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## CECILY NEVILLE AND THE APOCRYPHAL *INFANTIA SALVATORIS* IN THE MIDDLE AGES\*

Mary Dzon

IN the late fifteenth century, Cecily Neville, widowed duchess of York and mother of Edward IV and Richard III,<sup>1</sup> was accustomed to having devotional works read to her over the course of dinner as part of her daily routine of pious activities. According to her household ordinance,<sup>2</sup> Cecily's reading

\* I am grateful for the assistance I received with this essay from a number of scholars, among whom are Jonathan Black, Tony Chartrand-Burke, Robert Getz, Joseph Goering, Zbigniew Izydoreczyk, Mary McDevitt, Jeri McIntosh, and Wolfgang P. Müller. In addition, I wish to acknowledge the support I have received from the Hodges Better English Fund at the University of Tennessee and the Fox Center for Humanistic Inquiry at Emory University.

<sup>1</sup> On Cecily's various titles, see Joanna L. Chamberlayne, "A Paper Crown: The Titles and Seals of Cecily Duchess of York," *The Ricardian* 10.133 (1996): 429–35; and see Chamberlayne's M.A. thesis, "Cecily Neville, Duchess of York, King's Mother: The Rôles of an English Noblewoman, 1415–95" (University of York, 1994) for a thorough study of Cecily's life. A brief overview is provided by Christopher Harper-Bill in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, vol. 10 (Oxford, 2004), 798–99.

<sup>2</sup> Neville's household ordinance was written sometime between 1485 and her death in 1495, by someone who "was either an actual member of Cicely's household, or wrote on the instruction of such a person" (C. A. J. Armstrong, "The Piety of Cicely, Duchess of York: A Study in Late Medieval Culture," in *For Hilaire Belloc: Essays in Honour of His 72<sup>nd</sup> Birthday*, ed. Douglas Woodruff [London, 1942], 73–94, at 78–79; reprinted in Armstrong, *England, France and Burgundy in the Fifteenth Century* [London, 1983], chap. 5). For the printed edition of Cecily's ordinances, see "Orders and Rules of the Princess Cecill," in *A Collection of Ordinances and Regulations for the Government of the Royal Household* (London, 1790), \*37. For a modernization, see *English Historical Documents, 1327–1485*, ed. A. R. Myers (New York, 1969), 837, no. 498. Armstrong's dating of the document (78 n. 11) is based upon the author's reference to the duchess as "Princesse Cecill, late mother unto the right noble Prince, Kinge Edward the Fourthe." Edward died in April 1483 and her son Richard III in August 1485, at the Battle of Bosworth. Lack of mention of her son Richard, as well as of her late husband Richard, duke of York († 1460), whom she referred to as rightful king of England during Edward IV's reign, implies that the document was written during the reign of the new king, Henry Tudor (Henry VII). Neville spent the last years of her life at Berkhamsted Castle and has sometimes been called a vowess, though that does not seem verifiable. According to P. H. Cullum, "No record appears to survive of Cecily having taken a vow of chastity, but her widowhood of twenty-five years and her apparent piety suggest that this was the life she had adopted [i.e., that of a vowess]" ("Vowesses and Female Lay Piety in the Province of York, 1300–1530," *Northern History* 32 [1996]: 21–41, at 22 n. 3).

list consisted of Walter Hilton's *Epistle on the Mixed Life*, "Bonaventure" (probably the pseudo-Bonaventuran *Meditationes vitae Christi*), the apocryphal infancy gospel *Infantia salvatoris*, Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda aurea*, and works associated with the mystics Mechtild of Hackeborn, Catherine of Siena, and Birgitta of Sweden.<sup>3</sup> All of these texts were available in Middle English, in prose or verse, by the second half of the fifteenth century. Many scholars have noted the pious dowager's use of books, but none has called much attention to the *Infantia salvatoris*, which might be considered the "black sheep" among Cecily's books on account of its apocryphal status and seemingly idiosyncratic presentation of Christ's childhood. Before discussing attitudes toward this book in the Middle Ages, it is worthwhile to say more about Cecily Neville's reading materials and habits, since an understanding of them suggests that she regarded the *Infantia salvatoris* as one of many devotional texts that enriched her spiritual life. My survey of medieval clerics' views of this text and of apocryphal literature in general suggests that Cecily's meditative reading of the *Infantia salvatoris* in a domestic setting would not have been perceived as unconventional behavior in the later Middle Ages.

On a larger scale, my study of late-medieval Catholicism's appropriation of the *Infantia salvatoris* reveals the capaciousness of the Christian religious imagination at that time. Yet the boy Jesus of the *Infantia salvatoris*, it should be noted, has not completely disappeared from the modern world. Hilaire Belloc, an historian and a staunch Catholic, and dedicatee of the 1942 festschrift in which C. A. J. Armstrong's classic study of Cecily Neville first appeared, wrote a poem based upon the apocryphal legend of the Christ Child's having fashioned birds from clay "and blessed them till they flew away: / *Tu creasti Domine*."<sup>4</sup> The narrator then asks the boy to bless him, "And bring my

<sup>3</sup> "... duringe the tyme whereof [i.e., during dinner] she hath a lecture of holy matter, either Hilton of contemplative and active life, Bonaventure de infancia, Salvatoris legenda aurea, St. Maude, St. Katherin of Sonys, or the Revelacions of St. Bridgett" ("Orders and Rules of the Princess Cecill," \*37). As Armstrong points out ("Piety of Cicely," 79 n. 13), the editor of this text punctuated the list of books incorrectly; the second and third titles should be three separate items instead of two: "Bonaventure, de infancia Salvatoris, legenda aurea." The mispunctuation is unfortunately transmitted in *English Documents* (see n. 2 above). In addition, a possessive is mistakenly added to Bonaventure's name, making it seem as if the *Infantia salvatoris* is his work. The latter text is anonymous, though it is often found in medieval manuscripts with a prologue that attributes it to the Apostle Matthew. See the discussion of the text's authorship and title below.

<sup>4</sup> "The Birds," in Hilaire Belloc, *Complete Verse*, preface by W. N. Roughead (London, 1970), 38. No mention is made of Jesus' Jewish playmates nor of Jewish adults upset by the

soul to Paradise.” As this example reveals, apocryphal stories about the child Jesus can be recycled by writers (and artists) in a devotional spirit.

# 1. THE IDENTIFICATION OF CECILY NEVILLE’S BOOKS

The first book mentioned in the ordinance can be easily identified. Walter Hilton, an Augustinian canon and contemporary of Chaucer, composed his *Mixed Life* in Middle English for a wealthy lay man with secular responsibilities. Hilton counsels him to moderate his impulse to live a solely contemplative life and to pursue, instead, a life which combines active and contemplative elements. Addressing an issue relevant to many lay people in late-medieval England, Hilton’s text was read by a more general audience, which may have included the fifteenth-century housewife turned holy woman Margery Kempe.<sup>5</sup>

The second item in the duchess’s household ordinance is “Bonaventure”—most likely a reference to the *Meditationes vitae Christi*, a devotional text that encourages its reader to reflect upon and imaginatively enter into the life of Christ, although “Bonaventure” may also refer to the *Stimulus amoris*, another devotional text that was attributed in the Middle Ages to the Franciscan Bonaventure and, like the *Meditationes*, circulated in Middle English translation in the fifteenth century.<sup>6</sup> Scholars have lately posited the fourteenth-century Tuscan Franciscan Johannes de Caulibus as the author of the *Meditationes*, a text originally written for a Poor Clare nun, but Sarah Mc-

Child’s vivification of clay birds on the Sabbath. Jesus in this poem is said to prefer the birds he makes to the golden toys brought to him by angels.

<sup>5</sup> For editions of Hilton’s text, see *Walter Hilton’s Mixed Life Edited from Lambeth Palace MS 472*, ed. S. J. Ogilvie-Thomson (Salzburg, 1986); and *English Mystics of the Middle Ages*, ed. Barry Windeatt (Cambridge, 1994), 108–30. Kempe mentions “Hyltons boke” as one of the devotional texts that were read to her; see *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. Barry Windeatt (Harlow, Essex, 2000), 115 and 280, chaps. 17 and 58. As Jacqueline Jenkins notes, this phrase could refer to Hilton’s *Scale of Perfection*, to his *Mixed Life*, or to a textual amalgamation of both (“Reading and *The Book of Margery Kempe*,” in *A Companion to The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. John H. Arnold and Katherine J. Lewis [Cambridge, 2004], 113–28, at 123).

<sup>6</sup> Jenkins, “Reading,” 123; Windeatt, *Book of Margery Kempe*, 11. The Latin *Stimulus amoris* exists in short and long versions, the first attributed to the Franciscan James of Milan, the second anonymous; for editions, see, respectively, *Bibliotheca Franciscana Ascetica Medii Aevi* 4, 2d ed. (Quaracchi, 1949), 1–132, and Bonaventura, *Opera omnia*, ed. A.-C. Peltier, vol. 12 (Paris, 1868), 631–703. For an edition of the Middle English translation, see *The Prickynge of Love*, ed. Harold Kane (Salzburg, 1983). For a recent study of the text, see Falk Eisermann, “*Stimulus amoris*”: *Inhalt, lateinische Überlieferung, deutsche Übersetzungen, Rezeption* (Tübingen, 2001).

Namer has recently argued that the text originated with a female vernacular writer.<sup>7</sup> Regardless of whether the text was originally authored by a woman writing in Italian or a male writing in Latin, it was the long Latin version that was translated into Middle English by the Carthusian Nicholas Love, prior of Mount Grace Charterhouse (Yorkshire) in the early fifteenth century. Thomas Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury, and others in the church hierarchy offered Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* as an orthodox form of devotional reading that was connected to the Bible but—in contrast to other vernacular religious texts, including the Bible in English—was seen as unlikely to lead lay people astray.<sup>8</sup> Cecily Neville's mother, Joan Beaufort, countess of Westmoreland and daughter of John of Gaunt, may possibly have owned the copy of Love's *Mirror* in Oxford, Bodleian Library MS e Musaeo 35.<sup>9</sup> Cecily Neville would presumably have read Love's English version of the *Meditationes* as well. The continuing popularity of Love's book into the sixteenth century is attested by Thomas More, who named it (under the title "Bonaventure of the lyfe of Christe") as one of three "englishe bookes as moste may norysshe and encrease deuocyon."<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> "The Origins of the *Meditationes vitae Christi*," *Speculum* 84 (2009): 905–55. For the critical edition, see Iohannes de Caulibus, *Meditationes vite Christi*, ed. M. Stallings-Taney, CCCM 153 (Turnhout, 1997).

<sup>8</sup> For an edition of Love's Middle English version, see *The Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ: A Full Critical Edition*, ed. Michael G. Sargent (Exeter, 2005). On the political and religious context within which the *Mirror* arose, see Sargent's introduction and Nicholas Watson, "Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Debate, and Arundel's Constitutions of 1409," *Speculum* 70 (1995): 822–64. See also Margaret Deanesly, *The Lollard Bible and Other Medieval Biblical Versions* (Cambridge, 1920), 321–26. On Love's version as an adaption of the Latin text for a lay audience whom he believed incapable of thinking beyond bodily images, see Michelle Karnes, "Nicholas Love and Medieval Meditations on Christ," *Speculum* 82 (2007): 380–408.

<sup>9</sup> Carol M. Meale, "'oft sipsis with grete deuotion I pought what I miȝt do pleyssyng to god': The Early Ownership and Readership of Love's *Mirror*, with Special Reference to Its Female Audience," in *Nicholas Love at Waseda: Proceedings of the International Conference 20–22 July 1995*, ed. Shoichi Oguro, Richard Beadle, and Michael G. Sargent (Cambridge, 1997), 19–46, at 23. Kathleen L. Scott, who dates the manuscript to around 1420, says the coat of arms in the manuscript are either those of Joan or her brother Thomas Beaufort ("The Illustration and Decoration of Manuscripts of Nicholas Love's *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ*," in *Nicholas Love at Waseda*, 61–86, at 67–68 and 71–72). On the possibility of Joan's ownership of this manuscript, see further Catherine Innes-Parker, "The 'Gender Gap' Reconsidered: Manuscripts and Readers in Late-Medieval England," *Studia Anglica Posnamiensia* 38 (2002): 239–69, at 257.

<sup>10</sup> *Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, in *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, vol. 8, part 1, ed. Louis A. Schuster et al. (New Haven, 1973), 37.

The third item in Cecily's household ordinance, which will be discussed at length below, is the *Infantia salvatoris*, an apocryphal text dealing with Christ's nativity or, more likely, both his nativity and childhood. The fourth item, like the *Infantia salvatoris*, is designated by its Latin title: *Legenda aurea*. This refers, of course, to the widely popular thirteenth-century collection of saints' lives compiled by the Dominican bishop of Genoa Jacobus de Voragine. Among the many vernacular translations of this text are the Middle English version published by William Caxton in 1483, the anonymous *Gilte Legende*, from the earlier part of the fifteenth century, and Osbern Bokenham's independent translation of the Latin text.<sup>11</sup>

With regard to the texts associated with the three female mystics named in Cecily's household ordinance, it should be noted that only one of the texts they authored is explicitly mentioned by title: the *Revelationes* of Birgitta of Sweden († 1373). Birgitta's *Revelationes* is a mammoth collection of visions and locutions that was dictated by the saint in Old Swedish and transcribed by her spiritual directors in Latin. The text was later translated into Middle English, likely for the Bridgettine nuns of Syon Abbey or other English devotees of the Swedish saint.<sup>12</sup> The ordinance presumably refers to an English version

<sup>11</sup> For the Latin text, see *Legenda aurea*, ed. Giovanni Paolo Maggioni, 2d ed., 2 vols. (Tavarnuzze, 1998). For the first two Middle English texts, see *The Golden Legend: Lives of the Saints as Englished by William Caxton*, ed. F. S. Ellis, 7 vols. (1900; rpt. London, 1931); and *Gilte Legende*, ed. Richard Hamer (with the assistance of Vida Russell), vols. 1 and 2, EETS o.s. 327–28 (Oxford, 2006–7). Simon Horobin has recently argued that the *Legenda aurea* mentioned in Cecily's will is the Middle English translation of Jacobus de Voragine's text by Bokenham. This translation (distinct from the fifteenth-century Augustinian friar's more well-known *Legendys of Hooly Wummen*) was presumed lost but seems to have been found in a recent effort to catalogue Sir Walter Scott's library at Abbotsford House. The connection Horobin claims between the duchess and this particular manuscript is based on a number of facts, among which are 1) the manuscript is in the same hand as that which copied London, British Library Add. 11814, which contains Claudian's *De Consulatu Stilichonis*, a presentation book for Richard, duke of York; 2) Bokenham dedicated some of his female saints' lives to aristocratic women; 3) the name of the husband of the niece of Bridget, Cecily's granddaughter who was a nun, is inscribed in the manuscript; and 4) the manuscript is made of vellum, as was the *Legenda aurea* mentioned in Cecily's will (i.e., if it were Caxton's text, it would have been printed on paper). See "A Manuscript Found in the Library of Abbotsford House and the Lost Legendary of Osbern Bokenham," *English Manuscript Studies, 1100–1700* 14 (2008): 130–62, and "The Angle of Oblivion: A Lost Medieval Manuscript Discovered in Walter Scott's Collection," *Times Literary Supplement* (11 November 2005), 12–13. Horobin also mentions Cecily as the intended recipient of the Abbotsford manuscript and speaks more broadly about the *Legenda aurea*'s readership in "Politics, Patronage, and Piety in the Work of Osbern Bokenham," *Speculum* 82 (2007): 932–49. I am grateful to Cynthia Turner Camp for calling Horobin's work to my attention.

<sup>12</sup> For editions, see *The Revelations of Saint Birgitta*, ed. William P. Cumming, EETS o.s.

of the *Revelationes* rather than to the original Latin compilation. Birgitta was an immensely popular saint in fifteenth-century England, as is indicated, for example, by Margery Kempe's efforts to surpass the Swedish lay woman in holiness.<sup>13</sup> Cecily's own devotion to Birgitta no doubt inspired her to name one of her granddaughters Bridget.<sup>14</sup> The Bridgettine foundation Syon Abbey established by Henry V in 1415, originally at Twickenham and then relocated at Isleworth, played an important role, along with the neighboring Carthusians at Sheen and other Charterhouses, in the cultivation of vernacular religious literature, much of which was read by the aristocracy.<sup>15</sup> As stipulated in Cecily Neville's will (dated 1495), the only other source we have for the books she used and owned, she left her granddaughter Anne de la Pole (†1501), niece of Edward IV and prioress of Syon Abbey, "a boke of Bonaventure and Hilton in the same [i.e., same volume], and a boke of the Revelacions of Saint Burgitte."<sup>16</sup> This confirms that Cecily read Birgitta's *Revelationes*; she was probably also familiar with an account of the saint's life. This statement also demonstrates that devotional works were often copied or bound in the same manuscript. Additionally, we learn from Cecily's will that, from her large collection of liturgical vestments and furniture, she gave "to the house of Sion

178 (London, 1929); and *The Liber Celestis of St. Bridget of Sweden*, ed. Roger Ellis, EETS o.s. 291 (Oxford, 1987). Excerpts and a brief introduction appear in *Women's Writing in Middle English*, ed. Alexandra Barratt (Harlow, Essex, 1992), 84–94. A complete edition of Birgitta's Latin texts has been published by The Royal Academy of Letters, History, and Antiquities, located in Stockholm, and the Svenska Fornskriftsällskapet (The Medieval Swedish Texts Society).

<sup>13</sup> See, among others, F. R. Johnson, "The English Cult of St Bridget of Sweden," *Analecta Bollandiana* 103 (1985): 75–93; and Roger Ellis, "'Flores ad fabricandum . . . Coronam': An Investigation into the Uses of the *Revelations* of St Bridget of Sweden in Fifteenth-Century England," *Medium Ævum* 51 (1982): 163–86.

<sup>14</sup> Armstrong, "Piety of Cicely," 89.

<sup>15</sup> On the similarity between the reading habits of the nuns of Syon Abbey and of aristocratic women such as Cecily Neville, see Ann M. Hutchison, "Devotional Reading in the Monastery and in the Late Medieval Household," in *De Cella in Seculum: Religious and Secular Life and Devotion in Late Medieval England*, ed. Michael G. Sargent (Cambridge, 1989), 215–27. See further C. Annette Grisé, "The Textual Community of Syon Abbey," *Florilegium* 19 (2002): 149–62; Mary C. Erler, *Women, Reading, and Piety in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge, 2002); and Rebecca Krug, *Reading Families: Women's Literate Practice in Late Medieval England* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2002), chap. 4.

<sup>16</sup> For Cecily Neville's will of 1495, see item 1 in *Wills from Doctor's Commons*, ed. J. G. Nichols and J. Bruce, Camden Society 83 (Westminster, 1863), 1–8, at 2–3. The date for Anne's death is taken from the Syon *Martiloge*, cited in A. I. Doyle, "A Survey of the Origins and Circulation of Theological Writings in English in the Fourteenth, Fifteenth, and Early Sixteenth Centuries, with Special Consideration of the Part of the Clergy Therein," 2 vols. (Ph.D. diss., University of Cambridge, 1953), 2:320.

two of the best coopes of crimson clothe of gold.”<sup>17</sup> The Syon community expressed its gratitude for the support that Richard, duke of York, and his wife Cecily, had given them during their lifetime by remembering them, as well as other “frendis and benefactours,” in its prayers for the dead, especially during Easter and Paschal Tide.<sup>18</sup> Given the duchess’s familial connection with medieval England’s only Bridgettine foundation, it should not surprise us that she read books that were associated with that abbey.

The ordinance’s mention of “St. Maude” likewise probably refers to a Middle English translation of a visionary text originally composed in Latin: the *Liber specialis gratiae*, a collection of the revelations of Mechtild of Hackeborn (†1298/9) written in the thirteenth century by two other nuns of the Benedictine/Cistercian convent at Helfta, one of whom is assumed to have been Gertrude the Great. Significantly, the Middle English translation of Mechtild’s text is connected with the Bridgettines and Carthusians.<sup>19</sup> In addition, one of the extant manuscripts containing this text (London, British Library Egerton 2006) was owned by Richard III, Neville’s son, and his wife Anne Neville, but it is probably not the same manuscript as that which his mother possessed.<sup>20</sup> Richard’s sister Margaret of York, duchess of Burgundy, was also a book collector (as I note below), though neither of them is designated as a recipient of a book or books in Cecily’s will.<sup>21</sup> Among other be-

<sup>17</sup> Chamberlayne, “Cecily Neville,” 56. See *Wills from Doctors’ Commons*, 2.

<sup>18</sup> G. J. Aungier, *The History and Antiquities of Syon Monastery, the Parish of Isleworth, and the Chapelry of Hounslow* (London, 1840), 527–29, citing the Syon breviary in London, British Library Cotton Appendix xiv. See also Chamberlayne, “Cecily Neville,” 56.

<sup>19</sup> For an edition, see *The Booke of Gostlye Grace of Mechtild of Hackeborn*, ed. Theresa A. Halligan, Studies and Texts 46 (Toronto, 1979), here 47–51. For the original Latin text, see *Sanctae Mechthildis virginis ordinis sancti Benedicti liber specialis gratiae: Revelationes Gertrudianae ac Mechthildianae*, ed. Ludwig Paquelin, vol. 2 (Poitiers and Paris, 1877). Barratt provides an introduction to Mechtild and excerpts from the Middle English translation of her revelations in *Women’s Writing*, 49–60. See further the classic study of the nuns of Helfta by Caroline Walker Bynum, “Women Mystics in the Thirteenth Century: The Case of the Nuns of Helfta,” in *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley, 1984), chap. 5.

<sup>20</sup> *Booke of Gostlye Grace*, ed. Halligan, 4. See Anne F. Sutton and Livia Visser-Fuchs, *Richard III’s Books: Ideals and Reality in the Life and Library of a Medieval Prince* (Stroud, Glouc., 1997), 46–50, 279, and passim. See also Rosalynn Voaden, “Who Was Marget Thorpe? Reading Mechtild of Hackeborn in Fifteenth-Century England,” *Religion & Literature* 37.2 (2005): 9–25, and “The Company She Keeps: Mechtild of Hackeborn in Late-Medieval Devotional Compilations,” in *Prophets Abroad: The Reception of Continental Holy Women in England*, ed. Rosalynn Voaden (Cambridge, 1996), 51–69, at 54.

<sup>21</sup> On books “associated with members of the Yorkist royal family,” see Anne F. Sutton and Livia Visser-Fuchs, “Choosing a Book in Late Fifteenth-Century England and Burgundy,”



quests of books, the duchess left “a boke of Saint Matilde,” as well as “the boke of *Legenda aurea* in velem” and “a boke of the life of Saint Kateryn of Sene” to her granddaughter Bridget (†1517). This is the Bridget mentioned above, who was the youngest daughter of Edward IV and a Dominican nun at the Dartford Priory in Kent.<sup>22</sup>

The third female mystic named in the ordinance is Catherine of Siena (†1380). The ordinance simply says “St. Katherin of Sonys” without specification, although the will refers to “a boke of the life of Saint Kateryn of Sene.” Since Middle English versions existed of both Catherine’s vita and the mystical text she authored, we cannot be sure that Cecily read the latter, though it would have been available to her. *The Orchard of Syon*, a Middle English translation of Catherine’s mystical *Il Dialogo*, which she dictated in her native Tuscan dialect to scribes, is the work of an anonymous cleric associated with Syon Abbey.<sup>23</sup> Given that the duchess read the revelations of the

in *England and the Low Countries in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. Caroline Barron and Nigel Saul (Stroud, 1998; first published in 1995), 61–98, at 62–63, and corresponding notes.

<sup>22</sup> *Wills from Doctor’s Commons*, 2–3. See also Paul Lee, *Nunneries, Learning and Spirituality in Late Medieval English Society: The Dominican Priory of Dartford* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2001), 169; and Doyle, “Survey” 2:320.

<sup>23</sup> For an edition of the text, see *The Orchard of Syon*, ed. Phyllis Hodgson and Gabriel M. Liegey, EETS o.s. 258 (Oxford, 1966). The text was printed by Wynkyn de Worde in 1519 (STC 4815). For an introduction and excerpts, see Barratt, *Women’s Writing*, 95–107. A Latin version of Catherine’s text, rather than the original Italian, is thought to have been used for the English translation for the Bridgettine nuns of Syon Abbey. For an edition of the Italian text, see *Il Dialogo della divina provvidenza*, ed. Giuliana Cavallini (Siena, 1995). For an overview of Middle English texts associated with Catherine of Siena, see C. Annette Grisé, “Catherine of Siena in Middle English Manuscripts: Transmission, Translation, and Transformation,” in *The Medieval Translator 8: The Theory and Practice of Translation in the Middle Ages*, ed. Rosalynn Voaden et al. (Turnhout, 2003), 149–59. As Grisé and others have pointed out, in Catherine materials the saint’s activism and mysticism seem to have been toned down for an English audience, many of whom were contemplative women living within a monastery or household. In ca. 1492 (STC 24766), Wynkyn de Worde printed an English version of Catherine’s life based upon the originally Latin vita by the Dominican Raymond of Capua. The translation printed by de Worde appeared with the revelations of Elizabeth of Hungary (Elizabeth of Töss?). See C. Horstmann, “The lyf of saint Katerin of Senis. Nach dem Drucke W. Caxtons (c. 1493) mitgeteilt,” *Archiv für das Studium der Neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* 76 (1886): 33–122, 265–314, and 353–400; and *The Two Middle English Translations of the Revelations of St Elizabeth of Hungary*, ed. Sarah McNamer (Heidelberg, 1996). Along with the lives of three late twelfth-/early thirteenth-century beguines, a letter in Middle English advocating Catherine’s canonization appears in a fifteenth-century manuscript (Oxford, Bodleian Library Douce 114), affiliated with the Carthusians. See Carl Horstmann, “Prosalegenden: Die Legenden des ms. Douce 114,” *Anglia* 8 (1885): 103–96, at 184–96; and *Three Women of Liège: A Critical Edition of and Commentary on the Middle English Lives of Elizabeth of Spalbeek, Christina Mirabilis, and Marie d’Oignies*, ed. Jennifer N. Brown (Turnhout, 2008), 15.

two other female mystics mentioned in the ordinance, it is likely that she was familiar with Catherine's writings and not just her life, even though her will only explicitly mentions the life."<sup>24</sup> The library of the fifteenth-century English Carthusian John Blacman similarly included the revelations of Birgitta of Sweden, Catherine of Siena, and Mechtild of Hackeborn.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, all three of these texts were used as sources in the Carthusian-authored *Speculum devotorum*, as noted below. Because of their international connections and interest in promoting the spiritual lives of those within their community, the Carthusians likely served as importers of devotional books from the Continent.<sup>26</sup>

The author of the ordinance refers to some of the books that Cecily had read to her using their original Latin titles, but it is likely that English versions were employed. In the early part of the fifteenth century, Margery Kempe, who, interestingly, seems to have visited Cecily's mother Joan Beaufort, likewise had a number of devotional works read to her by a cleric. Margery refers to some of these by their Latin titles (the *Stimulus amoris* and the *Incendium amoris*), though she would have encountered them through the vernacular.<sup>27</sup> In Cecily's case, prose translations existed for five of the seven books listed in her household ordinance (Hilton's text was written in English), but an extant Middle English prose translation of the *Infantia salvatoris* is lacking, though there were versions in verse available in the fifteenth century. While it is not impossible that Cecily's reader, probably a chaplain, had a

<sup>24</sup> Grisé notes that the "Syon library catalogue lists one entry each for Catherine's revelations and her vita," and that this is the "only confirmed place" where both texts were available, "Catherine of Siena," 156 and 153 n. 15. Considering Cecily's connections with Syon Abbey, it is probable that she had access to both texts through this religious community.

<sup>25</sup> See Roger Lovatt, "The Library of John Blacman and Contemporary Carthusian Spirituality," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 43 (1992): 195–230, at 206. On the reception of these women's writings in late-medieval England, see Alexandra Barratt, "Continental Women Mystics and English Readers," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Women's Writing*, ed. Carolyn Dinshaw and David Wallace (Cambridge, 2003), 240–55.

<sup>26</sup> *Booke of Gostlye Grace*, ed. Halligan, 52–53. On the Carthusians' cultivation of books, see Jessica Brantley, *Reading in the Wilderness: Private Devotion and Public Performance in Late Medieval England* (Chicago, 2007), chap. 2; and Michael G. Sargent, "The Transmission by the English Carthusians of Some Late Medieval Spiritual Writings," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 27 (1976): 225–40.

<sup>27</sup> For Margery's supposed visit to Joan Beaufort, see *Book of Margery Kempe* 1.53 (ed. Windeatt, 265–66). The devotional texts that she had read to her are mentioned in 1.17, 58, and 62 (115, 280, and 294–96). Margery and Cecily were both familiar with "Seynt Brydys boke" (280), i.e., her *Revelations*. As indicated earlier, Cecily knew Hilton's *Mixed Life* and the *Stimulus amoris* or the *Mirror*. Margery knew Hilton (the *Mixed Life*, *Scale*, or both) and the *Stimulus*, most likely the *Mirror* as well. Although they were clearly of different classes and lived during different periods of the fifteenth century, these women's tastes in books were basically the same.

Latin text in front of him and paraphrased it into English as he was reading, the fact that six of the seven books/authors mentioned in the ordinance also appear in Cecily's will suggests that the books that were read to her were her personal possessions and were thus in the vernacular.<sup>28</sup> She may even have used them for private devotional reading, although we have no definite evidence for this practice. Even assuming that the duchess would have known a little Latin, enough to understand the Latin prayers that she said or heard, at least in a functional sense, it does not seem likely that she would have been able to comprehend a Latin text of some length if it were read aloud to her, as would for example monks or friars in a refectory.<sup>29</sup> The latter assumption is supported by the remark about Cecily's inability to understand (written) Latin found in the dedicatory prologue of the second version of *The Chronicle of John Hardyng*, addressed to Richard, duke of York.<sup>30</sup> The vernacular literacy of Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII and kinswoman to Cecily Neville,

<sup>28</sup> Speculating on what one particular pious lay man, of the middle class or gentry, read to his family over dinner, W. A. Pantin says that "his choice of books must have been confined to those available in translation; or conceivably if a Latin book was used, he translated it sentence by sentence. This may be what the instructions [written on a fifteenth-century strip of parchment] mean when they say: 'expound something in the vernacular which may edify your wife and others'" ("Instructions for a Devout and Literate Layman," in *Medieval Learning and Literature: Essays Presented to Richard William Hunt*, ed. J. J. G. Alexander and M. T. Gibson [Oxford, 1976], 398–422, at 407–8). Hutchison, "Devotional Reading," 225, says that it was Neville's chaplain who read to her over dinner. This inference seems right, considering that the document focuses of Cecily's devotional activities, many of which were liturgical in nature and thus dependent upon her chaplain, who is explicitly mentioned twice in the ordinance.

<sup>29</sup> On the laity's limited knowledge of Latin, see, among others, Eamon Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c. 1400–c. 1580*, 2d ed. (New Haven, 2005), 213–25, and *Marking the Hours: English People and Their Prayers, 1240–1570* (New Haven, 2006), 59. With regard to a different, though related context, that of the friars' preaching to the laity, D. L. D'Avray, *The Preaching of the Friars: Sermons Diffused from Paris before 1300* (Oxford, 1985), 94–95, underlines that sermons were typically written down in Latin though preached in the vernacular. Sutton and Visser-Fuchs, "Choosing a Book," 75, assume that Cecily's seven devotional books were all in English.

<sup>30</sup> In the proem, Hardyng tells Richard that he will versify the history of England "to please good femynitie, / Of my lady your wife dame Cecely; / That in Latyn hath litell intellect / To vnderstande the great nobilytie / Of this ilke land of which she is electe. / Tyme commyng like to haue the souerayntie, / Vnder your rule . . ." (*The Chronicle of John Hardyng*, ed. Henry Ellis [London, 1812], 23). Nicholas Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry: The Education of the English Kings and Aristocracy 1066–1530* (London, 1984), 104–5, suggests that Hardyng's *Chronicle* may have been used by Cecily's children as well, since the author goes on to mention Richard's heirs. As Henry Summerson notes, "the heavy stress laid in this revised version on Richard's and Edward's hereditary claim to the English throne may indicate that it was intended to serve as Yorkist propaganda" (entry for "Hardyng, John" by Henry Summerson in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* 25:240–42, at 242).

provides what is likely a parallel case of poor Latinity. John Fisher, Lady Margaret's confessor, praises her for being "right studyous . . . in bokes whiche she hadde in grete nombre bothe in Englysshe & in Frensshe." He notes, however, that "[f]ul often she complayned that in her youthe she had not gyuen her to the vnderstandynge of latyn wherein she had a lytell per-ceuyunge."<sup>31</sup>

While I have called attention to Neville's devotional works,<sup>32</sup> which were probably all or mainly in Middle English, it should be pointed out that she had other books which she also prized, as is indicated by her will. Most of the

<sup>31</sup> *The English Works of John Fisher*, ed. John E. B. Mayor, EETS e.s. 27 (London, 1876), 292. See pp. 294–95 for Fisher's description of Margaret Beaufort's horarium, which is similar to that of Cecily Neville. Unlike Cecily, Margaret translated devotional books for her own use: "As for medytacyon she had dyuers bokes in Frensshe wherewith she wolde occupy herselfe whan she was wery of prayer. Wherefore dyuers she dyde translate oute of Frensshe into Englysshe" (295). Margaret Beaufort's language of choice was obviously English. For an introduction to and excerpts of her translations, see Barratt, *Women's Writing*, 301–10. On late-medieval English women's trilingualism, see Carol M. Meale, "' . . . alle the bokes that I haue of latyn, englich, and frensch': Laywomen and Their Books in Late Medieval England," in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150–1500*, ed. Carol M. Meale, 2d ed. (Cambridge, 1996), 128–58. (Cecily Neville is mentioned on pp. 135, 144, 149 n. 24, and 150 n. 33.) Margaret Beaufort and Cecily Neville are often compared in terms of their religiosity and the political power they wielded, as in Michael K. Jones and Malcolm G. Underwood, *The King's Mother: Lady Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby* (Cambridge, 1992), passim. Anne Crawford points out that "Margaret's cousin, Cecily Nevill, was the inheritor of a much earlier attitude to religion, that of the supremacy of the monastic life" ("The Piety of Late Medieval English Queens," in *The Church in Pre-Reformation Society: Essays in Honour of F. R. H. Du Boulay*, ed. Caroline M. Barron and Christopher Harper-Bill [Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1985], 48–57, at 57).

<sup>32</sup> The term "devotional literature" has been used by medievalists rather vaguely. In the introduction to their anthology, Anne Clark Bartlett and Thomas H. Bestul admit that they "have not aided the effort to pin down even the very term 'devotional literature,'" and state that they employ the term broadly (*Cultures of Piety: Medieval English Devotional Literature in Translation* [Ithaca, N.Y., 1999], 2). Richard Newhauser seems to prefer the more encompassing phrase "works of religious inspiration" in his recent survey of Middle English religious literature ("Religious Writing: Hagiography, *Pastoralia*, Devotional and Contemplative Works," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Literature, 1100–1500*, ed. Larry Scanlon [Cambridge, 2009], chap. 3, esp. pp. 37–39). Distinguishing between mystical and devotional literature, Denise N. Baker remarks that the latter is "much more difficult to define and classify . . . because these texts express or incite emotions of awe, reverence or piety in regard to a diversity of religious topics" and "stand midway between the didactic literature promulgating the Church's catechetical programme to the laity and the contemplative literature originally written for professed religious" ("Mystical and Devotional Literature," in *A Companion to Medieval English Literature and Culture, c. 1350–c. 1500*, ed. Peter Brown [Malden, Mass., 2007], 423–35, at 432–33). Resigned to the somewhat amorphous nature of the phrase "devotional literature," I prefer to speak of all seven books listed in Cecily's ordinance as "devotional" even though some of them are "mystical" and one is "apocryphal."

books I have discussed so far have been studied by those working in the sub-field of Middle English religious literature, but Cecily's (para)liturgical books, most likely all in Latin, should also be noted. Scholars have tended to omit these books from discussions of Cecily's reading materials and practices. Yet, as Eamon Duffy has stressed, the "Book of Hours was the most popular book of the late Middle Ages."<sup>33</sup> This implies that devout lay people in late-medieval England with some means at their disposal were more likely to own prayer and liturgical books than more "creative" works of devotional literature. According to the calculation of Anne F. Sutton and Livia Visser-Fuchs, thirty-nine liturgical books are mentioned in Cecily's will, three of which "were personal and in her closet."<sup>34</sup> By the latter, they are probably referring to Cecily's mention of "a masse-booke that servith for closett, a prymour with claspes silver and gilt, covered with blewe velvett, and a sawter that servith for the closett covered with white ledder."<sup>35</sup> While Cecily would have used these latter books for hearing Mass, saying the Office, and for private prayer, the majority of the liturgical books she mentions would have been employed by her chaplain and the other clerics within her household. Besides the devotional and liturgical texts that I have listed and identified thus far, a copy of Christine de Pizan's *Cité des dames* may also have belonged to Cecily. This would be the only secular book in her collection, and the only text in French.<sup>36</sup>

As Cecily ate dinner a lector would read to her from one of the seven devotional works that I have briefly described. In the evening, at supper, the duchess would recount to those around her what had been read to her earlier in the

<sup>33</sup> Duffy, *Marking the Hours*, 4.

<sup>34</sup> Sutton and Visser-Fuchs, "Choosing a Book," 74 and 87 n. 20. By my count, Cecily had almost fifty liturgical/prayer books. For a commentary on the household ordinance which attempts to specify which books Cecily (and her chaplain) would have used for her different religious activities throughout the day, see Charity Scott-Stokes, *Women's Books of Hours in Medieval England: Selected Texts* (Cambridge, 2006), 150. While the author's remarks are helpful (e.g., the suggestion that Cecily probably used a Book of Hours "[d]uring the afternoon [when] there was an opportunity for private prayer"), she veers from the ordinance when she states "At dinner there was public reading of a religious text, possibly from a book of hours. . . ." The document lists seven devotional books that were typically read to the duchess over dinner.

<sup>35</sup> *Wills from Doctors' Commons*, 4.

<sup>36</sup> See Sutton and Visser-Fuchs, *Richard III's Books*, 27–28, fig. 17 (as in n. 20 above); and Meale, "Laywomen and Their Books," 135 n. 31. The manuscript in question is London, British Library Royal 19.A.xix. Cecily's sister Anne Neville Stafford was also fond of books. Her will mentions four: two in French, one in English and a primer, which was presumably in Latin. See Karen K. Jambeck, "Patterns of Women's Literary Patronage: England, 1200–ca. 1475," in *The Cultural Patronage of Medieval Women*, ed. June Hall McCash (Athens, Ga., 1996), 228–65, at 240–41.

day, and she would then partake in some recreation with her gentlewomen.<sup>37</sup> The ordinance gives the impression that Cecily spent almost all of her time engaged in devotional exercises in some form or other. Supposedly only one hour in the afternoon was reserved for an audience, during which business matters were treated. While Cecily read Hilton's *Mixed Life*, her late widowhood, to judge from the ordinance alone, was far from being a balanced mix of secular and spiritual activities and concerns. Reflection upon her imminent death, which presumably prompted her to arrange for burial with a papal indulgence around her neck,<sup>38</sup> probably impelled Cecily to focus almost completely on prayer and meditation toward the end of her life.

## 2. IMAGES OF THE BOY JESUS IN CECILY NEVILLE'S BOOKS

Scholars have previously called attention to Cecily's devotional reading practices,<sup>39</sup> but they have not considered the intertextuality among her texts, particularly the diverging images of the boy Jesus that they present. How attune was the duchess to these differences? If, one day, during dinner Cecily had heard a selection from Nicholas Love's *Mirror*, she might have later edified her companions by recounting a passage from that book about the Holy Family's manner of life in Egypt:

Here mowe we deuoutly ymagine & þenk of þe maner of lyuyng of hem in þat vncouh londe, & how oure lady wrouht for hir lyuelode, þat is to sey with nedil sewyng & spinnyng as it is writen of hir, & also Joseph wirching in his craft of Carpentary, & how þe child blessed Jesus aftur he came to þe age of v

<sup>37</sup> "Orders and Rules of the Princess Cecill," \*37.

<sup>38</sup> Armstrong, "Piety of Cicely," 94.

<sup>39</sup> As Rowena E. Archer has noted, scholars have tended to focus on the religious (as opposed to secular) practices of English noblewomen such as Cecily Neville, thereby providing an incomplete picture of their lives, "Piety in Question: Noblewomen and Religion in the Later Middle Ages," in *Women and Religion in Medieval England*, ed. Diana Wood (Oxford, 2003), 118–40. Michael K. Jones helps offset this scholarly imbalance regarding Cecily Neville's biography, largely due to the large amount of attention given to her ordinance, by discussing Cecily's political activities, *Bosworth 1485: Psychology of a Battle* (Stroud, 2002), especially chap. 3. In a recent article, Joanna Laynesmith argues that the dowager duchess, who was always "a political pragmatist," wished to create a reputation for piety in her old age in order to counteract the accusation that her son Edward was a bastard; see "The King's Mother," *History Today* 56.3 (2006): 38–44, esp. 39. Laynesmith claims that although Cecily's intense religiosity, as suggested by her household ordinance, was a way of coping with the loss of her husband and three sons "to the violence of the Wars of the Roses[, i]t would be unwise to assume that evidence of devotion at this period can be applied earlier in her life" (43).

3ere or þere aboute, 3ede on hir erndes, & halpe in þat he miht, as a pore child to hem, shewyng in alle hese dedes buxomnesse, lowenesse & mekenesse.<sup>40</sup>

As to be expected of a text with Franciscan origins, the *Mirror* emphasizes the Holy Family's poverty: Mary here is not a housewife who is completely occupied with taking care of the Christ Child, preparing meals, and cleaning house; she is also a woman who contributes to the family income. The original Poor Clare reader would have been inspired by Mary's example, but how would an aristocratic reader have responded? Carol M. Meale remarks that Cecily Neville and Sybilla de Felton, abbess of Barking Abbey, two known late-medieval readers of this text, "must have been forced to take account of Love's recommendations of the virtues of humility and poverty, exemplified for him by the way of life of the holy family,"<sup>41</sup> yet it is also possible that aristocratic readers might have considered their wealth a helpful prompt to meditation upon the Holy Family's poverty, rather than as a possible impediment along the path to holiness. Commenting on a passage from the fifteenth-century *Tretyse of Love* that contrasts the luxury of the aristocratic reader's bedchamber with the Holy Family's poverty, Thomas Bestul and Anne Clark Bartlett state that the text "bestows a certain holiness on material possessions, since they [detailed depictions of noble wealth] can be used—paradoxically—as guides for contemplation on the abject poverty of Mary and Christ."<sup>42</sup> In the same chapter from the *Mirror* quoted above, we find a didactic digression on the evils of "curiosite" in the form of frivolous needlework: "Trowe we þat oure lady in hire sowyng or oþer manere wirchyng made curyouse werkes as miche folk doþe? Nay god forbede." Presumably having in mind the decorative needlework with which females of the nobility occupied their hours of leisure, Love continues by saying that "in þees dayes" people waste time in vain "curyositees." The Virgin, he says, did not have time to waste.<sup>43</sup> We know from her will that Cecily possessed (besides much jewelry) a number of tapestries and draperies, such as the one which depicted the Wheel of Fortune; these were no doubt exquisitely wrought and of great value.<sup>44</sup> This fact would seem to suggest that Cecily was not ethically inspired by the *Mirror* to undertake an *imitatio Christi* or *Mariae* with regard to the virtue of poverty. The

<sup>40</sup> *Mirror*, 53.

<sup>41</sup> Meale, "Early Ownership and Readership," 37.

<sup>42</sup> Bestul and Bartlett, *Cultures of Piety*, 8.

<sup>43</sup> *Mirror*, 54. On late-medieval portrayals of Mary engaged in textilework, see Robert L. Wyss, "Die Handarbeiten der Maria: Eine ikonographische Studie unter Berücksichtigung der textilen Techniken," in *Artes minores. Dank an Werner Abegg*, ed. Michael Stettler and Mechtild Lemberg (Bern, 1973), 113–88.

<sup>44</sup> *Wills from Doctors' Commons*, 2.

text's heavy emphasis upon "feeling" the sufferings of Jesus and Mary and other saints might very well have led to a substitution of emotion for "doing." In its chapters covering the childhood and adolescence of Christ, the *Mirror* encourages its readers to have compassion on the difficulties faced by the Christ Child as well as to admire the ways in which he humbly hid his divinity.

If another day, Neville had listened to a selection from the *Infantia salvatoris* over the course of dinner, that evening she might have told the following story:

Some men . . . seeing that when their children played with Jesus they were very often in danger, . . . put them in an oven out of fear, and placed a man there who would continually guard them and give them food so that no one would be permitted to come to them. Now it happened that Jesus, walking along by himself for the sake of recreation, passed through the place where they were being kept. Asking the watchman what he was guarding there, he answered, "Piglets," intending to deceive the little boy Jesus by his words. But he said, "Then let them be pigs!"—which indeed thus happened. And immediately they began to oink and grunt like pigs. When their guard heard and saw this, he lamented greatly and, coming to their parents and friends, recounted everything, just as it happened. But they, presenting a sorrowful face and wringing their hands out of grief, went to the oven. They found nothing there except little pigs oinking and grunting. Then they knew of no other remedy, but all proceeded unanimously to his mother Mary and humbly begged her assistance, that she might beseech her son on their behalf to bring their children who had been transfigured into little pigs back to their original state. Now Mary, granting their prayers, graciously prevailed upon Jesus for the sake of the aforementioned children. Hearing and not denying his mother's prayer, he returned all those who had been transformed to their original state by his word alone, restoring their health to them.

I translate here a chapter from the quarto *Infantia salvatoris* (STC 14551), an apocryphal account in Latin prose of the birth and childhood of Jesus, printed by William Caxton at Westminster in about 1477.<sup>45</sup> The story involving the

<sup>45</sup> The text was edited in the late nineteenth century by F. Holthausen, *W. Caxtons Infantia Salvatoris* (Halle, 1891), and will appear with a facing-page translation in my forthcoming monograph on the late-medieval Christ Child. (In this essay, all translations are mine unless otherwise noted.) The episode about the pigs is recounted in chapter 31, pp. 18–19 in the Holthausen edition: "Videntes igitur aliqui homines . . . quod pueri sui ludendo cum Iesu ita multotiens periclitabantur, posuerunt eos in clibano prae timore, et conduxerunt hominem, qui illos custodiret continue ac cibaria ministraret ita, quod neminem alium permetteret ad eos venire. Accidit autem ut Iesus spatiando solus causa recreationis veniret per eundem locum in quo erant. Qui postulans eorum custodem, quid ibi custodiret, respondit: 'Porcillos,' putans infan-



pigs, which many modern readers will find distasteful, traces back to an Arabic tradition,<sup>46</sup> which was appropriated by the West sometime in the high to later Middle Ages. Caxton's quarto was not illustrated, but it contains many legends about the child Jesus that are occasionally rendered in late-medieval illuminated manuscripts and art objects. An illustration of the miraculous transformation of boys into pigs appears on fol. 88v of the fourteenth-century Neville of Hornby Hours (London, British Library Egerton 2781), a book patronized by Isabel of Byron, a devout woman from a Lancashire gentry family.<sup>47</sup> It is also featured in full-page miniature found on a single folio dating to the third quarter of the thirteenth century (Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum 1148-1993r), presumably taken from an illustrated devotional book of some sort (see plate).<sup>48</sup>

tulum Iesum suis verbis decepisse. At ille dixit: 'Tunc porcelli fiant!' Quod et ita factum est. Et continuo coeperunt omnes sicut porcelli clamare et grinnire. Quod audiens atque videns custos eorum fecit magnam lamentationem, et pergens ad eorum parentes et amicos (15v) retulit totum, quemadmodum continebat. At illi maestum vultum praetendentes et manus suas pro dolore complicantes iverunt ad clibanum, et ibi nihil aliud invenerunt neque viderunt nisi porcellos clamantes et grinnientes. Tunc nullum aliud remedium sciverunt, sed omnes unanimi consensu ad matrem suam Mariam perrexerunt eius auxilium humiliter deprecando, quatinus filium suum pro eis imploraret, ut pueros suos in porcellos transfiguratos ad pristinam formam reduceret. Maria autem eorum precibus inclinans puerum Iesum pro praedictis cordialiter exoravit. Qui matris suae orationem exaudiens et non negans omnes illos transfiguratos solo verbo in gradum pristinum reduxit reddita sanitate." A surviving copy of Caxton's incunabulum is owned by the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York. For brief descriptions of this text, see N. F. Blake, *William Caxton: A Bibliographical Guide* (New York, 1985), 36–37, item B61; William Blades, *The Life and Typography of William Caxton*, 2 vols. (New York, 1861–63), 1:73; no. 8, 2:31–32; E. Gordon Duff, *Fifteenth Century English Books* (London, 1917), 62, no. 222; and Seymour de Ricci, *A Census of Caxton* (Oxford, 1909), 71, no. 62. Blake notes that the *Infantia salvatoris* "is unusual in that although not a work of a technical religious nature it is nevertheless in Latin. It is more in the nature of a meditational or instructive text, and these were in general in English" (*Caxton: England's First Publisher* [London, 1976], 183–84). For a short survey of the types of books Caxton published, see Alexandra Gillespie, "Caxton and After," in *A Companion to Middle English Prose*, ed. A. S. G. Edwards (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2004), 306–25.

<sup>46</sup> See below, at n. 97.

<sup>47</sup> Kathryn A. Smith, *Art, Identity and Devotion in Fourteenth-Century England: Three Women and Their Books of Hours* (London and Toronto, 2003), 32, 275–78; plate 7.

<sup>48</sup> On the verso of this leaf, Jesus is portrayed sitting on what appears to be a wooden beam, from which his playmates have fallen—a variation on the miracle about how Jesus sat on a sunbeam (as recounted, for example, in Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana Gaddi 208, on fol. 64r–v [examined *in situ*]; it is also noted in K. von Tischendorf, *Evangelia apocrypha*, 2d ed. [Leipzig, 1876; rpt. Hildesheim, 1966], 106). On the leaf, see Smith, *Art, Identity and Devotion*, 276–77, fig. 140, and "Accident, Play, and Invention: Three Infancy Miracles in the Holkham Bible Picture Book," in *Tributes to Jonathan J. G. Alexander: The Making and Meaning of Illuminated Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts, Art, and Architecture*, ed.

C. A. J. Armstrong has suggested that Cecily Neville might have had the Caxton text (or a Latin text similar to it) at her disposal, considering the proximity of the dating of her household ordinance (sometime after 1485) and Caxton's quarto (ca. 1477).<sup>49</sup> A connection between Cecily and Caxton's text is not improbable considering that the first book printed in English, *The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troyes* (based upon Raoul le Fèvre's French work), was translated by Caxton supposedly with the linguistic help of Cecily's daughter Margaret of York, duchess of Burgundy, and printed in Bruges (ca. 1473) as a result of her patronage. A frontispiece of the copy (now in the Huntington Library, San Marino, California) that belonged to Edward IV's queen, Elizabeth Woodville, depicts Caxton on his knees offering his book to Margaret.<sup>50</sup> Christine Weightman remarks that after this project, Caxton "continued to look hopefully towards the House of York for his patrons and . . .

Susan L'Engle and Gerald B. Guest (Turnhout, 2006), 357–69, at 361–62, fig. 2; and C. M. Kauffmann, "Art and Popular Culture: New Themes in the Holkham Picture Book," in *Studies in Medieval Art and Architecture Presented to Peter Lasko*, ed. David Buckton and T. A. Heslop (Stroud, Glouc., 1994), 46–69, at 64–65, plate 4. The episode about the pigs is also depicted in Oxford, Bodleian Library Selden Supra 38 (fols. 22v and 23r); and the Holkham Bible Picture Book (London, British Library Add. 47682, fol. 16r). See Maureen Boulton, ed., *Les Enfaunces de Jesu Crist*, Anglo-Norman Text Society 43 (London, 1985), 64–65, ll. 1101–56; *The Anglo-Norman Text of the Holkham Bible Picture Book*, ed. F. P. Pickering (Oxford, 1971), 26; and *The Holkham Bible Picture Book: A Facsimile*, commentary by Michelle P. Brown (London, 2007), 52, fol. 16r. The episode involving pigs is also rendered on one of the Tring Tiles, an early fourteenth-century series of ceramic tiles depicting apocryphal stories about Jesus' childhood; see M. R. James, "Rare Mediaeval Tiles and Their Story," *Burlington Magazine* 42 (1923): 32–37.

<sup>49</sup> Armstrong, "Piety of Cicely," 85–86.

<sup>50</sup> On the connection between Caxton and Margaret of York, see Lotte Hellinga-Querido, "Reading an Engraving: William Caxton's Dedication to Margaret of York, Duchess of Burgundy," in *Across the Narrow Seas: Studies in the History and Bibliography of Britain and the Low Countries: Presented to Anna E. C. Simoni*, ed. Susan Roach (London, 1991), 1–15; and Christine Weightman, *Margaret of York, Duchess of Burgundy 1446–1503* (New York, 1989), 209–12. For an overview of the religious literature that appealed to Margaret of York, see Nigel Morgan, "Texts of Devotion and Religious Instruction Associated with Margaret of York," in *Margaret of York, Simon Marmion, and The Visions of Tondal*, ed. Thomas Kren (Malibu, 1992), 63–76. On Margaret's book-collecting, see further Thomas Kren, "The Library of Margaret of York and the Burgundian Court," in *The Visions of Tondal from the Library of Margaret of York*, ed. Thomas Kren and Roger S. Wieck (Malibu, Calif., 1990), 9–36; Anne-Marie Legaré, "'La librairie de Madame': Two Princesses and Their Libraries," in *Women of Distinction: Margaret of York, Margaret of Austria*, ed. Dagmar Eichberger (Leuven and Turnhout, 2005), 207–19; and Sharon Michaelove, "Women as Book Collectors and Disseminators of Culture in Late Medieval England and Burgundy," in *Reputation and Representation in Fifteenth-Century Europe*, ed. Douglas L. Biggs et al. (Leiden, 2004), 57–79, at 68–74.

later dedicated a volume on the orders of chivalry to Richard III.”<sup>51</sup> A few of the seven books listed in the household ordinance of Cecily Neville were printed in English by Caxton or his successor Wykyn de Worde: *The Mirror* (“Speculum Vitae Christi,” 1st ed. 1484, STC 3259), *The Golden Legend* (1st ed. 1483, STC 24873), and the *Life of Catherine of Siena* (1st ed. ca. 1492, STC 24766).<sup>52</sup> It thus seems reasonable to entertain the possibility that Cecily’s copy of the *Infantia salvatoris* was the Latin text printed by Caxton.

Yet the duchess need not have possessed Caxton’s text recounting stories about the childhood of Jesus in Latin, or another Latin version of the *Infantia salvatoris*, since apocryphal legends about the Christ Child circulated in Middle English verse in late-medieval England.<sup>53</sup> These texts sometimes be-

<sup>51</sup> Weightman, *Margaret of York*, 212.

<sup>52</sup> Seymour de Ricci notes that the *Life of St. Catherine* was “printed by Wynkyn de Worde after Caxton’s death [1492], but with Caxton’s types” (*Census of Caxton*, 110). As noted above, the designation “Bonaventure,” which appears in both Cecily’s ordinance and will, may refer to either an English version of the *Stimulus amoris* or the *Meditationes vitae Christi*, though it is more likely to refer to the latter. On Caxton’s *Mirror*, see Lotte Hellinga, “Nicholas Love in Print,” in *Nicholas Love at Waseda*, 143–62. On the survival of copies of Caxton’s *Mirror*, see Christopher de Hamel, “The Selling and Collecting of Manuscripts of Nicholas Love’s *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Jesus Christ* since the Middle Ages,” in *Nicholas Love at Waseda*, 87–97, at 93–96. For Wykyn de Worde’s printing of the *Life of Catherine of Siena*, see n. 23 above (where I also mention his printing of *The Orchard of Syon*). For Ellis’s edition of Caxton’s *Golden Legend*, see n. 11 above.

<sup>53</sup> Anonymous Middle English poems on the childhood of Jesus survive in five extant manuscripts. I list all of them here for the reader who wishes to study the corpus as a whole, though I refer to some of them in the body of this essay: Oxford, Bodleian Library Laud Misc. 108 (s. XIII ex.), ed. Carl Horstmann, *Altenglische Legenden: Kindheit Jesu, Geburt Jesu, Barlaam und Josaphat, St. Patrik’s Fegefeuer* (Paderborn, 1875), 3–61; London, British Library Additional 31042 (s. XV med.), ed. Horstmann, “Nachträge zu den Legenden,” *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen* 74 (1885): 327–39; London, British Library Harley 2399 (s. XV) and 3954 (s. XV), ed. Horstmann, *Sammlung Altenglischer Legenden* (Heilbronn, 1878), 101–23; and Minneapolis, University of Minnesota MS Z822 N81 (s. XV med.), ed. Roscoe E. Parker, *The Middle English Stanzaic Versions of the Life of Saint Anne*, EETS o.s. 174 (1928; rpt. New York, 1971), 1–89. The second, third, and fourth manuscripts listed above contain essentially the same poem; for a study of their relationship, see Hermann Landschoff, “Kindheit Jesu, ein englisches Gedicht aus dem 14. Jahrhundert” (Ph.D. diss., Friedrich-Wilhelm University, 1889). The *Cursor Mundi* (s. XIII/XIV), a long Middle English biblical paraphrase, contains a close translation of the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew (discussed below); for an edition, see *The Southern Version of the Cursor Mundi*, ed. Roger R. Fowler, vol. 2 (Ottawa, 1990), 79–112, ll. 11595–12576 (for the apocryphal childhood). For a codicological overview of the manuscripts that contain Middle English poems on the childhood of Jesus, see Mary Dzon, “The Image of the Wanton Christ-Child in Late Medieval England” (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 2004, chap. 3.3). There is also an Anglo-Norman poem on the apocryphal childhood, which is extant in its complete form in an early fourteenth-century manuscript: Oxford, Bodleian Library Selden Supra 38. See Boulton, ed., *Les Enfaunces de*

gin or end with the phrase “infancia saluatoris” (or something similar), as is the case with the poem found in London, British Library Harley 3954, for example.<sup>54</sup> A poem about the childhood of Jesus contained in Oxford, Bodleian Library Laud Misc. 108 concludes on fol. 22r with “Explicit hic infantia Jhesu Christi.”<sup>55</sup> This text also tells the story about the pigs, except that in this case the animals are not changed back into children:

And euereft sethþe for to þis  
 þe Gyv for broþur heold i wis  
 Euerech swyn in heore manere;  
 Þis was a miracle clere;  
 Ne neuer eft fram þat to þis  
 Gywes ne eten of swynes flechs.<sup>56</sup>

This story can be seen as a parody of medieval eucharistic doctrine: whereas Christ was believed to have changed himself into food that was suitable for his followers’ consumption,<sup>57</sup> and to have perpetuated this miraculous trans-

*Jesu Crist* (n. 48 above). Boulton has also edited an Old French version, which is extant in one fourteenth-century and one fifteenth-century manuscript, *The Old French Évangile de l’Enfance*, Studies and Texts 70 (Toronto, 1984). For these legends in Occitan, see *Vangeli occitani dell’infanzia di Gesù, edizione critica della versioni I e II*, ed. Gabriele Giannini and Marianne Gasperoni (Bologna, 2006). For an overview of material on the apocryphal childhood of Jesus in the vernacular, see Robert Reinsch, *Die Pseudo-Evangelien von Jesu und Maria’s Kindheit in der romanischen und germanischen Literatur* (Halle, 1879).

<sup>54</sup> Horstmann, *Sammlung*, 101 and 110: “Hic incipit infancia saluatoris” (fol. 70r); “Explicit infancia saluatoris” (fol. 74r). I have examined the Middle English manuscripts containing apocryphal childhood of Jesus material by means of digital images. The words “pueritia vel infancia Christi” appear in the top right-hand corner of the folio (47v) on which the poem about Christ’s childhood in Harley 2399 begins. Horstmann presents these words as a title, as in the case of the previous manuscript (*Sammlung*, 123).

<sup>55</sup> At the beginning of the poem (on fol. 11r), the same title appears in French: “Ici comence le enfance Jhesu Crist.” Horstmann presents the latter as a title. See *Altenglische Legenden*, 1 and 61.

<sup>56</sup> Horstmann, *Altenglische Legenden*, 36, ll. 1043–48. The episode about the pigs appears in other Middle English poems on the childhood of Jesus; see Horstmann, *Sammlung*, 107–8, ll. 487–530; 116–17, ll. 361–96, and “Nachträge zu den Legenden,” 332, ll. 364–99. The Jewish parents’ discovery of their children’s transformation into pigs is also recounted in Old French; see *Évangile de l’enfance*, 67–68, ll. 1437–90; and in the Anglo-Norman version (see n. 48 above).

<sup>57</sup> Reiterating a long tradition in eucharistic theology, Thomas Aquinas, aware of the ancient charge of cannibalism leveled against Christians (cf. Jo 6:53), argues that it was God’s providential plan that the accidents of bread and wine remain after the consecration of the host: “quia non est consuetum hominibus, sed horribile, carnem hominis comedere et sanguinem bibere, et ideo proponuntur nobis caro et sanguis Christi sumenda sub speciebus illorum quae frequentius in usum hominis veniunt, scilicet panis et vini” [“since it is not a custom among human beings, but terrifying to them, to eat human flesh and to drink blood, for that reason we

formation through the priesthood, the apocryphal Christ Child changes the Jewish children into food that cannot be eaten by Jews.<sup>58</sup> A modern audience may find such tales shocking on account of their strong anti-Judaic character and their portrayal of Jesus as a vindictive child.<sup>59</sup>

Did Cecily Neville see any contradiction between the Franciscan version of the Christ Child, reminiscent of the meek and humble Savior of the New Testament, and the apocryphal version, which portrays him, we might say, as a “problem child”?<sup>60</sup> Cecily would have encountered the Christ Child not only in the *Infantia salvatoris* and in “Bonaventure” but also in the *Legenda aurea* and in her mystical texts.<sup>61</sup> How sensitive was she to differences among these

are directed to partake of the body and blood of Christ under the appearances of those things which more frequently come into human usage, namely, bread and wine”] (*Summa theologiae* 3.75.5 [Ottawa, 1953], 4:2944a). On the association of the eucharist with cannibalism, see also Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, 1999; first published in 1991), 359–60.

<sup>58</sup> A story similar to the episode involving pigs occurs in an early twelfth-century Latin biography of Muhammad by Embrico of Mainz, which connects the Islamic taboo against eating pork with the claim that Muhammad’s corpse was gnawed by pigs; see *Embricon de Mayence: La Vie de Mahomet*, ed. Guy Cambier, Collection Latomus 52 (Brussels, 1962), 31–32; 90–91, ll. 1092–1110. For other etiologial tales featuring the Christ Child, see Oskar Dähnhardt, *Natursagen: Sagen zum neuen Testament*, vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1909), 74–75. The conflation of Jews and pigs in the episode with the oven may be related to the medieval image of Jews sucking at the teats of a sow; see Isaiah Shachar, *The Judensau: A Medieval Anti-Jewish Motif and Its History* (London, 1974). Shachar notes, however, that “the medieval *Judensau* had not struck root” in England (63).

<sup>59</sup> As Denise L. Despres has emphasized, Jews are frequently set in opposition to Mary and the Christ Child in late-medieval devotional culture. See, for example, her essay that focuses on depictions of Jews in the Carew-Poyntz Hours (Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum 48), “Immaculate Flesh and the Social Body: Mary and the Jews,” *Jewish History* 12.1 (1998): 47–69.

<sup>60</sup> Ernest Renan characterizes the apocryphal Christ Child as “une sort d’enfant terrible, méchant, rancunier, faisant peur à ses parents et à tout le monde. . . . Cette image grotesque d’un gamin omnipotent et omniscient est une des plus fortes caricatures qu’on ait jamais inventées. . . .” (*Histoire des origines du Christianisme*, 3d ed., vol. 6 [Paris, 1879], 513–14). Evelyn Birge Vitz expresses horror at this character and contrasts him with the boy Jesus of the *Meditationes vitae Christi*; see “The Apocryphal and the Biblical, the Oral and the Written, in Medieval Legends of Christ’s Childhood: The Old French *Evangile de l’Enfance*,” in *Satura: Studies in Medieval Literature in Honour of Robert R. Raymo*, ed. Nancy M. Reale and Ruth E. Sternglantz (Donington, Eng., 2001), 124–49, at 130, 141–44, and 147. See further Julie Nelson Couch, “Misbehaving God: The Case of the Christ Child in Laud Misc. 108 ‘Infancy of Jesus Christ,’” in *Mindful Spirit in Late Medieval Literature: Essays in Honor of Elizabeth D. Kirk*, ed. Bonnie Wheeler (New York, 2006), 31–43.

<sup>61</sup> References to the Christ Child in these texts include the *Golden Legend*’s description of the babe visited by the Magi, “To whom, for a soft bed was duress and hard crib, for curtains of gold and silk, the fume and stench of dung . . .” (ed. Ellis [n. 11 above], 1:50); Mechthild’s questioning of the twelve-year-old Jesus in the temple as to why he did not call attention to

various presentations of the boy Jesus? Was she, despite her quasi-monastic piety, unaware that stories found in the *Infantia salvatoris* were ultimately derived from apocryphal texts, whose reputation is marred by their apocryphal status and whose orthodoxy is questionable on account of their idiosyncratic Christology?<sup>62</sup>

### 3. CECILY NEVILLE'S READING AND TRANSMISSION OF THE *INFANTIA SALVATORIS*: A TRANSGRESSIVE ACT?

In her discussion of textual communities of women in late-medieval England who heard and spoke about religious matters, Felicity Riddy mentions Cecily Neville and emphasizes the aurality/orality of her religious culture: "she heard works read, remembered them and passed them on to her companions. This is a textuality of the spoken as well as the written word; it begins in the book, which may have been read aloud by a clerk, but is then transmitted among the women by word of mouth."<sup>63</sup> Do Cecily's textual practices present a case of a medieval woman without theological training falling into heresy unawares (by entertaining the idea that Jesus was once a mischievous boy) and transmitting her heretical view to other women? Heresy is, technically speaking, not the appropriate term here, since it was typically defined in the late-medieval period as a conscious embrace of doctrine contrary to that taught by the church, whereas Cecily would presumably have accepted correction from a cleric if she had held a Christological view at odds with the church's teaching.<sup>64</sup> It is helpful to consider the setting of Cecily's reading.

himself earlier in his childhood (*Booke of Gostlye Grace*, ed. Halligan, microfiche 119–20); and Birgitta's famous vision of the nativity in *Revelationes* 7.21 (*Liber Celestis* 7.22, ed. Ellis [n. 12 above], 485–87). Cecily would also have been familiar with the legend about St. Christopher's encounter with a mysterious child. The saint realizes the boy is divine when, carrying him across a river, he becomes heavier and almost unbearable. The story appears in the *Golden Legend*, ed. Ellis, 4:111–19. David Farmer notes the saint's popularity in late-medieval England and the dubiousness of his historical existence, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, 5th ed. (Oxford, 2004), 105–6. Cecily, nevertheless, bequeathed "a pix with the fleshe of Saint Cristofer" to her granddaughter Elizabeth of York, Queen of Henry VII (*Wills from Doctors' Commons*, 2).

<sup>62</sup> Armstrong either did not pay much attention to the contents of the *Infantia salvatoris* (as published by Caxton, for example) or saw nothing objectionable in them, for, speaking about Cecily Neville's devotional books in general, he remarks that she approached "the mystical way by means of the most orthodox manuals" ("Piety of Cicely," 84).

<sup>63</sup> Felicity Riddy, "'Women talking about the things of God': A Late Medieval Sub-Culture," in *Women and Literature in Britain*, ed. Meale (as in n. 31 above), 104–27, at 111.

<sup>64</sup> The idea is enunciated in the thirteenth century by Thomas Aquinas, who cites August-

Paul Saenger has suggested that silent reading in private—a practice which had emerged by the later Middle Ages—could have fostered heretical belief, just as oral recitation of a text, with commentary on it by an authoritative figure, such as occurred in the schools, would have encouraged “right thinking.”<sup>65</sup> Considering that Cecily’s reading of the *Infantia salvatoris* was not a solitary activity that took place in a “privy closet,” for example, it is doubtful that she would have had the intellectual space, so to speak, that seems requisite for independent thinking. Nevertheless, Cecily’s conceptualization of the child Jesus may have been erroneous if, as a result of hearing the *Infantia*’s contents, she entertained the idea that his behavior was frequently offensive to those around him. While the gospels pass over Jesus’ childhood, the Letter to the Hebrews emphasizes that Jesus was without sin (4:15).<sup>66</sup>

In speculating on the apocrypha’s influence upon Cecily, it is important to note, as Riddy does, that a male clerk probably read this text (as well as the other devotional works) over dinner, and that the ordinance does not specify the gender of her evening audience later on in the day. According to the document, during dinner-time she “hath a lecture of holy matter” and “in the tyme of supper she recyteth the lecture that was had at dynner to those that be in her presence. After supper she disposeth herself to be famyliare with her gentlewomen.”<sup>67</sup> In other words, the ordinance does not explicitly say that Cecily recounted what she had heard earlier in the day only to her ladies-in-

tine and the *Decretals*, “‘Si qui sententiam suam, quamvis falsam atque perversam, nulla pertinaci animositate defendunt, . . . quaerunt autem tota sollicitudine veritatem, corrigi parati cum invenerint, nequaquam sunt inter haereticos deputandi,’ quia scilicet non habent electionem contradicentem Ecclesiae doctrinae” [“‘If some defend their opinion, although it is false and perverse, with no stubborn animosity . . . but seek the truth with all solicitude, prepared to be corrected when they shall have found it, in no way are they to be ranked among the heretics,’ since plainly they have not willfully chosen to contradict the church’s teaching”] (*ST* 2-2.11.2 ad 3, Ottawa edition, 3:1469b). Along similar lines, according to Matthew Paris, the bishop of Lincoln Robert Grosseteste stated shortly before his death, “Haeresis est sententia humano sensu electa, Scripturae Sacrae contraria, palam edocta, pertinaciter defensa” [“Heresy is an opinion chosen by human understanding, contrary to Sacred Scripture, openly taught, stubbornly defended”] (*Chronica majora*, ed. Henry Richards Luard, Rolls Series 57.5 [London, 1880], 401).

<sup>65</sup> Paul Saenger, *Space Between Words: The Origins of Silent Reading* (Stanford, 1997), 264–65. See also “Silent Reading: Its Impact on Late Medieval Script and Society,” *Viator* 13 (1982): 366–414, where Saenger notes, “The new privacy gained through silent reading and composition not only served as a conduit for heresy. It also intensified orthodox devotional and spiritual experiences” (401).

<sup>66</sup> For a more detailed consideration of the question of the orthodoxy of the *Infantia salvatoris*, see my forthcoming essay “Boys Will Be Boys: The Physiology of Childhood and the Apocryphal Christ Child in the Later Middle Ages,” *Viator* 41.2 (2010), forthcoming.

<sup>67</sup> “Orders and Rules of the Princess Cecill,” \*37.

waiting; recreation with her female companions took place *after* Cecily exercised the role of a quasi-preacher during supper (not preaching in a public assembly, but nevertheless addressing what was likely a mixed audience of men and women in her home).<sup>68</sup>

Susan Groag Bell's (earlier) interpretation of Cecily's literary practices parallels that of Riddy. Bell mentions the duchess of York in an essay in which she argues that medieval women's network of private book-reading and book-ownership was a response to the male ecclesiastical hierarchy that denied them "public participation in spiritual life."<sup>69</sup> Although Bell characterizes women's devotional reading as "inoffensive because of its privacy," she connects this practice with medieval women's involvement in heretical movements, presumably because both activities are thought to have provided women a degree of autonomy.<sup>70</sup> Bell does not specifically mention Cecily's reading of the *Infantia salvatoris*, but the tenor of her argument is that medieval women turned to devotional texts as a way of circumventing male church authority. Cecily's reading of the apocryphal *Infantia salvatoris* and her transmission of its contents might be regarded as subversive, yet her esteem for it may also represent a sincere, personal attempt to cultivate devotion to Christ's

<sup>68</sup> On women as preachers in the later Middle Ages, see Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, "When Women Preached: An Introduction to Female Homiletic, Sacramental, and Liturgical Roles in the Middle Ages," in *Voices in Dialogue: Reading Women in the Middle Ages*, ed. Linda Olson and Kathryn Kerby-Fulton (Notre Dame, Ind., 2005), 31–55, esp. 39, where she states that Catherine of Siena, Birgitta of Sweden, and Margery Kempe all "preached in the formal sense of the word, that is, they delivered discourses to mixed audiences—not simply to other women."

<sup>69</sup> Susan Groag Bell, "Medieval Women Book Owners: Arbiters of Lay Piety and Ambassadors of Culture," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 7 (1982): 742–68, at 750 n. 24 and 752. This essay was reprinted in *Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, ed. Mary Erler and Maryanne Kowaleski (Athens, Ga., 1988), 149–87.

<sup>70</sup> "I suggest that we may find it was women who had a profound influence in bringing about the Reformation by their collective involvement in heresies and by their individual involvement with religious literature in the preceding centuries" (Bell, "Medieval Women Book Owners," 766; see also 743). Shannon McSheffrey notes that "scholars have often assumed that women were particularly attracted to deviance, perhaps especially religious deviance," and she elaborates on this assumption: "Heretical sects drew women more than men because such groups provided women with more opportunities for religious activity and expression than they could find in orthodoxy. There are a number of problems with this hypothesis" (*Gender and Heresy: Women and Men in Lollard Communities, 1420–1530* [Philadelphia, 1995], 2). For discussions of medieval women's connection to heresy, see, for example, Malcolm Lambert, *Medieval Heresy: Popular Movements from the Gregorian Reform to the Reformation*, 3d ed. (Oxford, 1992), passim; and Andrew P. Roach, *The Devil's World: Heresy and Society 1100–1300* (Harlow, 2005), chap. 8.



dual nature,<sup>71</sup> and the absence of any clear indication that Cecily was aware of the dubious status of the *Infantia salvatoris* as an apocryphal text would seem to argue against the interpretation of her reading and oral transmission of this text as an act of resistance against the church hierarchy. While Cecily may have been emboldened to speak about holy matters as a result of having read the works of female mystics, in my view, it would be a distortion of the ordinance to claim that Cecily transmitted a questionable depiction of Christ to other women in a gesture of feminist opposition to male clerics.

There is one indication that Cecily's view of this text might have changed near the end of her life. Six of the seven books named in Cecily's household ordinance are explicitly mentioned in her will; the only book it omits is the *Infantia salvatoris*. It is possible that Cecily gave this book away to a friend or relative sometime before writing up her will. Nevertheless, one cannot help but wonder if the reason that she did not refer to this book in the document that would serve as an attestation of her piety to future generations is that she had become aware of its apocryphal status and so purposely omitted it.

Yet this hypothesis seems unjustly to read anxiety into Cecily's relationship with the *Infantia salvatoris* and her self-presentation to others, since we lack evidence of her awareness of clerics' classification of this text as apocryphal. Nor does the author of her household ordinance evince such an awareness; the book by this title is not singled out by the document as being different from the other devotional texts in Cecily's literary repertoire. An example of a fifteenth-century lay person (a male) who appreciated legends about Christ's childhood and may indeed have been aware of their apocryphal status is Robert Thornton, a member of the Yorkshire gentry who copied a Middle English poetic rendition of these stories into one of his miscellanies (London, British Library Additional 31042). Thornton introduces this poem as follows: "Here Bigynnys the Romance of the childhode of Jhesu Criste pat clerkes callys Ipokrephum [apocryphal]."<sup>72</sup>

Whereas the duchess of York treated the *Infantia salvatoris* as a devotional book, a contemporary of hers in France, a Celestine monk, considered the *Livre des enfances Jhesucrist* blasphemous because it depicted Jesus as a naughty boy:

Is it not a great derision and mockery to say that the child Jesus would strike his companions, or that he would mock his schoolmasters, or that he would

<sup>71</sup> On this topic, see Dzon, "Boys Will Be Boys."

<sup>72</sup> Horstmann, "Nachträge zu den Legenden," 327. It is possible that Thornton thinks "Ipokrephum" is the title of the romance without realizing that this Greek-derived word means "apocryphal."

give his parents occasion to complain of him, or that St. Joseph would reprimand him for being a bad boy, or moreover that he would respond to the aforesaid St. Joseph in a proud and menacing way, or any of the many other fables, mockeries, and blasphemies that are contained in the aforesaid book, which is dreadful and worthy of being burned? And, should it please God, there would never be any such book in all the world, if I had hold of it! I believe I would put it in such a state that one would never hear tell of it.<sup>73</sup>

We cannot identify the exact French book that the speaker is referring to,<sup>74</sup> but it is probably similar to a number of late-medieval English texts that narrate the apocryphal childhood of Jesus and at times depict him as a boy disrespectful toward his foster-father.<sup>75</sup> For instance, in a Middle English poem recounting Christ's apocryphal childhood found in a late thirteenth-century manuscript (Bodleian Library Laud Misc. 108, mentioned above), Joseph reproves Jesus for fashioning clay birds on the Sabbath. In response, Jesus "lou3h so þat it dude him guod" while he makes the birds come to life—hardly a way of expressing repentance for his "misdeed."<sup>76</sup>

Notwithstanding the Celestine's harsh denunciation of the legends about the childhood of Jesus, the *Infantia salvatoris* seems to have been esteemed

<sup>73</sup> "Et n'est ce pas grant derision et moquerie de dire que l'enfant Jhesus faisoit blecier ses compaignons, qu'il se moquoit de ses maistres d'escole et qu'il donnast occasion de se plaindre de luy a ses parens, et que saint Joseph le reprenoit comme malvaiz garçon, et puis qu'il respondit au dit monseigneur saint Joseph orgueilleusement, en le menaçant et pluseurs aultres fables, moqueries et blasphemies qui sont contenus au dit livre maudit et digne d'estre brulé? Et pleust a Dieu qu'il n'y eust que ung tel livre par tout le monde et que je le tenisse! Je cuide que je le mettroye en tel point que jamaiz on n'en orroit parler" (ed. Max Lieberman, "Saint Joseph, Jean Gerson et Pierre d'Ailly dans un manuscrit de 1464," *Cahiers de Joséphologie* 20 [1972]: 5–110, 253–61, at 50–51). I am grateful to Suzanne Conklin Akbari for helping me with this translation.

<sup>74</sup> Maureen Boulton has identified a large number of apocryphal texts in medieval French; see "Transmission or Transformation: Scribal Intervention in French Apocryphal Texts (13–15<sup>th</sup> Centuries)," *Romance Languages Annual* 5 (1993): 14–18. An example of an English reader of a French apocryphal infancy text is Guy de Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, who possessed "[u]n volum en le quel sount contenuz les Enfaunces de Nostre Seygneur, coment il fust mené en Egipt," as well as a number of other devotional works and romances, which he gave to Bordesley Abbey at the beginning of the fourteenth century; see F. Somner Merryweather, *Bibliomania in the Middle Ages* (London, 1849), 193–94. For a commentary on this list of about forty books, see Madeleine Blaess, "L'abbaye des Bordesley et les livres de Guy de Beauchamp," *Romania* 78 (1957): 511–18.

<sup>75</sup> On this topic, see Mary Dzon, "Joseph and the Amazing Christ-Child of Late-Medieval Legend," in *Childhood in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: The Results of a Paradigm Shift in the History of Mentality*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin, 2005), 135–57.

<sup>76</sup> Horstmann, *Altenglische Legende*, 15, l. 386. It is worth noting that Jesus does not laugh in this episode as it is recounted in the Infancy Gospel of Thomas. See Ronald F. Hock, *The Infancy Gospels of James and Thomas* (Santa Rosa, Calif., 1995), chap. 2, pp. 106–7.

by devout Christians, such as Cecily Neville, in the later Middle Ages. Illuminations of these legends can even be found in Books of Hours, as noted above.<sup>77</sup> The fusing of apocryphal images with conventional religious iconography reveals the extent to which the legendary Christ Child had become an object of meditation for late-medieval audiences.<sup>78</sup> How may the *Infantia salvatoris* have appealed to pious sensibilities? Many of the stories contained in the Latin and vernacular versions of this text are like the episode involving the pigs recounted above: Jesus comes into conflict with the Jews around him and causes them to experience misfortune, which he usually later rectifies. In other cases, the Child mercifully performs miracles to help those in need, as when he causes grain to grow instantaneously in order to relieve a famine afflicting the Holy Family's neighbors.<sup>79</sup> The *Infantia salvatoris* also tells how, on the flight into Egypt, the infant Jesus graciously causes a palm-tree to bend down so that his mother, who is tired and hungry, may be refreshed by its fruit. This is one example of a large number of miracles that the apocryphal Christ Child performs at his mother's request. In this respect, the apocryphal infancy legends are similar to the miracles of the Virgin, a popular genre in the later Middle Ages.<sup>80</sup> The variation among the last two anecdotes involving benevolent miracles worked by Jesus and the story about the pigs demonstrates the ambiguity of the legends' portrayal of the Christ Child: he is not simply a mischievous boy but also a loving son and merciful Savior. In this

<sup>77</sup> Kathryn A. Smith has studied apocryphal images contained in the fourteenth-century Neville of Hornby Hours and in other medieval religious art; see her *Art, Identity and Devotion* (n. 47 above), "Accident, Play, and Invention" (n. 48 above), and "Canonizing the Apocrypha: London, British Library MS Egerton 2781 and its Visual, Devotional and Social Contexts," 3 vols. (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1996), 1:227–80. The Carew-Poyntz Hours is another fourteenth-century devotional book that includes scenes based upon apocryphal infancy legends (fols. 68r–v and 69r–v). See M. R. James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Fitzwilliam Museum* (Cambridge, 1895), 111–12. On medieval depictions of the apocrypha more generally, see David R. Cartlidge and J. Keith Elliott, *Art and the Christian Apocrypha* (London, 2001).

<sup>78</sup> Boulton points out that the legends of Jesus in late-medieval France took on the character of meditational texts ("Transmission or Transformation," 18).

<sup>79</sup> See, for example, the episode recounted in the longest extant Middle English poem on the childhood of Jesus, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota MS Z822 N81 (ed. Parker, *Middle English Stanzaic Versions of the Life of Saint Anne*, 68–69, ll. 2614–58).

<sup>80</sup> For an overview of medieval devotion to Mary, see Elizabeth A. Johnson, "Marian Devotion in the Western Church," in *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation*, ed. Jill Raitt (New York, 1987), 392–414. On the emergence of Marian miracles as a popular genre, see Richard W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (New Haven, 1953), 246–54. The brevity of accounts of the miracles worked by the Virgin and by the Christ Child makes them, like *exempla*, suitable for oral recitation and occasional reading, a point made by Armstrong, "Piety of Cicely," 85.

way, the apocryphal Christ Child is not so different from the pious boy of the *Mirror* after all.

#### 4. SURVEY OF APOCRYPHAL INFANCY TEXTS

The various Latin and vernacular versions of the *Infantia salvatoris* consist of apocryphal narratives dating back to the Early Christian era and legends that were added to them over the course of the medieval centuries. The Protoevangelium of James, most likely written in Greek in the second century, describes, among other things, the childlessness of Anne and Joachim, the conception of Mary, her presentation in the Temple, her marriage to Joseph, the discovery of her pregnancy, the vindication of Mary and Joseph's innocence, and the miraculous birth of Christ.<sup>81</sup> The Infancy Gospel of Thomas (henceforth IGT), which was also probably originally written in Greek in the second century, narrates the various wonders that Jesus performed as a boy, including his vivification of clay birds and his precocious manifestation of divine wisdom in the presence of Jewish teachers.<sup>82</sup> In the Middle Ages, the IGT circulated in Latin and was also incorporated into the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, as noted below.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>81</sup> For scholarly discussions and translations of the Protoevangelium, see Hock, *Infancy Gospels* (n. 76 above); J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation*, revised ed. (Oxford, 1999), 48–67; and Oscar Cullmann, "Infancy Gospels," in *New Testament Apocrypha: Gospels and Related Writings*, ed. Edgar Hennecke and Wilhelm Schneemelcher, trans. R. McL. Wilson, revised ed., 2 vols. (Louisville and London, 1991), 1:421–39. M. R. James notes that Origen's reference to the Protoevangelium indicates that it "is as old as the second century" (*The Apocryphal New Testament* [1924; rpt. Berkeley, 2004], 38).

<sup>82</sup> For introductions to and translations of the Infancy Gospel of Thomas, see Hock, *Infancy Gospels*, 84–101; Elliott, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 68–83; and Cullmann, "Infancy Gospels," 439–53. Tony Chartrand-Burke is preparing an edition of the IGT based upon his Ph.D. diss., "The Infancy Gospel of Thomas: The Text, Its Origins and Its Transmission" (University of Toronto, 2001). On the dating of the text, see *ibid.*, 265–69. Reidar Aasgaard, *The Childhood of Jesus: Decoding the Apocryphal Infancy Gospel of Thomas* (Eugene, Or., 2009), provides a full-length study of the text but gives only minimal attention to its reception in the Middle Ages. For a brief overview of this apocryphon, see Sever J. Voicu, "Notes sur l'histoire du texte de L'Histoire de l'Enfance de Jésus," *Apocrypha* 2 (1991): 191–32. For the passages in the IGT mentioned above, see Hock, *Infancy Gospels*, 104–7, and 112–19.

<sup>83</sup> For the IGT in Latin (*Evangelium Thomae latinum*), see Tischendorf, *Evangelia apocrypha*, 164–80. On the earliest witness to the Latin tradition, see Guy Philippart, "Fragments palimpsestes latins du Vindobonensis 563 (V<sup>e</sup> siècle?): Évangile selon S. Matthieu, Évangile de l'enfance selon Thomas, Évangile de Nicodème," *Analecta Bollandiana* 90 (1972): 391–411.

In considering whether the original IGT text was heretical, scholars were formerly influenced by the mistaken view that it was associated with the gnostic Gospel of Thomas, a collection of sayings of Jesus.<sup>84</sup> More helpful in this matter is a passage from Irenaeus of Lyons's *Adversus haereses*, which may possibly suggest a gnostic origin, or at least affiliation, of the IGT. Irenaeus refers to a story circulating among the heretical sect of the Marcionites that tells how a master tried to teach the sagacious Christ Child the alphabet but was shown by his pupil to be ignorant of the meaning of the letters Alpha and Beta. A version of this story, which has been said to present the boy Jesus as "the gnostic Redeemer," appears in the IGT.<sup>85</sup> Recently Ronald F. Hock has denied that this episode is necessarily gnostic, saying that "both in its original form as an apophthegm and in its later expanded form this story is easily understood as merely showing Jesus's superiority over his teachers."<sup>86</sup>

The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew is a Latin reworking of and elaboration on the Protoevangelium, which has been dated variously from the sixth to the ninth century.<sup>87</sup> The text derives its modern title from a spurious set of letters that, after its composition, was later attached to its beginning in a number of manuscripts. In this prologue, two bishops ask Jerome to translate a Hebrew text on the infancy of the Savior and birth of the Virgin, supposedly composed by the Apostle Matthew. In his response, Jerome agrees to do so. According to this prologue, the goal of translating Matthew's text into Latin is "to make known the extraordinary things of Christ" and to counteract an apocryphal text on the same topic that was written by "heretics." In order "to instill their evil doctrine," these heretics "mixed in their lies with the true ac-

<sup>84</sup> Johannes Quasten, for example, believed that the IGT was "probably an expurgated and abbreviated edition of the original [Gospel of Thomas]" (*Patrology: The Beginnings of Patristic Literature*, 3 vols. [1950; rpt. Westminster, Md., 1984], 1:123). Chartrand-Burke explains that the two texts are not related, as scholars had previously thought ("Infancy Gospel of Thomas," 11, 95–99, and 292–98). For a discussion and translation of the gnostic Gospel of Thomas, see Elliott, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 123–47.

<sup>85</sup> See *Irénée de Lyon: Contre les hérésies*, vol. 1.2, ed. Louis Doutreleau and Adelin Rousseau, Sources Chrétiennes 264 (Paris, 1979), bk. 1, chap. 20.1, p. 288. Cullmann, "Infancy Gospels," 442 and 445.

<sup>86</sup> Hock, *Infancy Gospels*, 99. For a selection of gnostic legends concerning the Christ Child, see Cullman, "Infancy Gospels," 453–55.

<sup>87</sup> Elliott suggests the eighth or ninth century (*Apocryphal New Testament*, 86). In contrast, Rita Beyers, the recent editor of the Nativity of Mary, a reworking of the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, says that the latter text originated sometime between the middle of the sixth century and the last decades of the eighth century, probably in the first quarter of the seventh century ("Introduction générale aus deux textes édités," *Libri de nativitate Mariae: Libellus de nativitate sanctae Mariae*, Corpus Christianorum, Series Apocryphorum 10 [Turnhout, 1997], 13).

count of the nativity of Christ so that they might hide the bitterness of death under the sweetness of life,” mixing honey with poison so to speak.<sup>88</sup> This quotation reveals that an anonymous redactor of Pseudo-Matthew was aware of the charge of heresy leveled against apocryphal literature. He cleverly presents the text that follows as an authoritative and pristine account of Mary’s birth and Christ’s infancy, which was subsequently corrupted by heretics.

Some versions of Pseudo-Matthew include stories relating the miracles that the child Jesus supposedly performed on the flight into Egypt, and end with the angel telling Joseph to return to Judea. Other versions, found in Latin manuscripts from the high to later Middle Ages, incorporate episodes recounted by the Infancy Gospel of Thomas, thus extending the text into Jesus’ childhood, a stage of his life marked by many miracles.<sup>89</sup> This latter section is called the “Pars altera.” Although the most recent editor of Pseudo-Matthew, Jan Gijssels, excludes the additional legends because they are absent from most manuscripts, he provides codicological descriptions of families of late-medieval manuscripts that have incorporated the extra material pertaining to Christ’s childhood.<sup>90</sup> An anonymous author of a thirteenth-century Latin apocryphal infancy text in prose, whose contents go beyond those of the most recent edition of Pseudo-Matthew, indicates on more than one occasion that his source is the *Liber de infantia salvatoris*.<sup>91</sup> This phrase (or some variation of it) was apparently the title by which the expanded version of Pseudo-Matthew was commonly known in the later Middle Ages.<sup>92</sup> Yet considering

<sup>88</sup> “. . . non tam ad percipienda ea quae sunt Christi insignia quam hereticorum astutiam excludendum, qui ut doctrinam malam instruerent bonae Christi natiuitati sua mendacia miscuerunt ut per dulcedinem uitae mortis amaritudinem occultarent” (*Libri de nativitate Mariae: Pseudo-Matthaei evangelium, textus et commentarius*, ed. Jan Gijssels, Corpus Christianorum, Series Apocryphorum 9 [Turnhout, 1997], 281).

<sup>89</sup> For introductions to and translations of Pseudo-Matthew, see James, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 70–79; Elliott, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 84–99; and Cullmann, “Infancy Gospels,” 458 and 462–65. See also the recent edition cited in the previous note.

<sup>90</sup> Gijssels discusses the various manuscript families of Pseudo-Matthew in the introduction to his edition. Most prominent of the families that include IGT material are Q and R, though IGT material sometimes appears in other manuscript families, such as P<sup>3</sup> (*Pseudo-Matthaei evangelium*, 94–97, and 150–86). Elliott (*Apocryphal New Testament*, 85) summarizes Gijssels’ view of the status of the IGT material in relation to Pseudo-Matthew. The older edition of Pseudo-Matthew, published by Konstantin von Tischendorf in the nineteenth century and based on four late-medieval manuscripts, includes legends recounting miracles that Jesus performed as he was growing up (*Evangelia apocrypha*, 51–112, esp. 93–112 [Pars altera]).

<sup>91</sup> See *Narrationes de vita et conversatione beatae Mariae virginis et de pueritia et adolescentia salvatoris*, ed. Oscar Schade (Halle, 1870), 20 and passim.

<sup>92</sup> In Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France lat. 11867, a manuscript that contains Pseudo-Matthew with the “Pars altera,” the apocryphal infancy text begins on fol. 166r with a descrip-

that the unexpanded version of this apocryphon sometimes went by this title (or something similar to it) as well,<sup>93</sup> we cannot be absolutely sure whether the *Infantia salvatoris* mentioned in Cecily Neville's household ordinance refers to a text that contained stories about what Jesus did as he was growing up, or only dealt with events leading up to his birth and occurring during his infancy. Nevertheless, there is definitely a good probability that it did contain stories about Jesus as he was growing up, given that Caxton's apocryphal infancy text does so, and, more generally, that IGT material was circulating in both Latin and the vernacular in the later Middle Ages.<sup>94</sup> In this discussion it is helpful to recall that the Latin word *infantia* in the six-age scheme of the life cycle referred to the first stage of human life, which was thought to last seven years.<sup>95</sup> *Infantia* did not simply mean "babyhood," which is what the word conjures up for a modern English-speaking audience.

Besides incorporating stories from the Infancy Gospel of Thomas, the *Infantia salvatoris* appropriated other legends, such as the tale about how Jesus miraculously dyed separate pieces of cloth different colors despite his having

tion of St. Anne's three marriages and is presented as follows: "Incipit liber de ortu beate marie virginis et de infancia iesu Christi a beato matthaeo evangelista ebraice scriptus. . . ." This text, which belongs to Gijssels's Q family, has been edited by Catherine Dimier-Paupert, *Livre de l'Enfance du Sauveur: Une version médiévale de l'Évangile de l'Enfance du Pseudo-Matthieu (XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle)* (Paris, 2006), here 137.

<sup>93</sup> See Gijssels, *Pseudo-Matthaei evangelium*, 98–104 and passim. The title *Infantia salvatoris*, or some variation of it, appears in a number of medieval manuscripts containing an apocryphal infancy text and the Gospel of Nicodemus; see Zbigniew Izydorczyk, *Manuscripts of the Evangelium Nicodemi: A Census* (Toronto, 1993), passim. Without examining all the manuscripts listed by Gijssels and Izydorczyk, it is impossible to know exactly what apocryphal infancy episodes particular manuscripts contain and how the scribes themselves entitled these texts. The old library catalogues upon which both these scholars were dependent often speak vaguely of apocryphal infancy material. I should note here as well that an unusual apocryphal infancy gospel, a composite text with docetic features, was likewise entitled *Infantia salvatoris* or something similar. See Gijssels, *Pseudo-Matthaei evangelium*, 211–17. For an edition of one of these Latin texts (in London, British Library Arundel 404) and a translation of an Irish congener, see M. R. James, *Latin Infancy Gospels* (Cambridge, 1927). For a newer edition, see Martin McNamara et al., *Apocrypha Hiberniae I: Evangeliae Infantiae*, Corpus Christianorum, Series Apocryphorum 13–14 (Turnhout, 2001).

<sup>94</sup> Izydorczyk has suggested that the Caxton text is affiliated with late-medieval Latin manuscripts of Pseudo-Matthew ("Early English Translations of the Infancy Gospels: A Preliminary Assessment," delivered at the Colloque international sur la littérature apocryphe chrétienne, Lausanne and Geneva, 22–25 March 1995). I am grateful to Professor Izydorczyk for permitting me to read a transcript of his paper.

<sup>95</sup> Isidore, *Etymologiae* 11.2.1–2 (ed. W. M. Lindsay, 2 vols. [Oxford, 1911]). A translation is provided in *The "Etymologies" of Isidore of Seville*, trans. Stephen A. Barney et al. (Cambridge, 2006), 241. On different schema of the life cycle, see J. A. Burrow, *The Ages of Man: A Study in Medieval Writing and Thought* (Oxford, 1986).

cast them into one vat.<sup>96</sup> This story is found in the Arabic Infancy Gospel, which has been described as a “late compilation” that “is likely to go back to a Syrian archetype.”<sup>97</sup> The episode about the pigs, found, for example, in Caxton’s *Infantia salvatoris*, does not occur in the IGT. Like the story about the dyed cloths, it may be traced back to the Arabic Infancy Gospel, which tells how Jesus changed his playmates into goats, rather than pigs.<sup>98</sup> The miracle involving pigs is recounted in some of the extant Middle English poems on the childhood of Jesus, but I am unaware of its appearance in a Latin manuscript. However, given that Caxton’s text “almost certainly [is] reflecting older Latin traditions,” I think it is fair to surmise that the story about the pigs circulated in some late-medieval Latin manuscripts, even if only in a relatively small number.<sup>99</sup> Further examination of Latin manuscripts with IGT material might very well reveal instances of the episode with the pigs.

<sup>96</sup> This story appears, however, in the Paris fragment of the IGT (Bibliothèque nationale de France gr. 239); for a translation of this passage, see Cullmann, “Infancy Gospels,” 453.

<sup>97</sup> Elliott, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 100; James, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 80. The text may have been composed in the eighth or ninth century; see Chartrand-Burke “Infancy Gospel of Thomas,” 127. Henry Sike translated the text into Latin and printed it in a facing-page edition, *Euangelium infantiae uel liber apocryphus de infantia saluatoris* (Utrecht, 1697). For a modern English translation of the Arabic text, see B. Harris Cowper, *The Apocryphal Gospels and Other Documents Relating to the History of Christ* (London, 1867); for the story of the miraculously dyed pieces of cloth, see chap. 37, p. 203.

<sup>98</sup> See Elliott, *Apocryphal New Testament*, chap. 40, pp. 106–7. A story about Jesus changing children into pigs is recounted by the Islamic writer al-Tha’labī (†1035); see ‘*Arā’is al-Majālis fī Qisas al-Anbiyā*’ or “*Lives of the Prophets*,” trans. William M. Brinner (Leiden, 2002), 650. See further Roger Arnaldez, *Jésus, Fils de Marie prophète de l’Islam* (Paris, 1980), 122–24, connecting the story about the pigs to Sura 5.60 (“... condemned as pigs . . .”) and other verses from the Qur’ān (see *The Qur’an*, trans. M. A. S. Abdel Haleem [Oxford, 2004], 74). On the motif of the pigs, see also Smith, *Art, Identity and Devotion*, 275–78.

<sup>99</sup> Here I quote Izydoreczyk, “Early English Translations.” He goes on to point out that the Caxton text contains stories found in the Anglo-Norman poem on the apocryphal childhood of Jesus which the editor Boulton claims are unattested elsewhere or “have analogues only in Syriac, Arabic or Armenian” (*Les Enfaunces*, 9). It is possible, though I think not probable, that the anecdote about the pigs found its way into the Latin *Infantia salvatoris* as the result of someone’s translation of it from a vernacular version of this apocryphal text. In the early twentieth century, M. R. James remarked that this story “does not occur in known Greek or Latin texts. . . . Most probably the occurrence in both East and West means that the story formed part of the text that lies behind all the versions” (*Apocryphal New Testament*, 67–68). Elsewhere, commenting on the sources for the fourteenth-century Tring Tiles, which depict Christ’s apocryphal childhood, James emphasized scholars’ lack of knowledge of the apocryphal infancy tradition: “so little is as yet known of the manuscripts of the *Liber de Infantia* . . . that it cannot be said that this one story [i.e., Jesus’ extraction of a boy from a tower] is not to be found in Latin; it will probaby emerge when a systematic examination of the MSS. is undertaken” (“Rare Medieval Tiles and Their Story” [n. 48 above], 33. This story occurs in at least two Latin manuscripts: Paris, Bibliothèque de France lat. 11867, fol. 170vb, and Oxford,



There are other stories (besides the anecdote involving pigs) found in European vernacular narratives about the childhood of Jesus that can not be readily traced to a Latin source. These may possibly be derived from oral tradition.<sup>100</sup> An example is the tale about how, on the flight into Egypt, the infant Jesus caused grain to grow instantaneously in order to deceive Herod's men who were pursuing the Holy Family.<sup>101</sup> When the soldiers come upon a man harvesting this grain, the latter tells them that he saw a woman carrying an infant when he was sowing his wheat, leading the soldiers to believe that this must not have been the Child and his mother they are looking for, since the sowing would have had to have taken place a long time ago.<sup>102</sup> Regardless of their origins, all of these legends served the purpose of satisfying the curiosity of Christians who, in the words of Émile Mâle, "found the Gospels too short and could not resign themselves to their silences."<sup>103</sup>

Scholars sometimes posit a tension between popular and elite religious culture in the consumption and propagation of apocryphal legends.<sup>104</sup> According to this view, uneducated lay people enjoyed hearing legends about Jesus, Mary, and the saints without being troubled by the fact that such stories were not found in the New Testament or were lacking in plausibility or historical authenticity. It is sometimes assumed that the church hierarchy was opposed to folklore dealing with religious matters, condemned apocryphal literature, and tried to prevent people from reading or knowing about it. This scenario, however, is not an accurate representation of the reception of the *Infantia salvatoris* in the medieval West. In the following two sections I give an overview of medieval writers' attitudes toward apocryphal literature and evidence for

Bodleian Library MS e Musaeo 177, fol. 44v, as noted below. For an edition of the former, see Dimier-Paupert, *Livre de l'Enfance du Sauveur*, 161–62.

<sup>100</sup> Stephen Gero, "The Infancy Gospel of Thomas: A Study of the Textual and Literary Problems," *Novum Testamentum* 13 (1971): 46–80, describes the IGT as "the fixation in writing of a cycle of oral tradition, of religious folklore" (56).

<sup>101</sup> Kauffmann emphasizes the folkloric nature of the apocryphal infancy legends, particularly the story of the miraculous grain ("Art and Popular Culture" [n. 48 above], 55 and 58). On the origins of this legend, see further Andrew Breeze, "The Instantaneous Harvest," *Ériu* 41 (1990): 81–93.

<sup>102</sup> An anonymous late-medieval French text recounts the story of the miraculous grain on the flight into Egypt; see *La Vie de Nostre Benoît Sauveur Ihesuscris & La Sainte Vie de Nostre Dame*, ed. Millard Meiss and Elizabeth H. Beatson (New York, 1977), 26.

<sup>103</sup> Émile Mâle, *The Gothic Image: Religious Art in France in the Thirteenth Century*, trans. Dora Nussey (1958; rpt. New York, 1972), 206.

<sup>104</sup> Leonard E. Boyle, however, criticized the dichotomy between popular and elite religion; see "Popular Piety in the Middle Ages: What is Popular?" *Florilegium* 4 (1982): 184–93, at 191.

their knowledge of and interest in the *Infantia salvatoris* in particular. My aim is to show that although medieval clerics were somewhat wary of apocryphal texts, they did not forbid others to read them. A corollary of my argument is that Cecily Neville's reading of the *Infantia salvatoris* should not be considered transgressive. In fact, it is likely that her copy of this text circulated within the textual community centered around Syon Abbey, a religious foundation known for its orthodoxy and cultivation of devotional literature.

##### 5. LATIN AND MIDDLE ENGLISH FORMS OF THE WORD "APOCRYPHAL" IN MEDIEVAL CANON LAW AND LEXICOGRAPHICAL TEXTS

The fourth-century synod at Laodicea, which was incorporated into early-medieval collections of canon law, made a pronouncement against apocryphal books. The fifty-ninth canon of this synod as translated from the Greek in the *Collectio Hispana* reads as follows: "it is not fitting for books outside the canon to be read in churches."<sup>105</sup> This statement that apocryphal works were not to be publicly recited within a church leaves open the possibility that such works could be read elsewhere. The Gelasian Decree of the early sixth century names the canonical books of the New Testament and then gives a long list of apocryphal texts, headed by an undoubtedly negative statement about them: "The catholic and apostolic Roman church in no way receives the remaining works, which have been written or preached by heretics or schismatics; we have thought that a few of these, which have come to mind and are to be avoided by Catholics, should be put below."<sup>106</sup> Among the books listed are

<sup>105</sup> The complete passage reads as follows: "Non oportet ab idiotis psalmos compositos et uulgares in ecclesiis dici, neque libros qui sunt extra canonem legere, nisi solos canonicos Noui et Veteris Testamenti" ["popular songs that have been composed by the uneducated are not to be sung in churches, nor are books which are outside the canon to be read there, except only the canonical books of the New and Old Testament"] (*Concilium Laodicenum*, ed. Gonzalo Martínez Díez and Félix Rodríguez, in *La Colección canónica hispana* 3 [Madrid, 1982], 170–71).

<sup>106</sup> "Cetera quae ab hereticis sive scismaticis conscripta vel praedicta sunt, nullatenus recipit catholica et apostolica Romana ecclesia; e quibus pauca, quae ad memoriam venerunt et a catholicis vitanda sunt, credimus esse subdenda" (*Das Decretum Gelasianum: De libris recipiendis et non recipiendis*, ed. Ernst von Dobschütz, *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur*, ed. Adolf Harnach and Carl Schmidt, 38.2 (Leipzig, 1912), 11. A translation of the Decree is given, in excerpted form, in Schneemelcher, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 38–40; and Elliott, *Apocryphal New Testament*, xxiii–xxv. Aasgaard provides a brief reception history of the IGT, which he sums up by saying that "the overall attitude in the [Early Christian] sources seems to have been acceptance and even appreciation. Ecclesial censuring appears to have increased only in the sixth and seventh centuries with the

the *Liber de infantia salvatoris* (item 15) and the *Liber de nativitate salvatoris et de Maria vel obstetrice* (item 16). Considering the date of the Decree, these titles probably refer respectively to the Infancy Gospel of Thomas and the Protoevangelium, though scholars are not in agreement on this point.<sup>107</sup> At the end of the list, the anonymous author states, “we confess that these works and those things similar to them [which a number of heretics or schismatics have taught or written] are not only repudiated but also rejected (*eliminata*) by the entire Roman and apostolic church, and are permanently condemned (*damnata*) by the indissoluble bond of anathema along with their authors and their followers.”<sup>108</sup> The authors of a recent study have commented on the severity of this pronouncement, claiming that it sentenced “to Hell all readers of such texts.”<sup>109</sup> Yet the phrase “*insolubili vinculo in aeternum*” (“forever indissoluble bond”), which they may have in mind, refers to the irrevocable nature of the pronouncement, rather than to the sentencing of a person to hell for eternity. While books and authors are condemned (*damnata*), this is done so vaguely and in a relatively passive way; the place of the damned is not explicitly mentioned in the Decree, although the implication may very well be that those who propagate apocryphal books deserve to go there if they do not they mend their ways.<sup>110</sup> The Decree’s description of apocryphal books and their authors as “*damnata*” may be seen as a Christian parallel of the classical practice of *damnatio memoriae*, whereby the name or image of an unpopular Roman citizen or former emperor was erased from public objects, such as a

canon/apocrypha lists” (*Childhood of Jesus*, 180); this last statement, however, is not substantiated by a serious extension of the text’s reception history into the Middle Ages.

<sup>107</sup> See, for example, Dobschütz’s commentary, *Das Decretum Gelasianum*, 296–97 nn. 1–6; and Elliott’s summary of different views, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 86.

<sup>108</sup> “Haec et his similia quae . . . non solum repudiata verum ab omni Romana catholica et apostolica ecclesia eliminata atque cum suis auctoribus auctorumque sequacibus sub anathematis insolubili vinculo in aeternum confitemur esse damnata” (Dobschütz, *Das Decretum*, 58–60). The Latin past participle “*eliminata*” literally means that apocryphal texts have been cast over the threshold (*limen*) of a church, the verb *elimino* meaning “to turn out of doors” (Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary* [1879; rpt. Oxford, 1996]). “*Eliminata*” should not be rendered “destroyed.”

<sup>109</sup> Monique Paulmier-Foucart and Alain Nadeau, “The History of Christ in Vincent of Beauvais’ *Speculum historiale*,” in *Christ among the Medieval Dominicans: Representations of Christ in the Texts and Images of the Order of Preachers*, ed. Kent Emery, Jr. and Joseph P. Wawrykow (Notre Dame, Ind., 1998), 113–26, at 121. Paulmier-Foucart and Nadeau mention the Gelasian Decree in their discussion of Vincent of Beauvais’s use of apocryphal sources, which I mention below.

<sup>110</sup> The past participle *damnatus* can be used of both people and things, and with regard to those still living, anathematization can be seen as both medicinal and punitive.

monument, as a way of signifying the current regime's disapproval.<sup>111</sup> *Damnatio*, therefore, can refer to "shunning" rather than "damning."

The Decree was reiterated in Gratian's *Decretum* in the middle of the twelfth century, at about the same time that apocryphal stories about Jesus' childhood were starting to take a strong hold on the popular imagination in Western Europe. How could clerics familiar with the Gelasian Decree condone and even participate in the transmission of such literature? An explanation, I suggest, may be found in how the document was interpreted. While modern scholars tend to emphasize the severity of the Gelasian Decree, medieval scholars made subtle distinctions that undercut its harshness and seem at times to have challenged its authoritativeness by rationalizing the reading of apocryphal texts.

Explicating the section of Gratian's *Decretum* that lists apocryphal books (i.e., its citation of the Gelasian Decree), the *Glossa ordinaria* explains the meaning of the word "apocryphal" as follows:

Apocryphal means hidden and secret, as the word comes from *apo* meaning "of" and *crysis* meaning "concealed." Therefore, a book is called apocryphal, that is, concealed and secret, when its author is unknown. It is not received by the Church but, one might say, rejected, in that it may be read, not in church, but elsewhere privately (*non in Ecclesia, sed remote et secreta ab Ecclesia est legendus*). This follows Hug. [Huguccio]. So it is called apocryphal in Greek and *secreta*, that is "concealed places" in Latin. And, according to Io. de Fan. [Johannes de Phintona?], because virgins are accustomed to hide in their rooms and remain there concealed, a virgin is called *alma* in Hebrew, *apocrypha* in Greek, and *secreta*, that is, hidden, in Latin.<sup>112</sup>

The interpretation of the word "apocryphal" as "secret" may be traced back to Isidore of Seville (†636), who explains that apocryphal texts are considered dubious because "their origin is hidden and not evident to the Church Fathers, from whom the authority of the true scriptures has come down to us. . . ." He also remarks that although these writings contain some truth, they do not have canonical authority on account of the many false things that are in them. "Many works," Isidore continues, "are produced by heretics under the names of the prophets, and more recently under the names of the apostles, all of which have, as a result of diligent examination, been set apart by canonical

<sup>111</sup> Harald Weinrich, *Lethé: The Art and Critique of Forgetting*, trans. Steven Rendall (Ithaca, N.Y., 2004; first published in German in 1997), 33.

<sup>112</sup> Gratian: *The Treatise on Laws (Decretum DD. 1–20) with the Ordinary Gloss*, trans. Augustine Thompson and James Gordley (Washington, D.C., 1993), 57. For the Latin, see *Corpus iuris canonici*, D. 15 c. 3 (Lyons, 1618), col. 57.

authority under the name apocrypha.”<sup>113</sup> Huguccio, a twelfth-century canonist, whose gloss is mentioned in the passage from the *Glossa ordinaria* cited above, provides a helpful explanation of what it means to say that the church does not receive, but rejects, an apocryphal book.<sup>114</sup> That such a book is not completely condemned, in the sense of being regarded as forbidden reading material worthy of destruction, is indicated by Huguccio’s statement that it may be read “elsewhere privately.” Cecily Neville’s practice of having the *Infantia salvatoris* recited in the privacy of her home is an excellent example of licit reading of an apocryphal text. Although it is doubtful that Cecily Neville knew about Huguccio’s gloss on apocryphal books, another English noblewoman, Elizabeth de Burgh, Lady of Clare (†1360), seems to have owned a copy of one of Huguccio’s works (“1 hugucion”), as well as “1 poire [pair] de decretals,” both of which she bequeathed to Clare Hall, Cambridge.<sup>115</sup>

In the Latin dictionary known as the *Catholicon*, the thirteenth-century Dominican John Balbi of Genoa explicitly mentions the *Infantia salvatoris* in his

<sup>113</sup> Isidore, *Etymologiae* 6.2.51–3 (ed. Lindsay; trans. Barney et al., 241). Isidore here cites Augustine of Hippo, who gives a definition of the apocrypha in his discussion about whether there were giants who did not have human fathers, which he says is treated in an apocryphal book attributed to Enoch (see *De civitate Dei* 15.23, ed. Bernard Dombart and Alphonsus Kalb, CCL 48 [Turnhout, 1955], 491). Marek Starowieyski argues that, despite his statement about heretics authoring apocryphal texts, Isidore saw value in the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, to which he occasionally alludes; see “Isidore de Séville et les apocryphes,” in *De Tertullien aux Mozarabes, I: Antiquité tardive et Christianisme ancien (III<sup>e</sup>–VI<sup>e</sup> siècles): Mélanges offerts à Jacques Fontaine*, ed. Louis Holtz and Jean-Claude Fredouille (Paris, 1992), 133–39.

<sup>114</sup> Huguccio’s comment about apocryphal books found in the *Glossa ordinaria* comes from his *Summa decretorum*, specifically his gloss on D.16, c.1, s.v. “constat esse remota ab auctoritate canonica atque aliter deputata inter apocrypha”: “Apocrifum dicitur occultum et secretum ab apo quod est de et crifus quod est secretum; inde liber dicitur apocrifus id est occultus et secretus scilicet cuius auctor ignoratur vel si non ignoratur ab ecclesia tamen non recipitur sed reprobat quasi non in ecclesia sed secrete et remote ab ecclesia est legendus” (Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana Vat. lat. 2280, fol. 13vb; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France lat. 13396, fol. 14v). I am grateful to Wolfgang P. Müller for providing me with these references. For a study of Huguccio the canonist, which considers the vexed question of whether he is the author of the lexicon *Derivationes*, see Müller’s *Huguccio: The Life, Works, and Thought of a Twelfth-Century Jurist* (Washington, D.C., 1994), esp. chap. 1; and his earlier article “Huguccio of Pisa: Canonist, Bishop, and Grammarian?” *Viator* 22 (1991): 121–52. Echoing Isidore, the author of the *Derivationes* discusses the word *apocryphus* under the letter *c* (for *crisis*), analyzing it in terms of its etymological meaning; see the edition by Enzo E. Cecchini et al., *Uguccione da Pisa: Derivationes*, 2 vols. (Florence, 2004), 2:291. This entry overlaps partially with the passage from the *Summa decretorum* cited above, but it does not include Huguccio’s statement that apocryphal texts may be read privately.

<sup>115</sup> *A Collection of All the Wills, Now Known To Be Extant, of the Kings and Queens of England*, ed. J. Nichols (1780; rpt. New York, 1969), 31.

entry for the word “apocrifus.” After noting, along the lines of Isidore, that the word etymologically refers to something secret,<sup>116</sup> Balbi offers another definition when he explains that “apocryphal” means “far from judgment or concerning which certain judgment cannot be had.”<sup>117</sup> He goes on to enumerate two ways in which a book is said to be “apocryphal”:

(1) either since the author is unknown and the truth is clear, and these the church receives not for the proving of faith, but for the destruction of errors. Such are the book of Judith and others which Jerome enumerates in the prologue to the Book of Kings. . . . (2) Or it is called “apocryphal” when there is doubt about the truth of the book, and the church does not receive this kind of work, such as the *Book concerning the Infancy of the Savior* and the *Book concerning the Bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin*.<sup>118</sup>

As is evident from this passage, Balbi distinguishes between works whose authorship is unknown, but which are highly regarded, and those that are suspected of being untrue. Medieval churchmen placed the *Infantia salvatoris* in the latter category. As this example shows, the Latin word “apocryphus” was used to refer to different kinds of books, not simply to texts that were thought to be authored and propagated by heretics, and utterly without value.

<sup>116</sup> “Apocrifus a crisis quod est secretum, et apo quod est de componitur. Apocrifus, fa, fum, penultima correpta, id est, occultus et secretus, quasi de secretis, id est, de numero secretorum. Apocrifa proprie dicuntur illa scripta quorum origo et autor ignoratur et quamvis ibi sint multa vera tamen non habentur in autoritate, propter plura falsa que ibi continentur,” entry for “apocryphus” (John Balbi, *Catholicon* [Strasbourg, not after 1483]). This passage echoes the aforementioned quotations from the *Summa decretorum* and the *Derivationes*. In contrast to Isidore, the authors of these texts all divide the word “apocryphus” into the components “apo” and “crisis.”

<sup>117</sup> “Uel secundum quosdam apocrifus componitur ab apos quod est longe, et crisis quod est iudicium, quasi longe a iudicio, vel de quo non potest certum haberi iudicium” (ibid.)

<sup>118</sup> “Et dicitur dupliciter liber apocrifus, vel quia autor ignoratur et veritas patet et talem recipit ecclesia non ad fidei probationem, sed ad errorum destructionem, quales sunt liber Iudith, et alii quos numerat Hieronimus in prologo regum. . . . Uel dicitur apocrifus, quia de eius ueritate dubitatur, et tales non recipit ecclesia, ut est liber de infancia saluatoris, et de assumptione corporis beate virginis” (ibid.). For the passage from Jerome, see *Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*, ed. Robert Weber, 4th ed. (Stuttgart, 1994), 365. Another copy of the *Catholicon* I have consulted has “ad morum instruccionem” in place of “ad errorum destructionem” (1460; rpt. Westmead, 1971). This passage from the *Catholicon* is quoted in the prologue to the Wycliffite Bible, where the *Liber de infantia salvatoris* is translated as “the book of the 3ong childhed of the Sauyour” (*The Holy Bible containing the Old and New Testaments with the Apocryphal Books in the Earliest English Versions made from the Latin Vulgate by John Wycliffe and his Followers*, ed. Josiah Forshall and Frederic Madden, 4 vols. [Oxford, 1850], 1:2). Reference to the *Infantia salvatoris* in this passage indicates that this apocryphal text was known among the Wycliffites, at least by name. On Wycliffite criticism of apocryphal “fables,” see below.

The Middle English word “apocrif” (and its variants) had different shades of meaning, as did the Latin word “apocryphus.”<sup>119</sup> It could be used to characterize a book whose authorship was unknown, one which was doubtful or not trustworthy (a consequence of the first condition), or one which was inauthentic or simply false. An example of the first, least condemnatory sense of the word “apocrif” occurs in John Trevisa’s fourteenth-century translation of Ralph Higden’s *Polychronicon*, when he remarks that the legend of St. George “is acounted among writynges þat beeth Apocripha. þe writynge is Apocripha whanne þe auctor þerof is unknowe.”<sup>120</sup> The fifteenth-century Augustinian friar John Capgrave adds another shade of meaning to that given by Trevisa, thereby exemplifying the second sense of the word mentioned above. He remarks that the book known as “*Þe Penauns of Adam* be cleped *Apocriphum*, which is to sey ‘whan þe mater is in doute’ or ellis ‘whan men knowe not who mad þe book.’”<sup>121</sup> An example of the third sense occurs at the end of a long poem on the life of Mary and the childhood of Jesus found in a fifteenth-century manuscript (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota MS Z822 N81). The narrator obviously feels compelled to offer some kind of justification for his poem in order to counter his curmudgeonly critics who say that his source “es apocrysme & none authentyk thyng.”<sup>122</sup>

The scribe who copied this manuscript gave his initials in a colophon on the folio preceding the beginning of the poem on the lives of Mary and Jesus (185r): “May the name of the Lord be blessed now and forever. The name of the writer is R. S., [who is] full of love. Behold how good and how pleasant it

<sup>119</sup> Only a few instances of this ultimately Greek-derived word are listed in the *Middle English Dictionary*, ed. Robert E. Lewis, Sherman M. Kuhn, and Hans Kurath (Ann Arbor, 1954–2001). On medieval knowledge of Greek, see Walter Berschin, “Greek Elements in Medieval Latin Manuscripts,” in *The Sacred Nectar of the Greeks: The Study of Greek in the West in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Michael W. Herren (London, 1988), 85–104.

<sup>120</sup> *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden monachi Cestrensis, together with the English Translations of John Trevisa*, ed. Joseph Rawson Lumby, Rolls Series 41.5 (London, 1874), 104–5. The Passion of St. George is said to be “apocryphal” in the *Legenda aurea* 66 (ed. Maggioni [n. 11 above], 1:391; and in Gratian’s *Decretum*, D.15 c.3 (ed. Friedberg, col. 39). Despite the questionable origins of his legend, George had become the patron saint of England by the later Middle Ages. For a history of his cult of this saint, see Samantha Riches, *St. George: Hero, Martyr and Myth* (Stroud, 2000). The fifteenth-century manuscript Minneapolis, University of Minnesota MS Z822 N81, which contains an apocryphal childhood of Jesus poem, ends with a legend of St. George.

<sup>121</sup> *John Capgrave’s Abbreviacion of Cronicles*, ed. Peter J. Lucas, EETS o.s. 285 (Oxford, 1983), 12. Osbern of Gloucester (s. XII) similarly offers “dubitabile” as a synonym for “apocri-fum” in his *Derivationes*, ed. Paola Busdraghi et al., 2 vols. (Spoleto, 1996), 1:70.

<sup>122</sup> Parker, ed., *Middle English Stanzaic Versions of the Life of Saint Anne*, 89, ll. 3428–29.

is for brethren to dwell together in unity."<sup>123</sup> On the basis of this autobiographical remark, which draws on Psalm 132:1, we can deduce that the scribe lived in a religious community, and was probably a monk or a friar. He would likely have been familiar with canonical discussions of the word "apocryphus," and so probably knew that although his "apocrysome" text was questionable, it was still allowed to be read within a private setting.<sup>124</sup>

I have already mentioned that the lay scribe Robert Thornton stated that clerics call "the Romance of the childhode of Jhesu Criste . . . Ipokrephum."<sup>125</sup> It is not entirely clear what Thornton means here, but he seems to indicate that clerics have put this text into a special, "apocryphal" category. By referring to the poem on the childhood of Jesus as a "romance," Thornton may simply mean that it is a narrative poem, perhaps one translated from the French; by the phrase "apocryphal romance," he may be characterizing the narrative as one that is not historically reliable.<sup>126</sup> Regardless of what precisely Thornton had in mind, we can infer from the aforementioned examples that both religious ("R. S.") and lay people (Thornton) took an interest in apocryphal legends about the childhood of Jesus, even when they were aware of the dubious status of such literature.<sup>127</sup>

<sup>123</sup> (Citing the Douai-Rheims translation). "Sit nomen Domini benedictum. Ex hoc nunc et usque in eternum. Nomen scriptoris R. S. plenus amoris. Ecce quam bonum et quam iocundum habitare fratres in unum." I have taken this transcription from J. Lawrence Mitchell, "A 'Northern Homilies Cycle' Manuscript: Minnesota MS Z822 N81," *Scriptorium* 35 (1981): 321–30, at 322. Scholars do not agree about the second initial. Parker interpreted it as a "G" (*Middle English Stanzaic Versions of the Life of Saint Anne*, xxvi). Thomas J. Heffernan believes that "the initials R.S. are almost certainly to be expanded to the name 'R.[?] Stanndone,'" and that "plenus amoris" is a rhetorical tag ("The Use of the Phrase *Plenus Amoris* in Scribal Colophons," *Notes & Queries* 28.6 [1981]: 493–94).

<sup>124</sup> The poem on the childhood of Jesus in London, British Library Harley 2399 was likewise copied by a cleric. The scribe signed his name at the end of it (on fol. 60v): "Quod dominus Johannes architenens canonicus bodminie et natus in illa—deo gratias" (Horstmann, *Sammlung*, 123). On the basis of this colophon and a similar notation made earlier in the manuscript (fol. 47r), Horstmann concludes that the scribe's name was John Bower. As N. R. Ker points out, Bodmin refers to the Augustinian priory of St. Petroc in Cornwall (*Medieval Libraries of Great Britain: A List of Surviving Books*, 2d ed. [London, 1964], 53, 75, and 331).

<sup>125</sup> Horstmann, "Nachträge zu den Legenden," 327.

<sup>126</sup> On the semantic range of the word "romance" in Middle English, see the MED and Dieter Mehl, *The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (London, 1968), 15–17. Thornton may also be thinking of the poem about the childhood of Jesus as an adventure story, having some generic similarities to, say, the "romance" of *Richard Coeur de Lion*, which precedes it in the manuscript. See John J. Thompson, *Robert Thornton and the London Thornton Manuscript* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1987), 17, and 47–48.

<sup>127</sup> Vitz, in contrast, argues that the author of the Old French poem on the childhood of Je-



# 6. ATTITUDES TOWARD THE *INFANTIA SALVATORIS* ON THE PART OF THE RELIGIOUS ELITE

Clerics and religious had greater cause than lay people to find the *Infantia salvatoris* objectionable because they likely knew of its non-canonical status. In addition, clerics' greater knowledge of the Bible probably made them more aware of the inconsistencies between this apocryphal text and the scriptural account of Christ's life. An examination of medieval views of the *Infantia salvatoris* between the fifth and fifteenth centuries reveals ambiguous feelings on the part of clerics and religious toward it, but very few statements to the effect that Christians should in no way read it.

Jerome († 420) has a reputation for being an outspoken critic of apocryphal infancy gospels on the basis of his repudiation of the story about midwives being present at the nativity of Christ. In his treatise against Helvidius, who held that Mary did not preserve her virginity *post partum*, Jerome refers to the legend about the midwives as "the delirious ravings of apocryphal texts" (*apocryphorum deliramenta*); he reduces Helvidius's position to absurdity by arguing that Joseph could not have "known" Mary right after she gave birth to Jesus (cf. Matthew 1:25) because "there was no room for them in the inn," and by contending that there were no midwives present since Mary herself "laid him in a manger" (Luke 2:7).<sup>128</sup> Despite the fact that Jerome here only refers to the Protoevangelium and must not have known about the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew,<sup>129</sup> scholars tend to take his denunciation of apocryphal details concerning the nativity as indicative of a wholesale condemnation of the apocryphal infancy tradition on the part of the church.<sup>130</sup>

sus could not have been a cleric since he seems ignorant of Scripture ("The Apocryphal and the Biblical," 140).

<sup>128</sup> *Liber adversus Helvidium de perpetua virginitate B. Mariae* (PL 23:192 [201]): "Quae sententia et apocryphorum deliramenta convincit, dum Maria ipsa pannis involvit infantem; et Helvidii expleri non patitur voluptatem, dum in diversorio locus non fuit nuptiarum." Ironically, Jerome's imagination runs the risk of impropriety, since he suggests that even if Joseph had wanted to consummate his marriage with his wife he would have been prevented from doing so since the couple lacked private lodgings and childcare for the newborn infant. Commenting on *Et pannis eum involuit* (Lc 2:7), the Franciscan biblical commentator Nicholas of Lyra († 1349) similarly refers to the apocrypha, though more explicitly: "Per se ipsam. Ex hoc patet falsitas quae scribitur libro de infantia Saluatoris, scilicet ipsam obstetrices habuisse in partu, quae non requiruntur nisi propter inflictionem matris in partu . . ." (*Biblicorum sacrorum cum glossa ordinaria . . . et postilla Nicolai Lyrani . . . Tomus Quintus* [Venice, 1603], col. 709).

<sup>129</sup> Jerome lived before the earliest date of composition assigned to this text.

<sup>130</sup> Vitz, for example, cites Jerome (and the Gelasian Decree) in support of her comment that the Church "in fact condemned various apocryphal stories" ("The Apocryphal and the Biblical," 138 n. 28).

A markedly different attitude toward this literature can be found in the writings of the German canoness Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim († ca. 1000), who translated a version of Pseudo-Matthew into Latin hexameters, presumably for the sake of providing pious reading material for her female companions living in the same Benedictine establishment. In her preface to the seven verified saints' lives which she composed, Hrotsvitha claims to have discovered too late that some of the sources she used are considered apocryphal. Adopting a skeptical attitude toward clerical disapproval of this literature, Hrotsvitha says that, for all churchmen know, the apocryphal stories which she relates may prove to be true.

But if one objects that certain details of this work, in the judgment of some people, have been taken from apocryphal texts, this is not a crime of wicked presumption, but a mistake based upon ignorance, since, when I began to weave the thread of this narrative, I did not know that those matters about which I determined to write were of a dubious nature. But when I realized this, I refused to destroy it, since what may seem to be falsehood may perhaps prove to be truth.<sup>131</sup>

Referring to this passage, Peter Dronke asks whether Hrotsvitha thought that “the concept ‘apocryphal’ itself something relative” and suggests that “perhaps Hrotsvitha is saying: Can legends not be true in their own way, in that they ring true imaginatively?”<sup>132</sup> Other medieval writers defended apocryphal infancy legends using a similar argument, namely, that the Christ Child, possessing divine power, could have worked wonders,<sup>133</sup> yet the forthrightness

<sup>131</sup> “Si autem obicitur quod quedam huius operis . iuxta quorundam estimationem sumpta sint ex apocryphis . non est crimen presumptionis inique sed error ignorantiae quia quando huius stamen seriei . ceperam ordiri . ignoravi dubia esse in quibus disposui laborare . At ubi recognovi pessumdare detrectavi . quia quod videtur falsitas . forsitan probabitur esse veritas” (*Hrotsvitha Opera omnia*, ed. Walter Berschin [Munich, 2001], 1).

<sup>132</sup> Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages: A Critical Study of Texts from Perpetua (†203) to Marguerite Porete (†1310)* (Cambridge, 1984), 66. Hippolyte Delehaye makes a similar remark at the end of his classic book on the saints: “legend, like all poetry, can claim a higher degree of truth than history” (*The Legends of the Saints*, trans. Donald Attwater [Dublin, 1998], 181). Compare the distinction Aristotle makes between historical veracity and hypothetical (or “poetical”) truthfulness in the *Poetics* 9 (*Complete Works*, trans. Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols. [Princeton, 1984], 2:2323).

<sup>133</sup> For example, the author of the *Vie de Nostre Benoît Sauveur* states, “Cy apres sont recitez moult de miracles que l’enfant Jhesus peut faire en sa jeunesse, lesquelz ne sont point en l’euvangille; mais quelque personne devote contemplant la puissance de Dieu, lequel puet faire toutes choses, les mist en escript” [“Hereafter many miracles are recited which the infant Jesus was able to do in his youth, which are not in the Gospel, but which have been put into writing by a devout person contemplating the power of God, which can do all things”] (ed. Meiss and Beatson, 26–27). The anonymous author of Caxton’s *Infantia salvatoris* makes a similar re-

with which Hrotsvitha expresses her willingness to entertain the veracity of apocryphal stories seems reflective of her assertive personality. In the preface to her legends, besides justifying her use of apocryphal sources, Hrotsvitha describes the secretive manner in which she composed her poetry, which may indicate a self-consciousness about being a writer, if not necessarily a fear of censorship on account of the content of her writings.<sup>134</sup>

In her poem *Maria*, which is based upon Pseudo-Matthew, Hrotsvitha narrates Mary's birth and early life, her marriage to Joseph, the nativity of Jesus, and the miracles that occurred on the Holy Family's flight into Egypt.<sup>135</sup> Following the lead of her source, Hrotsvitha weaves together apocryphal and scriptural details. In the middle of her narrative, immediately after noting Joseph's consternation at finding Mary pregnant and the heavenly directive he received in a dream (cf. Matthew 1:20), Hrotsvitha says that she will focus on apocryphal details rather than those found in the gospels, prefacing this narratorial comment with the topos of humility: "The evangelical books speak of all these matters, which indeed surpass our fragile strength. Having mentioned these things which are known to all, I will speak to you about those things which are believed (*creduntur*) to be less frequently (*rarius*) recited in church."<sup>136</sup> In other words, Hrotsvitha wishes to recount apocryphal stories, that is, those that are usually not spoken about publicly in a church, but which may serve as devotional reading material for nuns and canonesses, perhaps within the privacy of their chambers. Hrotsvitha's comment here anticipates

mark: "Nec credantur esse minus vera que hic scripta eo quod non sunt canonizata cum apud deum nichil est impossibile" ["Nor should the things which have been written here be considered less true because they are not canonized, since nothing is impossible with God" (cf. Mt 19:26)] (ed. Holthausen, *W. Saxtons Infantia Salvatoris*, 22). Cf. Parker, ed., *Middle English Stanzaic Versions of the Life of Saint Anne*, 89, ll. 3430–32.

<sup>134</sup> "Unde clam cunctis et quasi furtim. nunc in componendis sola desudando nunc male composita destruendo satagebam iuxta meum posse licet minime necessarium aliquem tamen conficere textum ex sententiis scripturarum. quas intra aream nostri Gandeshemensis collegium coenobii" (*Hrotsvit Opera*, ed. Berschin, 2).

<sup>135</sup> These include the Christ Child's taming of dragons, his commanding a palm-tree to bend down, his shortening of the journey to Egypt, and his causing the idols in the temple to fall down. The IGT material is lacking. For discussions of this poem and the source Hrotsvitha used, see Monique Goullet, "Hrotsvita de Gandersheim, *Maria*," in *Marie: Le culte de la Vierge dans la société médiévale*, ed. Dominique Iogna-Prat et al. (Paris, 1996), 441–70; and Jan Gijssels, "Zu welcher Textfamilie des Pseudo-Matthäus gehört die Quelle von Hrotsvits *Maria*?" *Classica et Mediaevalia* 32 (1979–80): 279–88.

<sup>136</sup> "Haec evangelici demonstrant cuncta libelli / Nostras et fragiles excedunt denique vires. / His nos transmissis, constant quia cognita cunctis, / Sermonem vobis tantum faciemus ab illis, / Rarius in templo que creduntur fore dicta" (*Hrotsvit Opera*, ed. Berschin, 23, ll. 538–42). The phrase "his . . . transmissis" may also be interpreted as "having passed over."

the statement found in the *Glossa ordinaria* to Gratian's *Decretum* that apocryphal works may be read privately.

I have suggested that Cecily Neville was not a woman who read the *Infantia salvatoris* as an act of resistance against the male hierarchical church. There are grounds for interpreting Hrotsvitha's work in this way, on account of her defensiveness of using apocryphal sources. Dronke points out the subtlety with which she expresses her belief in the value of apocryphal literature, paraphrasing the passage quoted above as follows: "I shall base my composition only on those things which are held to be too rarely told in church." Hrotsvitha uses the generalized passive construction . . . but who else thought the apocrypha were too much neglected in church? Does not the impersonal *creduntur* conceal a very personal *credo*?"<sup>137</sup> Dronke's translation of the word *rarius* as "too rarely" (which I have translated above as "less frequently") makes Hrotsvitha seem opinionated and even defiant of ecclesiastical authority. Building upon Dronke's remarks, Charles Nelson likewise interprets Hrotsvitha's attitude toward apocryphal literature in a feminist light: her "decision upon reflection to stay with her [apocryphal] source . . . marks an unmistakable challenge to the male-approved corpus of texts from the past." In her preface, "she is emboldened to add that she has actually presumed to tell a forbidden story."<sup>138</sup> In response to these interpretations, I would say that while Hrotsvitha no doubt felt strongly about the value of the apocrypha, it does not necessarily follow that her valorization of these texts was simply a move to compensate for the relative powerlessness of women in medieval society.

Another well-known medieval writer, Peter Comestor, for the most part skips over the legends about the childhood of Jesus in his *Historia scholastica* (ca. 1170), despite the fact that he incorporates so many other legends into his biblical paraphrase in order to fill in the lacunae left by Scripture.<sup>139</sup> Nevertheless, he includes the detail of the ox and the ass hovering over the manger,<sup>140</sup>

<sup>137</sup> Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages*, 67.

<sup>138</sup> Charles Nelson, "Hrotsvit von Gandersheim: Madwoman in the Abbey," in *Women as Protagonists and Poets in the German Middle Ages: An Anthology of Feminist Approaches to Middle High German Literature*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Göppingen, 1991), 43–55, at 48.

<sup>139</sup> As Beryl Smalley remarks, "Odd as it may seem, Comestor showed rather more reserve on Christian apocrypha, for all their color and piety, than he did on rabbinic traditions on the Old Testament" (*The Gospels in the Schools c. 1100–c. 1280* [London, 1985], 69).

<sup>140</sup> The Protoevangelium (chap. 22) mentions that Mary laid Jesus in an ox-manger to hide him from Herod; see Elliott, *Apocryphal New Testament*, 66. The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew goes further by stating that an ox and ass adored the baby Jesus once he was placed in a manger. This event was seen as a fulfillment of the prophecies of Isaiah (1:3) and Habakkuk (3:2), to which Pseudo-Matthew explicitly refers (*Pseudo-Matthaei evangelium* 14, ed. Gijssels, 431). The ox and the ass were already an iconographic commonplace by Comestor's time, as he him-

and also mentions the destruction of the idols upon the Christ Child's entrance into the temples in Egypt.<sup>141</sup> Noting that the Holy Family stayed there for seven years, Comestor refuses to say more about what happened during that time and upon the Holy Family's return to Nazareth:

Furthermore, concerning the infancy of the Savior and his deeds up until his baptism, we do not read anything in the Gospel except that Luke [chap. 2] says that when he was twelve he remained in Jerusalem, and after three days was found by his parents in the midst of the teachers, hearing and questioning them.<sup>142</sup>

Despite Comestor's strict adherence to the canonical gospels' account of Christ's childhood, some manuscripts of the *Historia* include an apocryphal detail about what Jesus did as a boy: he used to draw water from a well in the service of his mother.<sup>143</sup> It is not clear whether Comestor (or a redactor) took this detail about the well from an apocryphal text about the childhood of Jesus or from oral tradition. A similar story is recounted and illustrated in a fourteenth-century Latin bible harmony (Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana SP II 64 [formerly L. 58 Sup]), on folio 14v: when the boy Jesus was sent by his

self notes: "Etiam in picturis ecclesiarum, quae sunt libri laicorum hoc repraesentatur nobis" ["This is also represented to us in the pictures found in churches, which are the books of the laity"] (PL 198:1540); cf. Gregory the Great's letter to the bishop of Marseilles (PL 77:1027). On the tradition of these two animals, see René Grousset, "Le boeuf et l'âne à la nativité du Christ," *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire* 4 (1884): 334–44.

<sup>141</sup> This incident was recounted by Pseudo-Matthew but also seen as prophesied by Isaiah and prefigured by the departure of the Israelites from Egypt. Pseudo-Matthew alludes to Isaiah 19.1 in its account of the fall of the idols (*Pseudo-Matthaei evangelium* 23, ed. Gijssels, 475). Comestor draws a parallel between the fall of the idols and the departure of the Israelites when he states, "Tradunt quoque, quod sicut in exitu filiorum Israel ex Aegypto non fuit domus Aegypti in qua, Deo procurante, non jaceret mortuum primogenitum, ita nec modo fuit ex Aegypto templum in quo non corruisset idolum" ["They say also that, just as in the departure of the sons of Israel in Egypt, there was no house in Egypt in which, by the power of God, the firstborn did not lie dead, so at that time there was no temple in Egypt in which an idol had not fallen down"] (PL 198:1543).

<sup>142</sup> "Porro de infantia Salvatoris, et operibus eius usque ad baptismum, non legitur in Evangelio nisi quod Lucas dicit duodennem remansisse in Jerusalem, et post triduum inventum a parentibus in medio doctorum audientem, et interrogantem eos" (PL 198:1549). The fact that Comestor used the phrase "infantia Salvatoris" may suggest that he has in mind a book by this title. He explicitly refers to the *Liber de infantia salvatoris* elsewhere, in his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew. See the passage quoted by Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages*, 3d ed. (1952; rpt. Oxford, 1983), 239 n. 5.

<sup>143</sup> "Dicitur ibi fons esse parvus, de quo puer Jesus hauriebat, et ministrabat matri, dum subditus erat" (PL 198:1550, additio).

mother to draw water from a well, a crowd of boys broke his jar, so he brought home water in the lap of his garment.<sup>144</sup>

In the thirteenth century, a number of influential Dominicans incorporated details from the *Infantia salvatoris* into the pastoral manuals they composed for the use of their fellow friars. For example, in his *Speculum historiale* Vincent of Beauvais narrates the conception, early life, and marriage of Mary, noting that his source is the *Liber de infantia salvatoris*.<sup>145</sup> He also cites this book as his authority for the story about how Mary, on the way to Bethlehem before giving birth to Jesus, saw two groups of people, one rejoicing and one lamenting. An angel appears on the scene and interprets them as the Gentiles and the Jews, respectively.<sup>146</sup> Vincent also recounts how a palm-tree bent down at the command of the Child and how the idols were destroyed when he entered a pagan temple in Egypt.<sup>147</sup> At the end of his chapter on the finding of the twelve-year-old Jesus in the Temple, Vincent quotes Comestor's comment about the canonical gospels' passing over Christ's childhood except for this incident, and includes the detail about how the boy Jesus used to draw water from a well.<sup>148</sup>

In the prologue to his grand encyclopedia, the *Speculum maius*, Vincent offers a justification for his use of apocryphal texts as sources. "It is permissible," he says, "to read and even believe [apocryphal works] which are not contrary to the catholic faith, although they do not have the certitude of truth."<sup>149</sup> Vincent makes a threefold distinction among apocryphal texts: some

<sup>144</sup> See the facsimile *Evangelica historia: Manoscritto L.58.Sup. della Biblioteca Ambrosiana*, ed. Angelo Paredi, Bernard Degenhart, and Annegrit Schmitt, 2 vols. (Milan, 1978), facsimile vol., fol. 14v; text vol., 195–96. As the editors note, this story is derived from the Infancy Gospel of Thomas; see Hock, *Infancy Gospels*, chap. 11, 127 and 129. The *Meditationes vitae Christi* similarly relates that Jesus used to draw water from a fountain for his mother (ed. Stallings-Taney [n. 7 above], 59; cf. *Mirror*, 57).

<sup>145</sup> Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum historiale* 6.64–66, vol. 4 of *Speculum quadruplex sive speculum maius* (1624; rpt. Graz, 1965), 194–95.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid. 6.87, p. 203. This anecdote occurs in the Protoevangelium and was repeated in Pseudo-Matthew (Hock, *Infancy Gospels*, chap. 17, pp. 61 and 63; *Pseudo-Matthaei evangelium* 13, ed. Gijssels, 411 and 413).

<sup>147</sup> Vincent also mentions that a tree, which had been exorcised in the presence of the Christ Child, adored him, and thereafter possessed miraculous curative properties (*Speculum historiale* 6.95, p. 206). Vincent's discussion of the curative tree is an exact quotation from Cassiodorus, *Historia ecclesiastica tripartita* 4.42 (ed. Walter Jacob, CSEL 71 [Vienna, 1952], 364–65, ll. 21–39).

<sup>148</sup> Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum historiale* 6.103–4, p. 209.

<sup>149</sup> "Nec hoc dico quia uelim apocrifis, quod nimie presumptionis esset, auctoritatem dare, sed quia licet, ut opinor, ea legere et etiam credere que non sunt contra catholicam fidem, etsi

are heretical; some are of unknown authorship, but “contain pure truth,” such as the Gospel of Nicodemus; and some are of unknown authorship and dubious, such as the *Liber de infantia salvatoris*.<sup>150</sup> He remarks that the type of people who are liable to put credence in apocryphal texts are those “who believe that God could do all these things.”<sup>151</sup> He himself remains neutral, not claiming that the apocryphal material he has included in his history is either true or false.<sup>152</sup> After comparing apocryphal books to pagan texts, both of which, he says, may be read with profit, he concludes his apologia by quoting Paul (1 Thess 5:21): “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”<sup>153</sup> Vincent apparently sees no inconsistency between his limited approbation of reading apocryphal works and the Gelasian Decree’s labeling of such works as apocryphal, for he quotes the latter shortly after his defense of citing apocryphal literature and his argument for the value of reading it.<sup>154</sup>

Jacobus de Voragine, the thirteenth-century Dominican bishop of Genoa and author of the *Legenda aurea*, includes much apocryphal material in his widely popular collection of saints’ lives. In a few passages he explicitly states that he leaves it up to his readers to judge for themselves whether such

non habeant ueritatis certitudinem” (*Préface au “Speculum Maius” de Vincent de Beauvais: Réfraction et diffraction*, ed. Serge Lusignan [Montréal, 1979], 124).

<sup>150</sup> “Quedam enim reputantur apocrypha quia ueritati aduersantur, ut sunt libri hereticorum; quedam uero quia actores eorum ignorantur, licet ueritatem puram contineant, ut est Euangelium nazareorum; quedam etiam quia de ueritate dubitatur, ut est Liber de ortu et infantia beate Virginis et Liber de infantia Salvatoris” (ibid.). On medieval authors’ use of the title *Evangelium Nazareorum* to refer to the Gospel of Nicodemus, see Zbigniew Izydorczyk, “The *Evangelium Nicodemi* in the Latin Middle Ages,” in *The Medieval Gospel of Nicodemus: Texts, Intertexts, and Contexts in Western Europe*, ed. Zbigniew Izydorczyk (Tempe, Ariz., 1997), 43–101, at 77–8, and 91–2.

<sup>151</sup> “. . . salua fide ac sine periculo anime et credi et legi posse, ab hiis qui credunt Deum hec omnia facere potuisse” (*Préface au Speculum Maius*, ed. Lusignan, 124). Compare Vincent’s remark here to the medieval statements about God’s power cited in n. 133 above.

<sup>152</sup> “Sic et ego pauca illa de apocryphis huic operi inserui, non uera uel falsa esse asserendo . . .” (ibid., 124–25).

<sup>153</sup> “Quod autem superius dictum est de gentiliis libris, idem etiam dici potest et de apocryphis” (ibid., 124); “Neque enim aliter a quoquam christiano libri apocryphi siue etiam philosophici uel poetici legendi sunt, nisi in mente iugiter seruando, quod dicit apostolus: ‘omnia probate, quod bonum est tenete’” (ibid., 125).

<sup>154</sup> Paulmier-Foucart and Nadeau note that while Vincent knows the Decree, “he distances himself somewhat from the letter” of it (“History of Christ in Vincent of Beauvais’ *Speculum historiale*” [n. 109 above], 121). It may not be a coincidence that, in his quotation of the end of Gelasian Decree, Vincent leaves out the phrase that speaks of apocryphal books as “repudiata” and “eliminata” (*Préface au Speculum Maius*, ed. Lusignan, 129). The original text (and that which appears in Gratian’s *Decretum*) said that apocryphal books were both repudiated and rejected by the church, and that their authors and the followers of them were condemned.

“apocryphal” stories are to be recited.<sup>155</sup> His attitude toward apocryphal texts is clearly manifested in his account of how the Virgin dropped down her girdle from the sky to prove to doubting Thomas, who was not present at her death, that her body had been assumed into heaven. At the end of this chapter, Jacobus informs his reader that “All that has been said so far, however, is apocryphal,” yet he leaves it to his reader to decide whether this legend seems plausible.<sup>156</sup> Jacobus also makes reference to some apocryphal infancy legends. Like Vincent of Beauvais, he notes that Mary had a vision of two peoples.<sup>157</sup> Yet unlike Vincent, he tells the story of the two midwives both of whom tested Mary’s virginity and found that she was intact.<sup>158</sup> Being a careful scholar, and perhaps also wishing to add credibility to these accounts, Jacobus names his sources: his fellow Dominican Bartholomew of Trent († ca. 1251) and the *Liber de infantia salvatoris*.<sup>159</sup>

In his *Chronicon*, the thirteenth-century Dominican Martin of Poland recounts the miracles that the Christ Child performed on the flight into Egypt, citing the *Liber de infantia salvatoris* as his source.<sup>160</sup> He quotes the passage from the *Historia scholastica* (cited above) in which Comestor says that the

<sup>155</sup> *Legenda aurea* 45, 51, 63 (ed. Maggioni, 1:280, 352, 456). I borrow these references from Zbigniew Izydorczyk, “The *Evangelium Nicodemi* in the Latin Middle Ages,” 81. See also Baudouin de Gaiffier, “L’‘Historia Apocrypha’ dans la Légende dorée,” *Analecta Bollandiana* 91 (1973): 265–72.

<sup>156</sup> *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. William Granger Ryan, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1993), chap. 119, 2:82; *Legenda aurea* 115 (ed. Maggioni, 2:786). For a study of post-medieval criticism of the *Legenda aurea*, which was partly based upon the text’s inclusion of such “fables,” see Sherry L. Reames, *The “Legenda aurea”: A Reexamination of Its Paradoxical History* (Madison, 1985).

<sup>157</sup> *Legenda aurea* 6 (ed. Maggioni, 1:65).

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.* (ed. Maggioni, 1:66).

<sup>159</sup> “. . . ut frater Bartholomeus in sua compilatione testatur et de libro infantie saluatoris sumptum est” (*ibid.*, ed. Maggioni, 1:65); “ut in compilatione Bartholomei habetur et de libro infantie saluatoris sumptum fuisse uidetur” (1:66). In his narration of these stories, Bartholomew himself does not cite the *Liber de infantia*. See *Liber epilogorum in gesta sanctorum*, ed. Emore Paoli (Florence, 2001), chap. 17, p. 33.

<sup>160</sup> In particular, Martin relates how the tree bent down and produced a spring at the child’s command, how he tamed some dragons, how a lion directed the Holy Family to Egypt, and how the idols in the temple were destroyed in the presence of the Christ Child (*Chronicon pontificum et imperatorum*, ed. Ludwig Weiland, MGH Scriptores 22 [Leipzig, 1928], 408). This passage also appears in the Middle English translation of Martin’s chronicle, *The Chronicles of Rome: An Edition of the Middle English Chronicle of Popes and Emperors and The Lollard Chronicle*, ed. Dan Embree (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1991), 30. These anecdotes about the Christ Child, with an acknowledgement as Martin’s *Chronicon* as their source, are included in the Franciscan *Fasciculus morum: A Fourteenth-Century Preacher’s Handbook*, ed. and trans. Siegfried Wenzel (University Park, Pa., 1989), 238–41.



canonical gospels are silent about the infancy of the Savior. Considering that Martin also composed an alphabetical index to the *Decretum*, known as the *Margarita*, it is fair to assume that he saw no contradiction between transmitting apocryphal material and accepting the authority of Gratian's canon on apocryphal books.<sup>161</sup>

In the *Tertia pars* of the *Summa theologiae*, Thomas Aquinas points out that the *Liber de infantia salvatoris* contradicts Scripture and says that the miracles it attributes to the Christ Child are false. In the question in which he considers whether Christ ought to have made his birth known (q. 36, a. 4), the third objection that Aquinas considers is that, according to the *De infantia salvatoris*, Christ worked miracles in his childhood, which would mean that he revealed his divine power at an early age.<sup>162</sup> Aquinas counters this objection by deferring to the authority of Gratian's *Decretum*: "That book *De infantia salvatoris* is apocryphal."<sup>163</sup> Aquinas's point here is that this text cannot be used as an authority in a theological argument; he does not explicitly say that Christians should not or may not read it. In the reply to this objection, Aquinas also cites a homily of John Chrysostom († 407), who states, on the authority of John the Evangelist (2:11), that Christ worked his first miracle at the wedding feast of Cana and, therefore, did not work miracles during his childhood. He reiterates Chrysostom's other arguments against the veracity of the legends that ascribe miracles to the Christ Child. First, if Jesus had been a wonder-child, then the Jews would not have stood in need of John the Baptist to point him out to them. Second, if the Child had worked miracles, then the Jews would have thought the Incarnation an illusion and, overcome by malice, would have handed Jesus over to be crucified before the opportune time.<sup>164</sup>

<sup>161</sup> M. Michèle Mulchahey mentions Martin's *Margarita* and his other works in "First the Bow is Bent in Study . . .": *Dominican Education before 1350*, Studies and Texts 132 (Toronto, 1998), 462–63, and 470–71.

<sup>162</sup> "In libro *De Infantia Salv[atoris]* legitur quod Christus in sua pueritia multa miracula fecit. Et ita videtur quod suam nativitatem per seipsum manifestaverit" (Aquinas, *ST* 3.36.4 obj. 3, Ottawa edition, 4:2648b).

<sup>163</sup> "Dicendum est quod liber ille *De Infantia Salv[atoris]* est apocryphus" (ibid. ad 3, 4:2649a).

<sup>164</sup> Aquinas quotes Chrysostom as follows: "Si enim secundum primam aetatem miracula fecisset, non indignissent Israelitae alio manifestante eum; cum tamen Ioannes Baptista dicat, Ioann. 1.31: 'Ut manifestetur in Israël, propterea veni in aqua baptizans.' Decenter autem non incoepit facere signa in prima aetate. Existimassent enim phantasiam esse incarnationem, et ante opportunum tempus cruci eum tradidissent, livore liquefacti" (ibid., 4:2649a–b). For an English translation of Chrysostom's homily (no. 21) to which Aquinas refers here, see *Saint John Chrysostom: Commentary on Saint John the Apostle and Evangelist: Homilies 1–47*, trans. Sister Thomas Aquinas Goggin (New York, 1957), 205–6. Chrysostom makes similar remarks about the childhood of Jesus miracles in homily 17; for the passage, see Goggin, 167.

The hypothetical scenario that Chrysostom and Aquinas put forth is similar to what we see imaginatively realized in some of the late-medieval versions of the apocryphal childhood, which depict the Jews as eager to put the Christ Child to death. For instance, in the *Cursor Mundi*, when Jesus's teacher Levi is confounded by his pupil's superior wisdom, he exclaims: "Þis chylde oweþ not to lyue, / Abouen erþe he lyueþ longe / Worþi he were on gibet honge."<sup>165</sup>

Aquinas mentions the *Liber de infantia salvatoris* again in an objection he considers in another question (q. 43, a. 3), in which he asks whether Christ began to work miracles when he changed the water into wine at the wedding feast at Cana (John 2:1–11). In the body of the argument, Aquinas explains that the purpose of Christ's wonder-working was to confirm his teaching and thus it occurred after he assumed this office. Since he has already established that Christ did not begin to teach before he reached the perfect age, it follows that Christ did not work miracles before he reached that phase of his life.<sup>166</sup> Note that here Aquinas goes so far as to call the miracles attributed to the Christ Child "fallacious and fictitious."<sup>167</sup>

When viewed in the context of other medieval churchmen's views of the *Infantia salvatoris*, Thomas Aquinas's harsh condemnation of the belief that legends about the childhood of Jesus are true and his rigorous theological examination of them appear atypical. Other clerics who found the *Infantia salvatoris* objectionable, even when they do not refer to it explicitly, probably had in mind one of the key biblical passages Aquinas cites against this text's veracity: "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee" (John 2:11). Those who favored the childhood miracles had either to address or ignore this ostensible proof text against the Christ Child's having worked wonders. The Augustinian friar John Capgrave, for example, conveniently omits reference to John's statement that Christ's miracle at the wedding feast in Cana (2.11) was his first when he records that "In þis ȝere [30 C.E.] was Crist

For the Greek text, see PG 59:100–11 and 130. For Aquinas's view on the fittingness of the age at which Christ died, see *ST* 3.46.9 ad 4 (4:2724a).

<sup>165</sup> *Southern Version of the Cursor Mundi*, ed. Fowler, 100, ll. 12216–18. For the corresponding passage in Pseudo-Matthew, see Tischendorf, *Evangelia apocrypha*, 101 (chap. 31).

<sup>166</sup> Here, as well, Aquinas gives Chrysostom's anti-docetic argument (which he quotes in *ST* 36.4), namely, that people would have thought the Incarnation an illusion if the Christ Child had worked miracles (Aquinas, *ST* 3.43.3, Ottawa edition, 4:2695a). On the age when Christ began to teach, see *ST* 3.39.3 c. and ad 3 (4:2668b–69b).

<sup>167</sup> "... manifestum est quod illa signa quae quidam dicunt in pueritia a Christo facta, mendacia et fictiones sunt" (Aquinas, *ST* 3.43.3 ad 1, Ottawa edition, 4:2694b). Aquinas also refutes the claim of the *Infantia salvatoris* that Christ worked miracles before the wedding feast of Cana in his commentary on the Gospel of John (*Super evangelium s. Ioannis lectura*, ed. R. Cai [Turin, 1952], 53 and 72).

oure Lord baptized. . . . And in þis same ȝere he turned watir into wyn.” In the previous sentence Capgrave states that “In all þese ȝeres tyl Crist was xxx ȝere of age, þe gospel makith no gret declaracion of his dedis, but withoute ony doute he lyued a parfit lyf and ded many miracles, þou þei be not wrytin in bokis.”<sup>168</sup>

A different passage from the Gospel of John was used by proponents of the *Infantia salvatoris*, in particular, John’s concluding remark (21:25) that “there are also many other things which Jesus did; which, if they were written every one, the world itself, I think, would not be able to contain the books that should be written.”<sup>169</sup> The Englishman James le Palmier, for example, refers to this biblical passage in his fourteenth-century encyclopedia in order to defend his inclusion of material from the *Libellus de infantia Christi*, which he admits “is not canonized but apocryphal.”<sup>170</sup> Similarly, the anonymous author of a thirteenth-century Latin poem *Vita beate virginis Marie et salvatoris rhythmica* defends his narration of Jesus’s working of miracles before the wedding feast of Cana by citing John 21:25:

It is unbelievable that he had lived so many years and performed no miracles or wondrous works. For—alas!—it is not found in authentic writings how he lived for twenty-nine years and what he did. Neither is it found fully in apocryphal writings. For John the Evangelist writes, Jesus worked many more miracles than these! They are not, however, declared in writing in this book; instead, a few are told in order that there may be belief in Jesus.<sup>171</sup>

<sup>168</sup> John Capgrave’s *Abbreviacion of Cronicles*, ed. Lucas (n. 121 above), 48.

<sup>169</sup> In her discussion of the Old French poem recounting the apocryphal childhood of Jesus, Vitz refers to this passage from John to suggest the orality of biblical material at the beginning of the Christian Era, as well as the orality of medieval accounts of Christ’s life (“The Apocryphal and the Biblical,” 136–37).

<sup>170</sup> “Nunc sequitur videre de infancia xpi & de diversis operibus per ipsum in infancia sua factis. Et licet iste libellus de infancia xpi non sit canonizatus sed apocrifus, tamen secundum Jeronimum qui illum libellum composuit vera continet secundum illud multa fecit ihc xpc que non sunt scripta in libro hoc” (*Omne Bonum: A Fourteenth-Century Encyclopedia of Universal Knowledge [British Library MSS Royal 6 E VI – 6 E VII]*, ed. Lucy Freeman Sandler, 2 vols. [London, 1996], 1:150 n. 95).

<sup>171</sup> “Est tamen incredibile, quod annis tot vixisset, / Virtutes et miracula nullaue fecisset; / Nam qualiter hic vixerit, quomodo conversatus / Annis sit viginti novem et quid sit operatus, / In scriptis heu autenticis hoc non reperitur, / Sed nec in apocrifis ad plenum invenitur; / Nam Johannes scriptitat hic evangelista: / Multo plura signa fecit Jesus, quam sint ista! / Que non tamen in hoc libro scripta declarantur, / Sed ut credatur in Jesum hic pauca recitantur” (*Vita beate virginis Marie et salvatoris rhythmica*, ed. A. Vögtlin [Tübingen, 1888], 118, ll. 3404–13). The poet explains that the reason that we do not have a written account of the miracles that Jesus performed at an early age is that he did not work them in the presence of the faithful and he had not yet called his disciples, who were the ones who committed his deeds to writing.

The author's pious regard for Christ's power leads him to believe that Jesus worked wonders as he was growing up. He reveals his emotional involvement with the question of whether the boy Jesus made use of his divine power by his insertion of the exclamation "heu!" Considering that the author of this poem was probably a male religious,<sup>172</sup> it is fair to conclude that, in the Middle Ages, it was not only women, such as Cecily Neville and Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim, who seem to have had an affinity for apocryphal legends of the childhood of Jesus.

The author of the *Meditationes vitae Christi* preempts his reader's objection to the incongruity of Christ's not having done anything remarkable during his youth, which the anonymous author of the *Vita rhythmica* voices in the passage cited above (possibly a common sentiment). In the chapter devoted to what Jesus did between the ages of twelve and thirty, the author claims that Jesus wished to be considered a good-for-nothing in order to give others an example of humility. He takes pains to emphasize, however, that Jesus was not "idle" (*ociosus*) during all this time.<sup>173</sup> Whereas apocryphal legends about the childhood of Jesus depict Christ working wonders from the beginning of his life, the Franciscan author argues, paradoxically, that in his youth Jesus he did something wonderful by not doing anything worth mentioning.<sup>174</sup> He seems to have in mind his reader's assumption that the Christ Child, as God, could have performed miracles because he already possessed divine power, the most common and simplest argument on behalf of the *Infantia salvatoris*.<sup>175</sup>

While readers of the *Meditationes* or the *Mirror*, such as Cecily Neville, probably admired the humility of a young Jesus who did what he was supposed to do and hid his supernatural abilities, the image of the powerful Christ Child who courted and resisted opposition also seems to have appealed to Christians in the later Middle Ages. This "other" Jesus would have counterbalanced images dominant at that time: Christ as a passive babe or suffering

<sup>172</sup> Ibid. 3. See also the entry on the "Vita Beatae Virginis Mariae et Salvatoris Rhythmica" by Werner J. Hoffman in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique, doctrine et histoire*, ed. M. Viller et al., vol. 16 (Paris, 1994), cols. 1025–29.

<sup>173</sup> *Mirror*, 61 and 81. Cf. *Meditationes* 15 and 20 (ed. Stallings-Taney, 64, 100).

<sup>174</sup> "Bot here mowe we see þat he in þat abiectioun as it were noȝht doing, dide a ful gret virtues dede of worþi comendynȝ" (*Mirror*, 62). Cf. *Meditationes* 15 (ed. Stallings-Taney, 66).

<sup>175</sup> See nn. 133 and 151 above. Thomas Aquinas's discussion of the time at which Christ was baptized and began to teach and work miracles implicitly dealt with this objection. He argues that Christ chose to wait until he reached the perfect age before he began to teach (which, was before he began to work miracles) in order that he might set an example for others, particularly clerics, as to the proper time of assuming the offices of teaching and governing. In other words, the Christ Child could have worked miracles but chose not to do so.

Man of Sorrows.<sup>176</sup> Whereas contemporary meditational texts on the Passion encouraged Christians to feel compassion for the sufferings of their Savior, the *Infantia salvatoris* likely inspired in its readers a sense of awe at Christ's divine power, all the more striking as being manifested in his childhood persona.<sup>177</sup> As I have already suggested, the *Infantia's* emphasis upon the graciousness of Jesus toward his mother, his working of miracles at her request, probably had the effect of increasing its audience's reverence for the Virgin Mary.

Despite the pious effects that the *Infantia salvatoris* could have had on those who read or heard its stories, in his *Considérations sur Saint Joseph*, the French theologian and chancellor of the University of Paris, Jean Gerson († 1429), recommended that the *Livre de l'enfance du Sauveur* be burned:

Let us consider, moreover, that just as the aforesaid book *On the Infancy of the Savior* consists of various stories which the church receives not at all as truths of the faith and necessary to believe, so no less ought the aforesaid book to be condemned and burned because of the errors that are in it.<sup>178</sup>

Gerson regarded the book as more pernicious because it included some good things, as do the Qur'ān and the *Romance of the Rose*, which, he says, hide the venom they contain by adding honey.<sup>179</sup>

For it happens that some heretic makes a beautiful book which is very truthful and profitable in many points, and all that is done in order to deceive its readers more easily by mixing his error in with them. And regarding this evil

<sup>176</sup> As Caroline Walker Bynum argues, medieval women were disposed to identify with the Man of Sorrows because bodily suffering was one of the few modes of religiosity that were available to them; see *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley, 1987). David Aers has argued against the universality of the image of the suffering Jesus in the later Middle Ages; see "Christ's Humanity and *Piers Plowman*: Context and Political Implications," *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 8 (1994): 107–25.

<sup>177</sup> For a study of meditation on the Passion in the later Middle Ages, see Thomas H. Bestul, *Texts of the Passion: Latin Devotional Literature and Medieval Society* (Philadelphia, 1996).

<sup>178</sup> "Considerons encorez que jasoi ce que ou dit livre De l'enfance du Sauveur, soient aucunes narrations lesqueles l'Eglise recoit non mie comme verités de la foy et necessaires a croire, neantmoins le dit livre devroit estre condampné et ars pour les erreurs qui y sont" (Jean Gerson, *Considérations*, ed. Palémon Glorieux in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 7, *L'œuvre française* [Paris, 1966], 76). I am grateful to Suzanne Conklin Akbari for assistance with this translation. Max Lieberman dates the *Considérations* to sometime between 26 September 1413 and 23 November 1413, "Chronologie Gersonienne," *Romania* 76 (1955): 289–333, at 325.

<sup>179</sup> Norman Daniel notes that "Muslim devotion to Jesus and his mother was often welcomed as 'poison mixed with honey'" (*The Arabs and Mediaeval Europe*, 2d ed. [London, 1979], 251). A passage similar to Gerson's comment about sugar-coated heresy occurs in the prefatory letter attached to Pseudo-Matthew, cited in section 4.

behavior, we have spoken elsewhere in reproving the very perilous, false and damaging *Romance of the Rose*, which is even more harmful for the fact that it is written in the sweetest language, and because it puts forth many beautiful and profitable teachings; but all this is the honey which envelops poison. Similarly, Muhammad composed his detestable law using many sayings from the Old Testament and the New; but this was in order to incline the Jews and Christians and others more easily to his disloyalty.<sup>180</sup>

Gerson concludes his condemnation of the *Livre de l'enfance du Sauveur* by remarking that the errors found in this book are produced by "people of little understanding and lacking instruction in Holy Scripture," and that it is "a perilous thing for Holy Scripture to be put into the common language for lay people and women."<sup>181</sup> Gerson may mean here that incompetent translators are likely to produce errors or that it is simply dangerous for the unlearned to have access to a vernacular Bible because they lack the training necessary to interpret it properly.

Objecting to authors who mix stories harmful to one's faith with those that are spiritually edifying, Gerson would no doubt have disapproved of a text that portrays the boy Jesus as being mischievous and disrespectful toward his elders, though compliant with his mother's requests. It is unclear whether Gerson has in mind a version of the *Infantia salvatoris* that includes episodes about Christ's childhood, or a shorter version that deals only with his nativity.<sup>182</sup> Yet regardless of what precise text he is referring to, I think one can

<sup>180</sup> "... car avient bien que aucun herite fera un beau livre et moult veritable et profitable en plusieurs pions et tout pour plus tost decevoir en y mellant son erreur; et de ceste malice avons nous autre fois parlé en reprouvant le tres perilleux, fauls, et dommageux Roumant de la Rose qui de tant est plus preiudiciable comme il est de plus doulz langage et que il met plusieurs belles et profitables doctrines; mais c'est le miel qui enveloppe le venin. Pareillement Mahomet composa sa detestable loy de plusieurs dis de l'ancien testament et du nouvel; mais c'estoit pour encliner Juifs et crestiens et autres, plus legierement a sa desloyauté" (Gerson, *Considérations*, ed. Glorieux, 76–77). For Gerson's opposition to the *Roman de la Rose*, see, among others, *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Christine McWebb and Earl J. Richards (New York, 2007), passim; and Jillian M. L. Hill, *The Medieval Debate on Jean de Meung's Roman de la Rose: Morality versus Art* (Lewiston, N.Y., 1991), chap. 4.

<sup>181</sup> "Les erreurs aussi devant dis vinrent par gens de petit entendement et sans instruction de la sainte Escripture en ses gloses et expositions. Si est tres perilleuse chose a gens lays ou a femmes bailler l'Escripture Sainte en commun langage car c'est occasion souvent de errer" (Gerson, *Considérations*, ed. Glorieux, 77).

<sup>182</sup> Before the passage I have cited, Gerson objects to how the *Livre de l'enfance du Sauveur* portrays Joseph as an old widower at the time of his marriage to Mary. He alludes to Jerome's *Adversus Helvidium* but does not mention any legends about the boy Jesus, which may imply that he is only thinking of apocryphal details concerning the nativity (76). It is worthwhile noting that Meiss and Beatson proposed that Gerson was the initiator, and even compiler, of the late-medieval *Vie de Ihesuscrist* cited above, but admit that the text includes

reasonably infer that Gerson, along with his contemporary, the Celestine monk (quoted in section 3) who similarly lambasted apocryphal infancy legends, would have urged Cecily Neville to remove the *Infantia salvatoris* from her reading list.<sup>183</sup>

The other passages I have referred to suggest that medieval clerics tended to be tolerant of the *Infantia salvatoris*.<sup>184</sup> Contrary to assumptions about women's efforts in the later Middle Ages to resist the authority of the church, Cecily Neville's reading of the *Infantia salvatoris* presents a case in which a lay woman's religious practices were in accord with canonical pronouncements on apocryphal texts and the personal attitude of a number of males toward them. Notwithstanding the stigma attached to the "apocryphal" *Infantia salvatoris*, many medieval clerics seem to have found some of its stories useful in promoting the piety of both the clergy and the laity. Although some readers may regard the Infancy Gospel of Thomas material as unorthodox, clerics in the later Middle Ages did not usually label the *Infantia salvatoris* as "heretical," even when they recognized or suspected that its accounts about Jesus' early life were not historically true in all (or even most of) their details.<sup>185</sup> In their minds, "apocryphal" and "heretical" were not interchangeable;

apocryphal infancy material, which Gerson would probably have rejected (*La Vie de Nostre Benoît Sauveur Jhesusrist*, xxi–xxiii). Geneviève Hasenohr strongly rejects this hypothesis; see "A propos de la *Vie de nostre benoît Sauveur Jhesus Crist*," *Romania* 102 (1981): 352–91, at 363–64 n. 1.

<sup>183</sup> It is possible that this monk knew of Gerson's disapproval of the *Livre de l'enfance du Sauveur*, considering that two of Gerson's younger brothers were Celestines; see *Jean Gerson: Early Works*, trans. Brian Patrick McGuire (New York, 1998), 5. On Gerson's connection with this order, see also Gilbert Ouy, "Gerson and the Celestines," in *Reform and Renewal in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Studies in Honor of Louis Pascoe, S.J.*, ed. Thomas M. Izbicke and Christopher M. Bellitto (Leiden, 2000), 113–40. It is worthwhile noting that both clerics recommended that a French version of the *Infantia* be burned. On the church's attempt to quash heresy through book-burning, see *Heresy and Literacy, 1000–1530*, ed. Peter Biller and Anne Hudson (Cambridge, 1994), passim.

<sup>184</sup> Horstmann, in contrast, offers a more negative interpretation of the reception of the apocryphal infancy legends in late-medieval England. He speculates that they were not widespread in medieval England on account of their "slightly offensive contents": "Die Kindheit Jesu, nur im Ms. Laud 108, und in keinem anderen Ms., vorhanden, ist eine metrische Bearbeitung des im Mittelalter weitverbreiteten, im mehreren, von einander abweichenden, lateinischen Versionen erhaltenen Kindheitsevangeliums, welches, wegen seines leicht anstößigen Inhalts, in England nicht sonderlich beliebt gewesen zu sein scheint" (*Altenglische Legenden*, xxxviii).

<sup>185</sup> This is not to say, however, that the apocrypha were not at times attributed to heretical authors. Gerson introduces his brief discussion of the *Livre de l'enfance du Sauveur* by saying that he will consider "la malice des herites" (*Considérations*, ed. Glorieux, 76). Centuries earlier Isidore stated that many apocryphal texts "ab haereticis proferuntur" under the names of the

the latter was mainly a theological concept, while the former was a canonical notion. A text might very well be both “apocryphal” and “heretical,” but apocryphal texts were not assumed to be heretical, even though the Gelasian Decree had long ago linked apocryphal texts with heretics.

John Wyclif (†1384) and his followers would no doubt have disapproved of contemporary clerics’ openness toward and, in some cases, predilection for legendary material about the Christ Child. In his treatise *De fundatione sectarum*, Wyclif accuses the friars of tampering with Scripture: “Can we believe that they, as a rule, speak from God, when they direct their attention to pleasing their audience with apocryphal poems, fables, and lies?”<sup>186</sup> Wyclif here objects to the way preachers use religious topics to create entertainment literature. He may also be expressing a concern that the laity would gullibly accept apocryphal stories as true. In contrast, many medieval churchmen do not seem to have been worried that lay people would be deceived by legends concerning the infancy and childhood of Jesus, or to have made an effort to suppress them.

#### 7. CONCLUSION: THOMAS ISMAELITA IN THE ABBEY AND AT HOME?

Earlier in this essay, I placed Cecily’s reading of the *Infantia salvatoris* in the worst possible light, by raising the possibility that she was familiar with the story about Jesus changing his playmates into pigs. While this tale appears in Caxton’s text, in vernacular poems about Christ’s childhood, and in art, it is not the most popular apocryphal anecdote about the boy Jesus in medieval sources, and thus may not have appeared in Cecily’s copy of the *Infantia*

prophets and apostles (*Etymologiae* 6.2.53). The tenth-century monk Ælfric explained that he did not wish to write about the Virgin’s parents (i.e., retell the story of her conception found in Pseudo-Matthew), “læs ðe we on ænigum gewylde befeallon” [“lest we should fall into any heresy”] (cited and commented on by Frederick M. Biggs, “‘Righteous People according to the Old Law’: Ælfric on Anne and Joachim,” *Apocrypha* 17 [2006]: 151–78 n. 154). Biggs suggests that Old English *gedwyld* “implies less heretical doctrine than simple error about past events relevant to religious matters” (155).

<sup>186</sup> “Numquid credimus, quod ipsi regulariter ex deo locuntur, qui intendunt apocryphis poematibus, fabulis vel mendaciis auditorio suo placentibus?” *John Wyclif’s Polemical Works in Latin*, ed. Rudolf Buddensieg, vol. 1.1 (1883; rpt. New York, 1966), 41. Compare the Parson’s remark in the Prologue to his Tale: “Thou getest fable noon ytoold for me” (*The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3d ed. [Oxford, 1987], X.31, p. 287). That the legends about the childhood of Jesus were indeed entertaining to some late-medieval audiences, is suggested by the way an anonymous author of a fifteenth-century French life of Jesus justifies his retelling of these legends: he says they are “ung passetemps” (*La Vie de Nostre Benoît Sauveur Ihesuscris*, ed. Meiss and Beatson, 36).



*salvatoris*. Jesus' vivifying of clay birds would probably be a more typical example.<sup>187</sup> My intention was to raise the question of why a late-medieval Christian who seems so pious and was, in all likelihood, completely orthodox in her beliefs would include a book with questionable content in her reading list. My answer is that the book must have seemed edifying to her and the members of her household. They might not even have known it was apocryphal, but if some of them did, they probably knew, in addition, that it was acceptable reading material within a private setting.

The bulk of this essay has offered a range of opinions about the *Infantia salvatoris*, pointing out that many clerics were tolerant of and even favorable toward this text. Under the assumption that clerics were mainly hostile toward the *Infantia salvatoris*, or at least material from the IGT, one might object that my presentation of a spectrum of medieval views of the apocrypha and of this text in particular involves a misrepresentation. Yet the transmission of apocryphal legends about the Christ Child throughout the medieval period and the apparent resurgency of the IGT material in the high Middle Ages suggest, to the contrary, that church leaders were not uniformly or consistently opposed to the *Infantia salvatoris*.

Around a millenium before Cecily Neville read the *Infantia salvatoris*, Leo the Great wrote to Turibius, bishop of Asturica, urging him to root out the Priscillian heretics, who among other misdeeds supposedly altered copies of the canonical Scriptures. In this letter Leo speaks harshly about apocryphal texts falsely attributed to the Apostles, stating that they "are not only to be proscribed, but taken away altogether and burnt to ashes in the fire." He explains why they merit such treatment in words which were later echoed by Gerson (quoted above): "although there are certain things in them which seem to have a show of piety, yet they are never free from poison, and through the allurements of their stories they have the secret effect of first beguiling men with miraculous narratives, and then catching them in the noose of some error." While Leo is probably referring to the miracles in the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, books which were treasured by the Priscillianists, the pope's statement is also applicable to the apocryphal narrative of Christ's childhood, which is filled with wonders.<sup>188</sup> The pope goes on to urge the bishop to forbid both the possession of the aforementioned apocryphal texts "in men's houses"

<sup>187</sup> On this episode, see Mary Dzon, "Jesus and the Birds in Medieval Abrahamic Traditions," in *Alpha es et O: Studies on the Medieval Christ Child*, ed. Mary Dzon and Theresa Kenney (Toronto, forthcoming).

<sup>188</sup> Henry Chadwick, *Priscillian of Avila: The Occult and the Charismatic in the Early Church* (Oxford, 1976; rpt. 1997), 77–79, and 208–12.

(private places) and the reading of “vitiating” copies of the Scriptures “in church” (a public place). Failure to do so, he says amounts to heresy, “since he who does not reclaim others from error shows that he himself has gone astray.”<sup>189</sup> At the end of the Middle Ages we have the example of Cecily Neville who had an apocryphal book about the Christ Child read to her, probably by a cleric, in the private setting of her home—a situation which is completely at odds with Leo’s directives. Church leaders may have had to concede to popular taste in this matter—“popular” here referring to the predilection of both the laity and a large proportion of the clergy for apocryphal infancy legends.

The picture I have presented of clerics tolerating apocryphal literature circulating in Latin and the vernacular languages calls into question the representation of the late-medieval church as oppressive or prone to censorship and the characterization of fifteenth-century English culture as stagnant in the area of vernacular theology.<sup>190</sup> The Middle English poems recounting Christ’s childhood may be seen as an attempt to explore the implications of Christ’s passage through the life cycle, his once having been a real human child.<sup>191</sup>

While Cecily Neville’s *Infantia salvatoris* may have been similar to one of the extant Middle English poems that recount the apocryphal childhood of Christ, we need to remember that these legends had circulated in Latin in ecclesiastical (primarily monastic) circles for centuries. I have earlier considered the possibility that Cecily’s quarto was that printed by Caxton in ca. 1477. Space here does not permit me to discuss the relationship between the contents of Caxton’s *Infantia salvatoris* and of apocryphal infancy texts found in Latin manuscripts. Nevertheless, it is worth noting in this discussion of Cecily Neville’s reading materials and practices that the library of the Syon brethren seems to have had a copy of one such Latin manuscript. Here I will provide a basic sketch of the evidence, intending to present the argument in more detail elsewhere.

<sup>189</sup> *The Letters and Sermons of Leo the Great*, trans. Charles L. Feltoe, in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, ser. 2 (New York, 1895), 25. For the Latin text, see PL 54:688.

<sup>190</sup> See Watson, “Censorship and Cultural Change” (n. 8 above). For a recent study that is suggestive of a more tolerant atmosphere in late-medieval England than has previously been assumed, see Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, *Books under Suspicion: Censorship and Tolerance of Revelatory Writing in Late Medieval England* (Notre Dame, Ind., 2006).

<sup>191</sup> The term “vernacular theology” has been popularized among medievalists by Watson’s “Censorship and Cultural Change.” For an exploration of the Middle English poems’ Christology, see my essay “Boys Will Be Boys.”

The Protestant bibliographer John Bale (†1563), who seems to have examined some books from Syon's library that fell into the possession of Richard Grafton (†1573) after the abbey's closing,<sup>192</sup> includes in his list of British authors a certain "Thomas Ismaelita" (lit., "Thomas the Saracen").<sup>193</sup> In his *Index Britanniae scriptorum*, "an untitled manuscript that remained unpublished until the twentieth century,"<sup>194</sup> Bale describes the author Thomas Ismaelita as a "monachus diuae Brigidae de Syon" [monk of St. Bridget of Syon] who collected "de dispersis per loca scriptis, miracula quae deus occultari noluit" [miracles (i.e., accounts of miracles) from writings dispersed throughout places, which God did not wish to be hidden].<sup>195</sup> Bale's descrip-

<sup>192</sup> For a brief description of Grafton's career as a printer and historian, see the entry on him by Meraud Grant Ferguson in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* 23:166–68. For hypotheses concerning the fate of books in Syon's library at the Dissolution, see Christopher de Hamel, *Syon Library: The Library of the Bridgettine Nuns and Their Peregrinations after the Reformation* (Smith Settle, Otley, 1991), 111–13.

<sup>193</sup> The *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* (ed. D. R. Howlett et al., vol. 5 [Oxford, 1997]) defines "Ismaelita" as "Saracen," citing a twelfth-century instance. R. W. Southern notes that while, for medieval Christian readers of Genesis, "Ishmael and his descendants represented the Jews" allegorically, "literally the actual descendants of Ishmael were held to be the Saracens" (*Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* [Cambridge, Mass., 1962], 17). There were, of course, other words used for Muslims, such as the Latin word "Saracenus," which was more common (and more generic) in the later medieval period, and it is possible that Bale is treating "Ismaelita" as a surname.

<sup>194</sup> John N. King's entry on Bale in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* 3:482–85, at 484. Bale's notebook is Oxford, Bodleian Library Selden supra 64.

<sup>195</sup> John Bale, *Index Britanniae Scriptorum: John Bale's Index of British and Other Writers*, ed. Reginald Lane Poole and Mary Bateson, new intro. by Caroline Brett and James P. Carley (Cambridge, 1990; first published in 1902), 441. Bale indicates his source: "Ex domo Ricardi Grafton." Earlier in the catalogue he lists some works by Joannes Clipston, noting "Ex spoliis Syon, per Grafton" (193–94). This suggests that the works that Bale attributes to Thomas Ismaelita—the account about miracles and the *Speculum humilitatis*—were once in the Syon library. For Bale's references to the latter text, see *Index*, 470 and 480. Bale gives a fuller description of "Thomas Ismaelita" in a catalogue that he compiled before he put together the index in his notebook, a catalogue which was published during his lifetime: *Scriptorum illustrium maioris Brytanniae, quam nunc Angliam & Scotiam uocant: Catalogus*, 2 vols. (Basel, 1557; rpt. Westmead, Farnb., 1971), 1:568–69, where he lists both the *Speculum humilitatis* and the account about miracles, which is here called the *Collectiones miraculorum*. He then states, "Aliaque his similia. In quibus sic habet: Frater peccator (seipsum intelligit) & seruus iustorum, atque omnium in Christo credentium, collegit de dispersis per loca scriptis, miracula quae Deus occultari noluit." Bale's insertion of "seipsum intellegit" is an indication that he interpreted what was probably a colophon at the end of an apocryphal infancy text as a personal note by a fifteenth-century Syon brother. The *registrum* of Syon's holdings, written mainly in the hand of Thomas Betson, deacon and librarian at Syon, survives in a single manuscript from the late fifteenth/early sixteenth century (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 141). It includes an apocryphal infancy text, described as "Optima narracio de Christo & beata sua genetrice

tion of this Syon brother is, I would argue, derived from a non-historical author's justification for the miracles he has just transmitted in his account of Christ's childhood. An almost identical phrasing is found in a colophon on folio 53v in Oxford, Bodleian Library MS e Musaeo 177:

Ego autem Thomas Ismaelita frater peccator seruus autem iustorum et omnium in Christo credencium hec collegi de dispersis per loca scriptis miraculis que nullatenus uoluit Dominus abscondi uel a memoria hominum deleri. Ipsi honor et gloria in secula seculorum

[Now I, Thomas Ismaelita, a sinful brother, but servant of the just and all who believe in Christ, have gathered these things from miracles that have been written down, dispersed throughout places, which the Lord in no way wished to be hidden or erased from the memory of human beings. To him be honor and glory, forever and ever].<sup>196</sup>

This text includes many apocryphal anecdotes about Jesus' childhood, chapters, for example, about how the Christ Child extracted a boy through a narrow opening, how he miraculously multiplied grain, and how he sat on a sunbeam (fol. 44v). After narrating how Jesus miraculously reunited the shards of a pitcher, "Thomas Ismaelita" claims to be an eyewitness who has written what he has seen and remembered "in gentibus et fratribus meis et multa alia que fecit Jhesus ante conspectum Israel filiorum" ["among the gentiles and my brothers, and many other deeds which Jesus did in the sight of the sons of Israel"].<sup>197</sup>

qualiter eius virginalis puritas a iudeis probate est & experta," but the *registrum* does not explicitly mention the *Infantia salvatoris*, a *Collectiones miraculorum*, or a "Thomas Israelita." See *Syon Abbey with the Libraries of the Carthusians*, ed. Vincent Gillespie and A. I. Doyle, Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues 9 (London, 2001), 233. In Appendix 1, Gillespie lists a few items from Bale's *Index* which "have not yet been linked to Syon books," among which is "Thomas Ismaelita, *Collectiones miraculorum*," lxx. It is possible that the "Optima narracio" and the *Collectiones miraculorum* are related, if not the same text. In any case, evidence seems to indicate that Syon library once had an apocryphal infancy text.

<sup>196</sup> My transcription. A partial transcription is given in *Summary Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford*, ed. Falconer Madan et al., vol. 2.2 (Oxford, 1937), entry for no. 3525 (e Mus. 177), p. 671. Gijssels calls this text Q<sup>a</sup>b1 (s. XIV). In his brief description he notes that the first part of the manuscript (which contains the apocryphal infancy text) is in Latin, while the second is in French (*Pseudo-Matthaei Evangelium*, 169–70). Gijssels' claim that the manuscript is of French provenance and the fact that part of it is in French decrease the probability that this particular manuscript was affiliated with Syon Abbey. The library of the brethren was "pre-eminently a library of Latin books." According to Mary Bateson, the total number of works in French is four, *Catalogue of the Library of Syon Monastery, Isleworth* (Cambridge, 1898), ix.

<sup>197</sup> Thomas *Ismaelita* may have been a Jew (*Israelita*) who has come to believe in Jesus; he goes on to say that the purpose of his writing is so that his reader might believe that Jesus is the

In his late nineteenth-century edition of a Latin version of the Infancy Gospel of Thomas (based upon a fourteenth-century manuscript: Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana Vat. lat. 4578), Tischendorf recorded a colophon that also presents Thomas Ismaelita as the author of an account of Jesus' miracles.<sup>198</sup> Other manuscripts that name "Thomas Ismaelita" as the author of an account of the miracles Jesus worked in his childhood include London, Lambeth Palace Library 331<sup>199</sup> and Oxford, Merton College 13.<sup>200</sup> From these few examples one can reasonably infer that John Bale saw a copy of an apocryphal narrative about Christ's childhood miracles, which ended with a colophon attributing the text to Thomas Ismaelita.<sup>201</sup> While the original "Infancy Gospel of Thomas" seems not to have made reference to Thomas as author, it eventually came to be attributed in Greek manuscripts to "Thomas Israelita" (or some variation on this), a name which was transformed or simply mistranscribed as "Thomas Ismaelita" in certain late-medieval Latin

Son of God (fol. 52r–v). Along similar lines, Caxton's *Infantia salvatoris* ends with the author informing his reader that his sources were Jews and Jewish books (fol. 17v; ed. Holthausen, 22).

<sup>198</sup> Tischendorf, *Evangelia apocrypha*, 164–80, at 179 (chap. 15); the apparatus indicates that the manuscript actually says "ysmaelita," although Tischendorf emended this to "Israelita." See also *Evangelia apocrypha*, xlv. Although Tischendorf was not entirely clear about which manuscript he employed for his base text, Chartrand-Burke infers that he used Vat. lat. 4578 ("Infancy Gospel of Thomas," 120). Maurice Geerard, however, says that Tischendorf used Biblioteca Vaticana Apostolica Reg. 648 (*Clavis apocryphorum novi testamenti* [Turnhout, 1992], 35). I have not yet seen either manuscript, but Gijssels's description of them seems to suggest that Tischendorf used Vat. lat. 4578; see *Pseudo-Matthaei Evangelium*, 151–52 and 169. The latter contains both Pseudo-Matthew with the "Pars altera" and, after a few folios, the IGT in Latin. On the relationships among the expanded Pseudo-Matthew, the IGT in Latin, and the IGT in Greek and other ancient languages, see Sever Voicu, "La tradition latine des *Paidika*," *Bulletin de l'AEIAC* 14 (2004): 13–24; and Gero, "Infancy Gospel of Thomas" (n. 100 above).

<sup>199</sup> M. R. James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of the Lambeth Palace: The Mediaeval Manuscripts* (Cambridge, 1932), 436–37. The section of the manuscript in which only a fragment of the apocryphal childhood appears is dated s. XIII–XIV. The fragment (on fol. 118) quoted in James's catalogue indicates that the text ends with the story of how Jesus healed a boy bitten by a snake, chap. 14 in Tischendorf, *Evangelia apocrypha*, 178.

<sup>200</sup> The text, which I have examined *in situ*, appears on 26r–31v. In this colophon, "Thomas Ismaelita" is presented as an eyewitness: "ego Thomas ysmaelita scripsi que uidi et recordatus sum. . . ." This text is Q<sup>4</sup>b2 in Gijssels's list and is dated s. XIV–XV (*Pseudo-Matthaei Evangelium*, 170–71).

<sup>201</sup> Richard Sharpe makes a similar suggestion, but he does not explicitly state that "Ismaelita" is a corruption of "Israelita" or point to the connection between "Thomas Ismaelita" and late-medieval colophons of the Infancy Gospel of Thomas (*A Handlist of the Latin Writers of Great Britain and Ireland before 1540* [Turnhout, 1997], 662).

manuscripts.<sup>202</sup> There was in all probability never a Syon brother named Thomas Ismaelita, despite the fact that Bale dated him 1430.<sup>203</sup> Nevertheless, Bale's reference to a text relating miracles collected by Thomas Ismaelita provides very strong evidence that there was once a copy of an apocryphal narrative about the childhood of Christ at Syon, probably several decades prior to Cecily's death in 1495.

The devotional books that the duchess of York had read to her over dinner in her pious old age were not a random group of texts, but rather commonly read devotional works that circulated within a textual community that encompassed the religious of Syon Abbey, the Carthusians, the aristocracy, and early English printers, such as William Caxton and Wynkyn de Worde.<sup>204</sup> Evidence for the Carthusians' interest in Christ's apocryphal childhood is found in the fifteenth-century *Speculum devotorum*, an anonymous Middle English life of Christ which seems to have originated at the Charterhouse of Jesus at Bethlehem, at Sheen.<sup>205</sup> For his sources, the anonymous Carthusian

<sup>202</sup> On the text's title and author, see, among others, Sever Voicu, "L'histoire du Texte," (n. 82 above), 120–21; and Hock, *Infancy Gospels*, 84–85, and 90–91. On the unreliability of Bale as a cataloguer, see further James P. Carley, "Misattributions and Ghost Entries in John Bale's *Index Britanniae Scriptorum*: Some Representative Examples 'Ex bibliotheca Anglorum regis,'" in *Anglo-Latin and Its Heritage: Essays in Honour of A.G. Rigg on His 64<sup>th</sup> Birthday*, ed. Siân Echard and Gernot R. Wieland (Turnhout, 2001), 229–42.

<sup>203</sup> "Anno Domini 1430 claruisse fertur" (Bale, *Scriptorum illustrium maioris Brytanniae . . . Catalogus*, 569). The date 1430 is repeated by Aungier, who mentions Thomas Ismaelita in his "Addenda et Corrigenda," in reference to the 30 September 1428 list of Syon nuns and brethren he provides earlier in *History and Antiquities of Syon Monastery*, 52–53, and 525. No mention of a brother Thomas Ismaelita seems to be made in the *Martiloge* of Syon (London, British Library Add. 22285), which lists the obits for the abbesses, nuns, confessors, and brothers. Perhaps Bale transferred the date 1430, which he found in a manuscript with a colophon mentioning Thomas Ismaelita, to the brother he thought had that name.

<sup>204</sup> Space here does not permit me to elaborate on this circle of readers and book-producers, so an example will have to suffice: Symon Wynter, a Syon brother in the first part of fifteenth century, translated the life of Jerome for Margaret, duchess of Clarence, a benefactress of the abbey. Wynter is also credited with having written sermons on the Syon indulgence and a text in praise of the Virgin for the Bridgettine nuns. See Aungier, *History and Antiquities of Syon Monastery*, 527; Vincent Gillespie, "The Haunted Text: Reflections in *The Mirror to Devout People*," in *Medieval Texts in Context*, ed. Graham D. Caie and Denis Renevey (London, 2008), 136–66, at 140; and George R. Keiser, "Patronage and Piety in Fifteenth-Century England: Margaret, Duchess of Clarence, Symon Wynter and Beinecke MS 317," *Yale University Library Gazette* 60 (1985): 32–46. Margaret's brother Thomas was one of the founders of the Carthusian Charterhouse at Mount Grace. Wynkyn de Worde printed the life of Jerome in ca. 1499 (STC 14508). So here we see a network encompassing the Syon nuns and brethren, devout aristocracy, the Carthusians, and an early English printer. For Claire Waters's introduction to and translation of Wynter's life of Jerome, see Bartlett and Bestul, *Cultures of Piety*, chap. 7.

<sup>205</sup> On the text's authorship and likely audience, the whole community of Syon Abbey, see

author used a number of the books that were read by Cecily Neville, including the *Infantia salvatoris*, to which he explicitly refers (by an English version of this title) in the sections on the nativity and the flight into Egypt.<sup>206</sup> The copy of the *Infantia salvatoris* that he used may have stopped with the miracles that occurred on the flight into Egypt and not have recounted those that occurred when Jesus was growing up in Nazareth. As in the case with Cecily's copy of the *Infantia salvatoris*, we cannot specify the contents of the text by this title that he had at his disposal. For the section on the childhood of Jesus, he cites St. Birgitta's *Revelationes* in order to fill out the biblical narrative. His use of this source here and elsewhere is not surprising considering that he probably addressed his text to a nun at Syon Abbey. Of particular relevance here is the locution in which the Virgin Mary informs the Swedish saint that, although the Christ Child hid his divinity from others, she and Joseph "seghe [saw] oftymes merueylouse syghtes & lyghte schynynge about hym."<sup>207</sup> A detail about a bright light surrounding the boy Jesus is found at the end of a number of manuscripts containing the expanded Pseudo-Matthew.<sup>208</sup> This passage from the *Speculum devotorum* reveals both the influence of St. Birgitta and of an expanded version of the *Infantia salvatoris*, though the author might not have been aware of Birgitta's apparent borrowing from the latter text. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that he names the *Infantia salvatoris* as one of his sources and also includes a detail found in an expanded version of this text.

In his recent edition of the *Speculum devotorum*, Paul J. Patterson, unable to find a reference to the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew in the catalogues of the libraries of Syon or Carthusian Charterhouses, speculates that this book "may

Gillespie, "Haunted Text." See also Paul J. Patterson, "Myrror to Devout People (*Speculum Devotorum*): An Edition with Commentary" (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 2006), who discusses a fifteenth-century, aristocratic family's ownership of Notre Dame MS 67, a manuscript containing the *Speculum devotorum* and another Middle English devotion text (*The Craft of Dying*).

<sup>206</sup> For a list of sources, see Gillespie, "Haunted Text," 155–56. For the *Infantia salvatoris*, see "Myrror to Devout People," chaps. 5 and 9, pp. 98 and 119, where the author explicitly refers to "þe Boke of þe Youthe of our Lorde" and "a litell boke þe whiche is writen [of] þe youthe of our Seuyoure." Besides the *Infantia Salvatoris* and the *Revelationes* of Birgitta, the author of the *Speculum devotorum* used the *Meditationes vitae Christi*, the *Legenda aurea*, and the mystical texts of Catherine of Siena and Mechtild of Hackeborn. See Patterson's discussion of sources in the introduction to his edition.

<sup>207</sup> Patterson, "Myrror to Devout People," 127. Cf. *Sancta Birgitta: Revelationes: Book VI*, ed. Birger Berg, Svenska Förskriftsällskapet, ser. 2, Latinska skrifter 7.6 (Stockholm, 1991), 202 (bk. 6, chap. 58).

<sup>208</sup> "Et quando Iesus dormiebat, sive in die sive in nocte, claritas dei splendebat super eum" (Tischendorf, *Evangelia apocrypha*, 111 [chap. 42]). I explore the relationship between Birgitta's texts and apocryphal infancy materials in my monograph on the Christ Child.

have been stored with the Bibles and therefore kept on a separate list. It is possible that both Syon and Sheen had a copy of the work.”<sup>209</sup> My analysis of Bale’s description of Thomas Ismaelita indicates, in all probability, that there was once a copy of Pseudo-Matthew (or, more properly, the *Infantia salvatoris*) in the library of the Syon brethren. The religious in the two communities on either side of the Thames were clearly interested in this book, despite the fact that it was “apocryphal” and they were staunchly orthodox.<sup>210</sup> While we may not know exactly whence Cecily Neville’s copy of the *Infantia salvatoris* came or whither it went, I think it is justifiable to regard it as one of many devotional texts that circulated in the elite circle of pious readers that gravitated around these two religious communities, and of the book-producers who catered to them in the late fifteenth/early sixteenth century. Within this community, the *Infantia salvatoris* would have been regarded as one of many works that were useful for inspiring devotion.

Above I have suggested that Cecily’s use of the *Infantia salvatoris* at home was a practice permitted by canon law, which allowed apocryphal books to be read *remote et secreta ab Ecclesia*. As we have seen, the *Glossa ordinaria*, after making this crucial distinction between public and private space (e.g., church as opposed to home), goes on to compare apocryphal texts to virgins hiding in their rooms, since both are *secreta* (hidden). Both space and textuality in the gloss are gendered: men and their canonical books dominate churches, while women and apocryphal texts are relegated to private spaces, such as the home.<sup>211</sup> In the case of the reading habits of the dowager duchess,

<sup>209</sup> Patterson “Myrror to Devout People,” 60. Patterson explains, “The nature of fragmentary lists of surviving Carthusian library holdings does not allow for an accurate account of the location of sources available to the *Mirror* author.” He is confident, however, that a study of this text reveals a book trade between Syon and Sheen (58–59). Gillespie suggests that the author of the *Speculum devotorum* used books from the library of Syon brethren (“Haunted Text,” 155).

<sup>210</sup> It should be noted that the author of the *Speculum devotorum* says he follows Peter Comestor and Nicholas of Lyra (Patterson, “Myrrour to Devout People,” 75), who either ignore or discount the *Infantia salvatoris* (see nn. 128 and 142 above), and that he himself is somewhat skeptical of the apocrypha, as indicated by his comments about the Gospel of Nicodemus. In one place he says that “it is not autentike,” and that he will “ouerpasse it and wolle not putte such thynges here þat is so vnsiker and myghte be cause of erreure to symple creatures,” (ed. Patterson, 208). Later, he states again that the Gospel of Nicodemus “is not autentyke,” but says that he leaves “it to þe dome of þe reder whether he woll admytte it or none” (217). This comment echoes a remark by Jacobus de Voragine, mentioned above (n. 155).

<sup>211</sup> On these associations, see, for example, Karen L. Fresco, “Gendered Household Space in Christine de Pizan’s *Livre de trois vertus*,” in *The Medieval Household in Christian Europe, c. 850–c. 1550: Managing Power, Wealth, and the Body*, ed. Cordelia Beattie et al. (Turnhout, 2003), 187–97.



we do not find a simple dichotomy between private and public space, women's realm and men's sphere of influence. Recall that Cecily's copy of the *Infantia salvatoris* was read aloud over the course of dinner (where Cecily and her chaplain were probably not the only people present) and later at supper-time summarized by her orally for the benefit of her companions (whose gender is not mentioned). We might be inclined to assume that aristocratic or royal women like Cecily who could afford expensive Books of Hours and devotional texts, and had the leisure to read and pray with them, had their own private places whither they could withdraw, at least part of the time, and enjoy a peaceful setting for the interior life of the mind—a scene such as we see in Rogier van der Weyden's painting "The Magdalen Reading" (ca. 1440).<sup>212</sup> Without having any historical data regarding the space in which Cecily made use of books, we might be tempted to sequester her imaginatively in a room like the Virgin by herself with a psalter, as she is frequently depicted in late-medieval scenes of the Annunciation, or to construct her along the lines of the strong-willed girl Catherine of Siena, who made a room in her family's home a place of constant prayer.<sup>213</sup> Judging by her household ordinance, Cecily, in contrast to Mary and Catherine, spent only a small portion of her time in a room by herself praying or reading a pious book. While the location of some of her activities is not specified, some are said to take place in a "her chamber" (where, in the morning, "she hath a lowe masse") or in "the Chappell." Only towards the end of an admittedly short document is what seems to be a truly private place mentioned: "one howre before her goeing to bed, she taketh a cuppe of wyne, and after that goeth to her pryvie closette, and taketh her leave of God for all nighte . . . and by eighte of the clocke is in bedde."<sup>214</sup>

<sup>212</sup> Men of importance also had their private space, where reading could take place, as discussed by Andrew Taylor, "Into His Secret Chamber: Reading and Privacy in Late Medieval England," in *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England*, ed. James Raven et al. (Cambridge, 1996), 41–61.

<sup>213</sup> On images of the Virgin and of women reading, see, for example, David M. Robb, who traces the emergence of an interior setting for the Annunciation, "The Iconography of the Annunciation in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," *Art Bulletin* 18.4 (1936): 480–526; Bell, "Medieval Women Books Owners"; David Linton, "Reading the Virgin Reader," in *The Book and the Magic of Reading in the Middle Ages*, ed. Albrecht Classen (New York, 1998), 253–76; and Martha W. Driver, "Mirrors of a Collective Past: Re-considering Images of Medieval Women," in *Women and the Book: Assessing the Visual Evidence*, ed. Lesley Smith and Jane H. M. Taylor (London and Toronto, 1997), 75–93. Catherine is said to have appropriated her brother Stephen's room as a place of prayer, since during the day he was away working and slept at night, thus allowing her to pray. See the vita by Raymond of Capua: *Legenda maior*, in *Acta Sanctorum*, vol. 3 of April (Paris, 1866), 875 (30 April).

<sup>214</sup> "Orders and Rules of the Princess Cecill," \*37. The first definition of a closet in the MED is "(a) a private apartment or room; bedchamber . . .; (b) a private chamber (of an offi-

As Felicity Riddy has emphasized, Cecily absorbed and transmitted the contents of devotional texts in an aural/oral manner and in a public context. Her home was a quasi-religious community, her life monastic rather than anchoritic. Lollards were not the only ones in the fifteenth-century who gathered together in domestic settings to listen and discuss texts; orthodox lay people (albeit often in the presence of a cleric) did this, too, as the household ordinance of Cecily Neville indicates.<sup>215</sup> Stories about Jesus turning his playmates into pigs, rescuing a playmate locked within a tower by a cruel father, or causing a miraculous harvest to compensate for a recent famine were undoubtedly entertaining and thought-provoking, as well as effective in increasing piety or at least awe at God's power. Unfortunately, many of these legends would also have had the deleterious effect of strengthening the anti-Judaism of their readers/viewers. A multimedia form of instruction and entertainment, apocryphal infancy legends were undoubtedly more capable of holding the average person's attention than what the Lollards had to offer.<sup>216</sup> Was treating the Christ Child in this way not mockery? While we might think so, and the anonymous Wycliffite author of the *Tretise of Miraclis Pleying*, who objected to the staging of Christ's miracles, would certainly have thought so, this does not seem to have been the view of the orthodox majority.<sup>217</sup> Ecclesiastical authorities may have wished to ferret out holders of a vernacular Bible, but the church in fifteenth-century England, as well as in earlier medieval centuries and in other places, seems to have given people given a

cial); (c) a monastic cell." An example of (a) is *Troilus and Criseyde* 2.599, where Criseyde is said to go "streght into hire closet" to ponder the news of Troilus's love for her. Both (a) and (c) seem applicable to Cecily. Lena Cowen Orlin suggests that in the early modern period the "closet" was generally not conceived of as a place of privacy and subjectivity as scholars have assumed, although it retained, to some extent, "its prehistory as a late-medieval space with devotional functions" (*Locating Privacy in Tudor London* [Oxford, 2007], 316 and 324).

<sup>215</sup> Consider the reading practices in a fifteenth-century household discussed by Pantin. He reasons that since the lay man in question was of the gentry or middle class, he "had no chaplain or Bible-clerk to read at meals, as would happen in a religious community or college or a pious magnate's household. Instead, a book is promptly produced and passed around to be read by the diners in turn" ("Instructions for a Devout and Literate Layman" (n. 28 above), 407).

<sup>216</sup> As Richard Rex has remarked, "reading aloud in private houses seemed to have competed at some disadvantage with the multimedia approach of the late medieval parish church and community" (*The Lollards* [Houndmills, 2002], 74).

<sup>217</sup> *A Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge*, ed. Clifford Davidson, Early Drama, Art, and Music Monograph Series 19 (Kalamazoo, Mich., 1993). The Wycliffite authorship of this text is uncertain. According to Anne Hudson, "whether the text . . . is really a product of Wycliffism seems . . . doubtful, but its attitude to the plays is assimilable to Wycliffite thought as that is expressed elsewhere" (*Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* [Oxford, 1988], 387).

good deal of leeway when it came to books that were considered apocryphal. Although apocryphal texts were not allowed to be read publicly in churches such as parishes or cathedrals, they were not excluded from the domestic church of the home.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> On the home as a religious sphere, see the work of Diana Webb, e.g., her recent essay “Domestic Space and Devotion in the Middle Ages,” in *Defining the Holy: Sacred Space in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Andrew Spicer and Sarah Hamilton (Aldershot, Hants., 2005), 27–47.

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