *RC* are from the Kornexl edition.

for the reformed monasteries. The writer uses a biblical analogy: like Christ, the Shepherd protecting his sheep from wolves, the king is the good protector who saves the religious from those desecrating or destroying the places built for the devout. Stafford describes the accepted elevated status of the king's position: "theocratic, sacral, regal, the king was not as other laymen; his responsibilities for the Church set him apart as different, legitimate, and acceptable" ("Queens, Nunneries, and Reforming Churchmen" 21). The writer of the *Regularis Concordia* gives King Edgar credit for restoring monasteries and minsters by ridding them of "gymeleasra preosta fylþum" (*RC,* sec. 2 line 20). (of the negligent, immoral priests.) The *ASC* provides more information about who the wicked wolves were that monks and nuns needed to be protected from, and who managed the "renewal." At Winchester in 963, Bishop Æthelwold drove out the secular priests from the bishopric because they "would hold no rule" and replaced them with monks and nuns (*ASC Online*). The next year he received permission from King Edgar to buy all the minsters that had been "destroyed by the heathen" to restore them for the use of monks and nuns. This refers to the Vikings who had destroyed churches and religious communities during their raids which began in the late eighth century. King Edgar also expelled secular priests from the old minster, the new minster, Chertsey, and Milton (*ASC Online s.a*. 964). In the context of the Benedictine Reform, the wolves often refer to the married secular clergy, church officials who have not vowed to live by a standard rule and have not made the monastic vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience. Their devotion and standards, therefore, could more easily become tainted by misuse or open corruption of church resources for personal benefit. Such judgments that those choosing the monastic life were more holy and ranked higher in religious status became so common that many secular clerics are presented to be as dangerous to the monastic

religious as wolves are to their prey. As a result, one major aspect of the reform aimed to return godly management to church establishments by replacing the secular clergy with monks.

After the dramatic analogy of devouring wolves, the writer of the text then declares—twice—that the role of protective leadership extends to the queen so that, together, the rulers can ensure the good reputation of nuns and monks. This inclusion of the queen is given historical context by Stafford who situates her role as part of "the great century in the history of English queenship" which included Queens Eadgifu, Ælfthryth, Emma and Edith between the 940's and the 1060s ("Queens, Nunneries, and Reforming Churchmen" 21). For its immediate medieval audience, however, the *RC* lays out the reform structure, services, and ideals in what is a rationale and a rubric for more standardized and properly authorized services and roles in English monasteries.

The striking feature of this consuetudinary is the inclusion of queen and king in each part of the text. The rule shows intentional integration of the rulers, along with reference to benefactors, in every liturgical office throughout the day except one. In addition to their designation over monks and nuns, the forward declares that monastic leaders should "eadmodlice togan" (RC, sec. 10 lines 160-161) (humbly access) the king and queen for their requests and, in fact, should consult no one else. The rulers will use their power "oft framige to haliges mystres þam hi ofersint note mid godes ege" (*RC*, sec. 10 lines 158b-161a). (often to profit the holy mother Church and, with benefit, protect those in office with their overwhelming influence.) Thus, ideally the king and queen will maintain regular contact with the religious for their benefit. Within the agreement, the rulers are prayed for after each office, almost all of which consist of Psalms. The content of the texts varies and includes penitential requests and references to requests that fit the gender of each royal. For example, after Mass, the king's prayer asks that

"the Lord fulfill all thy petitions now have I known that the Lord hath saved his anointed" (Psalm 19; *RC*, sec. 24 lines 483-484). The queen's prayer uses female comparison: "As the eyes of the handmaid are on the hands of her mistress: so are our eyes unto the Lord our God, until he have mercy on us" (Psalm 122: 2b; *RC*, sec. 24 line 484). The king is acknowledged as being chosen with the same authority as biblical anointing. The queen is compared to a servant girl attentive for the least expression from her mistress for instruction; likewise, the queen will watch the Lord just as carefully for his expressions of mercy.

After Sext, the Psalms are applied to both king and queen. Psalm 66 acknowledges the Lord as creator, as establishing his throne with justice, and warning against those who glory in idols. The daughters of Judah rejoice since the Lord is above all gods (*RC*, sec. 25 lines 512-513). Again these prayers are providing direct parallels to the justice role for the king, to the rulers' duties to serve only the true God, and to the joy that follows such beliefs. The second Psalm after Sext concerns future generations: "Let these things be written unto another generation: and the people that shall be created shall praise the Lord . . . The children of thy servants shall continue: and their seed shall be directed for ever" (Psalm 101.4, 29; *RC*, sec. 25 lines 512-513). This prayer is directed to the rulers' dynastic concerns and offers them a promise or at least a hope that their blood line can be future rulers for generations. After None, the prayers address difficult relations with other tribes and pleas for forgiveness and "plentiful redemption" (Psalm 79.6a; 129.4a,7b; *RC*, sec. 25 line 522). Psalms 84 and 142, chanted after Vespers, deal with similar themes (*RC*, sec. 25 lines 534). Prayers after Compline ask for shame for those that come for the Psalmist's soul, and acknowledge the Lord as his helper, the one who never slumbers, and a blessing for the Lord to keep "thy going in and thy coming out" (Psalm 69:2b, Psalm 120.1, 2, 8; *RC* 27 lines 565-566). Overall, these prayers use biblical references to

issues relevant to kings and queens: justice, enemies, offspring, mercy, and acknowledgement of the Lord as sovereign, helper, and savior.

This amount of inclusion of the royal couple is unique to this English consuetudinary (Symon, *RC* 14 n.3). The rulers are continuously lifted up in the prayers of the priests throughout their liturgical services. Stafford notes that in this instance the reformers "stressed the equivalence of king and queen in regality…emphasizing their common lordship" ("Queens, Nunneries, and Reforming Churchmen" 21). This document records the religious position of both rulers as rightly being over the religious class, responsible for its protection and growth, and remembered with Psalms that relate to their concerns. As a result of the rulers' protection and assistance, "the fathers and mothers of monasteries were to seek the lordship of the king and queen" (Stafford, "Queens, Nunneries, and Reforming Churchmen" 3). The hundreds of prayers said by the monks and nuns on behalf of the king and queen presumedly benefitted the couple in the afterlife. In earthly life, this also meant that overall royal authority extended beyond the religious houses that the royals founded to all of the monasteries in the kingdom.

As usual in a text written and approved by those whose interests are at stake, the *RC* does not present actual reality. Later scholarship shows that at least some of the religious young women needed protecting from King Edgar himself, with stories and rumors of his sexual indiscretions with young women in the monasteries becoming more well known in the eleventh and twelfth centuries (Yorke, "The Women," 143-45; 150-57). William of Malmesbury gives examples of Edgar's many sexual indiscretions which resulted in a seven-year penance that included not wearing a crown (160). Joyce Hill notes that the guide's application was never as regionally universal as the title implies nor were its prescriptions closely followed for long (153-54). In a larger reality, leaders of both church and state each claimed a superior position in

relation to the other which led to lengthy, serious conflicts about whether royal or church leaders appointed and consecrated church personnel. Nevertheless, the *Regularis Concordia* provides evidence of just how the queen, as well as the king, aspired to and believed in roles and responsibilities that set them apart from other members of the religious and the ruling classes.

The king, however, did receive extra attention in the agreement. After morrow mass, which is the monastery mass held in the early morning, the king alone is prayed for with two additional psalms and one collect. For those who refer to the guide later, Æthelwold specifies the overall manner of these prayers. In a tone which recognizes the human tendency to rush through rituals, he cautions that prayers for the King and benefactors should not be sung "mid micelre swifnysse" (with much speed.) Rather, they should be sung "todælendlice" so that "geþangc" and "stæfne" "geþwærige" (*RC*, sec. 8 line 113-114). (mind [and] voice agree.) The writer wants the ones who pray to be conscious of the high status of the subjects of these prayers. The ideal is that prayers for the souls of the king and queen be expressed in an attentive, reverent manner as is fitting for those who are responsible for the church's ongoing protection.

Establishing the queen as the guardian of religious women is intended to provide a benefit to them in protection, defense, and patronage. In the main body of the *Regularis Concordi*a, women mentioned in addition to the queen include abbesses and nuns but, as Hill notes, there is no indication that the rituals would need to be different for female monastic houses. She also observes that the nuns remain largely invisible in the main body of the *RC* (153-54). An Old English fragment of the *Regularis Concordia*, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 201, written in an early eleventh-century hand, shows that an adaptation was done for at least the portion which covers from Palm Sunday through part of Good Friday. Hill's examination characterizes the result of that attempt to include nuns as sounding awkward, being incomplete,

and resulting in illogical grammar (158-164). While the nuns' inclusion is not smooth nor complete, many of them at the time of the reform, especially those who had seen their religious homes disappear as a result of Viking invasions or felt unsafe in places run by secular clerics, may have felt grateful for the queen's special sponsorship and hopeful for an improved home to live out their religious vocation.

Later, the royal foundations tied closely to the queen demonstrated advantages and disadvantages for those living in them. For example, the queen might provide gifts and land to enrich the monastery, but she could also interfere with the wishes of the abbess or nuns, or insert herself into conflicts between them. However, for the reformers who created the agreement and for those who heard and read its contents, the protection of the queen set a helpful precedent for roles women could and did play in religious life. The queens' role overseeing female houses proved a major way that they supported Christianity for themselves and other women.

The religious role modeling of English rulers often involved individuals with every bit as contradictory actions as those found in the tales of the biblical King David and the legendary King Arthur. As previously discussed, medieval rulers mostly represented their religious values by outward actions, while their inner motives are almost always unknown, only hinted at, or likely taken with their own interests in mind. One of the more complex cases of trying to untangle inner motivations from seemingly incongruent outward actions is demonstrated in the records of the marriages of two late, pre-Conquest kings to the same queen. Their reigns clearly reveal the lack of political control one Anglo-Saxon king exercised during the Viking incursions and the use of religious representations for mixed reasons. King Æthelread II (r.978-1013, 1014-1016) became known as the "unræd" (ill-advised) king for the way that his armies could not seem to confront the Northern invaders in strategic places nor with brave perseverance. He is

described as religious in the *ASC* only in a report recorded in *MS F* that seems to have been added later than the original entry for 995.

In this case, in pursuit of his wish to expel secular clerks, the newly appointed Archbishop, Ælfric, recruits wise counselors to explain to King Æthelread how St. Augustine first structured Canterbury, emphasizing that monks were established and were meant to be permanent in the see. The king is highly influenced by their words and recommends that Ælfric travel to Rome to consult with the pope and do whatever he advises (Swanton, *ASC*, *s.a.* 995). The king is represented as being attentive to counsel, flexible in his response, and even eager to cooperate with the wishes of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the pope. Æthelread also may have provided his priests with judicial and financial rights in their lands connected to the minster of St. Paul and confirmed the freedom of one hide of land at Chilcomb to Bishop Ælfeah as his ancestors had declared previously (questions remain about the writ's authenticity) (Farmer 236-37, 240-41, 395-96). These few records may indicate minimal church engagement.

Later, after setting aside his first wife, Ælfgifu of York, Æthelread married Lady Emma of Normandy, daughter of Duke Richard I, and they had two sons, Edward and Alfred. In this marriage, both spouses came from powerful families, but Emma chose to connect herself to Æthelread's family in two familial and religious ways. Emma changed her Norman name to Ælfgifu, the name of Æthelread's grandmother who was known as a very pious, even saintly, woman. Stafford notes the deliberate connection of king and new queen to his family: "This unique example of an early English queen changing her name at marriage suggests not only [a] strong dynastic sense but also perhaps the importance in that sense of a saintly female ancestor" ("Portrayal of Royal Women" 152). This new name shows how astutely Queen Emma embedded herself not only in Æthelread II's rulership but in his dynastic past for its religious benefit. By

using the same name as a pious relative of her husband, the queen from Normandy might encourage her subjects to connect her more easily to similar spiritual interests. Even in a later portrait of Emma and her second husband, the Danish King Cnut, she is still identified as Ælfgifu. In both marriages, Queen Emma is intentional in making a royal connection to a recent religious saint.

The *ASC* spends an extraordinary amount of time on the Danish invaders, King Swein and the future King Cnut. Cnut is reported as efficient and ruthless. Dunn notes the several "atrocities" of the Second Viking Age which include the mutilation of ears, noses, and hands of Anglo-Saxon hostages by Cnut and his men on the beach of Sandwich in 1014. She describes this age as "defined by betrayal, broken promises, and brutality" (141). After great suffering throughout the land, the deaths of Swein and Æthelread, and the great diminishment of the best English warriors, "þær ahte Cnut sige & gefeht him ealle Engla þeode" (*MS C*, O'Brien O'Keeffe, *s.a.* 1016). (then Cnut obtained the victory and gained him all the nation of the English.) The Danish victory over the English is noted by Elaine Treharne as "the zenith of the Viking incursions and settlements that had been part of English history since the late eighth century" (269). The chronicle also details how Cnut organizes and metes out harsh punishment and reward to various athelings and ealdormen (*MS D,* Swanton, *s.a.* 1017). Treharne attributes Cnut's 1016 victory to "martial strength; that he held the throne for nearly twenty years . . . is testimony to his sustained political and diplomatic skill" (269). Stafford describes the Danish takeover as "the neglected conquest of eleventh century England" due to a lack of sources compared to the 1066 conquest by William of Normandy, the shorter duration of the Viking conquest, and to the Viking conquest's much smaller effect on the church. By all accounts, however, the conquest was not amicable and Cnut was "murderous" in conquest and in securing

his rule as well as in requiring a huge tribute from the conquered country (*Unification and Conquest* 69-70). As a result, the early years of Cnut's reign were unstable and difficult. These stories and assessments of Cnut's fierce battle tactics and early rule conflict with his later impressive patronage to the church.

Not all of Cnut's actions as conqueror were violent. In one early move to secure his military conquest, he chose an astute if controversial marriage. The last sentence at the end of the *ASC* entry for 1017, switches subject abruptly from war reports to marriage: "& þa toforan Kalendas Agusti het se cynigc fetian him þæs cyniges lafe Æþelrædes him to wife Ricardes dohtor" (*MS C*, O'Brien O'Keeffe). (And then before August the king ordered that the [former] king Æthelread's widow, Richard's daughter, be fetched for him to marry.) This marriage plan is announced within months of King Æthelread's death and the marriage takes place within eighteen months of his passing. Most scholars agree on the political benefit of the Danish Cnut's choice to marry a queen of the previous English ruling dynasty and the sister of the current count of Normandy, a potential rival (Stafford, *Unification and Conquest* 72). More questions, however, coalesce around the widow, Queen Emma, concerning the degree of personal choice she had in the match, the extent of her own political ambitions, and probably mixed inner motivations, illustrated most poignantly in the future mutilation and death of her son Alfred, one of two sons of her marriage with Æthelread II. Nevertheless, this short statement is notable as the first mention in the *ASC* of a royal medieval English couple who, despite the previous brutal battles between English defenders and Danish invaders, chose to join forces of their military, politics, families, and religion.

To what extent could a couple with such a complicated past contribute to Christianity? Despite the problematic history of their union and the harsh tactics of King Cnut in gaining and

keeping England, or perhaps to mitigate these realities, before many years passed in their marriage, Emma and her second husband took several opportunities to patronize the church. They intentionally represented themselves as a strong Christian pair to their court, the church, and society at large. Visual and textual evidence, discussed later, demonstrate these choices. Together, they worked to re-invent themselves as the rightful, Christian leaders of a new dynasty.

Little is known about previous religious interests of Cnut before his marriage to Emma. His grandfather, his father, and he were baptized Christians, but not until four years after taking the throne does evidence indicate that Cnut increased his engagement with Christianity. Specific textual evidence survives in the "Letter to the English," written in 1020 and thought to have been co-written by Cnut and Archbishop Wulfstan of York. Treharne posits that Cnut wrote the first half, so that is what is examined here for its religious context expressed by the king (269). After the greeting, the letter first declares the king's three overall priorities of loyalty: "Ic wylle beon hold hlaford and unswicende to Godes gerihtum and to rihtre woroldlage" ("Cnut's Letter," lines 4-5). (I desire to proclaim [to be] a gracious lord and faithful to the laws of God and to the just laws of the world.) King Cnut declares his intention to be kind to his subjects, to place himself under the Christian God, and to pledge fidelity to laws that are right. Further, he chooses to be guided by the messages from the pope, who advises "þæt Ic scolde æghwær Godes lof upp aræran, and unrigt alecgan and full frið wyrcean be ðære mihte þe me God syllan wolde" (lines 7-8). (That I should everywhere lift up praise to God who is above and to give up wickedness and to make full peace so far as God will give me that power.) These religious actions are claimed as the primary context for Cnut's continuing rule and ones he affirms. The king's ancient role and biblical example is to provide justice, and Cnut is choosing to follow the pope's

emphasis by declaring that, despite his own long string of raids and battles and brutalities, peace is the proper conclusion to successful wars.

Perhaps it is in view of this statement, that King Cnut next explains in the letter why he and his men have traveled to Denmark where he will use his treasure to remove any further threat from the Danes. He continues acknowledging God with his own thanks and urges all of his followers to give "modlice Gode ælmigtigum þancian" (lines 16, 20-21). (humble thanks to almighty god) as well. The king's explanation and expressions of gratitude to God are followed by what may be Wulfstan's contribution, which gives specific instructions about how Cnut's ealdormen will help the bishops enact God's law and how the bishops will help ensure that the reeves provide mercy to those in their charge (lines 22-36). Expressions of thankfulness to God and promises of justice are not uncommon in the records of Anglo-Saxon rulers, but this letter gives clear written evidence of how the king presents himself as willing to work with the church to benefit his subjects throughout his rule.

Treharne summarizes some of the acts that show this choice. Cnut sponsors the building of a church at Ashingdon, which is the site of his victory over King Edmund Ironside that cost so much death to the English warriors. This first letter, as well as another one in 1027 and others, indicate a good working relationship between the king and Archbishop Wulfstan of York who had also written previous law codes. Cnut also completes many acts of penance for his previous bloodshed in conquering England. In a broader sense he states his intention to govern in such a manner as to be seen by his subjects as the "heir of the Laws of Edgar (r. 959-975), who was remembered as one of Anglo-Saxon England's greatest kings…[and] a great supporter of the church in its major period of reform" (269). Another indication of Cnut's acknowledgement of a higher king comes from an anecdote reported by Henry of Huntington in the third version of his

History of the English, written circa 1140, and summarized by Dale. In this well-known story, King Cnut commands the sea not to rise, but when the tide ignores his command and still rises as usual, he proclaims, "'know all who inhabit the world, that the power of kings is empty and frivolous, nor anyone worthy of the title of king, besides him whose orders the sky, earth and sea obey in everlasting law'" (138). In a further pious act, the king refuses to wear his crown, placing it instead on a cross above a picture of the Lord (Dale 138). If the stories of the rising tide and Cnut's crown removal in acknowledgement of God's superiority are true, they may have inspired other believers or helped prepare his subjects for the religious choices he and his second queen made together. If they are apocryphal, the story helped those after his death view him as a king who humbled himself under God. More reliable evidence of Cnut's patronage is reported in the *Anglo-Saxon Writs*, where, for example, in 1020, he provides perhaps the earliest example of a writ that gives a prelate, in this case, Archbishop Æthelnoth of Canterbury, judicial and financial privileges (Farmer 171). More patronage of Cnut is discussed in the next chapter, but evidence indicates the king decides to align himself with and provide substantial support to the cause of Christianity.

Although Queen Emma is not mentioned at all in Cnut's letter, other evidence indicates that she became a partner in important aspects of Cnut's Christian governing and support for the church. For example, in 1023, they and their new son Harthacanute played a public part in the translation of the bones of the martyred former archbishop of Canterbury, St. Ælfeah, from his original burial place in London to Christ Church in Canterbury. Colleen Dunn analyzes this event for its political and religious elements. The king gave permission for this ceremony, a shrewd political and religious choice since a group of drunken Danes had killed the archbishop in a cruel manner only eleven years previously in "one of the most notorious atrocities of the

entire Anglo-Saxon period" (141). Queen Emma and Harthacanute join the public procession, but perhaps emphasizing his increasing support of Christianity, the *ASC* implies that Cnut may have led one of the early parts of the journey:

> & se brema cyng & se arcebiscop & leodbiscopas & eorlas & swiðe manege hadode & eac læwede feredon on scype his þone halgan lichaman ofer Temese to Suðgeweorke, & þær þone halgan martyr þan arcebiscope & his geferum betæhton. . . Ða on ðam ðryddan dæge com Imma seo hlæfdie mid hire cynelican bearne Hardacnute, & hi þa ealle mid mycclan þrymme & blisse & lofsange þone halgan arcebiscop into Cantwarebyri feredon. (Cubbin, *MS D, s.a.* 1023)

(And the noble king and the archbishop and the bishops and earls and very many a man, both church and lay, set out on the ship with that holy body across the Thames to Southwark, and then after that entrusted the holy martyr to the archbishop and his companions . . . Then on the third day came Queen Emma, appearing with her kingly son Harthacnut. And then with much majesty and rejoicing and singing praises, they all conveyed that holy archbishop into Canterbury.) This public participation in the multi-day journey demonstrated to a very large group of subjects of all ranks their royal support of and engagement with important religious events. Their joining with the church to honor a recently martyred saint enhanced the public's celebration. The sight of the king, his queen, and their young son is reported to have been positively received by many of their subjects present even though it would also surely be complicated by those who remembered the context of Ælfeah's brutal and shameful death (Dunn 142). Based on records of later church patronage, the implications involve more than this celebration. Dunn explains: "the translation of Ælfeah's body to Canterbury, therefore, cannot be viewed as a single, isolated event. Instead, it must viewed as part of the much larger strategy on the part of Cnut and Emma to promote the image of royalty as generous donors to the church" (51). Despite the recent past of violence and previous marriages, king and queen chose to use this public event as one of many ways they increasingly presented themselves to their public as legitimate Christian rulers blessed by and

thankful to God. They are remembered in the next century as generous church patrons (Treharne 269). In a charming illustration of a nostalgic imagining of Cnut, Emma, and the monks of Ely, the compiler of the *Liber Eliensis* in the late twelfth century seems to have created a royal context to match a traditional poem of the house. He relates that on a royal visit to Ely, traveling by boat with Queen Emma, Cnut becomes inspired by the monks' beautiful singing and responds with his own song in English. E. O. Blake, editor of the *Liber Eliensis*, provides the only surviving lines:

> Merie sungen þe muneches binnen Ely
> þa Cnut ching reu þer by
> Roweþ cnites noer the lant
> and here we þes muneches sæng. (qtd. in and transl. by Parker 16-17)

(Merrily sang the monks in Ely, / When Cnut the king rode by. / Row men nearer to the land / and let us hear the song.) This anecdote presents a pleasant creation carried into the next century with traces to the more substantial instances in support of Christianity that Emma and Cnut together provided. Their efforts proved a positive factor in its survival after the Danish conquest and development through to the next conquest.

The second English Conquest of the eleventh century is the one remembered best—the Norman Conquest of 1066. Its causes and effects are much better documented and because of its duration, it has thoroughly eclipsed the earlier one for most modern people. Harold Godwinson's defeat by William the Duke of Normandy (r.1066-1087) brought sweeping political, social, and religious changes. Land ownership, court language, cultural practices, and the aristocracy itself underwent dramatic displacements and eventual adaptations. Significantly, though, the dominant religion remained the same. Because both King William I and Queen Mathilda I were Christian, no slow, uneven transition to a new religion, such as the Anglo-Saxons faced four centuries before, would be necessary. Nevertheless, the English church experienced upheaval. "However

much one stresses the continuity of Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman ecclesiastical life, it remains true that the generation after the Conquest saw very much more rapid changes introduced into the English Church than any other comparable period between the death of Dunstan (d. 988) and the Reformation" (Brett 90). As the Normans brought their own language and their own religious officials with them to rule and regulate the English, Anglo-Saxon church personnel and practices struggled to survive. The new rulers of the new dynasty continued to support the church, but they initiated great personnel shifts to reward Norman loyalists and to institute their preferred Norman expressions of Christianity.

Changes to the content and style of religious services proved painful for the defeated Anglo-Saxons and, in some cases, were resisted strongly. For example, "liturgy became the mouthpiece of political opposition" when one group of monks refused to drop their Anglo-Saxon liturgy for the Norman one being imposed. Reportedly in response, Bishop Thurston at Glastonbury called in soldiers to force the monks to acquiesce (Kantorowicz 178n98). Both the conquerors and the conquered took many decades to shape and adapt to the new realities of Christian administration, personnel, and practice. Historical and literary works provide evidence to show, at least partially, how the rulers and church leaders chose to negotiate their new relationships and responsibilities.

The influence of the Norman rulers of England shows varied results. An examination of its first ruling couple, William I and Matilda I, demonstrates that, together, they continued to support the church in Normandy as they played a vital role in the development of the Anglo-Norman church. Interestingly, however, the future conquering Norman rulers had not always followed church prohibitions closely. William, as the Duke of Normandy, and Mathilda of Flanders (c. 1031-1083), granddaughter of Robert the Pious, King of France, openly defied the

church by marrying against its rule of consanguinity; they were too closely related as cousins and failed to obtain permission from Pope Leo IX. However, both king and queen chose to seek church approval again from the next Pope Nicholas II six years before William's invasion of England. Reluctantly, official church approval came retroactively on the condition that the rulers completed proper penance; in this case, king and queen must each establish a monastery. This they did, and they continued to support the church in many ways in Normandy and in England as the nation changed over the next decades from Anglo-Saxon to Anglo-Norman.

William took many steps to show he was a staunch supporter of the church. For example, William supported church reform before he became king of England and "had won papal approval by calling a series of provincial synods to issue reforming decrees" (Chibnall 38). In addition, early in his reign, he "took care to keep the favour of the church by penance and reparation for the bloodshed [of the Conquest]; his foundation of Battle Abbey a few years later was his own most dramatic and visible act of reparation" (Chibnall 55). After replacing both archbishops in York and Canterbury, William and the new Archbishop Lanfranc of Canterbury developed a close working relationship to complete the changeover in church offices; "within a very few years most of the abbots and bishops were churchmen from Normandy" (Chibnall 38-9). In fact, according to William of Malmesbury, King William I chose no English bishops (Chibnall 42). Not surprisingly, Norman victory and politics played a large role in church appointments. However, William's appointments have been deemed as "capable and well-educated men," and several times he supported and enabled the replacement of secular canons with monks as part of Lanfranc's reform. In general, "most chroniclers praised William I for protecting church rights more than they condemned any infringement of liberties." This positive evaluation is in great contrast to the assessment given during the rule of his son, William Rufus

(r. 1087-1100) who generally ignored the pope and refused permission for church councils (Chibnall 42, 63). These actions demonstrate William I's desire to work within the authority of the wider Christian church to the extent that it did not take away his royal rights to choose archbishops and bishops, and that he considered church reform and growth an important element of his rulership.

For the benefit of the king and the church, William I had married a very competent and devout spouse in Matilda I of Flanders, who had already helped him in his struggles with the barons of Normandy. Huneycutt reports that one contemporary chronicler noted her "strong faith and fervent love of Christ" (*Matilda of Scotland* 50). Scholars evaluate their partnership as relatively happy and productive (Earenfight, *Queenship* 131-132). With a positive partnership in the early part of their rule, Matilda helped as a regent in Normandy, as mother to eight (or nine) children, and as public consort participating in formal "crown-wearings" at Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost whenever the king was in England. These occasions emphasized both rulers' royal and religious leadership as they established England's new dynasty and became generous patrons to the church in England while maintaining what they previously supported in Normandy.

They used individual and joint resources as well as those of their kingdom in the overhaul of church personnel and in the expansion of church properties. For example, Huneycutt contrasts a later queen, Matilda II (r. 1100-1118), queen of Henry I, as not providing the "sustained and generous" support for a foundation, such as Matilda I had shown to the church and monastery she established at Caen (*Matilda of Scotland* 117). Church foundations and personnel may have preferred consistent support over a long period rather than the more personal but unpredictable support of Matilda II. At the end of their lives, the couple further illustrated their religious interests in their disposition of their royal regalia. Following the French tradition and the queen's

example of leaving her crown and scepter, the signs of her rulership, to the nuns of Ste. Trinité, the king left his royal regalia to the monks of St. Étienne; both religious houses were long favored by the couple ever since their formation as penance for marrying within too close bonds of relation (Chibnall 58**).** Anglo-Norman society and its church faced both quick changes and long-term developments post-conquest, but being ruled by a king and queen who actively promoted Roman Christianity continued the tradition of rulers who chose to make piety and patronage important pillars of their reigns.

Although different in their style of giving from William I and Matilda I, their youngest son and his queen provide the example of another post-conquest ruling couple, King Henry I (r. 1100-1135) and Queen Matilda II of Scotland (r. 1100-1118), whom evidence indicates showed a deep commitment to the church through patronage. Matilda II came from a powerful family whose mother gave her the blood of the English along with the special significance of being related to Edward the Confessor. Her father provided royal Scottish heritage through King Malcolm III Canmore. This meant that children born in the marriage would "unite the past and present reigning royal houses of England, a fact which contemporary commentators were not slow to mention" (Green 55). This linkage of Old England and Norman history and current reality would appeal greatly to medieval society, but so would Matilda's strong religious heritage. Queen Matilda II's mother, Queen Margaret of Scotland (c.1045-1093), eventually became St. Margaret—the only Scottish saint to be venerated by the Catholic church. The *ASC* describes Margaret as leading King Malcolm and the rest of the country to Christianity in a way that echoes the conversion influences of Queens Bertha and Æthelburh to Kings Æthelberht and Edwin described by Bede (*MS D, s.a.* 1067). Sources including chronicle, charter, and confraternity agree with the hagiographic *Life of St. Margaret* that her piety and devotion were

so authentic and consistent that "she influenced her children in their lives" (Huneycutt, *Matilda of Scotland* 15). Another influence of Matilda II's powerful and religious family is exhibited in her upbringing and education; she lived at two monasteries under the supervision of her aunt, Abbess Christine.

There developed a religious obstacle to Matilda's and Henry's marriage which reveals the extent to which royal and religious matters could be entwined and which the couple needed the help of Archbishop Anselm to overcome. While at the monastery at Wilton, Matilda had been reported as wearing a veil. If she had taken the vows to be a nun, Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury would not approve their marriage. Henry did not change his mind about the marriage. Matilda took an active role to resolve the issue by submitting to a church council called by the archbishop just to decide this question. After investigative witnesses, and Matilda's own declaration that she wore a small black hood or veil as a disguise to ward off unwanted marital interests, Archbishop Anselm, who had previously expressed disapproval for the match, granted the marriage and performed the ceremony (Brett 75-76). This incident shows how Henry and Matilda actively sought and participated in religious approval for their marriage, a contrast to the route described previously as chosen by William I and Matilda of Flanders who waited years before requesting approval from a different pope than the one who initially refused church sanction.

Such religious approval paved the way for Henry I and Matilda II to continue to show the importance of ecclesiastical concerns which, in turn, opened the path for patronage to flow from them to the church. Chroniclers report that King Henry and Queen Matilda enjoyed generally good relations as evidenced by her being a member of his ruling court and acting with vice-regal

authority when he was absent (Huneycutt, *Matilda of Scotland* 1). That working partnership extended to the many ways they demonstrated leadership of the church as well.

Although Henry I is often best known by modern historians for his fierce campaign to keep Normandy as part of his kingdom, his generosity to favorites, and his severe punishments of those whom he judged traitors, records show that he also took care to be generous to the church from his abundant treasure and strove to work with church leaders especially those within his kingdom. For example, Chibnall sees his establishment of a new bishopric of Carlisle in 1133 as an extension of the Norman Conquest (53). Matilda II's devotion is clear in contemporary reports. During her reign from 1100-1118, she became honored with the affectionate descriptor "the good Queen Maud" and chroniclers in the twelfth century often focused on her "religious dedication, benefactions, or good relationships with prominent churchmen" (Huneycutt, *Matilda of Scotland* 3, 103). Her reputation for piety and good works seems to be what her subjects remembered best.

Queen Matilda II chose performance piety and practical support to show Christian charity which may have seemed surprising for a queen. For example, William of Malmesbury reports in 1107 that she personally washed the feet of the poor and did not avoid touching the very diseased. She went barefoot during Lent and wore a hairshirt under her royal garments (453). King and queen also showed religious support generally by appearing together at church dedications, for example, the one attended in 1115 at St. Albans which was reported by the historian of the monastery (Huneycutt, *Matilda of Scotland* 120). Their patronage and piety helped to demonstrate to all onlookers the value of Christianity, the tangible results of a good relationship with church leaders, and the long-term impact of the church as it become more firmly entrenched in the Anglo-Norman dynasty.

The fact that medieval kings and queens possessed more rights and privileges than anyone else in their kingdoms is obvious, as is the logical assumption that they would use their extensive resources of family, wealth, and power to benefit themselves in as many ways as possible. What is not a foregone conclusion, however, are the many decisions made by those kings and queens to participate in projects that furthered Christianity. This chapter has attempted to show the methods and manners that royal couples employed to confirm and establish the religion. Marriage negotiations that accommodated Christian brides' faith influenced their royal partners and the religion of their descendants. Inaugurations of kings and queens that evolved into deeply Christian consecrations led to a wider awareness of the importance of royal religious responsibilities. Biblical texts provided authoritative role models of both how to and how *not* to be remembered as a good king and queen especially in the display of courage, of faith in God, and of intercession. Famous literary texts shaped more such role models into entertaining and memorable forms for readers and listeners of an ever-growing audience. The historical ruling couples presented offer a selection of evidence, including the textual documentation of queen and king supervision of monks and nuns in the *Regularis Concordia,* of how their efforts to support and reform Christianity were presented by themselves and remembered by others. Although church patronage of royal couples often served political ends for both parties, generous joint donations provided the new religion and its converts prestige, land, income, and buildings that gave sufficient spaces and personnel to meet the spiritual needs of their subjects. Joint appearances at high church festivals by kings and queens provided confirmation to Christians that their own faith in those rulers was validated by the God in whom they believed. Because of the breadth and depth of its influence, patronage projects of kings and queens working together will be further examined to assess its nature and impact.

Chapter 2

Royal Partners Using Royal Resources

Some of the kings and queens in early sixth-century medieval England exercised their privilege of choosing Christianity as a result of the work begun by Augustine and Columba and continued by Aidan and Theodore (among many others). In the late sixth through the eighth centuries, kings, and eventually, queens publicly presented themselves in inaugurations as rulers based upon public acclimation and, increasingly, as the divine appointment of God. Supporting that responsibility to fulfill religious roles, the royal couples could draw on extraordinary resources to express their support of and their belief in the church. Although members of the aristocracy gave valuable gifts to support their own good works for the church and for personal benefits in the afterlife, not many had the wealth and other resources enjoyed by royals. For example, royal crowns were a unique asset. After inaugurations, English rulers, including Danish King Cnut (r. 1016-1035) and Norman King William the Conqueror, (r. 1066-1087) used their royal crowns in religious rituals for important festivals and, reportedly, donated them as gifts to a church. Rulers made rich gifts of other valuable objects to church leaders and entities. Less broad but more practical and lasting support came with income-producing gifts of lands, rents, and significant tax exemptions. Kings and queens had the financial and political power to found churches and monasteries as well as to influence and, at times, to choose the appointments of church leaders in their kingdom. A narrow yet significant practice of intercession between queens and kings resulted in pardons and other benefits to subjects that no one else could provide. This chapter establishes such cooperative practices by examining recorded church patronage of a royal couple of the Anglo-Saxon era, Queen Emma and King Cnut, and one pair of rulers of the post-Conquest era, William I and Queen Matilda I. Each case demonstrates the

complexities involved with any form of combined royal patronage within challenging times as well as differing motivations. In addition, the unique relationship in the practice of intercession between kings and queens is explored as an important resource used in situations that mingled the political and spiritual aspects of England's medieval society. Queen Philippa and King Edward III (r. 1327-1377), among others, illustrate the significance of this royal interaction with religious context within the historical record. Together, rulers provided recipients of all types of patronage with the benefits that came with joint ruler sponsorship. In an immediate way, a gift or grant from both rulers may have meant increased prestige for the recipient, but the larger benefit may be seen in the possibility of receiving future gifts if the initial act of patronage went well. Rulers, including King Henry I (r. 1100-1135) and Queen Matilda II of Scotland (r. 1100-1118) often continued their families' previous support of church establishments. Royal couples also influenced each other to support favored church leaders and institutions. Historical records and literary representations show the influence of queens and king in creating and continuing the central role of religion in medieval England.

Royal religious choice for conversion and religious coronation, as Bede's history illustrates, leads quickly to royal patronage. As a matter of hospitality, King Æthelberht provided Augustine and his group a dwelling in Canterbury and supplies for their maintenance while he and his witan pondered their invitation to accept the gospel of Christianity. Immediately, "ða gunnon heo þæt apostolice lif þære frymðelecan cyrcan onhyrgan" (Miller, *OEEH* I.25). (Then they began to imitate the apostolic life of the early church there.) The missionaries' example of simplicity and humble teaching soon led to the conversion of the king which then led to many more conversions. With this surge, Æthelberht's patronage began: "he þa se cyning geaf & sealed his lareowum gerisne stowe & setl heora hade in his aldorbyrig, & þær to sealed heora

nydðearfe in messenlicum æhtum" (Miller, *OEEH* I.26). (then the king gave and granted to his teachers a place and residence in his ancient city, fitting to their position, and bestowed all provisions for their mass services.) This significant upgrade in the king's primary city of Canterbury included land, buildings, and provisions with which the missionaries could establish themselves and consider bringing additional personnel. King Æthelberht illustrates a sense of the responsibility to support and treat the Christian missionaries with more than generic respect and generosity. With each conversion of a king or ruling couple, royal patronage grew during the seventh and eighth centuries which, as Mayr-Harting describes, allowed Christianity to push the practice of appeasement to older gods further into the cultural background (23, 33, 43-44). Although individual rulers rejected Christianity, its benefits and its support gradually grew with the crucial support of many kings and queens.

The evidence for early Anglo-Saxon projects of joint royal patronage beyond conversion is relatively scant in contrast to individual projects or working with others. Bede relates royal patronage of kings, such as West Saxon King Cynegils (c.611-642) who, along with the help or at least sponsorship of King Oswald of Northumbria (r. 633-642), gave the city of Dorchester to Bishop Birinus to create an episcopal see (*EH* III.7). Religious patronage of queens, including Æthelthryth (c.636-679), who founded the monastery at Ely after she renounced marriage are recorded, but no record of a king and queen acting together is given (Bede, *EH* III.7, II.9). Nor are any described in the *ASC* except Queen Margaret's positive Christian influence on King Malcolm III in Scotland (Ingram and Giles *s.a.* 1067). The *ASC* reports almost all church donations and endowments as patronage from king to church leader, such as the archbishops, bishops, and abbots (Swanton, MSS A-E). With one exception which will be discussed later, the

degree of patronage partnership between queens and kings remains mostly hidden during England's conversion and establishment period.

What records are available indicate that religiously-focused patronage tied to a ruling couple seems to have grown slowly and unevenly. Pauline Stafford, in an analysis of early medieval European queens, summarizes the gradual change to more collaborative royal responsibility that increased with the growing Christian conversions: "together with kings, queens must tend to the worship of the Christian god and his saints, now become their royal deities. Their motivation embraced both piety and political advantage . . . . All sponsored a Christianity that in the early Middle Ages was committed to prayer for king and kingdom" (*Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers* 124-25). Rituals from previous practices provided the precedent for rulers to pray for the success of their battles and their kingdoms. As Christianity became the religion of more kingdoms, sometimes with queens who were already Christian, the efforts of both king and queen helped make the transition successful. Admonitions from Christian bishops who referred to the Bible for both principles and examples of royals who met their spiritual responsibilities became familiar. Two sources report the actions of King Eorcenberht of Kent (r. 640-664) and Queen Seaxburh to promote Christian practices during their reign, but the sources differ in their record of the influence they exerted on each other. Bede gives sole credit to Eorcenberht for many actions that help restore the Christianity that his father, King Eadbald, had abandoned early in his rule: "Þes cyning ærest Onglocyninga in eallum his rice he heht deofolggold towerþan & fæstlice forlætan; ond swelce eac mid his ealdorlicnesse bebead, þæt feowertiglice fæsten healden beon ær Eastrum bi witerædenne" (Miller, *OEEH* III.6). (This ruler [was] the first of the English kings to order them in all his kingdom to destroy and strictly abandon idolatry, and also, in like manner, with his authority to require that forty

days of Lent fast to be held before Easter on penalty of punishment.) A much later report of this seventh century patronage, however, reports that the queen showed much of the initiative for Eorcenberht's church patronage. Goscelin of Saint-Bertin (c. 1040-1106) is a monk and writer who is described by C. H. Talbot as a "traveling hagiographer" and "the most important writer on women in eleventh century England" (qtd. in Stafford, "Portrayal of Royal Women" 154). He visited the monastery at Ely circa 1087-8 and is the probable author of lectionaries for the feast of St. Seaxburh, who, after the death of King Eorcenberht became the abbess of Ely after her sister, Æthelthryth. Virginia Blanton analyzes this queen and abbess as Goscelin presented her, in essence, as the nurturing mother of Christianity in Kent who continued and expanded upon Queen Bertha's introduction of Christianity to King Æthelberht (r. 560-61 to 616-17). Based on the timing of his travels, Blanton suggests that Goscelin relied on the traditions and documents of the Ely monastery for the role of Queen Seaxburh that he describes ("The Kentish Queen" 192n3, 211). She also reports that, unlike Bede's narration which emphasizes King Eorcenberht's contributions in returning to Christianity, it was Queen Seaxburh who "leverages her power as queen to effect religious change throughout the kingdom" ("The Kentish Queen" 202, 207). Specifically, the fifth lectionary adds frequent phrases to frame Eorcenberht's many Christian actions that were reported by Bede as mostly due to the fact that "the excellent heroine more intently incited her husband the king to obedience to God," and he acted "at her frequent prompting" and worked "together with his most zealous queen." Goscelin concludes that the blessed result was that "by these his own merits and those of his holy co-worker Seaxburh, he obtained a reign far wider than his predecessors, save for the eternal reward in heaven" (trans. by Blanton, "The Kentish Queen" 208). Even before Seaxburh could devote herself completely to religion after the death of her husband, Goscelin declared that the queen "turns all of her queenly

duties to religious and charitable ends" (Blanton, "The Kentish Queen" 208). Not surprisingly, the contrast of these presentations of Eorcenberht and Seaxburh in Bede and Goscelin indicates the differing purposes and audiences for whom they wrote, as well as the times in which they wrote about these early rulers. Bede's focus is consistent in drawing lines of influence between Anglo-Saxon kings and their church counterparts in narrating the history of the English church as he considers it in the eighth century, while Goscelin writes to record and promote the female saints at Ely; historical accuracy is not his agenda. He creates eight lectionaries to celebrate St. Seaxburh in the eleventh century (Blanton, "The Kentish Queen" 213). Just as Bede's narrative serves as a model for future kings to actively spread Christianity throughout their kingdom, so too, Goscelin's representation provides a role model for later medieval queens to consider themselves as active partners with and influences on the king in Christian efforts. Such different perspectives reveal a more complete picture of the representation of the likelihood that Seaxburh's and Eorcenberht's contributions together furthered Christianity in Kent.

By the tenth century, both royals and church leaders had much invested in the success of Christianity with its integration into ruling and religious matters. Stafford notes that rulers and the religious chose to embrace widespread religious reform when questions arose about the ability of God to provide victory in the face of Viking attacks and in the face of criticism when moral failures and accusations between queens and high church officials surfaced (*Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers* 125). While kings were expected to be responsible for physical protection and leadership of their subjects, queens were expected to be responsible for moral virtue, not only as a good example but, especially, to protect the bloodline of heirs. Acknowledging human and royal complexity, scholars commonly emphasize that patronage directed towards religion can be driven by many motivations which often overlap. When rulers

exhibit generosity, they not only demonstrate an expected, valued trait in rulers, they also expect to influence the beneficiaries, whether directly or indirectly. This means that although queens experienced varying degrees of official power within the general hierarchy, using their wealth for the establishment and support of the church was common and, as previously noted, approved by society at large, especially when she presented herself in a humble manner. Patronage was typically given through the arrangements between individual rulers and the church officials who would benefit from the support. Thus, it seems important to look for the fewer recorded examples of acts attributed to both king and queen to consider possible reasons for and effects of such cooperation.

Mixed motives can be analyzed on both sides of a particular instance of patronage between the giver and the receiver. For an institution whose primary advice for members often involved encouraging them to consider the riches of heaven rather than the riches of earth, church officials and church estates could become extremely wealthy during their earthly existence. For example, the Domesday survey conducted in 1085 during William I's rule documents the vast financial worth of Archbishop Lanfranc of Canterbury. Brett calculates his approximate value as between £1000 and £1500 ranking him as the greatest landowner in the kingdom after King William I himself (69). The upper echelon of the religious class continued to grow throughout the Middle Ages as a powerhouse with political, economic, and religious clout. Royal couples often led the way in providing substantial support in lands and other types of patronage with which they created this ecclesiastical wealth.

Patronage, Pre- and Post-Conquest

Examining two royal pairs who provided relatively generous and consistent support to the religious class is useful to establish projects linked to both king and queen which may help

illuminate how they were perceived during their reigns, and to follow the impact felt by such support for those living after them. The nature of any such acts indicated the rulers' religious preferences and their desires to form closer bonds with whoever benefited from their patronage. For example, confraternity, which involves an exchange of religious prayers for the lay requestee and resulting patronage for those who granted it, is one way that royals mutually established relationships with religious communities. King William I (r.1066-1087) and Queen Matilda I asked for confraternity with the Cluniac Burgundian abbey and, when granted, sent a bejeweled chasuble of gold cloth in thanks (Hollister, *Henry I* 418). This association showed those of the abbey that the king and queen wanted a continuing relationship with it. This request fulfills the rulers' desire to gain many prayers for the souls of themselves and their family while also providing tangible gifts to the abbey. This mutually beneficial relationship sometimes lasted through many years and different reigns.

Post-coronation crown-wearings by the king and, sometimes, the queen at important religious gatherings is another unique practice available to the royals which displayed to the public in a grand manner the rulers' desire to connect their rule with divine blessing. Such a reminder often occurred at religious celebrations. For example, King William I (r. 1066-1087) wore his crown three times a year when he was in England, at Easter in Winchester, at Pentecost in Westminster, and at midwinter in Gloucester. For these celebrations, he brought along "all the powerful men of England" both church and lay subjects (Swanton, *ASC* MS E *s.a.* 1086-87). Later, King Henry I (r. 1100-1135) and his second wife, Queen Adeliza (circa 1103-1151), initiated their own crown wearing at Christmas in 1126 (Brett 70). When such crown-wearings featured both king and queen, their subjects received an additional, powerful reminder that their rulers were rightful leaders with divine authority. Appearing together helped elevate the status of

the queen so that both rulers could be better seen as partners in royal decisions. Any patronage provided at such events would be presented with the visual of both king and queen as donors.

As previously discussed, King Cnut (r.1016-1035) and Queen Emma/Ælfgifu (d. 1052) provide a complex record of joint engagement with the church along with the military and political forces which often drove both. Based on her research of early Anglo-Saxon queens, Stafford explains that Queen Emma/Ælfgifu exercised more than just traditional "peace-weaving" in her marriage to Cnut. She argues that "her role at court and in royal patronage was greater than that of any royal woman since Eadgifu (c. 903/4-968). That earlier queen provided much support for the tenth century monastic reform movement during the reigns of her husband, Edmund the Elder (r.939-946), and that of her two sons, Edmund and Eadred" (*Unification and Conquest* 76, 121). One anecdote about Emma and Cnut (r. 1015-1035) illustrates how king and queen at times are presented as influencing each other to improve a poor church. In his "Life of St. Wulfsige at Sherborne," Goscelin, notes that his sources include his fellow-monks at Sherborne, one of whom, Ælfmær, had attended Wulfsige on his deathbed. With this added support of his story, the monk writes that on one occasion both King Cnut and Queen Emma were motivated to generous patronage. Specifically, they "were moved by the contrast between the poverty of the church of Sherborne and themselves who were 'weighed down by gold and jeweled ornaments'" (Love; qtd. in Stafford, "Portrayal of Royal Women," 154-55). After the king's observation of the extreme gap between their royal condition and the poor church, the queen took up the king's challenge to use her own resources to help the church improve: "Straightway the Queen offered twenty pounds of silver to repair the holy roof. Having paid this much out, she hinted that they should make recourse to her again as if to a public treasury" (Goscelin). This story shows the king and queen acting on a their desire to assist this church with

immediate needs and offering to continue their patronage in the future. Other examples of Cnut's reported patronage include his re-founding of Winchester as a royal and religious city and the tradition, reported by Goscelin and Henry Huntingdon, that he donated his crown to the New Minster (Karkov 126). These acts indicate that despite the lack of sources recording a consecration of King Cnut and only a single reference to Emma in a witness list as a consecrated queen, the royal couple repeatedly displayed generosity to the church.

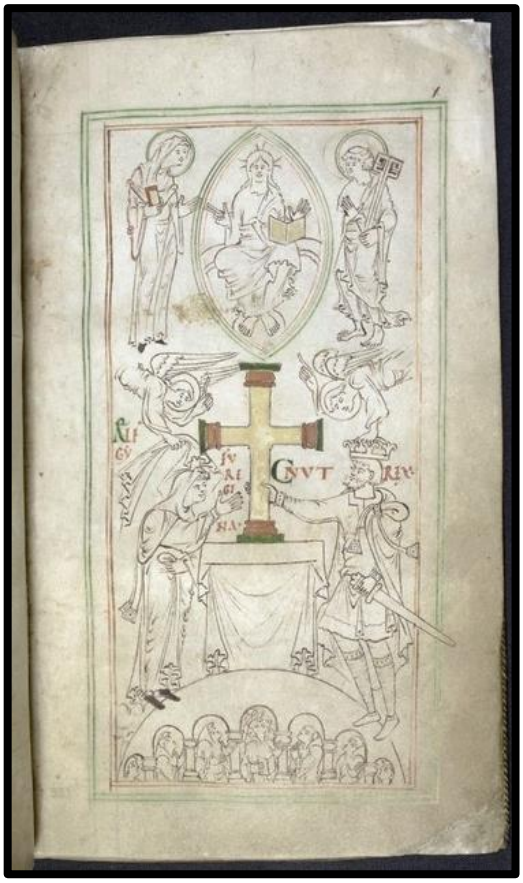

Fig. 1 Queen Emma and King Cnut donate cross. Used with permission British Library, Stowe 944, fol. 6, *Liber Vitae*, circa 1031.

A more striking record of a joint donation of Cnut and Emma to the New Minster in Winchester is shown in a double portrait of the rulers that is familiar to scholars as a frontispiece to a medieval register. This manuscript, BL, Stowe 944, fol. 6, dated around 1031, includes a portrait of the royal couple donating a cross (Fig. 1). Their dual participation and their religious significance are both emphasized. In her description of this frontispiece of the *Liber Vitae*, Stacy Klein points out how the figures of the couple are prominently featured. First, the royal figures of Queen Emma and King Cnut are depicted in an unusually large size in comparison to the smaller sizes and positions of the Virgin, St. Peter, and Christ, "reversing the customary iconographic hierarchy of early medieval donor portraits" (1). Their placement, however, may be explained because of the large size and the gold material of the cross which the king's hand grasps and the queen's open hand gestures towards. Their placement in the foreground and their gestures indicate they have donated the expensive cross together, an interpretation supported by Karkov (125). The central position of the cross is further emphasized by the dark reddish color of the decorative elements on each of the points of the cross which are themselves framed with black endpieces. The literal meaning of this picture serves well to acknowledge the interest of the royal couple in giving gifts to the church and, especially since the cross itself was lost sometime in the twelfth century, to demonstrate just how significant a donation royals had the resources to provide.

More symbolically, the portrait shows how the earthly rulers spiritually connect to heavenly rulers. Each of the figures relate aspects of the hierarchy which feature complex relationships of earthly religious, earthly rulers, heavenly angels, and heavenly rulers. An initial look shows the importance of both king and queen in the presentation of their gift. Just as both desire prayers for their eternal souls from the monks, represented by the tiny monks in stalls at

the bottom of the depiction, both rulers remind viewers of the central role they play as religious leaders. King and queen are represented as the earthly links between the monks and the heavenly angels. Those angels then provide the links to the Virgin Mary placed above Queen Ælfgifu /Emma and to St. Peter placed above King Cnut. The royals are seen as the earthly counterparts to the heavenly saints on either side of Christ. In the *Liber Vitae* confraternity book which follows, the king's and queen's names are appropriately listed first ("British Manuscript blog"). Perhaps the first overall impression intended for the book's contemporary readers and viewers is that the royal couple is devout and generous. Like the three wise men presenting gifts to the baby Christ, they are presenting a valuable gift to the New Minster to the glory of the heavenly Christ and of St. Mary. The portrait records for the monks who use it regularly and to posterity that these rulers are worthy examples of earthly spiritual leadership. A closer inspection reveals their connections with Christ, the Virgin, and St. Peter in heaven. This mediation through the angels is clear in the placement of each set of figures. Two angels set the queen's veil and the king's crown on their heads while pointing up to Christ. In an analysis of the importance of the earthly and heavenly books also shown in the portrait, Karkov broadens the significance of the couple: "it is the figures of the queen and king that unite the present moment, represented in the picture, to the abbey's past, documented in the texts collected in the manuscript, and to its hope for the future" (5). Contemporary observers could see how past participation as recorded in the register is honored by their rulers' elaborate gift which may well encourage those attached to the Abbey and Winchester religious community to hope for patronage from royals in the future. Karkov's perspective helps modern readers understand how a contemporary medieval audience would likely recognize both the economic and royal religious aspects. She notes, "it was surely the giving of the golden cross that was of primary importance to Abbot Ælfwine and the monks othe

New Minster – though they were also clearly interested in suggesting some sort of balance or equality between the queen and king" (126). Here is a portrayal of a role for both queen and king that recalls the designation of joint ruler responsibility recorded in the *Regularis Concordia* of 973 sponsored by King Edgar (r. 959-975) and agreed to by Queen Ælfthryth.

This visual depiction of a joint religious gift from their rulers may also assist readers to negotiate the tension created by the contradiction of Emma married to Cnut, the Danish enemy of her previous husband, King Æthelred II. The Cnut and Emma standing side-by-side as they present their golden gift to the church at Winchester shows them in a nobler, religious light when contrasted with earlier associations of them with the bitterness of war and the speed of a political marriage between former enemies. The royal couple knew the combined political and religious importance of reminding whoever examined the register in the future that both king and queen exercised liberality and displayed religious worship as their portrait representation showed leadership to the monks and humble adoration of the heavenly beings above them.

Queen Emma continued to use her privileged position to seek to shape the public's perception of herself, her family, and Cnut and his family in what has become the most well-known of her commissioned works. After Cnut's death in 1035 and much maneuvering and intrigue, Harold Harefoot, son of Cnut's first wife Ælfgifu of Northampton/York, became regent and king from 1035-1040. His death once again opened the opportunity for one of Emma's sons to gain the throne. Cnut's and Emma's son, Harthacnut (r. 1040-1042, England), was chosen by the English to rule. When her youngest son is declared king, Queen mother, Emma, arranges the writing of the *Encomium Emmae Reginae* (*In Praise of Queen Emma* Add MS 33241, f. 1v) by an unknown Flemish monk to set forth her version of the events of the rule of Cnut and herself, as well as the rule of King Harold Harefoot (r. 1035-1040), the torture and killing of her son

Alfred, and the final return of Harthacnut as rightful ruler of England. Simon Keynes provides historical context and evenhanded analysis of this text which is known for its biased viewpoint in favor of Emma and Cnut and its omission of important facts, such as Emma's marriage to former King Æthelred II. Keynes notes the attraction and the problem of Emma's commission. Recognizing her as "an image from the eleventh century which for once can come alive," Keynes also focuses on the continuing debate: "whether we should respect her political acumen and admire her capacity to survive… or whether we should censure her for a certain readiness to compromise [her children's] interests for the sake of securing her own" (Introduction, *EER* xiv). While acknowledging her complicated roles, for the purpose of seeing how she represents herself and her family in a religious way, the text is examined here for what of its content is tied to Cnut's and Emma's expression of Christianity.

After the writer, labeled as the Encomiast, begins with a familiar request for Christ to preserve the queen, God is specifically acknowledged as allowing her marriage to Cnut which was "barely brought to pass" and as the giver of their son Harthacnut as a result of "the Savior's grace," the source of "divine grace" and the "divine disposition." At the birth of their son, the text notes that the washing of the baby "is the custom of all Christians, in the sacred baptismal font" (Campbell, *EER* II 34, 36). This presentation illustrates that from their marriage through the birth and baptism of their son, God is credited with providing practical aid and spiritual blessing. Cnut is also praised as "a brother bishop for his maintenance of perfect religion . . . but a monk for the temperance of his life of most humble devotion." He also "built and dignified churches, [and] he loaded priests and the clergy with dignities." He provides "great charitable activities" in Gaul and Flanders on his way to Rome. The Encomiast cites his own eyewitness to a visit by Cnut to the monastery in the city of St. Omer in which the king worshipped with tears,

prostration, and self-inflicted blows before bestowing large offerings on the altar and for the poor (*EER* II 37). The king is presented as a generous supporter of the church both in his kingdom and on the continent. Upon his death, he is mourned by Lady Emma and all the people of all ranks. He is also described as being received into heaven with rejoicing (*EER* II 39). From the chosen perspective of Emma, through the Encomiast, Cnut is the ideal Christian king. This portrait sets up a contrast to the succession contest that occurred after his death.

In return for Cnut's devotion and generosity, England's highest church leader shows loyalty to Cnut. The Encomiast includes a story of how Archbishop Æthelnoth of Canterbury refused to crown King Harold because Cnut had entrusted him to crown Harthacnut. Æthelnoth also ordered that no other bishop should consecrate him. Showing his true nature, the new "tyrant" King Harold then turns from Christianity completely because of the archbishop's rejection. Meanwhile, the pious Emma "silently awaited the end of the matter, . . . in her anxiety daily gaining God's help by prayer" (*EER* III 41). The Christian elements mentioned may be a combination of conventional religious rhetoric used by the writer added to specific elements of Emma's point of view that emphasizes how God is on her and Cnut's side. For example, the phrases that thank God may be conventional while the anecdote of the refusal of Æthelnoth to consecrate Harold indicates Emma's version of her religious support. Emma and her family are clear heroes while Earl Godwinson and King Harold are the demonized villains. The monk does his job of praising Emma, noting her nobility, wealth, beauty, wisdom, and her family. In proportion to the text as a whole, most of the content revolves around Emma as the ideal woman, queen, and mother. Keynes notes, in hindsight, that because of Harthacnut's brief reign and Edward's dismissal of his mother as a ruling dowager queen, this encomium does not show evidence of being widely distributed.

It gained its significance as a dramatic and primary source only after its printing in the first quarter of the seventeenth century (Keynes, Introduction iv). Even so, unlike the reporting of religious patronage and examining the double portrait of King Cnut and Queen Emma, this text provides a rare, functionally first person, perspective of a determined medieval royal woman. She leaves the reader with a vivid sense of how Christianity can be seen as impacting such women's lives in positive ways while it is also being used in the service of ruling ambitions. Its production depended on both Cnut and Emma who are both represented as a king and queen above reproach. Without Cnut, there would have been no encomium to present Harthacnut as the rightful heir. Although some scholars emphasize the work as primarily a portrait of Emma, it is also a double portrait, even if Emma is responsible for its creation. It helps demonstrate that this couple used several types of resources to promote their reputation as Christian rulers during and after their lives. An early example is in an Anglo-Saxon writ that records a donation of land at Hemingford, Grey from King Harthacnut and his mother Emma: "In the name of the Holy Trinity, [we] give and confer upon the congregation of Ramsey, for the soul of our lord king Cnut and ours the land" (Harmer 257, trans. by Rhonda McDaniel). At least some in the congregation will remember in whose honor this gift was given, and the souls of the three royals will benefit in the afterlife.

The reality of the larger Norman Conquest fifty years later changed many aspects of the church in England, but it still enjoyed the support of most of its kings and queens. Queen Matilda II of Scotland (r. 1100-1118) and King Henry I (r. 1100-1135) are one royal couple who present a compelling, relatively well-documented post-Conquest example of a king and queen jointly helping the church in significant ways. Their patronage was broad and described by Hollister as "eclectic," because their gifts included churches and support of religious officials on the

continent as well as in England. This pattern differed from that of William I (r. 1066-1087) and Matilda I (*Henry I* 401, 404). For example, two elaborate candelabra went to Hildebert of Lavardin bishop of Le Mans and later archbishop of Tours; an annual rent was supplied to the bishop and canons of Le Mans Cathedral at the baptism of a son; bells for Chartres Cathedral and a chasuble arrived for canonist-bishop Ivo, and the royal family helped fund the re-leading of the cathedral's roof (407). This patronage to places outside of England is unusual according to surviving records. The English church may not have appreciated such gifts outside the kingdom, but the king's and queen's reputations for generosity to the wider church may have improved.

This royal couple also worked together in multiple ways, such as when Matilda issued acts in the absence of King Henry. Huneycutt has compiled "regal" rulings that involved the queen approving and issuing charters in the king's name. Some of the charters benefitted the church by resolving ecclesiastical dilemmas involving levels of rank ranging from bishops to monks. Land issues include resolving the problem of land seizure by Robert de Muschamps despite an agreement between Robert Earl of Northumberland and William of St. Carileph; Bishop of Durham, establishing Thomas Prior of Worcester and his monks and lands as part of the royal lands held in the king's "peace;" and confirming gifts from Bishop Sampson to the monks and church at Worcester to be held "freely." Restoration of property is a concern as illustrated in the order for the return of an unjustly seized ship and its goods to the Abbot of St. Augustine, Canterbury. Yet another directive rules for the return and protection for possessions of monks of St. Peter at Eye to Hubert the prior and Robert the chamberlain. Official protection is also ordered for Malger the monk and his servants in their travels to Luffield (*Matilda of Scotland* Appendix 1, 151-160). What these rulings show is that the king and the queen are both interested in justice and ruling well in church matters large and small. Matilda's participation

demonstrates the couple's intention and ability to provide timely resolutions to internal church problems during the frequent absences of the king.

Even in Matilda's acts as ruler over her own lands, the influence and agreement between king and queen are occasionally mentioned specifically. Of the twenty-five acts listed by Huneycutt as taken in relation to the church and its personnel, six mention both names of the royal couple. The list shows these examples: the charter records that a manor is given to Robert Bishop of Lincoln "at the request of the queen." The same bishop gains more property in another document that indicates the source of the new right to Tixover is the royal couple together. They are also mentioned as joint patrons in a gift to the church of St. German of Selby that includes a manor, £4, and the service of two knights. In addition, the rulers are recorded as acting on larger gifts. They work with Archbishop Anselm in giving Christ Church in London to Prior Norman and the canons, almost completely free of financial obligations, as well as the money from the gate of Aldgate and rent from the city of Exeter. The queen is mentioned in King Henry's charters for permission for a fair, in giving land in Stoke to the monks at Huntingdon, and in an order to return land to the monks of Abingdon that the queen had previously given (Huneycutt, *Matilda of Scotland* Appendix 1, 151-160). This is not an exhaustive list, but it shows the varied nature of several of their joint patronage decisions. Although it is possible that these mentions of both rulers in such documents is formulaic, it can indicate a degree of interaction concerning these specific cases benefitting church leaders, monks, canons, and other church entities. It suggests that the decisions may have been discussed and agreed upon together. In addition, scribes and recipients noticed and remembered that the patronage came from both king and queen.

In another demonstration of their patronage partnership, Queen Matilda II persuaded King Henry I to provide support for individuals and larger projects. For example, evidence indicates that the queen convinced Henry to help a hermit and his servants with both transportation and protection in the forest at Luffield. Both also seem to be responsible for the founding of the leper's hospital of St. Giles in Shrewsbury. Matilda's recognized concern for the poor and sick is possible to have directed the king's multiple foundations, gifts, and support to hospitals in Kent, York, Norfolk, Oxford, and London and in numerous places in Normandy (Hollister, *Henry I* 410-412). A final indication of interaction between king and queen in their bequests occurs in 1103, when Henry granted to Osmund the priest and his brothers the place of Goathland for the benefit of the poor; the hint of queenly persuasion is that it is specifically granted "for the soul of Queen Matilda" (Hollister, *Henry I* 409-10). Perhaps she had requested that Henry make this grant and, in return, it was officially credited for the benefit of her soul in the future, but that is speculative. Each time Henry and Matilda worked together, however, their actions increased the status and material condition of not only a particular religious place or people but also their own reputations for religious devotion.

Even after death, queens and kings could directly show their support for Christianity. In an Anglo-Saxon will, for example, King Eadred (r. 923-955) leaves two gold crosses, two gold-hilted swords, and £400 to the place his body will rest in death (maybe one of the Minsters at Winchester). He also gives estates for both churches at Winchester and money for the nuns at Winchester, Wilton, and Shaftsbury. More money goes to commoners to relieve famine or defend themselves from heathen invasion. The Archbishop of Canterbury receives £400 to relieve the poor. The list continues, but all of these bequests are for "the praise of God and the redemption of my soul" (*EHI* 511). This is a typical form, content, and phrasing for early

medieval English kings planning for their death and their day of Judgment. Post-Conquest, royalty used increasing wealth to sometimes make memorials quite grand. For example, King Henry I acted in many ways to memorialize his first wife, Matilda of Scotland, as an exemplary religious queen. He directed that she be buried in Westminster Abbey in an honored location near Edward the Confessor and Queen Edith. Her good works and piety were commemorated in the service and "thousands of masses, psalms and prayers were said for her soul, and alms were given in abundance." The inscription on her tomb described her as "the benchmark of morals," and the king paid for a light to always shine at her tomb (Green 139-40). With these actions, King Henry provided multiple ways for "Good Queen Maud," as she was already called, to remain in her people's memories primarily as a devout, Christian royal.

The king sponsored the rituals and songs to present her as worthy of a heavenly home where she would continue to rule. He made these elaborate arrangements for his own soul as well since they demonstrate his own pious actions of magnanimous Christian memorialization. If Emma's encomium tribute to Cnut can be considered in one sense a text jointly produced, even though Cnut was no longer living, then Henry's memorialization of Queen Matilda II can, in the same sense, be considered as a joint project. Medieval audiences would associate the religious honors with both of them. Although the queen could not participate alive, the fact that Henry honors her with such ceremony may even link them closer together for those living through their reign and observing her funeral and visiting her tomb. This further connection between king and queen as a lasting pair of partners may not have happened as quickly for Cnut and Emma because of the small circulation of the encomium. Such memorials could also be lessened with additional marriages or separate places of burial.

Royal projects recorded as historical are subject to scrutiny for mixed motives. The frequent and wide-ranging religious patronage of both Henry I and Matilda II is acknowledged by scholars but has also been critiqued as primarily used to reward royal officials. *Patronage* involved more than gifts of land or money or objects. Its definition in Middle English is "the right to present someone to hold an ecclesiastical office or living; the right to nominate the priest, vicar, abbot, prior, etc. to fill a vacancy" (*MEC*). Henry I took the appointment of abbots, bishops, and archbishops as part of his customary right as king and as the anointed religious leader of the church in his kingdom. During his reign, this issue became a point of huge conflict between Henry, the archbishops of England, and the popes. The church became increasingly insistent on prohibiting what was termed "lay investiture," the appointment of and the service to inaugurate high church positions to individuals. Some of Henry's appointments resulted in critiques of those he chose. He appointed church offices to those who did not have church-approved qualifications. Brett notes that "the king certainly used bishoprics as a means of rewarding faithful royal servants," and he also appointed at least two of the queen's chancellors as bishops. Martin further explains that the chosen men often combined their secular and specifically church duties (107-109). In fact, in the tasks of administration, "in some ways [the bishop's and clergy's] duty to the king was more pressing than that of their secular fellows" (113). This could happen for those religious whom the king came to rely on extensively.

Hollister notes the varied ways Henry's patronage has been interpreted. His regular and many donations of land and other support to the church may be seen as a demonstration of personal piety. Other times, such generosity could be tied to Henry's completing a specific penance for forgiveness. Still others interpret his public gifts as revealing his desire to impress others as royalty (*Henry I* 418). Perhaps all of these interpretations could be applied at various

times and occasions. As king, Henry did see the church as part of his ruling responsibility to manage. In the king's favor, Brett suggests that the king's church appointments evolved over time. He observed that Henry I's ecclesiastic appointments changed in 1125, and increasingly "introduced into the hierarchy men with wider and more specifically ecclesiastical horizons," even a few who—in conflict with Henry's inclinations—"conceived of the liberty of the Church in a new and urgent sense" and "gave the episcopate a more various quality" (112). King Henry deserves credit for gradually appointing church officials who were more fitted to their ecclesiastic roles than being chosen primarily for personal connection and known loyalty.

Power and influence issues went both directions. As the church, led by the papacy in Rome, became increasingly eager to define its independence from the control of lay rulers, some rulers seemed to back off using their bishops and archbishops as close advisors in secular matters. For example, "there is very little evidence" that [Henry I] relied on Archbishop Ralph or William of Corbeil for their judgments on secular issues (Brett 71). As Rome moved to control church officials in England, kings showed their own independence by excluding them more from non-church matters. This gradual development, however, did not mean that the king abandoned religious leadership or patronage.

The queen did not escape scrutiny of her support for the church. Green notes that Matilda II bore an heir and "conformed to contemporary models of a queen in her piety and works of charity," while William of Malmesbury concludes that "her spirits showed by tokens more than ordinary that it inhabits heaven" (qtd. in Green 139-40). Conventional expectations for queens' pious expressions might include attendance at mass and religious festivals, donating gifts, giving from her personal lands gifts to religious houses, and other visible good works to assist the poor. As mentioned in the previous chapter, some criticism of Matilda II was the result of her pattern

of giving; her support was not as regular or long-term to religious houses as had been that of her mother-in-law Queen Matilda I of Flanders.

On the other hand, Queen Matilda of Scotland did seem to have a gift for public display of her good works of charity and humility. According to a story told by Aelred of Rievaulx, who said he heard it from Matilda's younger brother David, during Easter court of 1105, the queen invited lepers into her palace rooms, washing, drying, and kissing their feet. To David's horror, she invited him to participate, which he declined. This story became repeated by chroniclers and entered into the hagiographical *Life of St. Margaret* by John of Tynemouth in the fourteenth century (Huneycutt, *Matilda of Scotland* 104-05). Although its details may be questioned, Matilda did show a specific interest in helping lepers by founding and supporting St. Giles, which cared for several lepers, and by becoming a benefactor to a leprosarium at Chichester. She was also known for ascetic practices, including, as reported by William of Malmesbury, walking barefoot between the palace and the church during Lent (Huneycutt, *Matilda of Scotland* 106). Such stories of the queen's humble yet performative practices would seem to encourage her subjects to view her as more than conventionally devout. In addition, she kept a regular correspondence with Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury during his exile; its impact will considered in the next chapter. Perhaps the most realistic assessment of this royal couple is to acknowledge mixed motivations of both king and queen while also recognizing their consistent religious engagement and the authentic steps they took to fulfill their religious responsibilities throughout their long reigns.

An unusual later medieval example of public promotion of a king and queen with entwined political and religious connections is found in several of John Lydgate's poems which feature the historical Queen Katherine of Valois (r. 1420-1422) and her infant son King Henry

VI (r. 1422-1461, 1470-1471) in literary productions. Because of the unique situation after the unexpected death of King Henry V (r. 1413-1422), this royal pair did not exercise personal choice to present themselves together as devout Christians. Queen Katherine needed to care for the young Henry while Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester and middle brother to the three Lancastrians, eventually became designated Protector of England until Henry VI became older. Those who promoted the Lancastrian legitimacy of Henry VI's rule over England and France made sure, for their own interests, to represent Katherine as the already-chosen queen mother and Henry VI as the rightful heir to King Henry V.

Royal inaugurations had developed into ceremonies filled with religious personnel and liturgy leading the king and queen through procession, oath, prayer, and anointing to begin their reign. In related coronation celebrations, civil authorities, such as the mayor of London, initiated pageants and processions that provided wide public access for rulers to participate in ways that combined what moderns label both secular/political and sacred/religious elements. John Lydgate (1370-1451), a monk at Bury St. Edmund, became the most popular poet of the fifteenth century and one who seems to have valued the moral *sentence* of a text at least as much—if not more—than its entertainment or *solace* aspects. Lydgate developed a style described as "laureate" that features elevated tone and vocabulary. Such public poetry reflected certain traditional oral features and the medieval convention of "amplification," which included digressions, descriptions, and rhetorical flourishes. It might also include Latin words "barely digested into English" which were understandable to scholars and provided the text a tone of "sonority" (Pearsall 8, 262; Schirmer 74). His style was seen by many contemporaries as elegant, and it is valued now as helpful in increasing the prestige of the English language, building on what Chaucer had begun in the fourteenth century. In addition to earls and countesses as patrons,

Pearsall notes the commission by Henry Prince of Wales (later King Henry VI) for a translation of the story of Troy into English in 1412 so that the English would have this story in their language (1). These attributes, some of which are unappreciated by modern readers, were just what helped Lydgate to connect to royalty.

Lydgate eventually became the unofficial court poet and his works were "widely read, universally admired and assiduously imitated" (Pearsall 1). As such, Lydgate was used as a valuable resource for the Lancastrian cause by writing several poems relating to the royal coronations of Henry VI. According to Henry Noble MacCracken, "Lydgate's pen was at the service of any devout Catholic and patriotic conservative" (vol. 1, Introduction ix). The events surrounding King Henry VI's coronations called for his laureate qualities to support Henry's young rule. Considering that Henry VI became king at under two years of age and the need to justify his rule over both England and France, Lydgate provided a valuable service. Henry V died unexpectedly, leaving a twenty-one-year old widow, Katherine of Valois, and nine-month old Henry. Parliament first appointed the baby's Uncle John, Duke of Bedford, youngest of the three Lancastrians, as Protector of England and advisor, in addition to his overlordship of France. When John was absent, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucestor, the middle brother, was assigned the role along with a council.

While containing both religious and secular elements, Lydgate wrote a group of seven poems celebrating and legitimizing the boy King Henry. They show a range of topics and tone and cover Henry's claims of kingship, his coronation as the king of England in 1429, and his return to London after his coronation as king of France in 1432. The inclusion of his mother, Queen Katherine of Valois, in some of these poems shows various degrees of public acknowledgement of her role. The promotion of Henry VI as the rightful heir of both kingdoms

began years before the coronations occurred and relied on his genealogy from both paternal and maternal sides. “The Title and Pedigree of King Henry VI” is a Lydgate poem commissioned by the Earl of Warwick in 1426 to publicize the case that “Henry the Sext, of age ny five yere ren, / Borne to be king of worthie reamys two. / And God graunt that it may be so, / Septure and crowne þat he may in dede, / As he hath right, in peas to possede” (“The Title,” vol. 2 lines 30-34). (Henry the sixth, nearly five years old, is worthily born to be king of two realms. / And God grant that it may be so, / that scepter and crown he may in fact, / as he has the right, to obtain in peace.) In the three-hundred twenty-nine line poem, Lydgate translates French material from Laurence Calot at the behest of the Duke of Bedford. He condemns the actions of the French Dauphin, heir apparent of France, as disqualifying him from the French throne and defends Henry VI as God’s gift as rightful heir to England and France just as the two countries had been joined under his father. As the genealogy shows, the young Henry is descended from “the stok and blode of Seint Lowys…in þe eight degre” (Lydgate, “The Title,” vol. 2 lines 133, 139). Lydgate then reminds his readers that King Henry V, affirmed by the treaty of Trois, became heir to France, and Henry VI’s own claim became doubly assured by his father’s marriage to Queen Katherine of Valois (Lydgate, “The Title,” vol. 2 lines 161, 168, 205-07). Lydgate helped to spread the perspective that Henry VI rightly claimed the crowns of both kingdoms by family and by holy matrimony. This claim was strengthened when King Charles VI of France (r.1380-1422) and King Henry V both died unexpectedly within one year of each other.

In the same manuscript, the lengthy defense is immediately followed by a short, exuberant “Roundel for the Coronation of Henry VI” containing thanksgiving and prayer:

> Rejoice, ye Reames of Englond & of Fraunce,
> A braunche þat sprang oute of the floure-de-lys,
> Blode of Seint Edward and Seint Lowys, God hath this day sent in gouernauce . . .
> O hevenly blossome, o budde of all pleasaunce,

> God graunt the grace for to ben als wise
> As was thi fader…Stable in virtue. (vol. 2, lines 1-4, 7-11)

In these brief lines, Lydgate captures joyful religious relief and the certainty of Henry VI's dual claims. The "braunche" is alluding to the branch of Jesse as represented by the fleur-de-lis. This acknowledges God's grace expressed as His blessed providence in the lineage of King Henry VI just as it was for the biblical David, youngest son of Jesse who was chosen by God, through Samuel, to be Israel's second king. Perhaps more related to contemporary concerns, lines referencing the holy blood of saints from England and France and the reminder of Henry V's governing virtues indicate the seriousness of succession and the hope of future dynastic success.

In Lydgate's 1430 "Ballade to King Henry VI Upon His Coronation," after advising Henry VI to let his father be his mirror and guide, Lydgate also mentions his mother "þe goode lyf of qweene Katheryne, / Þy blessed moder" (vol. 2 lines 102-104) in a way that can be interpreted that she is to be his guide as well as another proof of his royal lineage.

A more focused religious poem in this same group repeatedly connects Queen Katherine of Valois and King Henry VI in a prayer with effective repetition and increasing familiarity. "A Prayer for King, Queen, and People, 1429" demonstrates how Lydgate situates the queen and the young king publicly within a devout Christian people and kingdom that requests blessings for them and their land. The stanzas of the prayer beseech God on behalf of a public audience that express the concerns of royals, religious, and commons. Protection, victory, grace, forgiveness, and pity are requested. Throughout the poem, however, the most obvious and repeated request is to Jesus Christ and the Trinity to "preserve/preserue under thy mighty honde, / The kynge, the queen, the peple and thy londe" ("A Prayer," vol. 1 lines 6-7, 13-14, 20-21, 27-28, 34-35, 41-42, 48-49). This repeated refrain works to emphasize in descending social order exactly to whom Jesus will grant the many stated requests and keep under his protection. The overall content

seems intended to be all-encompassing for the kingdom of England. Rather than addressing the traditional social organization of the three estates, by the fifteenth century, Lydgate specifies each king and queen, combines all of the nobility, religious, and lay people into one group, and adds the land itself as needing God's guidance. The refrain sounds as if it could be performed in a public service for the rulers, and the people could say these ending lines aloud to acknowledge the son of God, their earthly rulers, all those accepting such rulership, and their sense of the land as a blessed nation.

The refrain changes in the last stanza of the poem's main part to "Benigne Iesu, preserve eke with thin hande" (vol. 1 line 55). This address connects the prayer to Jesus as the one who was sent to the world to show humans God's grace in the most personal way by suffering on the cross. The request next changes in the ending of the four stanzas of the Lenvoy to "Him and his moder, thy peple and thy londe" (vol. 1 lines 63, 70, 77, 84). This change presents the king and his mother, the queen, in a more direct and intimate way. In stanza nine, the speaker requests, "Now good lorde conserve him thurgh thy myght (vol. 1 line 61). There is at least a decade before the young king will rule on his own and the Lord can keep him from competing claims and the manipulations of nobles. The prayer then asks, "Lat him in vertu encresse and shyne / Worthy thorgh vertu to be put in memorye / And forgete nat hys moder Kateryne" (vol. 1 lines 64-66). The mother and son will need divine help during his minority as he learns how to be a worthy, sole king. The first lines echo the gospel phrase that references the boy Jesus as he grew up with Mary (and Joseph) as his teachers while preparing for his own adult ministry, "And Jesus advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and men" (Luke 2.52). As a biblical model for parental teaching, the discourse of this verse implies the responsibility of a medieval queen, in this case Katherine, to educate her son as a future ruler. Further, it states directly what

Henry needs: As “thyne oone chose knyghte,” Henry needs “conquest and victorye,” and for the Lord to be “hys counsaylle and hys souereigne” so he can “wexeth with vertu him tavaunce” (“A Prayer,” vol. 1 lines 58, 68, 71-72). As God’s appointed man, he will need success in battle which will be the result if the Lord is acknowledged as his advisor and master.

The refrains which mention Katherine may also reflect the pressured relationship that might develop between a mother queen and her son king as he grew older. The repeated inclusion of the people and their land in the refrain is an apt reminder that the quality of the queen’s and king’s relationship, whether spousal or parental, impacted their subjects and their lands in significant ways. One importance of noting the religious elements of these poems is that it helps to show the continuing, non-ironic support of traditional Christianity for a large public audience within growing criticisms of the religious estate in society. In contrast to the popular *Canterbury Tales*, in which only two of the religious pilgrims, the Parson and the Second Nun, are presented as principled and worthy in their descriptions, prologues, and tales, Lydgate’s poems mentioning Mother Queen Katherine and Son King Henry VI help build a textual case with various poetic forms which support the traditional working together of church and state and also more than a hint of propaganda.

Intercession as Royal Resource

Another unique aspect of king and queen relationships could prove vital to the benefit of rulers’ kingdoms. As often recorded in sources, the relationships between individual rulers and church officials seem to be the largest factor in rulers’ decisions to support various aspects of the church and religious life. However, one more exclusive and unique activity of relationship that impacted decisions of various types was the act of intercession between king and queen. Intercession is not specifically a religious practice and was often used for secular purposes. For

example, according to some Scottish historians, in 1113, Matilda II successfully interceded with King Henry I on behalf of her brother, David (r. 1124-1153), heir of Scotland, for permission to marry Maud, the extraordinarily wealthy widow of Simon de Senlis. The resulting marriage provided David extensive lands in England and in Scotland from which he successfully gained kingship of Scotland (Green 128-29; Barrow). In its early descriptions, royal intercession typically involved the queen making a formal, sometimes dramatic, appeal for the king to relent on a judgment he has declared. This request is made while the queen prostrates herself before the king in humble submission. The request relies on their personal relationship and the fact that it is she, the queen, who appeals for the party judged guilty. This interaction, perhaps partly reliant on a positive personal relationship between rulers, yet often acted in a public environment, had very early Anglo-Saxon secular roots in medieval governing procedures. Stafford examines the early Middle Ages for the development of the status and titles of kings' partners, noting how personal rule centered around king and family which allowed the queen to be an intimate counsellor and "help direct the course of events," which is the milieu of royal intercessions (*Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers* 98). John Carni Parson argues that intercession became more crucial as administrative kingship grew in the early twelfth century and examines the paradoxes that developed around the practice during the thirteenth century. Huneycutt studies intercession by examining the *Life of St. Margaret* and the role of Margaret's daughter, Queen Matilda II of Scotland, and King Henry I concerning church conflicts. Lisa Benz-St. John has explored the extent that thirteenth-century queens may or may not have been "marginalized" or "distanced" from direct access to the king focusing on intercession as one metric to consider (17-18). Generously granting a gracious appeal from his humble queen fit in well with a king's presentation of his rulership as both strong and reasonable. Intercessions work as a method by

which the king can rethink what may have been a quick judgment while still maintaining his hierarchical position. Understood more broadly, intercession is the queen enacting the part of mercy to suggest that some judgments of the king—while meeting the legal definition of justice—might still merit reconsideration. Just as most medieval kings believed, or presented themselves as believing, that they became king by the grace of God, they also believed that granting mercy and forgiveness were within their rights of rulership. Scholars have shown much interest in intercession, usually framed as one of the functions of queenship. Huneycutt argues that Matilda II (r. 1100-1118) "fully realized the power and influence she could wield if her subjects perceived her to be successful in interceding with her royal husband" ("Intercession and the High-Medieval Queen" 127). Intercession can benefit all parties. The two-way process benefits the king by allowing him to change his mind while saving face. For the queen, a successful intercession means she can experience the satisfaction of acting jointly with the king in a customary governing role. Also, she can feel relief for and with her subjects when her request is granted, and their punishment is lessened or cancelled. Finally, she often receives admiration, gratitude, and gifts from those who benefit from the staying of the king's initial sentence.

Some evidence indicates intercession is related to biblical concerns. Huneycutt examines the queen's intercessor role as it relates to Queen Esther. She reports that Queen Esther was "urged upon [queens] by prelates" as a model for the practice (qtd. in Parsons 64). In her examination of how Esther became a familiar medieval topos, Huneycutt cites Hrabanus Maurus and Walafrid Strabo as scholars who interpreted Esther as a symbol for the church. Maurus advised Judith, second wife of King Louis the Pious, to "'always place Esther, a queen like you, before the eyes of your heart, as someone to be imitated in every act of piety and sanctity'" ("In

tercession" 127, 140n7; 129). Thus, Esther's intercession, and, by extension, those of future queens, gained a spiritual meaning for medieval queens. Intercession may have become more essential to queens with the rise of administrative kingship. To boost authority for intercessory actions, "to some extent [Queen Matilda II] adopted Esther as a model for her own behavior" (Huneycutt, "Intercession" 130, 127). Others also recognized this biblical connection. Matilda was extolled by Ælred as a "second Esther for our time" (Huneycutt, "Intercession" 129, 142n20). In particular in a manner which will be discussed in the next chapter, Matilda used intercession in the lengthy church conflict of King Henry I with Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury and Pope Paschal II. Letters indicate that she made significant intercessory attempts to keep communication channels open before a compromise was achieved in 1106 (Huneycutt, "intercession" 135). Intercessions were complicated by egos and emotion and even Matilda's intercessions did not always lead to success.

Just as Queen Esther took great care before interceding with King Assuerus for her people, medieval queens seem to have been cautious before an intercession attempt. For example, King Henry I (r. 1100-1135), in his zeal to stamp out clerical marriage, initiated fines and occasional imprisonment for those who ignored religious councils and his own prohibitions. After he rejected a group of clerics requesting pity for those unable to afford fines, they pleaded with Queen Matilda II to intercede on their behalf. According to Eadmer, the queen, although weeping with understanding of their problem, was too frightened to initiate the process in the face of the king's fierce opposition (Green 275). In this case, if the attempted intercession had failed, it may have brought worse consequences to the clerics and harmed the relationship between queen and king as well.

Queen Philippa (1314-1369) became known for her successful intercessions with King Edward III (r. 1327-1377). Two examples show Queen Philippa's (1314-1369) defense of both common people and their leaders. In 1331, a tournament viewing stand in London fell while the queen and others were on it, and although the queen was not hurt, the lives of the carpenters who had built the structure were at peril due to King Edward III's angry reaction. Fortunately, Philippa interceded with the king, and he agreed to show the workers mercy. Her subjects repaid her intercessions with "outpourings of affection" (Earenfight, *Queenship* 204-5). In another anecdote, the chronicler Jean Froissart describes how, in 1347, a very pregnant Queen Philippa pleaded on her knees to King Edward requesting him to pardon six burghers of Calais whom he had sentenced to execution after they opposed him during a siege. Reportedly, the king expressed regret at Philippa's request yet still relents because "you have prayed so forcefully that I would dare not refuse the favor which you ask of me" (qtd. in Earenfight, *Queenship* 205). Even though the particular facts of her pregnancy do not seem to match the timing of this event, the story supports the queen's willingness and initiative to request mercy from the king. More data is reported by Lisa Benz-St. John, whose tally of requests made by late medieval queens shows that Queen Philippa made a relatively high number of requests for pardons in 1330 and 1333 (Appendix 1). Another time Philippa agreed to a later request for intercession; this time it was to return Guy de Rumbys to the hospital she patronized and within which he had taken sanctuary. Tingle interprets such actions and other reforms as indicating "genuine religious concern" in addition to showing a preference for a place she helped fund (Tingle, *Chaucer's Queens* 160). Philippa's popularity during her reign likely came at least in part from her personal concern for mercy and proportional justice for a variety of people and her many other works of patronage.

The practice of intercession, however, evidently proved successful often enough to be depicted not only in historical records but also in literature. Geoffrey Chaucer worked in the court and had perhaps observed many royal intercessions initiated by Queen Philippa and granted by King Edward III. Chaucer's inclusion of queen-to-ruler intercession scenes in tales told by the Knight and the Wife of Bath in *The Canterbury Tales* may reflect his own observations from the multiple courts where he worked and visited as a civil servant and diplomat. Whatever degree of historic reality Chaucer based his pilgrims' stories on in *The Canterbury Tales*, the *"*Knight's Tale" features two scenes of intercession that reveal his representation of the major features of the process along with some variations between them. Recent scholarship on this tale focuses primarily on modern critical analysis. Tory Vandeventer Pearman, for example, emphasizes that more attention needs to be paid to the Amazon Scythian ethnicity as well as the female gender of Queen Hippolyta and Lady Emily in acknowledging them as the Other and the silent conquered (38). Matthew Irvin critiques the feelings of Theseus' pity for women as still supporting the patriarchy and as an inadequate substitute for collective social justice that would include his new queen Hippolyta (395-96) While there is merit in understanding how modern critical lenses interpret Theseus in ways that reveal him as a leader unable to meet modern standards, I focus on the fact that, as medieval rulers and aristocrats understood and used the practice, Chaucer presents both intercessions as ideal two-way relationships within the limits of the unideal situations that motivated the women to initiate their intercession requests. As the previous medieval intercessions also show, a successful intercession involves benefits for the major participants and can often share further benefits to a larger group.

The Knight begins his tale with not one, but an entire group of weeping women in the middle of the road. They deliberately interrupt the victorious return of Duke Theseus, ruler of

Athens, after his defeat of the Amazons and his resulting marriage to their Queen Hippolyta (*CT*, KnT lines 861-870, 897-904). Not only do the mourners block his way but one of the queens takes hold of the bridle of his horse in order to stop him (line 904). This action in itself indicates a level of privilege not available to members of lower political and social status. In response to the remonstrative inquiry of Theseus about their loud wailing and black clothes, the women identify themselves as widows from the siege of Thebes, all former duchesses and queens. The eldest, widow of King Cappaneus, pleads, "we biseken mercy and socour. / Have mercy on oure wo and oure distresse! / Som drope of pitee, thurgh thy gentilesse, / Upon us wrecched women lat thou falle" (KnT lines 918-921). The widow asks for compassion based on the duke's gentility. The ladies are dishonored by the deeds of King Creon, the new ruler of Thebes, who refuses to let the ladies provide honorable burials for their slain husbands. Instead, dogs gnaw on their corpses which lie in an open heap. "Weylaway!....And with that word, withouten moore respite, / They fillen gruf and criden pitously, 'Have on us wrecched women som mercy, / And lat oure sorwe synken in thyn herte'" (KnT lines 938c, 948-951). Contrasting their position at the bottom of Fortune's wheel with the duke's position at the top, the noble widows describe the humiliation shown to the dead ruler-warriors and reveal that they have waited two weeks to bring their request to the one they think can redress the wrong (KnT lines 915-16, 924-926). They have performed their part of the intercession with their claim to high status, their appeal to the noble nature of Theseus, and their description of a horrible wrong that no just ruler should let stand. In contrast to the frequent lack of explanatory description of the manner in which historical kings respond to intercessory requests, Chaucer describes Theseus as displaying the ideal chivalrous response:

> This gentil duc doun from his courser sterte
> With herte pitous, whan he herde hem speke.

> Hym thoughte that his herte wolde breke,
> Whan he saugh hem so pitous and so maat,
> That whilom weren of so greet estaat;
> And in his armes he hem alle up hente,
> And hem conforteth in ful good entente,
> And swoor his ooth, as he was trewe knight,
> He wolde doon so ferforthly his might
> Upon the tiraunt Creon hem to wreke
> That al the peple of Grece sholde speke
> How Creon was of Theseus yserved
> As he that hadde his deeth ful wel deserved.
> (KnT lines 952-964)

Theseus reveals his nobility by how quickly his initial annoyance and suspicion change to compassion for the widows' plight. Feeling pity for their suffering and the traumatic fall they have experienced from their former estate, he dismounts from his horse. This signals to the widows that he hears their distress and will not leave them hopeless. Even before speaking, Theseus physically comforts the ladies in the present moment by helping them up from their kneeling positions. He next shows the depth of his honor by promising immediate aid to redress the desecration of the slain dukes and kings. Sending his new wife and her younger sister Emily on to Athens, Theseus rides to Thebes, defeats Creon, "and to the ladyes he restored again / The bones of hir freendes that were slayn, / To doon obsequies, as was tho the gyse" (KnT lines 991-93). Chaucer depicts strong emotions on both sides of this intercession, the desolate grief of the widows and the deep sadness of the duke for such dishonorable treatment of ruling warriors. Chaucer's audience could approve of both sides of this process of interaction. The high-ranking widows take advantage of their unique position to address the most noble ruler they know for help to resolve issues of grave import to themselves, their families, and to the city as a whole. Honorable funeral rites demonstrated what the bereft families deserved and would continue the honor shown by their ruler knights who had given their all to the battle. Theseus takes action that is a role model for medieval rulers and, indeed, admirably increases his own fame.

Pity and chivalry also play a major part in the narrative in the intercession between Theseus and his royal Queen Hippolyta and her sister Lady Emily concerning the fates of the two Theban knights of the royal line, Palamon and Arcite. Discovered wounded after the battle between Theseus and Creon, and subsequently imprisoned by Theseus, these two royal cousins faced drama and despair in their desire for freedom and in their fierce competing love for Lady Emily. After Perotheus convinces Theseus to release Arcite from prison and after seven years of imprisonment, a friend helps Palamon escape. By chance, the two Theban royal knights find each other only to immediately resume their contention over the queen's sister. They are discovered by Theseus and his hunting party fighting to the death for her hand, both with many wounds. When the duke investigates, Palamon confesses their identities and crimes, requesting the ruler to pass judgment: "And as thou art a rightful lord and juge, / Ne yif us neither mercy ne refuge" (KnT lines 1719-20). This request asks Theseus to enact justice in the traditional role of a leader. In this case the evidence of Arcite's deceit and Palamon's escape is clear. Theseus quickly declares they will be killed for the crimes committed against the king's peace.

This legal sentence, however, is met with great outcry from Queen Hippolyta, Lady Emily, and all the other ladies in the party:

> Greet pitee was it, as it thoughte hem alle,
> That evere swich a chaunce sholde falle,
> For gentil men they were of greet estaat,
> And no thing but for love was this debaat;
> And saugh hir blody woundes wyde and soore…
> "Have mercy, Lord, upon us women alle!'"
> And on hir bare knees adoun they falle
> And wolde have kist his feet ther as he stood . . . .
> (KnT lines 1751-55, 1757-59)

Here, Chaucer depicts the ladies enacting their traditional women's role of intercession based on their own noble feelings of pity. They express dismay that two royal knights find themselves in

such desperate circumstances that, instead of helping each other as kin, they are driven to kill each other. They feel compassion for the extent of the knights' wounds. They sympathize that a painful death may result, ironically, because of the competing love for one of their own group who is unaware of the existence of either. All these attitudes are shown in their words and in their abject posture as they request the ruler's mercy. And, once again, Theseus is moved by the appeal of worthy, high born ladies, "For pitee renneth soone in gentil herte" (KnT line 1761). Chaucer provides the interior thoughts that historic chronicles and court records cannot. He explains the duke's reasoning: "As thus: he thoghte well that every man / Wol helpe himself in love . . . And eek delivere himself out of prisoun" (KnT lines 1767-69). Theseus acknowledges that it is only natural for any man to further his own romance and to try to escape from jail. The narrator adds, "And eek his herte hadde compassioun / Of wommen, for they wepen evere in oon" (KnT lines 1770-71). Just as the duke felt pity for the weeping women who waylaid him on his way home to Athens to redeem the bones of their husbands, the duke's heart feels for the queen and her ladies. Further, he pronounces "'Fy / Upon a lord that wol have no mercy . . . To hem that been in repentaunce and dred . . . That lord hath litel of discrecioun, / That in swich cas kan no divisioun / But weyeth pride and humblesse after oon'" (KnT lines 1773-74, 1776, 1779-1781). Theseus expresses contempt for a lord who judges those who are repentant and afraid, as both Palamon and Arcite are, in the same manner as those who are obstinate and defiant in their error. Holly Cross, who examines Emily's passivity within the privileges of patriarchy, acknowledges that the outward passivity of the Lady's foreign captivity in Athens and her resulting endurance function in ways that initiate change. She suggests that "Emelye's vulnerability does productive work in the tale" (359). As in other intercessions, that work is to open a space in which the ruler can reconsider his judgment. The focus could expand to include

Queen Hippolyta who also displays vulnerability in the intercessory process. Her pleading request is rewarded by the change in Theseus. The intercession moves the duke from anger and a harsh sentence to a calm analysis of the knights' circumstances. Once that happens, he can then feel empathy for his queen and ladies and realize that his first reaction does not express the kind of lord he admires. He relents and rescinds his sentence of immediate death for the knights "At requeste of the queene, that kneleth here, And eek of Emelye, my suster deere" (KnT lines 1819-1820). He ties his forgiveness directly to the intercession of Hippolyta and Emily.

Further, Theseus decides on a public competition between the two lovers as more just considering their status and motivations. The successful intercession results in benefit to all parties with one significant exception. With the queen's intercession, the king has been able to mitigate his rash reaction to discovering two recalcitrant prisoners who have deceived and disobeyed him and violated the peace of his kingdom. As a result, the king can then conceive of a grand tournament involving the kingdom's best knights as well as those from other lands to help Arcite or Palamon gain his sister-in-law's hand in marriage. This grand event will seem appropriate for the Athenian royals and the two royal but lovelorn Theban knights. The knights will have the chance to prepare for their competition and gather men for support. Also, the ladies do not have to endure the pain of two such previously honorable knights destroying each other immediately in an unofficial, undignified, bloody manner. Widening the effect of the Duke's plans, the throngs who will gather for the lengthy and exciting contest are assumed to benefit from this demonstration of how to conduct the kingdom in order to keep the king's peace.

The notable exception to those who receive their primary request is Lady Emily who openly stated her preference for perpetual virginity to the goddess Diana rather than marriage to any knight. She asks the goddess Diana to turn away the hearts of both Palamon and Arcite from

her. Displaying either humility or astuteness, however, she frames this request as if she knows it may not be granted. She adds another: "And if so be thou wolt nat dome grace, / Or if my destynee be shapen so / That I shal nedes have oon of hem two, / As sende me hym that moost desireth me" (KnT lines 2322-2325). The burning sticks reveal that fate will not give her the secluded, virginal life she desires most. Eventually, however, she does receive her second request of Diana for marriage to the more devoted Palamon. Perhaps a view of this result as only second-best for the female protagonist is what attracts recent scholarly focus on Emily. Within the frame of medieval romance and hierarchy, however, the intercession allows the ideals of chivalry to be on full display in the knight's story. Of course, the tale's setting of ancient Thebes and Athens is not Christian. Helen Phillips describes it as being "compatible with Christian worldviews," but "without distinctive Christian doctrines like atonement or salvation" (70). Its society believed in obeying and honoring the gods by burying the dead appropriately. All the major characters participate in their pagan religion by following expected rituals and imploring their gods' aid. In addition, Chaucer's court audience and later medieval readers could easily make the connection between Christianity's values of justice and mercy and the noble values shown by the pre-Christian Theseus.

Chaucer's "Wife of Bath's Tale," (WBT) as explained by Joseph Roppolo, features three Celtic folk tale analogues which combine stories of the Loathly Lady with the tale of a man whose life depends on finding the right answer to an important question. In this case, the question is, what do women desire most? The analogues are John Gower's "Tale of Florent," the anonymous "The Marriage of Sir Gawaine," and "The Weddynge of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell" (263). As in "The Knight's Tale," Chaucer uses intercession to provide the set-up for the entire tale. As Alison tells it, King Arthur pronounces death as the legal punishment for one

of his young "lusty" knights who commits rape upon a maiden. There is a "clamour / And swich pursute unto the king" in the young lady's support (*CT*, WBT lines 889-90). There is a hue and cry for the king's justice. The queen, along with her ladies, however, steps in to intercede: "the queene and other ladyes mo / So longe preyeden the king of grace / Til he his lyf hym graunted in the place, / And yaf hym to the queene, al at hir wille, / To chese wheither she wolde hym save or spille. / The queene thanketh the king with al hir might" (*CT*, WBT lines 894-899). Led by the queen, the ladies take the young knight's case and make a long appeal for King Arthur to show him mercy. Apparently, their appeal convinces Arthur to rescind his own judgment of death.

In a plot twist, however, the king does not give the guilty knight his freedom but promptly turns him over to the queen. Arthur gives Guinevere full liberty to decide whether he should be saved or put to death. The result of the intercession reveals the court's differing opinions about the case. The king had first appeased the group clamoring for justice by pronouncing the knight's death. The queen then asserts her right to intercede and requests a reconsideration. By lifting his own capital sentence, the King Arthur hands power to Queen Guinevere who now faces the competing wishes of the justice-loving group and those of the guilty knight and her own ladies. The queen demonstrates her belief that the young knight deserves a second chance by offering a shrewd bargain that gives the knight both the hope of redemption and the threat of death. First she reminds him:

"'Thou standest yet,' quod she, 'in swich array / That of thy lyf yet hastow no suretee." Then she makes him the offer: "I grante thee lyf if thou kanst tellen me / What thing is it that women moost desiren." Last, the queen warns: "Be war, and keep thy nekkeboon from iren!" If he cannot "seche and leere / An answere suffisant" in one year plus one day, he will face the ultimate penalty, "Thy body for to yelden in this place" (*CT*, WBT lines 902-906, 909-910, 912).

The queen's pronouncement leaves the knight sighing with sadness, but it provides him with remedial education along with a chance to redeem his life. Just like Theseus' thought process in response to the pleas of the grieving queens and duchesses in the "Knight's Tale," Chaucer provides the audience a close look at how Queen Guinevere views the case. Her offer shows at least a degree of compassion but, as noted above, she is strict in her requirements. With her direction, the queen places him in the unfamiliar position of appealing to all sorts of women "in every hous and every place / Where as he hopeth for to fynde grace / To lerne what thing women loven moost" (*CT*, WBT lines 919-921). If he discovers women's greatest desire, then it is assumed he will have not only that prized information, but also many other better options of how to treat women than being driven only his own selfish sexual whims.

Perhaps not surprising to Queen Guinevere, the knight receives a wide range of answers from women during his year's quest. Alison's narration gives a catalog of the many and varying things women want from riches to sex to honor to flattery to gossip, among many other desires. This discovery that it is difficult to "fynde in this mateere / Two creatures accordynge in-feere" provides the knight his first chance to see each woman as an individual with her own wishes that are both good and—seemingly more often in Alison's blunt opinion—bad. Making his way back to court in frustration, the knight is met by a "wyf—[who] A fouler wight ther may no man devyse" (*CT*, WBT lines 922, 998-999). This poor, old woman also offers the knight a difficult bargain, promising the right answer if he grants whatever she requests next. He pledges his agreement, she whispers the correct answer in his ear, and the knight is able to save his life by announcing to the large assembly of women in court before the judge, Queen Guinevere, that "'Wommen desiren to have sovereynetee / As wel over hir housbond as hir love, / And for to been in maistrie hym above'" (*CT*, WBT lines 1038-1040). In opposition to familiar medieval

preaching that emphasized the principle of submission as a religious requirement, the wife of Bath uses her prologue and her tale to offer her opinion in which she declares: "'Experience . . . is right ynough for me, / To speke of wo that is in marriage'" (*CT*, "Wife of Bath's Prologue" lines 1-3). Her experience leads to her wish for sovereignty in marriage as illustrated in her prologue and her tale.

The question is, did the knight learn the lesson given to him by the intercession? Scholars offer different answers. Roppolo, agrees with the conclusions of earlier research that the knight is successfully "converted" to a more respectful, mature perspective on treating all women well and is rewarded with a beautiful, young, and obedient wife. More recently, however, Susanne Sarah Thomas explores the ambiguous meanings of the game's answer which the old, unattractive woman provides: *sovereignty*. This term can mean power over others or the power of self-control. These meanings allow for differing interpretations of the final character of the knight. She argues that the knight never actually understands his new wife's definition of self-control over desires. Instead, he enjoys the promise of beauty and obedience by a woman who herself may be ambiguous because of her power to change her body (88, 91). Pleading for mercy, the queen's traditional role in intercession, offers the guilty knight a chance to learn and live a better life. The knight does learn important lessons, but his learning seems incomplete. His disgraceful sexual sin and the lawful death sentence from King Arthur teaches him the wisdom of controlling future sexual attacks on unwilling maidens of any rank. If he had not learned this, he may have attempted escape into exile when Queen Guinevere sends him on his quest to discover women's truest desire. He successfully avoids such attacks on any women during his year-long project. As already mentioned, he also learns in his interviews that women do not all hold the same values and preferences. The knight, however, does not seem to have learned to gracefully

honor his pledge to the crone. In the reactive misery which follows her public marriage request, he also demonstrates that he has not learned to show courtesy to all women, even the ones he finds unworthy: "Allas and welawey!" he moans, "For Goddes love, as chees a newe requeste!" (*CT*, WBT lines 1058, 1060). This public tantrum in response to the loathly lady's request reveals his inability to control strong negative emotions in the service of courtesy. On the wedding night, he continues to show his contempt as he "hidde hym as an owle" avoiding her and "walweth" as he stays away from their bed (*CT*, WBT lines 1081, 1085). The lady's lengthy sermon on their wedding knight refutes his criticisms of her family's lineage, her poverty, her looks, and her age; instead, she encourages him to follow the late medieval concept that *gentilesse* and *courtesy* include "loyalty to oath" and "respect for [all] women" (Phillips 74). The audience never learns if he overcomes his bias in these areas. He may not need to since his wife previously assured him that she can remedy each of these seeming realities that cause him distress.

What he has learned, however, is the lesson of the Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale —to allow women sovereignty in marriage. In a complete reversal of his forced control of the helpless maid whom he rapes at the beginning of the tale, the knight surrenders control of whether to have goodness and old age or beauty and youth in his marriage to his wife. For that choice, he is richly rewarded with what every typical knight desired: a beautiful, young wife who is loyal and good. This happy ending seems appropriate for a romance. Phillips, however, argues that "its denouement manipulates closure through magic and happy marriage, without satisfactorily addressing these provocative points (the knight never has to tolerate and respect an old, ugly wife" (75). In the end, Guinevere's intercession results in partial success. The knight learns what seem to be the most urgent lessons of sexual self-control and giving his wife domestic mastery;

however, the knight does not demonstrate that he has internalized the deeper traits of chivalry which require showing courtesy to all women in all situations and developing the inner gentility that comes from God.

These literary intercessions by Chaucer show the method and the significance of intercessions and provide occasions for his courtly audience to better understand the reasoning of kings and queens during the intercession. They also help his audience, both medieval and modern, to enjoy his narrative tales as the essence of *sentence* and *solace*, the medieval concept that the best story communicates both a good moral and good entertainment. These literary representations show good rulers acting as expected to establish order in society and to lead by good example. The chivalric motivation of King Arthur's assent to the noble queen's intercession and her own compassionate method of providing the knight with a way to redeem his behavior and his life, however, is not represented in the biblical texts of the Christianity familiar to Chaucer's audience but rather in the veneration of the Virgin Mary as Queen of Heaven, which will be explored in the next chapter. Listeners and readers might well feel assured when kings/dukes and queens/duchesses both played their expected roles in situations where appeal and revision of judgment to consider mercy matches the spirit of good rule in agreement with two of Christianity's primary principles for living: justice and mercy.

Failed Intercession: Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes*

As in the earlier historical case of King Henry I's judgment against the married clerics and the reluctance of Queen Matilda II to intercede, literature also shows that royal intercession does not always work. Far-reaching and destructive consequences for entire kingdoms can be the result of such failure as illustrated in John Lydgate's version of *The Siege of Thebes* (c. 1421-1422). Lydgate (c. 1370-1449), a Benedictine monk at Bury St. Edmunds and great admirer of

Chaucer, wrote and translated prolifically. Notably, although he often worked for patrons from noble and royal houses, this work is the only Middle English text which tells the complete legend of Thebes and the only known work that Lydgate completed without a patron (Renoir 111; Pearsall 151). As a result, the speculation of scholars is that this work may express Lydgate's own ideas and concerns. Renoir describes the work as a "French mediavel [sic] romance translated into an English Renaissance epic" because it features an earnest tone, moral purpose, and nationalistic intent (135). Specifically, he sees its focus on the individual hero, Tydeus, and both sons of Oedipus and Jocasta as demonstrating a proto-humanistic focus (135). Lydgate's biographer, Derek Pearsall, disagrees, arguing that Lydgate remains primarily in a medieval mode (Edwards, Introduction *ST*). In spite of the attention given to Tydeus, one main theme of the poem is the devastation of war, and the intervention attempts by Jocasta seem to fit best within the description that Lydgate is "above all, incurably didactic. The stories of Troy and Thebes are not vehicles for the display of passion and human tragedy but store houses of moral exempla" (Pearsall 11). His overarching purpose seems to fit the medieval mind more closely. Thus, kings and queens are to look at the rulers in his works as either positive or negative examples of good rule.

The fall of Thebes is an ancient story from Greek mythology that is told in different versions by different authors. Lydgate follows previous French authors in writing a vernacular *roman antiques*, where "he recreates antiquity in the framework of medieval historiography, social conventions, and moral example" (Edwards, Introduction *ST*). For his sources, Lydgate relies primarily on Boccaccio's tale and an anonymous French romance *Roman de Edipus* or a similar, unknown romance (Edwards, Introduction *ST*; Pearsall 153-155). One of Lydgate's innovations is that he structures *The Siege of Thebes* as a prequel to Chaucer's "The Knight's

Tale." His speaker/narrator is a pilgrim who joins the Canterbury pilgrims on their return trip to London after visiting the shrine of St. Thomas Becket. He alludes to the Canterbury pilgrimage six times throughout his poem giving Chaucer a large presence in the work (Edwards, Introduction *ST*). According to Renoir, the immediate audience for the text was meant to be Henry V, who is presented, along with King Adrastus, as the most ideal of the kings in the poem (114, 128). Lydgate's pilgrim's instruction from the Host as he joins Chaucer's pilgrims is to tell a tale "if eny myrth be founden in thy maw, / Lyk the custom of this Compenye; / For non so proude that dar me denye, / Knyght nor knauë Chanon prest ne nonne" (Erdmann, Lydgate, *ST* lines 134-137). The monk of Bury, however, has his own purpose.

Lydgate's main message in his version of the Theban siege is that "Truth occupies first place among the virtues" required of a ruler (Schirmer 64). He inserts advice and didactic commentary so often that it is often associated with the familiar sub-genre known as a mirror for princes. Using the final section to communicate his major truth, Lydgate's speaker laments the destruction of all the "worthy blood" of Greece and the desolation of Thebes. Next the poet has his speaker broaden the perspective in a consideration of all wars:

> For in the werre is non excepcion
> Of hegh estat nor lowh condicioun
> But as fortune and fate, both yffre
> List to dispose with her double chere
> And Bellona, the goddess in hir char
> Aforn provydeth; wherefor ech man be war
> Vnavysed a werre to bygynne. . . .
> And werre in soth was neuer first ordeyned . . . .
> And ground an cause why that men so stryve,
> Is coveytise and fals Ambicioun,
> That euerich wold han domynacioun
> Ouer other, and trede hym vndyr foote:
> Which of al sorowe gynnyng is and Roote. . .
> For lak of love what meschief þer shal be.
> (Erdmann, Lydgate, *ST* lines 4644-4651, 4658, 4674-4678, 4680)

War is always a bad choice because the outcome cannot be predicted, it was never a part of God's original plan for humans, and it is caused by the desire for power and a lack of love. Lydgate's speaker even quotes lines from the recent Treaty of Troyes made after King Henry V's victory over France which connects his ancient story to contemporary conflict between England and France (Schirmer 64-5). Further, Lydgate's advice is that war "can be avoided only if everyone in the nation virtuously performs the part that befits his station in life" (Renoir 127). Critics, including A. C. Spearing, interpret Lydgate's anti-war theme as a silent critique of Chaucer's presentation of war in the "Knight's Tale" as a fitting and admirable occupation (Edwards, Introduction *ST*). The character of Jocasta, queen of Thebes, plays a crucial role in supporting this theme.

In Lydgate's *ST*, the poem's speaker focuses on the rulers, the nobility, and the commoners as needing to play their assigned part (Renoir 112). This principle can also be applied to Queen Jocasta, because Lydgate makes a significant change in the final disposition of her character from previous versions. The most famous version is *Oedipus Rex*, by Sophocles, and performed 430-426 BCE. Jocasta hangs herself upon hearing that she is married to her son (lines 1236-1244). In Euripides' version, *The Phoenician Women,* written about 410 BCE, Jocasta takes her own life by sword when she is overwhelmed by grief following the deaths by duel of her sons, Eteocles and Polynices (lines 1455-1460). Also, the *Thebaid*, by Statius, a classical epic poem written between 80-92 CE, is a version Lydgate used in his previous works including *Troy Book* (Edwards, Introduction *ST*). Statius follows the ending for Jocasta that is in Euripides, where she commits suicide after her sons kill each other in battle (Bk 11 lines 636-646). In the Middle Ages, Giovanni Boccaccio told yet another version in his epic poem *Teseida*, written in 1340-1341, which does not feature Jocasta. Lydgate's Jocasta, however, perseveres

through the news of her incestuous marriage with Oedipus and the conflict between their sons, Eteocles and Polynices, who fight bitterly over who will inherit their father's kingdom.

Within this conflict and the battle for the survival of Thebes itself, Lydgate creates in Jocasta an exemplary model of how a queen can stretch the usual interpretation of intercession beyond its familiar practice of occurring between only a king and a queen. Jocasta takes on a role of queenly intercession with both sons and with King Adrastus of Argos. Lydgate writes a complex, multi-intercessory role for the Queen mother which highlights her intelligence and diplomatic skills. By the end, however, the only royals to survive are King Adrastus, King Capaneus, and dowager Queen Jocasta; she and her daughters are taken as prisoners to Athens. With this mournful ending, Lydgate's theme of the tragedy of war is clear.

Jocasta's first intercession occurs as Eteocles gathers arms and warriors to defend his rule of Thebes. Once the Greeks arrive to champion the cause of Polynices and surround Thebes, Eteocles becomes worried about the existing divided loyalties between himself and his brother in the city. He calls his council lords and his elderly mother whom he considers "pur and clene, / Hool of on herte and not variable" (Lydgate, *ST* lines 3628-30). In response, after his young counselors advise battle and his old, wise counselors advise making peace, Queen Jocasta privately gives her eldest son a lengthy address, functionally interceding with Eteocles to treat his brother Polynices justly: "And tho the queen took hym out aside, / Tolde hym pleynly it was ful unsittyng / Swich doublenesse to finden in a king, / And seide hym ek, althog he were strong, / To his brother how he dide wrong" (*ST* lines 3648-3652). Jocasta first appeals to Eteocles's integrity as a king. A good king will not go back on his word.

Next, after acknowledging his advantage as the current king, she uses her maternal role and appeals to Eteocles on the basis of what he owes to the brotherly ties with Polynices. Kinship

should be honored on principle even when it may not be what a ruler desires. Her intercession next turns to an assessment of practical risk from his own city for his mistreatment of his brother and suggests an alternative: "'As al the toune wil record, in dede, / And ber witnesse, yif it kam to nede. / Wherfor lat us shape another mene / in this matere while that it is grene'" (*ST* lines 3653-56).) Jocasta's intercession moves into a caution that Thebans are watching and evaluating Eteocles' actions toward the brother whom they expected to be their next king. Then she functions as a counselor by giving an offer for them to work together to find an alternative plan while the quarrel is still relatively new. She uses her position of queen mother to be honest while still wording her suggestions in a respectful manner. She moves closer to a critique by analyzing Eteocles's own attitude: "for yif it be darreyned by bataylle, / Who treteth most may ful likely faille" (*ST* lines 3659-60). Here she notes that the one who is most confidant may not succeed. Jocasta implies that Eteocles's own arrogance is problematic. She predicts that his personal attitude may backfire and prove costly to him.

Jocasta's intercession ends by broadening the perspective of the harmful effects if Eteocles insists on armed conflict. She reminds him that the consequences affect not only both brothers and many innocents, but will also travel beyond this earth to the gods and their judgment of his actions:

> And yif we put our mater hool in Marte,
> Which with the swerd his lawes doth coarte,
> Than may hit happe …
> Thow and thy brother shal repente both
> And many another that is her present,
> Of youre trespass that ben innocent,
> And many thousand in cas shal compleyn
> For the debat only of yow tweyn,
> And for you strif shal fynde full unsoote.
> And for thow art gynning, ground, and roote
> Of this injurie and this gret unright,
> To the goddys that herof han a sight

> Thow shalt accountys and a reknyng make
> For alle tho that persshyn for thi sak . . . .
> And thow art dryve so narrowe to the stake
> That thow mayst nat moo delayes make
> But fight or tret this quarrel forto fyne.
> (*ST* lines 3665-3778; 3687-3689).

Jocasta gives didactic and strategic advice in which she points out that the stakes for Eteocles to consider are far beyond his immediate feelings of defiant pride and anger. He should question following the way of Mars, who always uses violence to enforce law. She places the entire responsibility for the desperate circumstances on her oldest son as the guilty party. She predicts how those in the city will likely view a battle that is a dispute between brothers with skepticism, a point which may only increase the doubts Eteocles already has about the loyalty of many of the Thebans. Then she points out that waging a large battle because of what is essentially a conflict between the brothers over their previous agreement will make the king feel even worse than he does currently. She tries to raise his thoughts to his own best interest by warning that he will have to answer to all the gods, not just Mars, for evil actions that cause innocent blood to be shed. This is a complex intercession from a queen who displays all the qualities that are the very reason Eteocles chose to include her in his council of advisers in the first place as noted above. She says who Eteocles should listen to and why he should. “Now note wel” and “counseayl wisly condescende” to her advice and “to thy lordys . . . sith they be so sage” (*ST* lines 3699a, 3700b). Her reasons relate to time, past, present, and future: “Wrong, wrouht of olde, newly to amende” (*ST* line 3700). He has the chance to be part of resolving the old wrongs resulting from the incest, bitterness, and despair of his father Oedipus. To accomplish that, however, he must “in haste trete with thi brother. . . and hym make no resistance” (*ST* lines 3672-73). She ends by looking to the future best interests of both of her sons: “Late Polymyte rejoyse his heritage. / And

that shal turne most to thyn avail" (*ST* line 3707). At first, her request seems to succeed, because, for his mother's sake, Eteocles agrees to bargain.

However, taking no counsel from his men, he immediately states very restrictive conditions: for only one year, Polynices can serve as his under lord in Thebes. He will have no ruling regalia and must quit the city forever at the end of his year. While Jocasta has shown dignified concern for royal privacy, royal dynasty, both royal sons, and their people, Eteocles insists on a non-offer that will result only in humiliation for his brother and co-king. He states, however, that "This wold he done only for her sake *(ST* line 3723). In reality, he insults his mother as queen by answering none of her points and refusing to fulfill his role as a king who should carefully consider an intercessory request made by the queen mother of his court.

The lords of the city immediately recognize the contempt shown in the king's offer. As a result, "ther was not one of hih nor lowgh esat /That wold gon on this ambassyat" (*ST* lines 3727-28). Jocasta, however, shows her perseverance. So "Jocasta made sadly her hors / And cast herself to gon for this treté, / To make an ende, gif it wolde be" (*ST* lines 3730-3732). She is willing to humbly convey Eteocles's cruel offer, perhaps with the hope of at least beginning a negotiation which may lead to improved offers and relations. Because Adrastus is the King of Argos who has brought many warriors to help Polynices and the Greeks, and is the father-in-law of Polynices, Jocasta addresses the offer from Eteocles to him. However, Polynices, Tydeus, and others are listening as well. Not surprisingly, perhaps, once she communicates the harsh conditions, "the Grekes thougten al another, / And specyaly worthy Tydeus, / Pleynly affermyng it shuld nat be thus" (*ST* lines 3754-56). In his seemingly self-appointed role as responder to Eteocles's offer, Tydeus emphasizes that only the original every-other-year ruling agreement will be honored. The alternative is full-scale war. The Greek's prophet Amphiorax tries to warn about

total destruction if that choice is made, but King Adrastus shushes him (*ST* lines 3775, 3801, 3806-08, 3814.) The case seems hopeless. It is interesting to note that Polynices himself does not respond to his mother. Just as Tydeus has already been his messenger and his warrior, Polynices lets his fellow Greek and champion, the prophet, or the Argos king do the responding. Perhaps his reticence is due to resignation. Even though it is his intended future to be king of Thebes, the views of others are the ones the audience hears. In the midst of this group, Jocasta persists in her attempts of persuasion.

Here, Lydgate inserts a passage that demonstrates the skills of an experienced, queenly intercessor: "And tho Jocasta, as wisdom did hyr tech, / Humble of her port with ful softe speech, / Gan seeke menys in hyr fantasye, / Yif she myghte the ire modefye / Of the Grekes to make hem to enclyne / In eny wise hyr rancour forto fyne. / She dyd hyr dever and hir bysy cure" (*ST* lines 3815-3821). The queen performs her duty with intense effort. In this passage, as in the earlier examples of intercession in Chaucer's "The Knight's Tale," and "Wife of Bath's Tale," a literary work provides the multiple nuances involved in a royal practice that are often reported briefly in historical records. In this case, the audience learns the queen mother's best tactics. As experience has shown, Jocasta's humble manner and soft speech can potentially diffuse some of the scornful anger and explosive reactivity of the Greek knights who receive the offer as attacks on their honor. Like Eteocles's offer, this response only drives already hostile parties further apart. In contrast, Jocasta arrives at the Greek camp with her large retinue, her two beautiful daughters, Antigone and Ismene, and her own regal, dignified presence. The daughters can perhaps remind Polynices of the high stakes involved which encompass family, rulers, and Thebes itself. Her polite, serious, and positive words might create a wedge of time within which anger on both sides can cool and alternate plans can be created and considered.

In spite of Jocasta's best efforts, however, her second attempt at intercession through King Adrastus to Polynices is a spectacular failure. Not only have the royal brothers become bitter foes, their knights have hardened in their own resolve and each side waits on high, edgy alert. Suddenly, the improbable occurrence of an escaped tame tiger from Thebes, which is soon killed by the startled Greeks outside the walls of the city, is the unexpected match that serves prematurely to derail Jocasta's intercession and spark the beginning skirmish of the battle. Theban warriors spontaneously rush out of the city and kill the Greeks who had rashly killed the tiger that belonged to the king's daughters. In response, more Greeks leave their tents to join the fray. Tydeus leads the beginning of a ferocious slaughter of more Theban soldiers.

The fighting leads the queen to initiate a third intercession: "When Jocasta the slauhtre gan adverte / styntyn to assaylle / For thilke day and cessen her bataylle" (*ST*, lines 3917-20). Despite the chaos of the tiger, its killing, the Theban revenge killing, and Tydeus's slaughter of Theban warriors, Jocasta remains calm enough to request Polynices to convince the Greeks to end the day's fighting. This youngest son responds: "At whoos requeste pleynly and preyeire / And at reverence of his moder dere, / Polymytes, her herte to conforte, / Grekes made hom ageyn resorte / And Tydeus to stynten of his chas" (*ST* lines 3921-25). Finally, Polynices, so far a king in name only, plays his royal role in a successful intercession. He responds to a specific relationship because of its noble and intimate attributes. He honors his mother the queen because of her position and because of his courtesy. His mother is "dere," and he wants to provide her "herte" comfort. Probably, he is the only one who can convince Tydeus to control and stop his fighting. He takes advantage of his own position to grant her request.

To follow up on this success, Jocasta meekly approaches King Adrastus with her final intercessory request to show her great favor, and "some mene way wisly to purchace / To make a

pees atwene the brethren tweyn / And the tréte so prudently ordeyne / On either party that no blood be shed (*ST* lines 3935). As queen mother, Jocasta is not satisfied with a temporary cease-fire; she makes her fourth intercession request to the senior king who has experience and cunning in making bargains between warring parties. She looks ahead and offers to work with King Adrastus to devise a strong peace pact that will avoid future bloodshed on either side. "And this Adrastus, avise and right sad, / For Grekis party answer gaf anon / That other ende shortly gete she non, / Lich as the lordis fully ben avysd, / Than Tydeus hath aforn devisyd" (Erdmann, *ST* lines 3936-3944). The fierce passion to fight and the foresight of Tydeus and his fellow Greek soldiers to apparently predict her possible pleas and take them into consideration overwhelm Jocasta's final effort to make peace. Neither of the young kings nor Tydeus will give up any part of their future plans to fight for rulership. Does the silence of King Adrastus show resignation or agreement? Either way, Queen Jocasta recognizes that her role is over, and she returns to Thebes.

These scenes of attempted intercessions are remarkable. Obviously, working as a negotiator between three kings and two peoples is more complex than when the petition is between only the king and his queen. In that sense, Queen Jocasta is interceding for and with both of her sons, all of the kings, and the larger peoples of Thebes and Greece. What broader impact is possible for a queen? Despite her own tragedies, Queen Jocasta puts her wisdom and perseverance to work in a way not available to anyone else. In the face of so much antagonism, pride, desire for revenge, and hatred, however, she is unable to negotiate a lasting peace or even lessen the coming damage. Eventually, both of her sons, the champion Tydeus, and all the kings except Adrastus and Capaneus are dead (*ST* lines 4550-52). More death and destruction come when Duke Theseus arrives to fight Creon, who in this version is a man appointed by the

parliament as king of the Thebans but without a royal lineage. Theseus kills Creon, burns all the city's dwellings and towers, and kills all the people. Jocasta and her daughters are taken as prisoners to Athens. Even in failure, however, the Theban queen serves as a memorable exemplar to medieval royals of both the possibilities of the practice of intercession as well as its limits.

As both history and literature indicate, the resources of medieval English kings and queens was varied in kind, in amount, and even degrees of success. As kingdoms developed, so did the methods of royal patronage. Even as the administrative structure of a king's rule grew beyond the earlier focus on family for assistance, queens utilized their privilege of intercession with kings to obtain unique benefits for their subjects and others whose causes they championed. As in the decision to convert to Christianity, a queen's influence could direct the choice and length of a king's decisions about his use of the kingdom's resources. Literary sources help show the interpersonal dynamics and contexts of the successes and failures of intercession. The growing English and French dual rulership used their increasing resources to publicly promote their politics and their religion.

Chapter 3

On Earth and in Heaven: Royal Partnerships with Christian Leaders and Heavenly Beings

Medieval English queens and kings enjoyed unique access to religious leaders in their own land and on the continent, and perhaps even more importantly for the continuation of the monarchy and Christianity, symbolic connections to heavenly beings. They corresponded with popes, worked with bishops and archbishops to arrange donations to the church, and occasionally became spiritual advisors, When such interactions with those of equal or higher positions included both king and queen, the impact reflected and enhanced the couples' status as significant influences in the English church, which, in turn, furthered and deepened the spread of Christianity throughout many centuries. This chapter analyzes medieval English historical and literary sources that demonstrate joint royal significance to Christianity in figurative relationships to biblical royal rulers, in literal connections with bishops, archbishops and popes, and in the development of spiritual relationships with heavenly beings. For English medieval believers, as kings and queens increasingly transitioned into presenting themselves and being presented as powerful identifications with and types of Christ and the Virgin Mary, these connections were literal and symbolic, imbued with accompanying eternal realities. From conversions to burial memorials, queens and kings used earthly practices to develop and promote eternal significance for themselves and their subjects. Letters, histories, romances, and poetry reveal the methods and results of having a king and queen operating together with others of the highest religious positions to promote Christianity. Although some of the texts to be considered have been introduced previously to explore royal couples' religious decisions and patronage, the purpose of this chapter is to look closely within some of the relationships formed between royal couples and biblical models, church leaders, and heavenly figures. What evidence exists that

these relationships existed and, if so, indicates that such interactions increased the influence of medieval English Christianity? How did such identifications and relationships of rulers create spiritual significance for themselves and others?

Recorded letters show that royals and popes exchanged letters of thanks and requests for various kinds of support and actions to each other throughout England's medieval centuries. The appeal could involve money and royal agreements that had long been disregarded. For instance, Queen Berengaria of Navarre (1170-1230), wife and then widow of King Richard I (r.1189-1199) wrote letters to Pope Innocent III and Pope Honorius III in her frustrated efforts to receive her agreed-upon dowry from King John and from King Henry III. In surviving letters, Pope Honorius demonstrates the former queen's privileged access by explaining that, although the holy see offers everyone piety, it also privileges those who are more devout, so he agrees to back Berengaria's requests. Specifically, he promises to protect her because of her status as former queen of England and widow of King Richard, and, again, notes that her reputation for loyalty to the holy Roman church is a persuasive factor (*Epistolae*, "Berengaria"). This interchange indicates that the pope considers queens' status and devotion to the church highly important.

Many letters have direct religious implications both small and large. Pope Urban VI, for instance, communicates with both Anne of Bohemia and King Richard II (r. 1377-1399), but specifically requested of Anne a royal dispensation for illegitimacy for a canon of Abergwili (Tingle, *Chaucer's Queens* 166-67). Such letters between the highest governing rulers and church officials signal the importance of the topics, senders, and recipients, but they also reveal the ways letter writers persuade and pressure recipients to accomplish the senders' own goals. Examining relationships between royals and religious leaders shows intentional attempts to impact Christian conversion, tensions between the conflicting goals of kings and popes and how

queens attempt to mediate them, and how authority and success might come from rulers' identification with biblical models and divine rulers in heaven.

As previously shown, one obvious unique privilege of English royals is that the highest authority in the Christian hierarchy, the pope, took an active role in persuading the highest political rulers of regions and kingdoms to convert. In two Anglo-Saxon cases, notably King Æthelberht (r. 560-616) and King Edwin (r. 616-633), papal letters are written to both king and queen. Bede records Pope Gregory I's letter to King Æthelberht. Separate letters to the queens of both Æthelberht and Edwin convey the popes' representation of the large influence that the Christian queens could exert on their non-Christian spouses. In long, thoughtful letters, the pope urges the royal queens to act more intensely to further the spirituality of the king. For example, in a letter to Queen Bertha, Pope Gregory I focuses first on positive aspects of her reported Christian works. He thanks her for the attention and Christian love she provided to Bishop Augustine and his monks. He assures her that she will be rewarded in heaven for her role in converting the Angles just as St. Helena (circa 248/50-330) was rewarded for her role in Christianizing the Romans through Emperor Constantine, her pious son (*Epistolae*, "Bertha"). Such an association with the sainted Empress who traveled to Jerusalem and purportedly found the cross of Christ provided a Christian queen with one of the highest earthly compliments.

But the pope also chides Bertha for the decade of their marriage before Augustine and his missionaries arrived: "with the goodness of your wisdom, as a true Christian you should have already inclined the heart of . . . your spouse to follow the faith that you cherish for the salvation of his kingdom and his soul." In fact, he continues, with Bertha's learning, "this should have been neither slow nor difficult for you." However, to make up for her previous failure, she should urge her husband to love the Christian faith. Her perseverance and enthusiasm will be a

sacrifice to Christ. Once King Æthelberht is converted, angels will rejoice, and "you may both rule here happily . . . and also receive the joys of the future life" (*Episotolae*, "Bertha"). This letter of praise, reproof, and potential rewards shows Gregory's single-minded focus on what the queen should have done and must now do. He notes the crucial role of Augustine but also assigns to Bertha great responsibility for the salvation of the king and their people. This early English royal conversion experience gives a clear description and demonstration of how pope, bishop, queen, and king each played a role in the journey to the acceptance of Christianity. The pope sponsors the mission, exhorts Augustine against discouragement, and urges Bertha to increase her wifely persuasion with Æthelberht toward the Christian goal of baptism. Augustine perseveres, teaches, and lives a humble, exemplary life alongside his fellow missionaries. Perhaps Bertha did put forth more effort for her husband's baptism after the pope's letter. King Æthelberht is presented as responding well to each Christian overture; he is generous in his agreement with a Christian wife, careful in his consideration of the new religion, mindful of his council, and wise to give religious choice to his people. Does this narrative picture the reality of a situation that has long been considered a paradigm for royal conversion? One gap remains. Without knowing how Queen Bertha reacted to Gregory's letter, it is impossible to assess the effectiveness of the pope's combination of positive comments and negative exhortation. Although Bertha was reportedly venerated after her death, the absence of her half of the correspondence with the pope hinders an understanding of their connection and its impact during their lives. Æthelberht's conversion and support of the early Christians in Kent does leave open the possibility that some of the success may have happened due to the efforts of the queen and the pope.

After Æthelberht did convert, however, the royal couple quickly facilitated the growth of the church by giving it freedom to establish more churches. Pope Gregory I included the king in his correspondence and sent gifts to encourage him to promote the faith with more enthusiasm. The pope begins his letter with the usual commendations and then urges him to "hasten to extend the Christian faith" among his subjects by destroying pagan places of worship and by "exhorting them, terrifying, enticing, and correcting them, and by showing them an example of good works." He adds greater motivation by reminding the king of the results that are at stake. Æthelberht will both "be rewarded in heaven" and can "become less anxious about your own sins before the dread judgement of Almighty God." He also compares Æthelberht to the Emperor Constantine as they both could be remembered as two rulers who influenced entire kingdoms for God (Bede, *EH* I.32). Perhaps King Æthelberht considered this letter when he extended consideration of religious concerns into his system of justice. He wrote a law code that included restitution requirements for thefts from the church or church officials. Canterbury became the center for a combined secular and religious Kent (Bede, *EH* II.5). Christian faith and practice from Bertha and religious freedom, legal support, and financial support from King Æthelberht provided a significant royal religious foundation for over two decades which gave Christianity a strong foothold in England. The pope showed deep interest in the mission he had authorized and prodded persistently into completion. The influence that the rulers exerted on their subjects who looked to them for leadership in religious matters helps explain the purpose and methods of the popes' letters to king and queen.

Bede records that other early cases also featured papal intervention. In King Edwin's (r. 616-633) case, Pope Boniface wrote strong letters to both king and queen. Even after the king's early signs of leaning toward belief in Christianity, including a promise to reject idolatry

for having his life saved, a victory in battle, and a pledge to give his newborn daughter to the church, the king "gelimplicum ana sæt, & geornlice him seolfum smeade & þohte, hwæt him selest to donne wære & hwylc æfæstnes him to healdanne wære" (Miller, *OEEH* II.12). (sat alone at every opportunity and earnestly meditated within himself and thought what was best to do and which religion he should keep.) This delay by a king who had the preaching of a bishop and the example of a converted queen resulted in the pope's notice. Pope Boniface "extends his pastoral responsibilities" to persuade the Northumbrian king to reject his traditional belief system and fully accept Christianity (Bede, *EH* II.10)[6]. He begins with points relevant to a ruler. The pope reminds Edwin that all empires are under God because he is creator of heaven and earth. As such, "the greatest empires and the powers of the world are subject, because it is by His disposition that all rule is bestowed" (Bede, *EH* II.10). He reminds the king of both the very distant and very close perspective of Christianity's spread. Just as other races of people in far-off places worship the true God, so does a nearby king, Eadbald, and his own Queen Æthelburh is baptized. Boniface attacks the worship of idols, declaring that it is a "delusion" for a king to trust in objects [idols] made by human beings. He ends with the promise of the king dwelling "in the splendour of eternal glory," emphasizing that precious possibility with gifts including a robe embroidered in gold (Bede, *EH* II.10). Once again, it is Edwin's privileged ruling position that caught the attention of the pope, who used his own high position in Christian hierarchy to influence the ruler to finally make a commitment to be baptized. The question of how much influence the pope's letter had on the king is open for debate for lack of a surviving response from Edwin. Bede reports that it took eleven years, the recognition of a previously given sign during the king's exile which was repeated by Bishop Paulinus through miraculous revelation,

[6] The Old English translation mentions Boniface's letter to King Edwin encouraging him to convert, but it does not provide the contents of the letter.

and the encouraging support of his advisors for King Edwin to make a final commitment (*EH* II.12-14). However, the pope's respectful letters and gifts from Rome to the Northumbrian king may have shown him the potential high rank of religious connections outside of England which might develop if the king did convert.

The pope did not forget Edwin's queen. Boniface's letter to Queen Æthelburh uses appeals that begin with compliments as did the missive Pope Gregory I sent to Queen Bertha. Specifically, the pope reminds her that, due to her status as queen, her spiritual influence encompasses not only her husband, but of the entire nation. Her own conversion is a good religious example, but if both rulers are Christians, their example will be that much more powerful for their subjects. After noting reports that Æthelburh, "continually shines in pious works pleasing to God" and assists "in spreading the Christian faith" (Bede, *EH* II.11). The pope emphasizes the potential breadth of her influence as queen and the even greater impact possible when a ruling couple present a united front in demonstrating devout Christianity.

Boniface turns to the closer issue of her husband's baptism. More complimentary to Æthelburh than Gregory was to Queen Bertha, Boniface is also more direct in explaining the religious consequences of having an unconverted husband. He gives a somber warning that questions the spiritual validity of their marriage, and the pope declares that her husband needs to convert in order for her to "enjoy the rights of marriage in undefiled union." Boniface acknowledges the necessary power of the Holy Spirit in converting her husband but reminds the queen that they are now biblically "one flesh" which cannot be completely true while pagan and Christian practices separate them. He then gives Æthelburh specific ways to appeal to the king: "for this reason you have obtained the mercy of the Lord, in order that you might restore to your Redeemer an abundant harvest of faith," and, in addition, Boniface looks forward soon to the

news of the king's conversion. Then he ends with the reminder that the conversion of all their subjects is at stake (Bede, *EH* II.11). The pope uses his lofty position to interrogate the status of the royal marriage, a blunt reminder that enjoying religious privilege for herself and her companions was not sufficient considering her responsibility as a Christian queen. Her work would be judged incomplete without the conversion of her husband which would provide the strongest example for their subjects. Although, just as with the responses of Bertha and Æthelberht, there seems to be no surviving record of Æthelburh's response, King Edwin and his Northumbrian people did eventually convert. According to Bede, when the news reached Rome, the succeeding Pope Honorius sent an "trymmendlic gewrit, & mid fæderlice lufan hine wæs onbærnende, þæt heo in þæm geleafan soðfæstnisse, þone þe heo onfengon, symle fæstlice astoden & aa wunedon" (Miller, *OEEH* XIV.17). (encouraging letter and, with fatherly affection, inspired them in this belief and truth which they accepted that they [should] always persevere and be steadfast forever.) The pope follows up after the king's baptism using a tone of paternal warmth to further establish a positive connection with this valued royal convert. He uses his considerable influence with the rulers and to urge them to always support the true religion with enduring faith. With both spouses as Christian believers, Honorius may hold reasonable expectation for many more conversions within their kingdom.

This papal pattern of encouragement to queens and kind but pointed exhortation to increase their Christian influence on their husband and king can be seen in a much later letter as well. Apparently, the Anglo-Norman Queen Matilda I of Flanders (r. 1066/68-1083) had sent a gift to Pope Gregory VII. In a letter of thanks, he first praises her generosity, love, and humility but ends, however, with an admonition that hints she can do more to influence William I: "Urge your husband, do not cease to suggest useful things to his soul. For it is certain that, if the infidel

husband is saved by a believing wife, as the apostle says, a believing husband can be made better by a believing wife" (*Epistolae*, "Matilda I"). The pope takes the familiar biblical text of Corinthians encouraging spouses who believe to help convert their unbelieving spouse and extends its meaning to his point that a strong Christian wife should build up her husband's faith. Although it is perhaps not surprising that a pope would remind a Christian queen of her spiritual opportunities within her marriage, the consistent presence of such admonitions may indicate how much the church depended on the influence of Christian queens to obtain and maintain its own influence and power throughout England as well as employing the familiar didactic style of the time.

Royal and Church Conflict: Letters Between Leaders

A more intricate picture of negotiation and intercession between English rulers and church leaders emerges in a group of over fifty surviving letters among King Henry I (r. 1100-1135), Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, Queen Matilda II, and Pope Paschal II. The letters concern the years-long battle over whether the Roman church or the English monarchy possessed the authority to appoint and inaugurate high church leaders and receive their homage. Although no letters between the queen and king are in this collection of letters, those among the other three give an indication of how each negotiated the conflict.

To understand the situation, it is necessary to begin with the reign of Henry's father, King William I (r. 1066-1087), who developed a productive relationship with Lanfranc who was his choice to become archbishop of Canterbury in 1070. As a lawyer, scholar, and previous abbot of Bec, the archbishop became successful in the process of transitioning the Anglo-Saxon church to Norman control and in maintaining Canterbury's independence from the papacy in Rome. He continued his office during the reign of King William Rufus (r. 1087-1100); however, no such

congenial relationship existed between them. After Lanfranc died, Anselm was reluctantly compelled to succeed him as archbishop of Canterbury (Vaughn 404). William Rufus alternately ignored or mistreated Anselm and the church, blatantly selling church positions and ignoring its laws (Hollister 377, 379). As a result of such flagrant abuse to the mission of the church, Anselm went into exile in 1097 (Vaughn 50). Henry I became king in 1100 upon the death of William Rufus.

In an encouraging sign for improved relations between the church and England, by 1101, the new king had invited Archbishop Anselm to return to from exile. He agreed and his return helped to establish Henry's kingship. Also, Anselm obtained a papal dispensation from consanguinity prohibitions of the church and resolved the question of whether or not Henry I's wife, Eadgyth/Matilda II of Scotland, had taken the vows to become a nun. The council which the archbishop called to decide the issue listened to witnesses and Matilda herself before deciding that she had never officially professed religious vows. Anselm presided over the marriage ceremony of Henry I and Matilda II in November of 1100 (Huneycutt, *Matilda of Scotland* 29). Henry and Anselm had helped each other resolve significant, knotty problems which may support their desire to work well together.

Although fierce in battle and harsh with those deemed disloyal under his rule, Henry I also took his religious leadership seriously. He initiated correspondence with Pope Paschal II in 1101 with a letter congratulating him on his papal election and agreeing to pay the traditional Peter's Pence. He also offered general friendship and obedience (Anselm 44). Henry worked to reverse the harm which the church had suffered under the reign of his brother William Rufus (r. 1087-1100). Henry helped establish many churches and religious houses. The king often returned tax exemptions to church properties. Late in his reign, choosing from competing popes,

Henry I threw his support behind Innocent III and prostrated himself before him at Chartres in 1131 (Green 207). These actions demonstrate Henry's interest in partnering with the church. From the beginning of his reign, Henry hoped to enjoy a good relationship with Anselm as his father had with Archbishop Lanfranc.

As king and head of the English church, however, Henry insisted on rights of investiture and homage of church leaders in England. These rights had long been customary in the Frankish rule in which Henry had been raised. The first two Norman rulers, William I and William Rufus, followed the customary practice of choosing and consecrating abbots, bishops, and archbishops within their own realm. In addition, Henry followed the tradition that required English church leaders to kneel in submissive homage to him as their lord and king. Hollister explains that both Anglo-Saxon and Norman rulers "expected to control the Church," and "by the late eleventh century the Norman rulers considered their bishops and abbots as ecclesiastical barons, powerful elements in the maintenance of order" (373). As Anselm described Henry's position in a letter to Pope Paschal II, "I [Anselm] should become his liege man, swear fealty to him and consecrate those on whom he would confer investitures of churches" (Anselm Letter 315). In addition to choosing church leaders and giving them existing land and properties tied to a church office, King Henry also reserved the right to present the new leader with the ring of faith and the crozier (staff) as signs of their church position and rule. This process confirmed to all concerned that the king remained at the top of England's hierarchy in both politics and religion.

The Roman church, however, disagreed that any earthly king should be higher in spiritual and ruling privileges than God, as represented by the pope, archbishops, and bishops. Henry took major offense that the church became more insistent in forbidding lay investiture and royal homage. In 1099, at a council in Rome (and before Henry's coronation), the church once again

proclaimed their exclusive right of investiture and homage. In addition, excommunication became the official consequence to those who lead in lay investiture inaugurations, had already accepted investiture from a lay ruler, or who might in the future, as well as for any lay advisors who recommended this practice to the king (Vaughn 372-373). These issues, both rooted in a power struggle over control of church and kingdoms, caused deep conflicts. When Anselm refused to kneel in homage to King Henry, they eventually agreed to appeal to the pope for a dispensation from these rules and their consequences. The conflict remained and the recorded attempts to find an acceptable resolution began.

In 1101, however, Pope Paschal, refused to send the pallium that Henry had requested so that he could invest Archbishop Gerard of York; during the next two years he also refused more royal appeals sent by Henry to grant a dispensation for both practices (Anselm 44). Eventually, it became clear that the king would not agree to abandon either practice. As a result, in 1103, Anselm once again left England in exile to France. With this background, some of the surviving letters between the church's leaders and England's rulers between 1102-1107 are examined for what they indicate about the nature of these connections.

Queen Matilda had formed a good relationship with the Archbishop Anselm prior to her marriage, and he became her spiritual advisor (Anselm 45). Together, Anselm and Matilda promoted several church projects early in her reign. Matilda's surviving letters demonstrate her representation of an authentic connection between herself and the archbishop. She begins one letter by stating she is under "great obligation for his kindness," specifically that by his "blessing I was sanctified in legitimate matrimony . . . by whose consecration I was raised to the dignity of earthly royalty and by whose prayers I shall be crowned, God granting, in heavenly glory" (*Epistolae*, "Matilda II" 1102-03). The most important events of her marriage and her coronation

provide personal, royal, and spiritual memories for which she is thankful to the archbishop. Without his help, Matilda may not have become queen. She predicts a future in which his prayers of intercession for her will culminate in a final heavenly consecration. Her stated main concern in this letter is with his overly enthusiastic fasting. She worries that it may result in a reduction of his ability to share his spiritual gifts (*Epistolae*, "Matilda II" 1102—03). She seems to be offering him physical and spiritual concern for the spiritual care and royal blessings he has given her. In the future, she leaned on their positive relationship during the investiture controversy.

Signs of the growing conflict are addressed in a letter from Anselm to Queen Matilda II scarcely two years into their reign. The archbishop prays to God "that through you the heart of our lord the King may turn away from the counsel of princes which the lord rejects and be made to follow God's counsel which stands forever." Anselm frames his suggestion in a prayer before noting that Matilda may be able to influence Henry away from ungodly advice. He does not scold or imply that she should have already convinced him to change his mind. Instead, these words create a more collaborative tone than that of some previous examples of popes' letters to queens. He ends with the reassurance that, "I gratefully accept your counsel and exhortation as from a lady and friend in God" (*Epistolae*, "Matilda of Scotland" 1102). By asking for her advice and teaching, Anselm places himself and the queen on a somewhat equal spiritual level as fellow friends of God who both need spiritual counsel. Taken together, these phrases create a congenial tone which assumes Matilda's good spiritual intentions. He uses them as a channel through which to encourage Matilda to use her influence with King Henry in the lay investiture conflict.

In another letter dated 1104, Anselm does not mention the king or the investiture controversy. Instead, he uses her thanks for his pastoral care, evidently expressed in a lost letter, to remind her of "the greater gratitude" she owes to Christ. His care is much more than any he

[Anselm] has provided. Further, as queen, Matilda is Christ's bride, which means that the more she forgets . . . "this world," the "more beautiful and lovable" she becomes to her heavenly bridegroom (*Epistolae*, "Matilda II of Scotland"). Anslem directs the queen's focus to her spiritual bridegroom to encourage her to praise Christ. Her devotion expressed toward heaven will allow her to let the matters of this world fade away. When that is achieved, Christ will see her as growing in true loveliness. Anselm shows himself an apt spiritual advisor who re-directs her references to himself with encouragement to form a loving relationship with Christ through praise and focus on him. It implies that the archbishop is not using their connection only to discuss Henry's conflict, but that he is considering her as a separate individual with spiritual needs.

Most of the letters written in 1104, however, do center on the controversy. This flurry of communication comes as each participant reacts to Anselm's exile of 1103. In the spring of 1104, Henry and Anselm exchange letters that indicate their desire to work together as well as the reason they are not do so currently. After Anselm's refusal to go against the Roman council, Henry writes, "I suffer greatly because you are unwilling." He plans to send ambassadors to Rome to make his request for an exemption to the Pope. He ends with the assurance that "there is no mortal man whom I would rather have in my kingdom with me than you" (Anselm Letter 318). Henry expresses his regret that he and Anselm cannot continue the relationship that he believes his father, William I, enjoyed with Archbishop Lanfranc of Canterbury, but he also states his wish for Anselm's presence. In his return letter, Anselm thanks Henry for his friendship but states that "neither at my baptism nor at any of my ordinations did I promise to observe the law or custom of your father or of Archbishop Lanfranc but rather the law of God and of all the orders which I received." The archbishop is firm in rejecting nostalgia and tradition

as reasons to go back on his promise to obey God and the instructions from the church. He, too, states that "there is no other mortal king or prince with whom I would rather live or whom I would rather serve." These words express a returned feeling of regret and wish for a solution. He does critique Henry's plan for yet another appeal to the pope as "a certain postponement which is not good either for your soul or for the Church of God" and ends with the hope that God will "speedily turn your heart towards his will so that after this life he may lead you into his glory" (Anselm Letter 319). Anselm sandwiches his expression of a mutual positive feeling of wanting to work with Henry between his stated stronger desire to follow what he believes is God's will and a warning of what he expresses is the spiritual harm the king is inflicting on himself and the church. Warren Hollister interprets this exchange, and others, as consistently written with respectful and affectionate language. This tone is in great contrast to several other "high clashes of the High Middle Ages" between kings and prelates. For example, in a letter reported by Eadmer, William Rufus expressed great and growing hatred towards Anselm (*Henry I*, 374, 422-23, 170, 374). Perhaps their lack of acrimony helps communication to continue even though neither king nor archbishop change their minds about the issues involved in the controversy.

Two letters written sometime in 1104 from Queen Matilda to Anselm shows her dramatic and strategic intercessory efforts. She describes her plight due to his absence: "See, lord, your humble handmaid throws herself on her knees before your mercy and, stretching suppliant hands towards you, begs you for the fervor of your accustomed kindness. Come, lord, come and visit your servant . . . [to] appease my groans, dry my tears, lessen my pains . . . grant my request" (*Epistolae*, "Matilda of Scotland"). Matilda performs in writing a complete intercession which she asks Anselm to imagine: she kneels, humbly acknowledges his lordship, holds out her hands in passionate appeal, and begs for compassion in her great distress. She draws on her experiences

of actual royal intercessions, describing gestures that may have been the language and the actions used in formal intercessions. Such actions seem similar to the dramatic plea previously mentioned of Queen Philippa of Hainault to King Edward III (r. 1327-1377) over the fate of the six burghers of Calais. Matilda does not always use this type of language in her letters to Anselm, so it might be based on customs for intercessions or, possibly, knowledge of such gestures of suppliants in literary texts, such as Virgil's *Aeneid* when Queen Dido pleads with Aeneas not to leave her for Italy (*Vergil* Bk. IV, pp. 66-67).

Following her emotive words, however, Queen Matilda calmly asks him to consider more than the lay investiture and homage prohibitions. She cites the biblical example of Paul who changed his observance of Jewish laws depending on whether he was with Jews or Gentiles. He could meet the salvation needs of both only if he adjusted his observance of the law according to whom he was with (I Cor. 9.21-22). Then, Matilda offers a corrective: "My good lord, tender father, bend this severity a little and soften—let me say it with your leave—your heart of iron. Come and visit your people" (*Epistolae*, "Matilda of Scotland" 1104). She couches her most direct criticism by apologizing if she is pushing the limits of propriety. Matilda offers her appeals to Anselm as a chance to change his position in the conflict, the traditional purpose of royal intercessions between king and queen. In addition, she asks him to justify returning on the basis of his spiritual mentorship to her and on a wider plane, his God-given responsibility to shepherd the English people.

Perhaps anticipating Anselm's refusal to return until Henry agrees to the church's law, she pushes beyond earthly royal intercession. She claims that she will come to him even though it would involve "spurning my crown and trampling the purple and the linen." She will "kiss your feet," and thereby achieve her "greatest desire" (*Epistolae*, "Matilda of Scotland" 1104). In

this declaration, Matilda represents herself as placing her spiritual bond with him above her queenship and responsibility to stay and support Henry. Again, such extreme claims might well be literary exaggeration in the service of persuasion. Matilda's experience and sophistication in intercession should be considered but so should her expressed depth of spiritual yearning. What it does show is that Matilda is making an intercessory plea on behalf of herself, Henry, and her people.

In the second letter, again dated generally in 1104, Matilda follows her previous pattern of written dramatic performative language in the beginning before turning to provide evidence of what she has learned and how she would like Anselm to respond. Matilda expresses her gratitude for his letter in response: "I embrace the parchment . . . press it to my breast . . . move it as near to my heart as I can, I reread with my mouth the words flowing from the sweet fountain of your goodness . . . and place them in the sanctuary of my heart." She describes the specific results of his message: "your writing strengthens my patience . . . lifts me up as I fall, sustains me when I am slipping, gives me joy when I grieve, mitigates my anger and calms my weeping" (*Epistolae* "Matilda of Scotland"). This upbeat tone seems to show a similar degree of emotion and can be seen as the opposite side to her previous message of deep despair. Together, the letters communicate the intensity with which she presents her feelings during Anselm's absence. She represents herself as greatly dependent upon the presence of her spiritual advisor.

About half-way through this letter, however, Matilda returns to her previous role of mediator between archbishop and king: "after careful investigation," she thinks that Henry "is more kindly disposed towards you than most people think. With God's help and my suggestions, as far as I am able, he may become more welcoming and compromising towards you." The queen has used her influence with Henry and her prayers to encourage continued

communication. Matilda. also keeps the archbishop apprised of Henry's actions, at times advising him on the proper way to approach the king or demand concession. Specifically, he should "ask for [compromise] in the right way and at the right time. . . . Having excluded the rancor of human bitterness which is not usually found in you . . . show yourself before God as a devoted intercessor for him and for me as well as for our child and the state of our kingdom" (*Epistolae,* "Matilda of Scotland" 1104). The queen instructs Anselm on how he can improve his interactions with Henry. She implies that he has not displayed the most beneficial attitude or strategy in his communication with the king. Then she expands her reference to his own responsibilities of intercession. She directs Anselm to fulfill his intercessory role between heaven and earth for her royal family and for the entire realm. Thus, Matilda attempts to be a liaison between king and archbishop by providing each with encouragement and selected information to keep working toward an acceptable compromise. She is also willing to critique Anselm and prompt him to consider a wider perspective.

Between Matilda's letter discussed above and Anselm's reply, however, there is a letter written in the spring of 1104, from Anselm to Gundulf, bishop of Rochester. Anselm reports on Henry's apparent delay in giving a promised decision on whether or not he will agree to the papal investiture requirements. He asks Gundulf to relay a message to the king that he will accept his delay as long as "he leaves me in possession of the archbishopric as I was when I left England," and if that does not happen, "I shall accept no delay but shall consider myself as a bishop disseised" (Anselm 316). Anselm interprets Henry's delays as a stalling tactic, which he will tolerate as long as he remains in control of Canterbury's finances. He warns Henry not to dispossess him. However, that is exactly what Henry does, although no letter survives that announces this decision. References to it in letters dated 1104, however, do remain. For her part,

according to Huneycutt, Queen Matilda "began to take on the role of intercessor between king and archbishop. For instance, when Henry seized the Canterbury revenues during Anselm's exile, Matilda persuaded him to mitigate his action to secure an allowance for Anselm's personal needs while on the continent . . . and [the archbishop] continued to serve as a spiritual advisor" (*Matilda of Scotland* 76). In this sense, Matilda's intercession with Henry is successful to a small degree.

Anselm's reply to Matilda's letter takes note of the several elements of her lengthy message and addresses the allowance she has obtained for his personal needs. He begins with "boundless thanks to your Highness by loving and praying for you for the magnitude of your holy love . . . you clearly displayed with what affection you love me when you received and treated my parchment in the way you describe. Your dignity raised my spirits." He shows sensitivity to the emotions Matilda had expressed in her letter. He analyzes her statements of interceding with Henry as "doing what is fitting for you and advantageous for him." He describes her intercession as appropriate but also as primarily serving Henry's goals. He protests that "if he has any bitterness of heart towards me I am not aware of ever having deserved it in any way" and Henry should "drive this rancor away from him lest he sin before God." Anselm rejects her implication that he has been remiss in attitude or action. In addition, her success in obtaining a small amount of money for him is acknowledged as coming from her "goodwill," but the larger issue is that her intercession should not be necessary, and that "whoever despoils a bishop of his goods can in no way be reconciled to God unless he restores to him all his goods intact." He ends his defense by framing the revenue as a spiritual principle: "I do not say this for the love of money but for the love of God's justice" (Anselm Letter 321). Although Anselm is polite, he is thorough in refuting the points Matilda implied about his own attitude and insists that the issue is

a matter of God's will and what he represents as the larger issue between Henry and the Pope. Anselm is communicating with Matilda in a more direct way to not accuse her but to refute Henry's position and defend his own from the Bible, making sure to distinguish between personal greed and the right use of money due to the church for the church.

Also in 1104, Matilda writes an intercessory plea to Pope Paschal. After beginning with a statement of her humble attitude and acknowledging her limits as a woman, the queen describes her sadness due to Anselm's absence as a reason for her letter: "So I flee to your kindness, o lord, and ask that we and the people of the kingdom of the English should not slip into such failure and decline." Matilda appeals to his compassion and requests his intervention on behalf of the spiritual condition of her people. Her goal is the return of Anselm, "our wisest counselor and the most loving father" but also states her desire to "keep unblemished the subjection which we owe to the holy Apostolic See" (*Epistolae*, "Matilda of Scotland"). Matilda uses the pathos of her grief and the state of the English church without Canterbury's archbishop as reasons the pope should insure Anselm's return. That Matilda chose to appeal to papal authority indicates the strength of her desire to use her queenly office for what she saw as the best spiritual outcome for the English leaders of the church and the kingdom as well as for the people subject under them. This intercession, however, is not successful.

The Pope reacts strongly to Henry's taking away Anselm's possession of Canterbury's revenue. Writing on December 23, 1104, Paschal ties Henry's requests to be allowed to continue investing church officials as being directly against his salvation. He further admonishes Henry: "We are amazed that you not only made him an exile but also despoiled him of the possessions of his church . . .dearest son, do not listen to any of your enemies but direct your path towards the will of the Lord" (Anselm Letter 348). The pope places responsibility on Henry for Anselm's

exile and for taking over revenue control from his archbishopric. He uses the rhetorical trope that the king is getting bad advice. Just as Matilda is working in support of Henry's position by trying to convince Anselm to soften his views on investiture and homage, Pope Paschal and Anselm reject their efforts of delay and intercession.

Another set of exchanges begins with what may be a reply to a lost letter from Matilda to Anselm. Matilda seems to have communicated more of her distress at his absence and perhaps suggested ways that either she or Henry thinks Anselm is contributing to the stalemate in the controversy. In a letter dated "1104 or 1105 from Lyon," Anselm defends himself. Henry evidently said that the archbishop's "lack of moderation," is the reason that "what she [Matilda] began"—presumedly the slight return of Canterbury's possession—cannot be completed. Anselm replies that this misrepresents what he said in a letter to Henry. Anselm states his position that his exile is because he cannot ignore "what I heard with my own ears in Rome" prohibiting investiture and homage. His attendance at the council in Rome solidified Anselm's decision to follow its decisions. He re-iterates his position that obedience to the church is his priority. Then he notes that his proposal to Henry had at first been received "kindly," but his negative turn is attributed to evil advisors. Thus, Anselm noticed a change in how Henry first reacted to his request to the king's later refusal to re-possess Canterbury to him. He ends his letter with a strong admonition for Matilda "not to consider these things heedlessly in your mind, but, if your conscience testifies that you have anything to correct," "make amends" with God (Anselm 329). Anselm approaches, for the first time, the possibility that Matilda herself is acting in the matter of the controversy in ways displeasing to God. She should examine her own actions to see if she needs to ask God's forgiveness. He acts as spiritual advisor with serious concerns about her part in the negotiations. This dual role of Anselm as Matilda's spiritual advisor and

advocate of the Roman church's position in opposition to her husband illustrates how entwined the roles of governing and church guidance could become.

This letter is evidently followed by a missing letter in which Matilda responds well to his admonition, because in another letter dated "1104 or 1105," Anselm thanks God for her "humble acceptance of disapproval," encourages her to "choose what you consider pleases God more," and references his own spiritual condition if he relented in the controversy: "it would not be good for my soul to disagree with God's will" (Anselm Letters 347). These exchanges indicate that Matilda and Anselm continue to construct their messages with thanks and regard, but they also communicate the continuing disagreement that remains between archbishop and king. In her mediatory role, Matilda attempts to communicate what seem to be Henry's complaints and "soften" Anselm's opposition, while also responding to his suggestion that she should consult her own conscience. For his part, the archbishop never changes his position yet frames his letters as keeping the spiritual health of king, queen, and himself as his uppermost concern.

Eventually, on December 23, 1104, Pope Paschal writes an impatient, stern letter to Henry that he is "despising the Church" and "through the presumption of investiture you are trying to show yourself as the gate to those who are to become bishops of churches" and keeping "your father, the guardian of your kingdom and salvation, the counsellor of life, distinguished for all his wisdom and sanctity, Anselm" from England. Further, "we command you" to invite Anselm back and keep the churches "in their freedom according to law. Otherwise, we shall cut you off, and your advisors" (Anselm Letter 351). The pope is pointed in his accusation that Henry is arrogant to assume that he should be the one through whom church bishops are inaugurated, and this reveals a contemptuous attitude towards the church. He emphasizes Anselm's spiritual roles and traits that England is missing due to Henry. Finally, he orders the

return and full reinstatement of Anselm, or the king and his advisors will be excommunicated. In a separate letter dated January or February 1105 to Matilda, the Pope briefly reviews Henry's insistence on investiture and his "expelling" of Anselm before telling the queen that "we fear greatly for his salvation since we love him dearly for his previous good deeds." The pope remembers the way Henry promised to help the church at the beginning of his reign before he began to listen to "counsellors of perdition." He makes his own intercession to Matilda for Henry: "we beg you to watch more carefully over his keeping and to turn his heart away from wrong counsel" to avoid "provoking God's fury." He appeals for her to do whatever she can to convince him to follow the church. He refers to him as the "unbelieving husband" of I Cor. 7:14, so often referred to by the church in counseling Christian wives, as applying to husbands who "will be saved by the believing wife." He refers to another Bible text, that she should "reprove, beseech, rebuke" (2 Tim. 4.2). These biblical texts apply to the king's and queen's situation. Paschal places Henry outside the fold of Christians and offers her own influence as his last chance to avoid excommunication (Anselm Letter 352). Matilda can no longer work towards a compromise between her husband and her church. The church refuses to admit that any earthly political factors may be involved.

This threat of excommunication was enacted at the Lenten synod of 1105 against Count Robert of Meulan, his advisors, and the bishops who had previously accepted the king's investiture (Anselm Letter 353). The pope follows through on expelling Henry's advisors, but not Henry himself. In a brief letter recorded as either August or September, Henry does not mention these actions, but requests that Anselm, "not be displeased" by the delay and assures him of his desire to resolve the matter by sending William de Warelwast to him as his messenger (Anselm, Letter 367). Anselm replies with thanks for Henry's "good will" before acknowledging

that Henry has given possession of Canterbury back to him. However, that is not enough. He warns, “God judges most severely that a bishop be separated from his office and a church from its bishop without a cause which God would approve,” so it is “expedient for your soul that you see to it that I . . . may be . . . restored as speedily as possible to your kingdom in your peace” (Anselm, Letter 368). Henry has evidently taken the first step towards relenting his position by returning the finances of Canterbury to Anselm. But Anselm reminds the king that excommunication remains a possibility until the archbishop returns to his see in England.

In October and November, 1105, Henry finally arranges for his and Anselm’s representatives to both travel to Rome so that “a firm love and peace may be established between us” (Anselm Letters 370, 371). Still, in January and February 1106, Henry writes to ask Anselm’s advice since he has heard there are two popes in Rome; Anselm quickly assures Henry of Paschal’s strong claims and predicts the false pope will fall (Anslem Letters 377-378). Hollister reports that, according to Eadmer, Anselm himself began a mission to excommunicate the king although that would have been against canon law (195). This drastic action became delayed by a visit to Adela Countess of Blois, a spiritual daughter of Anselm and a favorite sister of Henry who is “a most faithful servant of the Church of God.” She urgently requested that Anselm visit her, and she finally arranged a meeting between Henry and Anselm. There, the king gave up his investiture rights. Later, Pope Paschal conceded that church officials could provide homage to King Henry for their temporal properties and Anselm agreed to provide acceptable homage to the king (Hollister 195; Anslem, Letter 388). Finally, in March of 1106, Paschal writes a letter to Anselm acknowledging the king’s agreement to obey the investiture prohibitions is largely a result of the archbishop’s “charity and the perseverance of your prayers.” Anselm’s firm resolve not to compromise has achieved Henry’s compliance with the

investiture rights of the church. The pope also informs the archbishop that, in return, the church will allow homage to the king of new prelates "for their earthly possessions" (Anselm, Letter 397). The benefit of this major compromise seems to have repaired to some degree the strained relationship between England's king and ruling ecclesiastic although Anselm continued to write Henry when he considered the king to have overstepped his bounds in requiring taxes and other fees from the church.

With the controversy between the king and the church resolved, Henry is free to concentrate on his battle with his surviving older brother. Upon Henry's victory over and capture of Robert Curthose at Tinchebray, the archbishop wrote him a letter of congratulation in October 1106 from Canterbury: "I rejoice and give thanks with as much affection as I can to God, from whom all things come, for your prosperity and your successes" (Anselm, Letter 402; Hollister 201, 203). For his part, in his letter around October 1, 1106, Henry attributes his victory to "the gift of divine providence," and "[I] devoutly prostrate at the knees of your holiness, I beseech you to beseech the heavenly judge" that his victory "may lead to the initiation of good works and the service of God" (Anselm, Letter 401). Henry requests that his archbishop intercede with God so that the victory will result in further righteousness. Eadmer reports that Henry's conquest of Normandy was interpreted by many in the kingdom to be a direct result of the king's submission to the law of the church. Also, according to Eadmer and Anselm's letters, the queen was at Dover when Anselm returned to England to reclaim his archbishopric of Canterbury (Hollister 198). Taken as a group, these letters show the care and complexity involved in navigating what seemed to be impossible cross purposes between two strong institutions led by powerful leaders. By the end, Anselm was old and ill, but his resolve to engage firmly and persistently with king, queen, and pope garnered a significant victory in the history of the English church.

The interactions between King Henry and Queen Matilda on the conflict are only hinted at a few times. Matilda's intercessory epistles failed to convince the pope or archbishop to change their views or to entice Anselm to return to England before he was adequately convinced that Henry would keep his promises. Perhaps Adela of Blois should be given partial credit for her own intercession which brought the king and archbishop face to face.

The letters of these powerful leaders illustrate the complexity of church and state negotiations. The overall result of stronger church control in England illustrates the high stakes involved in such controversies. Henry I resisted Archbishop Anselm, the highest church leader in England, and Pope Paschal, the highest position in all of Roman Christianity, for five years to retain what he interpreted as his religious rights related to royal custom and the sacred responsibility he had as king of England. His beliefs mirror the elevated position kings and queens of England had developed through centuries through custom and church encouragement through religious coronation practices.

The controversy just discussed shows the difficulty of integrating the English monarchy that was growing successful under Henry's rule and management with the growing power of the church in Rome. In an unintentional irony, the church had promoted royal religious responsibility, but became more determined to centralize its own control by selecting the church leaders of England. The very generosity of the converted Christian kings to the church became its means and method to become financially and politically independent from the king while living on sometimes large estates within his kingdom. With such tensions in mind, perhaps it is understandable that kings and queens would look for models and help from more powerful and more distant entities than those on earth in charge of the church.

Pre-Christian beliefs and stories feature other-worldly beings for rulers to be inspired by and to imitate. Later, the Christian role models and spiritual heroes taught by the church provided encouragement for them to look beyond the earth to higher beings for help deciding how to conduct themselves and with whom to identify. As a result, English kings and queens accepted and gained religious benefit from acquainting themselves with higher and earlier spiritual connections than the Christian archbishops and popes living with them. Medieval rulers' options to consider included gods, biblical characters, and the heavenly beings of Christianity. For example, C. M. Kauffmann notes that King Æthelwulf claimed ancestry from back to Woden and beyond to the Genesis patriarchs. *ASC MS C* lists a Woden Frealafing in its recital of ancestors all the way back to "Adam primus homo" (O'Brien O'Keeffe *s.a.*856). This leap from pagan god to biblical leader in medieval England is "indicative of the desire to place the monarch in the narrative of biblical and salvation history" (Dale 48). Because the pattern of kings identifying with deities is seen in pre-Christian societies, it is understandable for them to continue such association with the God of Christianity. William A. Chaney, in his examination of the similarities between pagan and Christian concepts, cites a translation of an Anglo-Saxon charm found in *Maxims II* that efficiently expresses one reason for this transition: "'Woden wrought idols; the Lord wrought the spacious skies'" (199). This contrast places God as creator of nature, a higher position than Woden, who is depicted as creating only objects within humans' abilities. As a ruler who rules the cosmos with justice and benevolence as Christians taught, God may have attracted some of the early kings as a more powerful god and a more appropriate model of rulership. Participating in the rituals of pre-Christian gods and the Christian God also provided the rulers legitimacy and authority.

Royals' association with the rulers, patriarchs, and matriarchs of the Christian scriptures provided benefits, such as material with which to create liturgy and ceremony. Specifically, this use is seen in the use of the Psalms and in direct comparisons to biblical characters. The coronation *ordines* and supplemental source material provide a clear picture of the large proportion of the inauguration ritual which began and grew ever more religious. In general, according to musicologist Nancy van Deusen, the Psalms became the main pool of material for hymns, chants, and prayers (Dale 46). Many parallels also associate new rulers with holy counterparts. In addition to the Old Testament characters mentioned previously (King David and Queen Esther), liturgists used a wide range of biblical characters with which to associate the king and queen. For the king, the Old Testament "provides more than a narrow Davidic model…[he] appears with spiritual heroes, kings, and a prophet. One particular prayer includes the plea:

> We beseech you with our humble prayers, [to] always multiply the gifts of your blessings and the power of your right hand upon this servant of yours, whom in suppliant devotion we choose as king and, strengthened by the faithfulness of aforementioned Abraham, trusting with the gentleness of Moses, fortified with the courage of Joshua, exalted by the humility of David, and adorned with the wisdom of Solomon, let him be pleasing to you. (Dale 47-8)

These allusions provide the highest biblically-approved standard for which a new king should strive. The models included Hebrew patriarchs and kings. Only the best traits of these biblical leaders are mentioned. Thus, the king and his audience were reminded that with church approval came high expectations of good leadership.

The queen's *ordines* provide a parallel list of Old Testament women as appropriate models. One prayer asks specifically "that she be one with Sarah and Rebecca, Leah and Rachel" and that "she might merit to rejoice and multiply in the fruit of her womb" (Dale 50). This list is not surprising in its connection to the queen's traditional role as producer of a preferably male heir. What highlights a royal couples' joint dynastic hopes, however, is seen in Julie Smith's

analysis of two *ordine* prayers for the king which emphasize, first, the fertility aspect of Isaac's blessing to Jacob. The second prayer uses a specific reference to the loins of Abraham blessing the Israelites as the king's loins will his own land (Dale 50). This area of matched Old Testament couples and a shared prayer request to produce heirs illustrates two areas where the coronation rites for king and queen reveal private and public religious hopes of the royal couple. To the degree the king and queen follow the godly traits of these biblical exemplars, they provided their people an effective religious example and could themselves develop confidence in their heavenly reward.

Christianity soon added more holy models. The apostles of Christ, early disciples, and then early church leaders, both men and women, became persecuted and killed for their loyalty to Christianity. These martyrs inspired the young church as it developed a growing roster of saints to be remembered for their extraordinary faith and venerated for the wonders wrought in association with them. Once Emperor Constantine accepted Christianity in 313 and Emperor Theodosius ordered official empire support in 323, the criteria for sainthood expanded to also elevate those who at the highest levels and in the most visibly miraculous ways furthered the cause of Christ and his church. These heroes of faith inspired the development of cults which upheld them as models for all believers, but royal saints provided more focused significance for kings and queens. In England (as well as in other lands), martyrdom remained a possible route to sainthood as it did in the case of King Edmund (r. 920/21-946) (Ridyard 61-63).

For Queen Æthelthryth (c. 636-679), however, sainthood was achieved by the reports of her dedication to virginity through two marriages which medieval believers considered miraculous. Her purity became the foundation for her to be a role model for queens, and for female and male, lay and religious. Her example as a female spiritual hero who male religious

could venerate as a female saint was led by the actions of Bishop Æthelwold of Winchester. He is credited with establishing the cult of St. Æthelthryth (d. 679) during the tenth century Benedictine Reform. As Virginia Blanton explains, she became an "allegorical symbol of chastity for male religious . . . . suitable for imitation by the monks he [Æthelwold] placed at the monasteries of Abingdon, Winchester, Ely, and Peterborough, among others. . . . She eschewed royalty for spirituality—the themes so crucial to his reform plans" (92). The bishop emphasized Æthelthryth's reputed virginity and royal status rather than her gender. Further evidence that supports her virginal and holy status are displayed in the miniature pictorials of the *Benedictional of St. Æthelwold.* Of all the illustrations, the only recognizable females are St. Æthelthryth and the Virgin Mary (94, 90). The illuminator of this episcopal service guidebook used similar clothing draped about the middle to present both male and female saints and Christ; thus, suggesting that the virgin queen who became an abbess could be compared to Christ in his virginal perfection (95). The vows that nuns and monks made to remain celibate became a logical connection to this saint. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne describes how the monks at Ely relied on their patron, St. Æthelthryth, during the encroachment of the Normans in order to keep their rights for the monastery and its extensive lands. She argues that the *Liber Eliensis* (Book of Ely) was written by the Anglo-Normans in their attempt to meet that aim. Stories include St. Æthelthryth's "vengeance miracles of protection and control" in which the saint punished those who disrespected Ely and despoiled its properties. These provided narrative clout in addition to more conventional methods of persuasion (29-30). This development of a cult featuring a fierce patron in addition to the linking of Æthelthryth to Mary and to Christ provided reasons for monks to honor and elevate the importance of their own celibacy in cross-gender

devotion. Such cross-gendered worship will be discussed later between kings and the Virgin Mary in heaven.

St. Æthelthryth's reputation continued further into the future with the help of a twelfth-century queen. E. O. Blake in *Liber Eliensis* and Oderic Vitalis in his ecclesiastical history both tell the story of Queen Matilda of Scotland's (r. 1100-1118) promotion of Æthelthryth. Brustan, an English-speaking man, seems to be unjustly imprisoned in London. Reportedly, like the apostle Paul in Acts 12:3-19, he is miraculously released from his chains by St. Æthelthryth (also called St. Audrée) and St. Benedict. When Queen Matilda hears of the miracle, she orders a celebration in London and then accompanies the freed man to Ely to place the evidence of the broken shackles on the shrine of St. Æthelthryth (Wogan-Browne 40). In this way, the English saint's connection to the later church is strengthened and promoted in a very public and honored way by the queen herself. For her part, Matilda provides the opportunity for this miracle to bless all who witness both the city celebration and the procession to Ely. Her support also adds to Brustan's experience which will increase the impact of his own witness. This means that St. Æthelthryth remains a saint whom English male religious champion over a long period of time. Such veneration of a female becomes more prominent as worship is directed heavenward by kings and queens.

Rulers, Christ, and the Virgin Mary

Medieval church leaders and some rulers looked to the highest level of Christian hierarchy for role models to follow and with whom to identify. Kings, although acknowledging Christ as their own overlord, as Christ the King, occasionally likened themselves to Christ as the ultimate spiritual model for an earthly leader ruling almost all aspects of their subjects' lives. In the role of both secular and religious leader, for example, King Edgar of Wessex (r. 957-975)

represents himself as a holy king, a temporal Christ. This is seen in his role as protector of the monks that is recorded in the *Regularis Concordia.* Edgar is presented as being like Christ the shepherd who saved his lambs from the jaws of wolves.

Queen Esther was an early and frequent biblical model for medieval queens. Eventually, however, Esther becomes an Old Testament queen who points ahead to the New Testament Virgin. Earenfight notes that, later, in addition to biblical models and historical/literary models, "the Virgin Mary served as model for queens and empresses, who were expected to embrace a form of queenship that blended sanctity and maternity" (*Queenship* 247). An entire genre, now known as the *Middle English Marian Lyrics* (*MEML*) developed during the twelfth through fifteenth centuries, and featured many nurturing, intercessory, and ruling aspects of Mary. Just as Christ is linked spiritually to his mother Mary, so kings and queens could strengthen their own joint spiritual bonds of leadership by being connected to the highest beings in heaven. This has already been illustrated in the previous discussion of Queen Ælgifu/Emma and King Cnut shown visually with connections to the Virgin Mary and to Christ, respectively, in the depiction of their donation of a gold cross at Winchester. Other historical and literary texts also represent these unique, holy connections enjoyed by earthly rulers. Considering cases where both king and queen are mentioned suggests the greater impact possible when they are both represented.

With the exception of the roles covered within the Trinity, the Virgin Mary developed into perhaps the most adaptable and significant biblical and heavenly model for Christian rulers in the Middle Ages. Church fathers and other early biblical commentators praise her as the embodied deliverer of the Savior to save humankind. Relying on previous sources, including Jerome, Ælfric of Eynsham (c. 955-1025), in his homily for Mary's feast day, contrasts Mary and Eve: "Þur ure ealdan modor Euan us wearð heofonan riches geat belocken, and eft ðurh

Marian hit is us geopenod, þur þæt heo sylf nu todæg wuldorullice inferred" (*Catholic Homilies I*). (Through our ancient Mother Eve, the gates of heaven locked us out, but now through Mary's reign, they are opened to us because she herself gloriously enters them today.) Mary is viewed in opposition to the biblical Eve who desired to become more like God when the deceiver offered that possibility along with the forbidden apple in the garden of Eden. Mary's role, in contrast, is represented biblically with the humble submission of the virgin to the Almighty's will and who is given the grace to birth Christ. Because she is the person who makes possible the birth, death, and resurrection of her son, and, thereby, the possibility of salvation for humans, Mary earns the highest heavenly reward and is elevated above all other saints. As a result, Mary serves as spiritual intercessor and mother to all humankind. Thus, she deserves special honor on earth. In the same homily, Ælfric describes her position as "unwiðmetenlic eallum oðrum mædyn" (*CH I*). (incomparable with all other maidens.) She is over all maidens on earth and in heaven.

In Chaucer's only poem exclusively devoted to the Virgin Mary, she is addressed as "noble princesse, that nevere haddest peere" (Chaucer, "An ABC" line 97) In *Pearl*, an anonymous dream vision poem written between 1360-1390, Mary's supreme rank is memorably emphasized by describing the actions and words of the deceased daughter and new virgin bride of Christ who is teaching her earthly father. At his mention of Mary's name, the young virgin acknowledges her as "Cortayse Quen" before kneeling and adding, "Makelez moder and myryest may, / "Blessed bygyner of vch a grace" (VIII lines 433-436). Here Mary is given both highest rank of maternal and virginal female roles but also seems to be credited with the creative ability to be the originating source of gifts from God. Next Mary's rule is emphasized: "Þat emperise al heuenz hatz—And vrþe and helle—in her bayly" (VIII lines 441-442). (That empress has all heaven—and earth and hell—within her dominion.) Mary is described with the highest title of

earthly rule, but her sovereignty extends to the heights and the depths and in between of the cosmos. “Because she was the one who held first place among the entire celestial host, whether human or angelic, she, next go God himself, should receive the praises of the whole world” (Pelikan 134). This inclusion of the earthly and heavenly prominence of Mary can be seen to share some similarity to the divinely chosen and elevated status earthly queens and kings claimed for themselves and were taught by church leaders to expect to continue in some form in heaven.

Evidence of high esteem for Mary shown by rulers and church leaders is recorded quite early in the English conversion period. They honored her with dedications. For example, after her husband, King Eorcenberht, died in 664 and she ruled in his place for a year as regent for her son, Seaxburh, the Queen of Kent, founded and became abbess of a minster at Sheppey that was dedicated to St. Mary (Ridyard 56, Barnes). When Anglo-Saxon King Eadbald (r.616-640) converted to Christianity following years of hostility towards the religion of his father King Æthelberht (r. 560-616), Bede reports that the proof of his sincerity is when “Sce Petres mynstre cirican getimbran in àre þære eadigan fæmnan Sca Marian, ða eft Mellitus on hyre noman gehalgode, þa he wæs ærcebiscop” (Miller, *OEEH* II.6). (He ordered a church to be built in St. Peter’s monastery to the glory of the blessed virgin, St. Mary, which afterwards was consecrated in her name by Archbishop Mellitus.) The converted king’s decision to construct a church in Mary’s honor is then renewed and elevated when the archbishop gives a formal consecration.

This early consecration foreshadows the later growth in devotion to Mary by monks during the Benedictine reform of the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. Mary Clayton has gathered statistics for Anglo-Saxon church dedications and, noting the small number that can be traced, states that, still, between a fifth and a quarter of the churches are dedicated to the Virgin. Numbers for cathedrals, monasteries, and nunneries are more substantial, and of the ninety-five

listed in her chart, forty-four are dedicated or co-dedicated to Mary (125-129). This pattern indicates that founders and other leaders frequently favored the Virgin as the one on whom to center church institutions to inspire believers. Pelikan notes a similar revival of Marian interest during the High Middle Ages of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (125). Interest in the Virgin Mary does not disappear, but, rather, enjoys periods of greater emphasis.

Following the increased interest of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Marian poetry flourished in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. John Lydgate writes a tribute to the Virgin in a poem that emphasizes her worth above long catalogs of admirable women from throughout history. This poem of love to Mary uses romantic imagery in "A Valentine to Her that Excelleth All." He begins by noting the custom of St. Valentine's day when men focus on Cupid "And cheese þeyre choys by gret affeccioun; / Such as beon pricked by Cupydes mocion." Then, using his familiar ending refrain technique, he ends the first stanza, "But I loue oon whiche excelliþe alle" (Vol. 1 lines 4-5, 7). He next lists all the criteria that men use to choose their love: "fayrnesse," "beaute," "rychesse," "gentylesse," among many other virtues. Then he repeats the line that his choice "excelliþe alle" (Vol 1 lines 8-14). The next stanza explains that he chose his love long ago and renews his choice every year on Valentines because she is "so truwe" that "hit shal him neuer ruwe" (Vol. 1 lines 15-21). He lists famous women of good renown from antiquity, mythology, the Bible, and saints: Lucresse, Dydo, Rachel, Lia, Penelope, Heleyne, Kateryne, and many more. But, as expected by the many repeating concluding lines of his stanzas, his love is more excellent than any of these women. Finally, by process of elimination, he admits "Þis goodelly fresshe called is Marye" and narrates her virtues and the salvation she has made possible to all. He situates the date of this poem by recommending the Virgin to Henry VI and his mother Katherine of Valois. His choice of Mary as a non-sexual

Valentine provides an occasion and a saint to praise in the service of a queen mother and her king son. It seems an appropriate model of praise of Mary considering the ruling situation of Katherine and Henry VI.

The Middle English Marian Lyrics developed over the course of three centuries, exploring many perspectives and roles of Mary. Some of the roles relate to concerns about chivalry and good rule. Georgiana Donavin emphasizes that although the many poems range in topic and quality, they all share a performative nature which provides a focus on the passionate interaction between speaker and Mary (224, 231) One of the Marian lyrics, a polyglot combination of lines from Latin hymns and "courtly love conventions" (Saupe, Introduction), takes the romantic language of Lydgate's valentine and extends it to the lady and knight relationship of chivalry. In "Edi beo thu, hevene quene," the speaker addresses Mary as "hevene queen," a parallel to the romance tradition of a queen having the loyalty and service of a knight outside of her marriage that reflects the influence of French court poetry (Saupe, *MEML*, no. 8 line 1; Donavin 231). The second stanza continues with the courtly romance theme: "On thee hit is wel eth sene, / Of all wimmen thu havest thet pris. . . . Swo fair, so schene, so rudi, swo bricht / Swete levedi, of me thu reowe / And have merci of thin knicht" (lines 5-6, 15-17). Mary is described in the ideal terms of a romantic lady and the speaker ends the second stanza describing himself as her knight. Mary and penitent are also a queen and her knight. As such, he declares his intention: "'Levidi milde, softe and swote, / Ic crie thee merci, ic am thi mon, / Bothe to hone and to fote, / On alle wise that Ic kon" (lines 20-24). More sweet compliments and another request for her favor follow before he declares that he is her man, including hands and feet, to serve her in any way he possibly can. As Donavin notes, this image is "difficult to distinguish from secular love lyrics" which shows the close relationship between the emotive feelings of

both types of relationship (231). Marian lyrics often use language that focuses on strong emotions that can reflect religious and other situations such as courtly love.

The parallel of the conventional knight and lady relationship in this lyric, however, is not total. This knight does not ride off to perform gallant deeds or to protect his lady. Rather, the roles seem to reverse. By invoking the actions expected of a knight and applying them to Mary, a complete shift occurs: "Thu me sschildghe [sic] from the feonde . . . Help me to my lives ende" (lines 37, 39). The knight is asking for protection. It is the knight who needs saving from the devil, and the other descriptions of Mary in the poem make it clear that she can fight for him and will stay with him until his death. He is a knight and sinner in need. His final request ends the lyric: "Leyedi, bring us to thine bolde / And sschild [sic] us from helle wrake" (lines 63-64, translated by Saupe). (Lady, bring us to thine dwelling place / And shield us from the vengeance of hell.) The knight's plea has grown to include others and to last beyond earthly life. His Lady Mary can bring them to her home in heaven which will shield them from hell's punishment. The final point is that "the Virgin provides an intersection between human and divine" (Donavin 232). Queens and kings were encouraged to view themselves as viceroys of the kingdom's church, and, because of the divine appointment to their rulerships, they themselves provided their subjects with a link between the human and the heavenly worlds. Using the language of religious and romantic love perhaps broadens the appeal of an address to the Virgin while making the theological point that there is the necessity of a role reversal in the spiritual realm, even if the sinner is called Mary's knight. Rulers can recognize variations of love and the applicability of romantic images to a religious purpose. Their own roles in their marriages might merge the romantic and religious elements. These poems also help illustrate the overall importance of Mary in the medieval English church.

Chaucer's Prioress and the Virgin Mary

For royal women, the high regard given to Mary's purity and maternal compassion gave princesses a pattern for their youth and queens a way in which to act within their own reigns that fit into the hierarchy of medieval England and entered mainstream understandings of queenship. For Chaucer, according to Sherry Reames, "the Virgin Mary occupies a unique position in his work as the only saint whose cult seems to be held up for actual imitation" (84). Other saints are mentioned in many works, but the poet presents the orthodox view that Mary is above them all. Although Chaucer has only a handful of prayers to the Virgin and creates most of the religious pilgrims as not very exemplary, Phillips interprets his Mary prayers as "sophisticated poetry" that express "the power of a simple reverence and devout trust, together with certainty about Mary's power to provide a safe haven for the sinful soul, struggling through life's perils" (70). Such awe and faithful confidence in the Virgin as a compassionate place for all sinners may have added to the popularity of Marian devotion. An example from late-medieval literature illustrates these two roles of Mary's purity and maternal compassion. Chaucer's Prioress, in *The Canterbury Tales*, is a Marian legend, a popular late medieval genre, and a re-telling of a widespread miracle, the virulently anti-Semitic story, "The Child Slain by Jews" (Broughton 118).[7] In this analysis, her reference to many functions or roles that Mary plays is considered. Mary is seen first as a pure maid and mother who is worthy of worship. In the Prologue to her tale, the Prioress first calls on the Lord as worthy of praise, but she soon moves to the focus of most of her address: "the white lylye flour" Mary (*CT*, "Prologue of the Prioress's Tale" line 461). The Prioress gives Mary's best known roles equal imagery and status as "O mooder

[7] During the high Middle Ages, blood libel stories against the Jews became popular. For more context, see Anthony Bale, "Q maner Latyn corrupt': Chaucer and the Absent Religions," in *Chaucer and Religion*, edited by Helen Phillips, D. S. Brewer, 2010, pp. 53-58.

Mayde, O mayde Mooder free!" (*CT*, "Prologue of the Prioress's Tale" line 467). These roles began in the biblical content of Matthew and Luke, but they also remained as crucial functions of perfect purity and perfect motherhood that Mary enacted through centuries.

The Prioress, however, does not stop at maternal and virginal virtues. She further defines Mary as the "honour and the roote of bountee, next hir Sone, and the soules boote" (*CT* "Prologue of the Prioress's Tale" lines 465b-467). This plant imagery of Mary being the very root of goodness is echoed in the Marian lyric, "O hie emperice and queen celestiall," when she is described as "rute of all gudenance" near the beginning of a lengthy recital of her virtues (*MEML*, no. 86 line 10b). These images may support the view held by some that Mary does not need forgiveness since goodness springs forth from her. The Prioress adds to Mary's roles when she calls on her Lady as a Muse to assist her to tell a tale "in thy reverence," and then further requests, "O blissful Queene. . .gydeth my song" (*CT*, "Prologue of the Prioress's Tale" lines 473, 481, 487). The prologue, thus, begins with the familiar purity and maternal roles, before expanding into the goddess roles of inspiration and worthiness of believers' prayers. [8]

Chaucer's Prioress continues to add more possible roles and allusions in her specific word choice. For instance, the *blissful* of her address to heaven's Queen can carry both the religious meaning of "blessed" and "glorified" as well as the sense used for queens of romance, "giving joy," and "pleasing" and "illustrious" with which to introduce the dramatic miracle tale which follows (*MEC*). In contrast to the immediate, opinionated responses of the travelers to the previous tales, this tale temporarily silences the Host and the other pilgrims. They seem momentarily uncertain how to respond to her graphic story, which lacks, at least on first hearing, much of the pleasing medieval *solace* in favor of the *sentence* of devotion to the Virgin.

[8] Sherry Reames argues that Chaucer does not elevate Mary as if she "were a goddess" (Phillips 86). He does, however, seem to have his Prioress credit the Virgin with such supernatural powers of inspiration.

Adrienne Williams Boyarin provides some context that such Marian tales had, by late fourteenth century, "seemed to have been positioned in an uneasy space between entertainment and devotion" (150). In contrast, some in the Christian church enlarged the options for adoring Mary.

This late medieval portrait of the Virgin, created by Chaucer and narrated by the Prioress, provides a sense of the ways Mary's role had expanded beyond the biblical virgin who humbly agrees to mother the messiah. In the narration, Mary is worthy of praise and prayers, and she initiates miracles. She is the subject of the tale in which a widow teaches her young son the "Hail Mary" to which he soon adds an antiphon in her praise. As he sings it confidently and loudly on his way to and from school—which passes through a Jewry—Satan's control over the Jews is demonstrated when they become offended by the boy's praise to the Virgin Mary. They hire murderers to kill him and dispose of his body in a privy. The wicked cruelty of the murder, as in other Marian tales, provides a greater contrast for the miracles to come.

The boy's mother pleads to the Virgin for help in locating her son. In response, Jesus himself nudges the widow to cry out loud for her boy, and she receives a startling answer: "Ther he with throte ykorven lay upright, / He Alma redemptoris gan to synge So loude that al the place gan to rynge" (PrT lines 611-12). The young victim explains that the Virgin came and laid seed upon his tongue which enabled him to sing. When the seed is removed, Mary promises "'My litel child, now wol I fecche thee. . . Be nat agast; I wol thee nat forsake'" (PrT lines 667-69). The young boy's former song of devotion to the Virgin now transforms into a literal martyr's miracle. The song to Mary announces, "this gem of chastity, this emeraude, / And eek of martyrdom the ruby bright" (PrT lines 609-10) to the Christians drawn in from the street to witness the miracle. The son of the devout widow on earth is now elevated as a son of the Virgin Mother Mary in heaven. The boy himself explains that this miracle has been given because Jesus

Christ "Wil that his glorie laste and be in mynde, And for the worship of his Mooder deere" (PrT lines 653-54). Christ the Son wills the worship of his mother and both men and women respond to Mary's miracle. Here, in brief lines, is the acknowledgement that Christ's direction is behind Mary's miracle. The heavenly beings illustrate Christ's power and Mary's performance of the Son's will. This interaction can be applied to a queen's role as her subjects' intercessory route to the king who has the power to lessen or eliminate a judgement he has already given.

After the boy "yaf up the goost ful softely," (PrT line 672), then the monks and nuns in the tale weep and fall down in worship and praise of "Cristes mooder deere" (PrT line 678). Both men and women express their awe and reverence of Mary. To Chaucer's audience, the central character of the tale is the Virgin Mary who inspires the earthly widow and rewards her young virgin son who has shown ever-increasing devotion to her. She serves as object of worship, initiator of a miracle, and the one who promises to bring her little believer to heaven in an act which further increases devotion to herself from Christian men and women on earth. The *sentence*, or lesson, is that religious and lay, men and women—all should worship the Virgin as the way to Christ.

The Virgin Mary as Woman of Valor in Text and Art

Beyond such miracle stories, Marian devotion further multiplied Mary's roles; she came to represent many functions in the theological area. Boyarin describes early apocryphal, "independent literary tales" that "create a fascinating amalgam of the Marian character as Jew and Christian, lawyer and doctor, theologian and disputant, merciful mother and punishing *domina*, Empress of Heaven and Hell and humble young girl" (41). Mary's roles as intercessor and as role model ruler for both kings and queens invites examination. Pelikan emphasizes that Mary continues from biblical times through the twentieth century to exert an influence, "but the

striking quality would be the success with which, in all seasons, Mary's blessedness would be seen as relevant to men and woman in an equal variety of situations" (21). He further explains that this is because Mary as the handmaid of the Lord is "only half of the picture" (84). Just as both monks and nuns worshipped the Virgin Mary after her miracle in the "Prioress's Tale," English medieval kings and queens are represented as joining in their devotion to her. How did this happen?

Pelikan provides the history of how the prophecy given in Genesis that the serpent's head will be crushed changed from indicating that a male (Christ) would accomplish the crushing to an understanding that Mary could inflict the blow. In Jerome's translation to Latin, he used a neuter pronoun, *ipse,* to indicate the masculine Christ playing the role of crusher. However, in a process which remains unclear other than the vicissitudes of translation and scribal transmission, a switch to the feminine pronoun form, *ipsa*, appeared in other Latin versions. This change allowed an early interpretation that symbolically it is the mother church which is the active force; this is how Bede explained it in his commentary on the book of Genesis. As the Virgin Mary became ever more associated with the church, however, the interpretation eventually came to depict Mary herself as the active crusher of the serpent's head (92). Thus, in texts and art, "this translation inspired images of the humble Virgin triumphing over the proud tempter." In the *DR* translation from the Vulgate, God promises the serpent and the woman Eve that "she shall crush thy head" (Gen. 3.15b). With this physical blow to her tempter, in the eyes of medieval commentators, Mary is the new Eve. She also became "the divinely given answer to the question in Prov. 31:10, 'The woman of valor, who will find?'" (trans. by Pelikan 27, 92). Despite the biblical context of the Proverbs chapter praising an active and diligent woman dedicated to her family and vineyards, a more forceful meaning emerged as it was applied to Mary.

Mary's defeat of Satan-as-serpent accomplished through humble obedience to God's will what Eve had not accomplished, and this allowed the Virgin "to become the patron of victory" (Pelikan 27). The *DR* uses the word *valiant*. This is defined as "possessing courage, prowess, physically powerful; of blood shed in the commission of a valorous deed" (*MEC)*. It is also defined as describing a person "possessing . . . courage, prowess, and boldness," with further allusions to the "battlefield" (*OED*). This trait, which women who themselves had endured the physical pains, fears, and blood of childbirth could identify with, could also allow men to identify with it as the fighting prowess, blood, and courage required of them during physical battles. In this way, "woman of Valor thus became a striking formula for the motif and metaphor for Mary as warrior and champion, as conqueror and leader," and the so-called Marian interpretation became the one most widely used in medieval England (Pelikan 91-92). This meaning that emphasized her physical triumph gave kings the opportunity to worship and promote Mary because she is presented as physically fighting in the ultimate battle between God and the devil.

In two medieval English homilies, Mary is presented with multiple legal roles, including advocate and judge. Mary's intercessory role in a legal environment is evident in both of Ælfric of Eynsham's homilies that involve Mary's responses to legendary Christians who renege on their faith. Boyarin analyzes the contrasting fates of them both. The first provides a traditionally benevolent intercession of Mary. The homilist condenses the dramatic details of Theophilus, a formerly pious cleric who, tricked by magic, signs a legal charter renouncing his loyalty to Christ and the Virgin; he even "makes the legal act of [kneeling in] homage to the Devil" (52). Repenting of his grievous sins, Theophilus prays to Mary for her to intercede for him with Christ. He demonstrates sincerity with fasting, expressed sorrow, and much prayer within a

church dedicated to the Virgin. Even though Theophilus has used legally binding documents and actions to reject his faith, eventually Mary “mid micclum wuldre him to com, and cwæð, þæt heo him geðingod hæfde wið þone Heofenlican Deman, hire agene Sunu (*Catholic Homilies I*). (with much splendour comes to him, and says that she has interceded for him with the Heavenly Judge, her own Son.) Mary retrieves the charter and obtains forgiveness for his homage to the devil. "Mary’s extraordinary legal power . . . is such that she can nullify both the performative and the written act of bondage” (Boyarin 52-3). Mary is an active force in defense of Theophilus. This example shows Christ and Mary working together in heaven to achieve the forgiveness of Theophilus and restore him to be among those who will be redeemed. The three participants mirror scenes of intercession in earthly courts. A person with what he or she sees as a great need, approaches the queen to request her intercession with the king in order to grant the request or to reconsider his previous judgment. Whatever the circumstance, the request is based on the worthiness of the queen rather than on the worthiness of the one in need. In heaven, the Virgin Mary and Christ communicate on a higher plane than the penitent human; on earth, the divinely anointed queen and the divinely anointed king communicate at a superior level than that of their subject.

English manuscript art has also preserved this role of Mary fighting the devil. In the *De Brailes Hours*, (circa 1240) BL MS 49999, f. 40v., a small illustration within a capital letter illustrates Mary’s triumph over the devil (fig. 2). Her right arm punches the beast in the face. Robed in white and red rather than the traditional blue, the Virgin provides a holy contrast to the devil, indicated by his

Fig. 2. “The Virgin Mary Punches the Devil in the Face” from the *De Brailes Hours*, (circa 1240). Used with permission British Library, Add MS 49999, f. 40v.

ugliness: curved horns, protruding spurs behind his bird feet, and misshapen appendages. The Virgin’s eyes are wide open, and her face looks composed as she holds in one hand the condemning charter while her other arm has landed her punch on the beast’s right eye. Clutching the ribbon of the document’s seal, the devil’s one visible eye shows hurt, and his mouth grimaces, showing a row of teeth. Their contrasting expressions indicate that Mary has won. She is ready to intercede with her Son. Depicting the struggle between sin and salvation as a physical battle, this story and illustration might well appeal to kings in their own struggles against evil in literal or figurative battles.

Medieval English kings frequently acted as judge and sentencer. Some queens also ruled over those on their lands and over the nuns in monasteries in addition to acting as regent for the king when he was absent, placing them also in judicial roles. In another homily, Mary is active in

a court as judge and sentencer. Ælfric's version of the legend of Julian the Apostate emperor tells of "a negative miracle . . . how Julian's execution was orchestrated by the Virgin Mary herself" (Boyarin 53). St. Basil prays to Mary after the people have brought offerings and fasted to prevent their threatened destruction by Julian on his return from fighting the Persians. Basil "sees a vision of Mary as a warrior queen and 'on middan ðam werode sæt seo heofonlice cwen maria.' (In the middle of the heavenly troop sat the heavenly Queen Mary.) She sentences Julian to death at the hands of the martyr St. Mecurious because "se ðe mid toðundenum mode God mine Sunu forsihð" (*Catholic Homilies I*). (with an arrogant spirit, he denied God, my Son.) Mary declares the ultimate earthly punishment as a result of Julian's prideful denial of Christ.

Fig. 3. Virgin Mary fighting the devil from *Taymouth Hours* (circa. 1325-40). Used with permission British Library, Yates Thompson 13, f.155v

A miniature from the next century shows a scene with a similar result, but that also implies a broader picture of who enables Mary to be victorious (see fig. 3). In the *Taymouth Hours*, (circa 1325-40), London, BL, Yates Thompson MS 13, f. 155v., a soul rests in the arms

of an angel who looks soberly on the scene. The angel's arm seems inches away from one of the beast's upraised claws. The soul, who is depicted as a young child, has his hands lifted up towards heaven, fingers spread open in a gesture of petition as his face gazes intently on the fight. The fight, however, is over. The soul's prayer has been answered. Crowned and haloed, Mother Mary sits on the back of a scaly, dragon-like beast which is the largest figure in the picture. Its eyes are open and its mouth is open far enough to reveal two rows of sharp teeth, with either a fang or its tongue hanging down about in the center of its mouth. Although one huge leg and claw are raised up, the other one rests on the ground. The beast's overall expression looks resigned. In contrast, Mary firmly grasps its horns at their base with both hands. She is slightly hunched over as if holding it down with her own weight, and her facial expression shows determined focus. Mary has control of the beast. This illustration implies the two-way interaction of Mary and Christ. The penitent soul petitions Christ in heaven who provides Mary power over the beast-devil. In another illustration in the *Taymouth Hours*,London, BL Yates Thompson MS 13, fol. 166v, Mary is also depicted as triumphant and providing justice, by breaking the neck of the devil who has tripped a horse in order to break the neck of one of Mary's devotees (Smith, 253 Fig. 156). As Mary is assisted by the angel and the unseen Christ in heaven, so kings and queens can be successful in their spiritual battles and righteous undertakings when they pray to the heavenly father. It also suggests that the Virgin can take actions which show "displays of force and even violence" in defeating the devil as Christ provides forgiveness to the sinner and power to the Virgin (Smith 252). In like manner, an earthly queen sometimes takes the more active role in defeating the devil before Christ provides forgiveness.

These legends and illustrations show how potent Mary is as an advocate who responds to true contrition and assists the sinner by interceding with Christ even for the most serious sins.

With the increased resources enjoyed by medieval kings and queens came the increased opportunities for sins which could harm large numbers of people whether through war, land seizures, excessive taxation, or corruption. The legend of Theophilus shows that royals could approach the Virgin Mary with needs for forgiveness from her son for sins no matter how evil or widespread. Mary has developed far beyond the biblical humble handmaid of the Lord. Kings and queens are presented with a ruler who enacts various roles of a court including giving the ultimate earthly punishment. In addition to accessing her as a penitent, ruling spouses can readily seek Mary's help in parallel situations that call for them to act sometimes as advocate and sometimes as judge.

In addition to the "Prioress's Tale," Chaucer authored a lesser-known literary work among his occasional poems in which he focused on the Virgin Mary. Of unknown date, "An ABC" is a translation of a prayer from Guillaume de Deguilleville's long allegorical poem *Pelerinaige de la vie bumaine* (*The Pilgrimage of Human Life*), which was written about 1330-1331. Although traditionally assigned to an early period of Chaucer's writing, more recent analysis notes the changes he made from his source, and it is now valued more often as "fairly mature" in its "urgency and moral intensity," which are compared to the Psalms (Reames 89). Each verse begins with consecutive letters of the alphabet and continues from A to Z. It is directly addressed to the Virgin, but each stanza contains a reminder of a symbol or image of Mary (Benson 633). This form of reducing his stanzas from twelve lines to only eight is one of Chaucer's changes, and it is similar to the forms in Psalm 118, Prov. 30.10-31, Lam. 1.1-22, and Lam. 3.1-66 (Besserman, *Chaucer's Biblical Poetics* 73). Although many of the images and functions of the Virgin can be useful to any believer, kings and queens could note features especially apt for them. First, a frequent title of address is "queen;" only "ladi" is used more

often. One of the Marian lyrics adds to the language attached to female royalty beginning with the lines of: "O hie emperice and queen celestial" and "Princes eterne" and "soverane help" ("MEML," no. 86 lines 1, 2a, 3a). Medieval queens might be encouraged to identify with Mary because of their similar ruling roles. In addition, "celestial" and "eterne" remind them that their earthly rule may extend into eternity if they are faithful.

Mary's rulership covers many roles in Chaucer's translation. She is a "merciable," and "blissful" (joyous refuge as Virgin) queen ("An ABC" lines 1, 24). Twice she is addressed as queen of "comfort" and once as queen of "misericorde" (lines 25, 77, 121). (compassion.) These descriptors match the traditional roles of queens. Indeed, the speaker declares that to her "al this world fleeth for socour" (line 2). Obviously, "all" means men and women. This is because, as Tingle notes, in Mary, motherly concern is linked with the practice of intercession (*Chaucer's Queens* 11). Relief comes from the Virgin's maternal experience as "Glorious . . . mooder" while refuge and remedy invoke protection and active help to all who believe ("An ABC" line 49). As illustrated by the records of their assistance, historical medieval queens provided aid both in their pity for the poor when they intervened with financial and other resources as well as in their acts of intercession.

As shown previously in the PrT and the illustration in the *Taymouth Hours*, more poems demonstrate that Mary does not provide her help alone. The speaker only briefly refers to the divine working relationship of Mary and Christ, but it is crucial to provide what sinners need. In perhaps the most well-known Marian lyric, "Stond wel, Moder, under rode," there is a debate, or at least a conversation, between Mary and her Son about the conflict between his mission and her maternal compassion for him: "Moder, merci, let me deyen, / For Adam ut of helle beyn." Mary replies, "Sune, wat sal me to rede? / Thi pine pined me to rede? / Let me deyn thee biforen."

Christ must die in order to save humankind, but Mary protests that she cannot survive seeing his suffering and would rather die first. They do come to an agreement: "Moder, reu of moder kare, / Nu thu wost of moder fare." (Son, help all in need, / All those who cry to me.) (Saupe, *MEML*, no. 33 lines 31-32, 34-36, 43-44, 46-48). This is the heart of their dual sacrifice: Christ must die, and Mary must suffer by watching him. The result, however, is that Mary will use her experience of suffering to show compassion and to function as the conduit for all the sinners who come to her in need, while her Son will provide redemptive grace to all those who request her help (Donavin 241). This is a painful, but ultimately rewarding intercession. Mary's intercession with Christ is interpreted by Huneycutt as one of the reasons that queens may not have evaluated their practice of intercession as an inferior method of persuasion to ones used by kings involving some degree of physical force or threat (*Matilda of Scotland* 82). If that is true, then Mary's and Christ's heavenly work together provides a compelling model to both kings and queens on how they should work closely and, perhaps, sometimes against their own feelings, together for the spiritual benefit of their people.

In Chaucer's "An ABC," the focus is on the power needed as in a case of law. Even before being acknowledged as merciful, Mary is addressed as "Almighty," the very first word of the poem and repeated only five lines later (lines 1, 6). Power is also necessary to provide forgiveness. Forgiveness is described in legal terms and in his version, Chaucer "fully embraced a characterization of the Virgin Mary as a legal advocate with special attachment to gestures of written conveyance" (Boyarin 150). The speaker uses legal language to review the process of redemption. For his sins, the speaker deserves "To stink [sic] eterne" [9] (to hell) but because the Father granted that his Son become a man, Christ's blood "wrot the bille" (drew up the legal

[9] "stink eterne: i.e., hell," "An ABC," Benson, *Riverside Chaucer*, p. 638n56

document) which provided “aquitaunce” (acquittal) and canceled the “grevaunce” (complaint) (“An ABC” lines 56, 59-60, 64). Chaucer’s audience would be familiar with these terms. The speaker in this poem is chased by the seven deadly sins and is fearful of the Father’s anger. As a result, Mary is “the only lawyer who can win the speaker’s acquittal” (Benson, “An ABC” lines 15, 52; Boyarin 36). The Virgin Mary acts as the defense lawyer who is always successful. Intercessory acts can be seen as parallel to a legal defense brought to be decided before a ruler who is also judge.

Chaucer’s translation refers both to the English legal system and the final judgment of God. “But merci, ladi, at the grete assyse / Whan we shule come before the hye justice” (“An ABC” lines 36-37). (But mercy, Lady, at the great assize when we shall come before the high judge.) Boyarin discusses the meaning and significance of the word *assyse*, a term that describes various kinds of English courts and their procedures for making fair judgments, but it had a religious meaning as well. Here it “links Mary not only to the Last Judgment but to the English judicial system, to the Great . . .Assize created by Henry II [r. 1154-1189] to replace trials by Battle and provide national institutional structure.” The poem’s speaker, then, “sets Mary with the royal court that presided over all inquests, criminal and civil” (150). She represents the legal system used by both king and queen on earth but also the more significant one they will face at the end of earth’s time and, if found worthy, will help operate in heaven. This expansion of Mary’s legal association also encourages the application of her actions to the traditional actions of kings, and sometimes queens, in their judicial roles.

An interesting juxtaposition is added in the roles requested of Mary which, like some of her roles discussed previously, may seem to be in great opposition. The speaker requests Mary to “Beth ye my juge and eek my soules leche” (“An ABC” line 134). (Be you my judge and soul’s

physician.) Typically, a judge hears evidence and then sentences punishment if the defendant is ruled guilty, while a physician listens carefully to symptoms but then prescribes treatments that heal. Once again, however, the Virgin displays a wide flexibility of functions. The speaker seems to believe that Mary will judge his sins in a manner that also allows for spiritual healing. Just as a medical doctor must diagnose the sickness of a patient before providing the most advantageous treatment for recovery, Mary will hear the sinner's confession and repentance so that she can then prescribe or treat the sin with her son's sacrifice for redemption. John Lydgate expresses this same image of Mary as healer in "To Mary, The Queen of Heaven:" "O Saphir loup all swellyng to represse, / Off cankred sores & venymous feloun." Mary is like a sapphire gem which symbolizes her purity and heavenly grace. She can repress all physically harmful enlargements of the body, ulcerous sores, as well as poisonous, pus-filled boils. In contrast to these evils, she is called the "Bawme of Engaddy geyn al Infirmite" (Vol. 1, 285, lines 13b-14, 21). The Virgin is like the soothing oasis of Engedy in Israel. She heals all disease or plague. With the symbolism of the sapphire, Mary's soothing treatment also seems to be able to apply to spiritual wounds. These images combine the concern of a mother with the healing power of a physician. Mary is like a physician's receptionist and his close assistant for all who need her help to receive Christ's grace.

Chaucer's lines continue to focus on Mary as a ruler: "He hath thee maked vicaire and Maistresse / Of al this world, and eek governouresse / Of hevene, and he represseth his justice / After thi wil; and therefore in witnesse / He hath thee corowned in so rial wise" ("An ABC" lines 140-144). Because of all of Mary's roles, she is described as a ruler in the world and in heaven. Once again, the interactions of God and Mary are included. God tempers his justice as a result of her desire for mercy. In these lines, kings could see their traditional earthly titles and queens

could identify with her role as a consultant to God and an intercessor for those who seek her help.

In lines just before this passage, the model for joint spiritual interactions is emphasized. It centers on the relationship between the Virgin and the Trinity working together for the salvation of humankind. Chaucer's prayer declares that, "Soth is that God ne granteth no pitee / Withoute thee; for God his goodnesse /Foryiveth noon, but it like unto thee" ("An ABC" lines 137-39). Because God is good and just, He will not grant compassion or forgiveness without the intercession of Mary in heaven. Here, the Virgin is essential in the process of God imparting forgiveness. Her approval is needed. As she was the conduit of divinity into the earth, so she is the conduit of the grace of Christ for humans to gain entry into heaven. It is in the relationship interactions between Mary and Christ that medieval queens and kings had their clearest, most inspiring way to see how they, too, might work together for the spiritual good of their kingdoms.

One Marian lyric provides literary expression to the detailed process of the interactions needed for intercession and forgiveness. The macaronic lyric, "Of on that is so fayr and bright," focuses on the interactions between the penitent speaker, Mary, and Christ. "Ic crie to thee, thou se to me." From the distance created by sin, the sinner must cry for Mary's attention. "Levedy, preye thi sone for me, That ic mote come to thee" (*MEML*, no. 83 lines 3-5). The request is for her to pray to her Son in order that the sinner may approach closer to Mary. The first request is not about forgiveness for a grave sin, but to receive permission just to come nearer to the Virgin. Christ's power is needed even to get within speaking distance. This parallels well to the process in an earthly royal court in which a subject needs permission to come into the presence of royalty. An audience cannot be assumed. In the biblical story of Esther, even the queen was required to receive permission to enter the presence of the king. "Of kare, consell thou ert best,"

(*MEML*, no. 83 line 19). The speaker expresses grief at his condition. Remorse is part of repentance and seems to be most easily expressed to Mary. Again, a medieval petitioner may feel grief over the situation for which he or she asks the queen to intercede and may feel as if the queen will provide a more sympathetic listening ear than the king. "Of alle wery thou ert rest / *Mater honorata*" (*MEML*, no. 83 lines 21-22). (honored mother.) The speaker is worn down by sin and recognizes that Mary, as a mother, will provide respite not only to him or her but to everyone. This can be compared to the relief that may come if the intercession of an earthly queen is successful.

The idea of rest is foreshadowing the larger request that the sinner has not yet revealed. "Bisek him with milde mod" (*MEML*, no. 83 line 23). The speaker asks Mary to petition her Son with her gentle disposition. Earthly petitioners may experience anxiety about how the king may receive their request. As part of a queen's own gentleness, however, she will choose the best time to make her intercession. "That for ous alle sad is blod / *in cruce"* (*MEML*, no. 83 lines 24-25) (on the cross.) The speaker's petition is based on the fact that the Son's blood, shed on the cross, has already provided the sacrifice for current sins. Mary's acceptance to become the mother of God allowed Christ to give grace to all. "That we moten komen til him / *in luce*" (*MEML*, no. 83 lines 26-27). (in light.) Only at the end of the third stanza does the seeker's larger request emerge; his ultimate desire is to come to the Son after death into the light of heaven. Earthly rulers, of course, could not provide paradise to their petitioners, but they could offer a generous spirit and rest from the worry about whatever situation prompted the intercession request. The queen's support and her access to the king could result in a renewed peace with the law and the king rather than punishment and isolation.

The poem also includes Mary's power to save: "comet the day / *Salutis*, / The welle springest hut of thee / *Virtutis*" (*MEML*, no. 83 lines 33b-36). Mary is given credit for bringing the day of salvation because virtue flows out of her as a fountain. As in previous examples, the functions of Mary and Christ mingle together to save humanity. "Wel he wot he is thi sone, . . . He wyl nout wene thee thi bone" (*MEML*, no. 83 lines 37, 39). Finally, the speaker can feel confident that his petition will be granted because the Son knows his mother. With their intimate relationship established in Mary's womb, Christ cannot ignore her prayer for the sinner. In a related sense, an earthly queen and king have been joined in holy marriage and, experiencing an intimate relationship, they are considered by the church to be one flesh. In this way, their intentions for the good of their petitioning subject merge into a greater good experienced throughout their kingdom. This lyric by an unknown author unfolds in an understandable way the relational quality upon which depends the blessing of a royal couple who join their best efforts in spreading the gospel of Christianity.

Medieval art is filled with depictions of the Virgin Mary and Christ providing visual inspiration to the many aspects of their relationship beginning with the Annunciation and ending with them crowned in heaven. One option to consider the ways Mary and Jesus worked together in heaven is to examine an illustration in an English source that focuses on the coronation of Mary after her Assumption, which inaugurates the joint heavenly ministry of Mary and Christ. Although the English pictures lack the magnificence of Italian paintings of the same thirteenth century, one traditional image is part of a sequence of forty-six biblical illustrations (circa 1270-1280) placed at the front of a fourteenth-century English Psalter and illustrates important details.

Fig. 4. “The Coronation of the Virgin Mary” from St. John’s College, Cambridge, f.25r of MS K.26, (c.1270-80). Used by permission of the Master and Fellows of St. John’s College, Cambridge.

Titled “The Coronation of Virgin Mary,” the two layered background elements use patterned blue and red, traditional colors used to depict Mary and Christ (fig. 4). They are the only two figures within a large, elaborate frame and they appear solemn and elegant. Resting on a white bench patterned with blue and gold, Mary is sitting on Christ’s right side just as Christ is

traditionally shown as seated on God's right hand. Although Christ's leg places her behind him, her figure is larger, slightly dominating the scene. She wears a billowing blue robe flecked and trimmed in gold. The inside of her robe is red surrounded by gold. Her arms are upright and her hands and fingers fold in a position of prayer. Mary's eyes are slightly downcast but alert, almost as if she is peeking up and off to the right. Her skin is very fair, and her long, curly waves of golden hair hang down her back. Her face features a small nose, small red mouth, and a tall forehead. Overall, her features seem to match descriptions of an aristocratic lady or queen. None of her roles of fierce power are visible except, perhaps, as suggested by the red lining of her robe. Otherwise, her position shows humble engagement as she accepts her crown from Christ.

Christ is in the act of placing a large blue crown with three wide pinnacles on her head with his right arm, while his left hand has long fingers spread out to hold a golden orb. Also, a rod topped with both a Christian flag and cross may rest on his leg behind the orb. Christ's robe looks gray with small gold or white round shapes decorating it and a small patch of red seems to be on its inside. It is trimmed in a green band. His robe underneath is blue, and a gold band is around the collar. He, too has long, flowing dark gold hair. He gazes down at the crown as he places it. His face has a short beard, and his skin looks slightly darker than Mary's. His face shows regular features, and his expression is sober but not stern. Both figures are outlined in black around their heads and the sides of their figures that face each other. He also appears elegant and worthy of being a king. The colors seem slightly faded but his figure otherwise appears clearly and in very good condition. Although he has the regal spiritual symbols and is the one crowning Mary, Christ's figure does not dominate the overall scene. His expression even seems benevolent, and the fact that their heavenly work will be a partnership matches the size and placement of both figures.

This chapter has considered some of the relationships that medieval English kings and queens may have found significant and applicable in ways not usually available or not as relevant to people not in their ruling positions. These relationships include royals interacting with historical church leaders, biblical royalty, and heavenly rulers.

Anglo-Saxon sources, primarily Bede, present bishops and popes relating to royal couples in the context of conversion to Christian belief. In particular, Christian queens received letters from popes which show rhetorical strategies that include quotations from the Bible, didactic exhortation, and promises of heavenly reward. Queens are addressed as being to a rather large degree responsible to convert their non-believing kings. Popes also wrote to the kings using similar methods, with the variation that they tied the kings' conversions to future victories on earth and rewards in heaven. Post-Conquest queens continued to be a channel for popes to urge Christian kings to be more faithful and generous with good works as Pope Gregory VII urged William I's first wife, Matilda I of Flanders to do. A closer analysis becomes possible with the relatively large group of letters between King Henry I and Queen Matilda II and their church counterparts, Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury and Pope Paschal II. The nature and tone of these exchanges vary while the main purpose remains the attempt to influence the power struggle over control of the English church. The church promoted the spiritual nature of monarchs in coronation ceremonies, but as it grew with the help of the rulers it consecrated, its leaders grew much less sanguine when kings and queens took their spiritual leadership responsibilities so seriously that they believed selecting and inaugurating church leaders remained within the scope of their duties and rights. The ensuing struggle cost money, personnel, and delays in plans for kingdom expansion and resources for other projects. English control and distinctiveness of the church inevitably declined, while the Roman church organization gained major independence

from English royal influence. Even Henry I could not overcome the church's confident control of St. Peter's keys to heaven and hell in the pope's powers of pronouncing salvation and excommunication. One positive relationship that seems to have survived is the spiritual mentorship between Anselm and Matilda II. Their letters demonstrate a relationship of consistent concern, encouragement, and honest but politely-stated critiques.

Biblical role models featured in royal ceremonies and other genres provided rulers with inspiration but also a standard by which kings and queens could be evaluated by the church and the public. Reliance on the Bible also led rulers to the highest ideal models, Christ and the Virgin Mary. Kings and queens found texts in scripture that encouraged them to consider themselves in some ways as the Christ and Mother of their kingdoms. The Virgin Mary developed many qualities and roles of both traditional men and women so that rulers could look to her as an essential holy path to Christ and salvation. Medieval English art images of Mary literally beating the devil into submission could only encourage queens and kings to take on battles of all kinds. Ælfric's sermons that show Mary playing the court roles of advocate and judge validated the legal roles that rulers assumed. Kings and queens who chose to emphasize heavenly rulers and who worked together publicly to support the church could sometimes strengthen their own reputations and effective government. Literary depictions of the partnership between Christ and Mary, written only a few times by Chaucer but many times by Lydgate reflect these developments. Their works popularized the Virgin Mary to a large audience. The Marian lyrics became a wide-ranging, very accessible way for rulers and their subjects to increase their appreciation of how the roles of Christ and Mary merged to accomplish the redemption of human kind. The texts examined here show that rulers' relationships with many kinds of religious people and characters could be conflicted and yet both productive and long-lasting. The

relationships with earthly church leaders had consequences that affected overall church organization, smaller groups, and individual believers. Those same relationships also sometimes provided patterns of piety that gave meaning to the earthly reigns of kings and queens and models of hope for a heavenly hereafter.

Conclusion

Researching pairs of medieval English queens and kings for their relationships to Roman Christianity provides important reminders of the difficulties in understanding that multicultural place and lengthy time span. Much remains hidden. Conversations between rulers that might provide better assessment of their attitudes and feelings toward the religious elements of their reigns are absent. No faithful Eadmer, companion and biographer of St. Anselm, followed ruling couples around to observe them in their milieu and then later to shape the record of their lives. In addition, many records of patronage cover only the barest transactional details. When sources do give detail, questions about the changes that have occurred over time, about scribes, varied languages and dialects, and translation challenges affect the ability to draw specific conclusions. As in all texts, authorial intentions and multiple audiences influence interpretation. In addition, loss of records can be tied to significant events in English history: Viking incursions, Danish and Norman Conquests, the Plague, the Dissolution of the monasteries by King Henry VIII, and the hazard of fires, particularly the Cotton fire that almost destroyed *Beowulf*. Smaller instances resulting in intentional or unintentional loss of records can be reasonably assumed. For example, Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury remarked that he saw “no use” in saving certain letters between the pope and royals (Frölich 45). Large events and differing views of the value of documents played a part in what remains for current scholars to investigate.

Other difficulties include trying to separate religious elements out from a society that only began to think about such divisions relatively late in the period. Changing connotations of specific words and concepts lead to a lack of nuanced understanding. Research shows many ways that men and women played roles outside of the gendered expectations often seen in texts, both secular and sacred. Still, physical realities of separate gender activities during the English

medieval era remain. Kings usually formed bands and armies of warriors. They fought and traveled, gained and gave out treasure. Foreign battles, diplomacy, and ruling conflicts took up much of kings' time. Queens, meanwhile, are recorded as managing and, sometimes, ruling the kingdom in the king's absence; educating children and shepherding potential marriages for them; sponsoring religious communities and influencing and initiating patronage; tending to their marriage; and influencing political factions. As is the case now, societal expectations mattered, whether or not they were followed.

Fortunately, research in medieval English writings also has its rewards. Texts provide representations which give insight into the specific religious choices, the patronage opportunities, and the relationships that ruling pairs enjoyed with those of the highest religious rank. What does emerge from the examined texts is the importance of families, wealth, education, loyal counselors, and interpersonal relationships. These privileges seem crucial to the success of royal rulers' efforts to work together and with the church and its leaders.

In considering the religious choices of medieval English kings and queens, research supports the importance of ruling families' negotiations in marriage arrangements, and of the individual situations and religious inclinations of the unconverted kings. Examining kings' religious choices reveals the influence of wives, counselors, and bishops who persuaded rulers to convert and assist in the establishment of Christianity in England. Working together, kings and queens increased the spread and the engagement of Christianity by tying their religious work to values of good rulership which had their origin in pre-Christian societies but were adapted and shaped by the growing church. *Beowulf* and *Le Morte d'Arthur* provide memorable examples of how legendary queens and kings both succeed and fall short of incorporating values of good rulership into their lives. The Bible is frequently used by royals and, especially, church leaders

for didactic purposes, for role models, and for persuasion. Biblical and literary texts emphasize the positive potential of rulership and the consequences of poor rulership, sometimes illustrated in the same historical individual or literary character. The early Christian conversions reported by Bede demonstrate the factors and complexities of such religious choices in royal reigns. To an increasing degree throughout the Middle Ages, king- and queenship became tied to Christianity for legitimacy, support, persuasion, and power. This trend can be traced in the development of the various coronation *ordines*, and, ultimately, *The Regularis Concordia* which provides a strong basis for the aspirations of queens and kings to function as religious leaders. During the late Anglo-Saxon period, King Cnut's and Queen Emma's public participation in religious processions illustrate their attempts to integrate Christianity with political ambition. Post-Conquest kings and queens, including William I and Matilda I, appear in some records making joint patronage donations and sharing ruling duties which impacted the church when the king was not present.

Customary expectations of generosity from kings and queens drove church patronage. Their pursuit of Christian piety shows a wide variety of donations and sometimes joint presentations to royal monasteries and churches. Whether through land or regalia, public ceremony or lavish gifts, hospitals or memorials after death, royal couples often assumed responsibility for establishing the church and working for the public good. They also factored in their own goals in their patronage. Again, King Cnut and Queen Emma show astute attempts to present their Christianity publicly in significant donations, letters, and Emma's posthumous tribute to Cnut. Economic stability during times of relative peace meant increased trade; the development of ruling policies, such as the queen's gold, increased the opportunities for royal donations. Christianity could never have grown to its level of organization and wealth without

such initial generosity. Royal practices, such as coronations and intercessions, are also unique resources that require engaged, good-faith participation from at least two royals in order to be successful. Historical records and anecdotes illustrate some successes of the practice of intercession. Geoffrey Chaucer's tales told by the Knight and the Wife of Bath show a deeper picture than historical sources of the participants' actions, motivations, and feelings, as well as the limits of success. John Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes* presents a complex series of intercessory attempts by Queen Jocasta that present the reasons for and the tragic results of intercession failures. Lydgate's later public poetry works to create and promote Lancastrian rule in the precarious environment after the unexpected death of King Henry V. Overall, general conclusions about the interactions of English medieval kings and queens are difficult. Their individual situations at different times in their lives drove their actions, and the lack of knowledge of interior thoughts discourages attempts at speculation. The evidence indicates primarily that the ruling couples presented grew ever more invested in influencing the church and their own religious reputations with varying degrees of success. Further research of more ruling couples' joint religious contributions could deepen the validity of these conclusions.

Relationships between medieval English ruling couples and others of high religious rank ranged across time and space. Missional communications dominate Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* which focuses on Christian conversion, success, and varied evidence ranging from battlefield victories to miracles of affirmation. Kings seemed to enjoy the upper hand in power in relationship to the church during the early Anglo-Saxon centuries, and records show how kings and queens, as well as abbots and bishops worked within that structure to accomplish the conversion and establishment of Christianity. As the church gained in personnel, organization, and wealth, they used reforms, synods, and papal declarations to exert increasing pressure on the

monarchy to conform to its mandates; these were always presented as principles from the Bible, directives from God and established church authority, and, if necessary, as the determining factor in rulers' eternal destinies. Intercessions between ruling partners following medieval concepts of good Christian principles in historical anecdotes and fictional romances present qualified successes and almost complete failures. Further research could supply patronage data for more couples. More research of historical English medieval rulers' intercessions, such as those between Queen Edith and King Edward the Confessor, and King Richard II and Queen Anne of Bohemia could further the understanding of the patterns and variations of intercession as a royal practice. More literary depictions of intercessions in Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, such as those between Queen Morgause and King Lott, and Queen Isolde and King Mark, could be examined for further nuances of the practice. Comparisons of intercessions could also be made to couples in stories available to medieval English rulers, such as Queen Dido and Aeneus in Virgil's *Aeneid*. Such relationships might offer additional insight on royal interactions.

Rulership and Christianity rely on relationships. The privileged communications of English kings and queens reveal earthly realities and ideal role models. Popes and kings developed relationships that initiated and increased the role of Christianity in England with intended and unintended consequences. Again, Bede provides early examples that include the influence of queens in the early Middle Ages. Post-Conquest, historical letters between King Henry I, Archbishop Anselm of Canterbury, and Pope Paschal II and Queen Matilda II illustrate the areas of conflict and some of the methods used in the battle over church religious doctrine, power, and influence. Intercession is a method explored as it is used by both queen and pope in this case. Once again, lack of sources about the interactions between king and queen means that conclusions are tenuous at best. What is clear is that the inseparable roles of the politics and

religion of English rulers and the English and Roman churches meant the struggle was great and the effects long lasting. Fortunately, ideal role models remained in church liturgy, hagiography, the Bible, and in those that emphasized the beliefs about the interactions between Christ and his mother Mary in texts and art. Great devotion to and promotion of these models helped develop the distinct identities and lasting examples of rulers and their impact on Christianity in England's Middle Ages.

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