Light of the Everlasting Life

Disability and Crip Eschatology in Old English Literature

Leah Pope Parker

Light of the Everlasting Life

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in Old English Literature

Leah Pope Parker

University of Michigan Press
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Cover illustration: Portrait of St. Æthelthryth in the Benedictional of St. Æthelwold (London, British Library, Additional MS 49598, fol. 90v). Courtesy of the British Library Board.

The image on this book's cover is an illuminated manuscript miniature on parchment, predominantly using gold, blue, and peach. In a floriate rectangular frame, St. Æthelthryth stands wearing draped robes of peach and gold with a golden veil and aureole, holding two golden lilies and a golden book, and surrounded by golden Latin text announcing this as the image of St. Æthelthryth. The beige parchment background extends to the edges of the cover, bordered by pairs of ruled lines. At the top of the image is the title of the book, "Light of the Everlasting Life: Disability and Crip Eschatology in Old English Literature," followed by the author's name, Leah Pope Parker.

Authorized Representative: Easy Access System Europe, Mustamäe tee 50, 10621 Tallinn, Estonia, gpsr.requests@easproject.com

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Abbreviations

ASE	*Anglo-Saxon England*
Bjork	Robert E. Bjork, ed. *The Old English Poems of Cynewulf*, DOML 23 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013)
BL	London, British Library
B-T	Joseph Bosworth and T. Northcote Toller. "An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online." *Bosworth-Toller Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, 2001–2013 [1898]. http://bosworth.ff.cuni.cz/
Clayton	Mary Clayton, ed. *Old English Poems of Christ and His Saints*, DOML 27 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013)
DOE	Angus Cameron, Ashley Crandell Amos, and Antonette diPaolo Healey, et al. *Dictionary of Old English: A–I Online*. 2018–2023. https://tapor-library-utoronto-ca.lynx.lib.usm.edu/doe/
DOML	Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library
EETS	Early English Text Society
HE	Bede. *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. Edited by Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969)
JEGP	*Journal of English and Germanic Philology*
Klaeber	R. D. Fulk, Robert E. Bjork, and John D. Niles, eds. *Klaeber's Beowulf*, 4th ed., Toronto Old English Series (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008)
LS	Ælfric of Eynsham. *Old English Lives of Saints*. Edited by Mary Clayton and Juliet Mullins. 3 vols. DOML 58–60 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019)
Morris	Richard Morris, ed. *The Blickling Homilies*, EETS 58, 63, 73 (London: Oxford University Press for the EETS, 1967 [1874–1880])

MS	manuscript
OE	Old English
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford University Press, 2023). https://www.oed.com/

Note on Texts and Translations

All translations of Old English are the author's unless otherwise noted. Indicators of vowel length in Old English are omitted except to emphasize similarities or differences between orthographically similar words. Where editions retain the Tironian *et*, the scribal abbreviation has silently been expanded to *ond* (and).

All references to the Latin Vulgate Bible and Douay-Rheims Translation are to the DOML edition, ed. Edgar and Kinney, *The Vulgate Bible*.

Introduction

Crip Eschatology

Christ heals a blind man on his way to the Crucifixion in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke; the story is recounted in Blickling Homily II, an Old English homily copied in the late tenth or early eleventh century.[1] The blind man asks for mercy, and when Christ asks what the man would have from him, the man says, "Drihten, þæt ic mæg geseon" ["Lord, that I may see"] (15).[2] Christ grants his request: "Hælend him tocwæþ, 'Loca nu; þin agen geleafa þe hæfþ gehæledne.' He þa sona instæpes geseh" ["the Healer said to him, 'Look now; your eyes have been healed by your own faith.' He immediately and at once saw"] (15). This short miracle narrative, the homilist writes, provides "bysene belimpeþ eces lifes" ["an example pertaining to the everlasting life"] (15). That is, it promises the "healing" of salvation in the Christian afterlife, as the homily later explains:

> Eal þis mennisce cyn wæs on blindnesse, seoððan þa ærestan men ascofene wæron of gefean neorxna wanges, & þa beorhtnessa forleton þæs heofonlican leohtes, & þisse world þeostro & ermða þrowodan.

1. The homily's source is Luke 18:35–43, cf. Mark 10:46–52; the healing at Jericho is of two blind men in Matthew 20:29–34. The Blickling Homiliary is Princeton, Scheide Library, Princeton University, M 71, with the second homily at fols. 6v–14r. Blickling Homily II is designated for Quinquagesima, the Sunday before Ash Wednesday and the start of Lent.

2. All quotations from Blickling Homily II are from Morris 14–39, cited parenthetically by page number.

> Drihten þa þurh his tocyme þysne middangeard onlyhte, & eallum geleaffulum monnum heora gong gestaþelade to lifes wege, þæt hie magon þurh þa lustfulnesse heora modes, mid godum dædum, geearnian leoht þæs ecan lifes.
>
> [All of humankind was in blindness, after the first people were driven out of the joy of paradise, and forsook the brightness of that heavenly light, and suffered this world's darkness and wretchedness. The Lord then, through his arrival, illuminated this world, and affixed all believers for their journey to the way of life, that they might through the desire of their mind, with good deeds, earn the light of the everlasting life.] (17)

Blindness functions metaphorically here, physicalizing the abstract concepts of sin and damnation with an explicitly popular didactic purpose: teaching the masses to seek the "light" or the "sight" of salvation. The occurrence of this healing miracle on Christ's path to Jerusalem highlights the part played by disability in a pivotal moment in Christian salvation history, in which the Crucifixion makes possible the hope of salvation and the Christian afterlife.

It is tempting to read this story as yet another example of disability being erased through healing and ejected from a narrative's preferred world, as has frequently been observed in both secular and spiritual narratives.[3] The healing of the blind man positions blindness opposite faith, seemingly leaving no room for the coexistence of disability and salvation. However, the homily also makes disability into more than a stigmatized, eliminated trait; blindness becomes an epistemological resource for Christian faith. The homilist holds up the blind man as a model for the congregation:

> Men þa leofestan, onhyrgean we þone blindan þe on lichoman wæs gehæled ge eac on mode. Ne biddan we urne Drihten þyses lænan welan, ne þyssa eorþlicra geofa þe hrædlice from monnum gewitaþ, ac biddon we Drihten þæs leohtes þe næfre ne geendað.
>
> [Dearest men, let us imitate the blind man who in body was healed and also in mind. Neither let us ask our Lord for this transitory wealth,

3. Foundationally in disability studies, the acknowledgment and then removal of disability from a narrative is a core feature of what David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder call "narrative prosthesis," discussed in more detail below. See Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*, as well as Garland-Thomson, "Case for Conserving," on efforts to eliminate disability.

> nor these earthly goods which speedily from man depart, but let us ask the Lord for the light that never ends.] (21)

The homilist uses the light of physical sight to explain both asking for "þæs leohtes þe næfre ne geendað" ["the light that never ends"] (21) and earning the "leoht þæs ecan lifes" ["light of the everlasting life"] (17), a light that erases disability. Yet disability persists. It remains in the Gospel narrative, the homiletic text, and in the real world in which the homily would be preached, making possible the Gospel story that serves as "bysene belimpeþ eces lifes" ["an example pertaining to the everlasting life"] (15). The light in question is salvation, made possible by the existence and experience of blindness. Moreover, the healed blind man is still "þone blindan"—characterized by the nominalized adjective solely as "the blind one"—when the homily tells its audience to emulate him. In asking the congregation to be like the blind man, the homily normalizes disability as part of earthly existence. This is not a liberatory theology that embraces disability, but neither is disability wholly rejected.[4]

The trope of physical healing representing spiritual healing was pervasive in early Christianity, most prominently in the Latin model of *Christus medicus* (Christ the Physician) and the healing miracles of saints modeled on Christ's.[5] In early medieval England, Christ was often called *Hǣlend*, which is typically translated as "Savior" but literally means "Healer," as I have rendered it above, using physical health as a metaphorical substitute for spiritual health.[6] The root *hǣl-* relates to Old English *hǣlþ* ("health"), *hǣlu* ("wholeness"), and *hāl* ("whole" or "hale").[7] Both the *Christus medicus* trope and the word *Hælend* rely upon the long-standing metaphorical—though often also literal—association in Christian thought between disability and sin: that dis-

4. On liberatory theology of disability, see Eiesland, *Disabled God*, and below.

5. See Arbesmann, "Concept of 'Christus Medicus,'" as well as Kesling, *Medical Texts*, 157–61; Meaney, "Practice of Medicine," 235–36. Too many scholars to list have noted the moral connotations of disability and its healing in medieval Christian literature and culture, but see, for example, Baswell, "King Edward"; Brody, *Disease of the Soul*; Dubourg, *Disabled Clerics*; Parker, "Healing the Unborn"; Salter, *Saints*; Skevington, "*Unhal*"; Thompson, *Dying and Death*, 73–74, 92–101; Wheatley, *Stumbling Blocks*; Yearl, "Medicine for the Wounded Soul," 113–19.

6. Swain, "*Hælend*," 58–67; see also Fleming, "*Jesus*, That Is *Hælend*." I subsequently render *Hælend* without the indicator of vowel length; see the note on texts and translations.

7. On *hal* and its opposite *unhal*, see Bruce Wallace, "Unhælu"; Skevington, "*Unhal*." See also *DOE*, "hǣlend"; *OED*, "healend."

ability reflects sin (original, individual, or both) or that faith may conversely earn healing.[8] Among numerous epithets for God and Christ, however, Old English did have another word, *Nergend*, that specifically meant "Savior" and was etymologically associated with nourishment.[9] Even if the metaphorical use of Healer-as-Savior was prevalent enough to be used automatically, the frequent choice of *Hælend* over *Nergend* as an epithet for Christ reveals the utility of vocabulary relating to health and bodily wholeness in conversations about salvation.[10] The medicalization of salvation has been observed frequently in medieval Christian texts and is certainly at work here, as early medieval English writers seem to have been aware. In his second series of *Catholic Homilies*, the prolific late-tenth-century homilist Ælfric of Eynsham explains about Christ: "He is hælend gehaten[,] for ðan ðe he hælð ægðer ge manna lichaman ge heora sawle" ["He is called Healer/Savior, because he heals/saves both the bodies of mankind and their souls"].[11] In such a paradigm, every reference to Christ as *Hælend* invited Ælfric and his contemporaries to think of salvation in bodily terms of injury, illness, disability, and healing.[12]

Medieval Christians like Ælfric and the homilist who wrote Blickling Homily II evidently thought critically about how bodies experiencing disability could convey eschatological promises to the Christian masses through vernacular preaching. Christian eschatology—the branch of theology concerned with last things, such as death and the afterlife—made use of disability to ground abstract promises of resurrection and salvation in their congregants' most intimately knowable experiences: those of their own bodies. Metaphors reliant upon disability were not simply rhetorical shortcuts but

8. See, e.g., Eiesland, *Disabled God*, 70–75; Henning, *Hell Hath No Fury*, especially 19–20.

9. See *B-T*, "nergend." Spiritual nourishment, of course, metaphorically relies upon the nutritional requirements of the body.

10. Forms of *Nergend* appear mere dozens of times in the surviving Old English corpus, compared to uses of *Hælend* numbering in the thousands; see the *Corpus* associated with *DOE* for examples of each. In the texts discussed in the present study, *Nergend* appears, for example, in *Elene* (1064b in Bjork) and *Christ in Judgment* (632a in Clayton).

11. Ælfric, *Catholic Homilies: Second Series*, 273. This explanation appears in a homily on St. Matthew, in discussion of Christ's statement in the Gospel of Matthew: "Non est opus valentibus medico, sed male habentibus" ["They that are in health need not a physician, but they that are ill"] (Matthew 9:12). On Ælfric, see chapter 2.

12. Damian Fleming argues the reverse, that all references to healing with *hælan* would invoke *Hælend Crist*; "*Jesus*, That Is *Hælend*," 45.

were part of a vast conceptual network for understanding and explaining the most important aspects of Christian eschatological hope.

Medievalists and historians of religion have long recognized that medieval Christianity was very much a religion of the body and that the afterlife was an embodied life in the medieval Christian eschatological imaginary.[13] For the Middle Ages, as today, how we understand the body cannot be separated from how we understand disability. Certainly, the Middle Ages predated modern concepts of disability, whether we think of that term as a medicalizing way of describing bodies that look, feel, or function outside a statistically generated and enforced norm, or whether we think of disability as a unifying descriptor for a community that has asserted their human rights under the category of disability rights. Many modern ways of defining disability, however, adhere to medieval bodies, such as Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's description of disability as "the attribution of corporeal deviance—not so much a property of bodies as a product of cultural rules about what bodies should be or do."[14] Where there is body, there can be disability, and indeed, as this book reveals, disability was pervasive in the eschatological literature of early medieval England. The ways in which disability supported eschatological hope in vernacular literature reveal early medieval English Christians imagining the afterlife through disability, and inescapably reimagining disability through the afterlife. If we want to grasp how early medieval Christians understood eschatological concerns of the life to come, we must approach it—as they did—through the lens of disability.

Crip Eschatology

This book argues that Christian eschatology was a *crip eschatology* in early medieval England. The phrase *crip eschatology* invokes the activist and theorist reclamation of *crip*, the pejorative derived from "cripple" (discussed further below), to describe how ways of anticipating the Resurrection and hoping for salvation in medieval Christian eschatology depended upon crip and disabled embodiments. Where an eschatology of disability would describe a theology's explanation of or plan for disabled bodies in the afterlife in practical terms, a crip eschatology regulates a conceptual system that is reliant upon the relationships between all bodies—disabled or temporarily able-bodied—

13. The most widely influential study in this regard is Bynum, *Resurrection*. See also Blair, "Christian Theology and Human Disability," 73–74; Creamer, "Disability Theology," 341; Upson-Saia, "Resurrecting Deformity."

14. Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*, 6.

and the very idea of disability, and that inflects the eschatological anticipation of all bodies belonging to that theological system. There surely were and are a plurality of crip eschatologies, but I render the term in the singular throughout this study to characterize a collection of overlapping religious and conceptual processes specific to vernacular English literature of the late ninth century through the tenth century. This book does not provide a comprehensive discussion of all representations of disability in Old English literary texts that are connected to eschatological thought. Instead, I highlight texts that productively illustrate eschatological reliance upon crip and disabled bodies.

The two parts of this book articulate two interwoven literary phenomena under the larger rubric of crip eschatology, which I call *spiritual prosthesis* and *systems of aberrance*. Spiritual prosthesis adapts David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder's concept of "narrative prosthesis," the dependence of narrative upon "the pervasiveness of disability as a device of characterization in narrative art," to describe the spiritual dependence of medieval Christianity upon disability for its construction of eschatological hope.[15] The necessity of disability in crip eschatological narrative aligns with Mitchell and Snyder's narrative prosthesis, but with a medievalizing modification. While narrative prosthesis describes narrative relying on disability for its significatory and storytelling power, spiritual prosthesis describes the reliance of a spiritual system, the vast narrative of Christian salvation history, upon disability and on crip embodiments for its meaning, conveyance, and cultural power. This book thus extends the work of narrative prosthesis by showing how disability could serve a prosthetic function beyond the literary domain. Spiritual prosthesis describes the process by which rhetorical and narrative representations of disability prosthetically helped shape real-world Christian subjects and enabled their access to eschatological hope.[16] In medieval Christianity, the prosthesizing effects of spiritual prosthesis were persistently in progress, not yet complete, because the narrative of salvation history—the Christian timeline of all existence from Creation to the Apocalypse—has not yet reached its

15. Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*, 9. On the concept of prosthesis describing both metaphorical and material addition, replacement, corrective, or supplement, see also Dolmage, *Disability Rhetoric*; Godden, "Prosthetic Ecologies"; Hawk, "Prosthesis"; Orlemanski, "Literary Genre"; Porter, Walter, and Healy, "Foreword"; Walter, "Fragments"; Wills, *Prosthesis*. While I articulate spiritual prosthesis here as a distinctively medieval phenomenon, modern permutations surely exist and warrant further exploration, but those exceed the scope of this present project.

16. In a similar extension from medieval text into medieval culture, Richard H. Godden has argued that the trappings of knighthood (e.g., armor, reputation) prosthetically helped constitute the chivalric subject in late medieval romance; "Prosthetic Ecologies."

end. Like modern Christians, medieval Christians lived in a world in which the Apocalypse had not happened, and spiritual prosthesis cannot fulfill its goals until Judgment Day.

Spiritual prosthesis functions sometimes by erasing disability, but, unlike in narrative prosthesis, also by maintaining it. Spiritual prosthesis both embeds eschatological thought in rhetorical habits that rely on the language of disability and inscribes eschatological promises upon the marked bodies of Christ and the saints, as the chapters in part 1 illustrate. In the translation program of Alfred the Great, metaphors of vision and blindness elucidate matters of salvation and damnation. Bodies healed by saints such as St. Swithun make the metaphorical "healing" of salvation into literal healing. The bodies of saints themselves become legible through impairment and disability, as when St. Æthelthryth's scar models both the general Resurrection promised to all and the special marked embodiment exclusive to the saintly class. Thus, part 1 of *Light of the Everlasting Life* explores some of the ways in which literary texts with eschatological investments depended upon disability, and upon crip embodiments, to convey promises of resurrection and salvation.

Part 2 demonstrates the intersectional function of disability alongside a cohort of possible embodied differences that work together in Old English literature toward the conveyance of Christian eschatological promises. Systems of aberrance are collections of marked embodiments, both positively and negatively connoted, that function as a network to articulate through literary texts the path to salvation. Such systems serve spiritually prosthetic ends by reaching beyond the category of disability to engage systems of bodily normativity, stigma, and privilege in other realms, through bodies that are gendered, racialized, supernatural, monstrous, or otherwise marked. Systems of aberrance can function eschatologically in an individual text (such as the hagiographic poem *Andreas*), across a set of related works (as in the four signed poems of Cynewulf), and even across the whole of Christian salvation history (as through the Resurrection bodies of all humanity and Christ himself in the Apocalypse poem *Christ in Judgment*). Where the spiritually prosthetic narratives discussed in part 1 use either rhetorical or literal disability to articulate eschatological promises, systems of aberrance bring together intersecting marked embodiments, the relationships between which ultimately result in similar spiritually prosthetic effects. I theorize the term aberrance to denote the possibility for overlap between categories of othering; bodies made marginal by, for example, gender-, race-, or religion-based biases in medieval European cultures may have also been made crip—that is,

associated with disablement—in a medieval Christian eschatological worldview.[17] But their cripness neither made them unilaterally disabled, nor did it erase the earthly realities or consequences of stigmatized gendering, racialization, or physicalization of religion, analysis of which benefits all the more from being put in conversation with representations of disability. Systems of aberrance thus encompass the ways aberrant embodiments beyond disability perform spiritual prosthesis, through their relationships to crip and disabled bodies in literary texts.

To characterize an embodiment as *crip* invokes its relationship to disability: its present reality, the prospect of disability, or its existence in the realities of others.[18] Crip embodiments are often conceptual, rather than literal, in their relationship to disability, but they are no less real in shaping the understanding, treatment, and experiences of actual disability in the world. Indeed, in the medieval Christian habit of figural interpretation, also called typology, which practiced multivalent interpretations of text, holding both literal and figural readings together as simultaneous truths would have been quite natural: a body that is not literally disabled may figurally represent one that is. Using *crip* in this way builds on the work of crip theory, a branch of disability studies that, in Sami Schalk's words, "seeks to trace how disability functions as an ideology, epistemology, and system of oppression in addition to an identity and lived experience."[19] Much as queer theory examines systems of thought alongside and within LGBTQ+ studies, crip theory considers the systematic role of disability in broader thoughtworlds,

17. On women being understood medically as what we could call disabled in medieval thought, see Bruce Wallace, "Intersections"; Pearman, *Women and Disability*; for adjacent time periods, see Henning, *Hell Hath No Fury*; Juárez-Almendros, *Disabled Bodies*. On the modern pseudo-scientific pathologization of Black bodies, see, e.g., Baynton, "Justification of Inequality"; Schalk, *Black Disability Politics*. Further work is much needed regarding the intersections of such other forms of embodied marginalization with disability in the early Middle Ages; this study, however, prioritizes the long overdue examination of disability, even when in conversation with other marked embodiments.

18. On the term *crip* and crip theory, see, e.g., Clare, *Exile and Pride*, 81–85; Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 12–17; McRuer, "Crip"; McRuer, *Crip Theory*; McRuer, *Crip Times*, 18–24; Schalk, *Black Disability Politics*, 8–9; Schalk, *Bodyminds Reimagined*, 9–10. On the wide range of the term, see the special issue of the *Journal of Literary & Cultural Disability Studies* on "Cripistemologies," edited by Merri Johnson and Robert McRuer. This is a functionally, albeit not etymologically, unrelated use of "crip" from that of the Los Angeles–based gang called the Crips; see Kafer, "After Crip," 430–31n24; McRuer, "Crip," 121.

19. Schalk, *Black Disability Politics*, 8.

without exclusively being about specific people who identify as disabled, instead recognizing the affinities between disabled and temporarily abled bodies and minds, or bodyminds, as disability theorists often combine these parts to speak of whole persons.[20] Like queerness, cripness both claims clearly delineated identity categories and rejects them, asserting a fluidity between disabled and temporarily abled states.[21] The term *crip* adds more capaciousness to disability, welcoming many groups—such as people who are injured, sick, chronically ill, neurodivergent, or experiencing mental illness—who may not, for whatever reason, identify as disabled.[22] As Robert McRuer observes, however, reclamation of a term is never fully positive, and thus "'crip' will always carry traces of [a] painful history of stigma and derision."[23] The palimpsest of disability pride and histories of mistreatment and marginalization resonates with what is apparent in medieval sources, which motivates my choice of the phrase "crip eschatology" to indicate the inflection of disabled bodyminds in medieval Christian eschatology as both impaired and empowered, marginal and central.

I follow disability studies scholars and crip theorists in using the term *bodymind* to emphasize the partnership of body and mind, bringing together physical, cognitive, and mental disability.[24] To speak of body in the pre-Cartesian-split Middle Ages is always inclusive of mind, because for our medieval subjects, mind was also corporeal. Mental processes were understood as physical in both the dualist understanding of body and soul that Roman Christianity asserted and the vernacular quadripartite anthropology of early medieval England that Leslie Lockett has shown persisted at least through the tenth century: body, soul, the corporeal organ of mind, and *feorh* (the last of which referred to vitality or life force).[25] Thus, a medieval mind or body should always evoke a compound bodymind.[26] Much of this project, however, focuses on the physical body. Often, the eschatological utility of

20. On crip theory in relation to queer theory, see Clare, *Exile and Pride*; Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, e.g., 14–17; McRuer, *Crip Theory*, 30–32.

21. McRuer, *Crip Times*, 19–20.

22. See Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 13–14; Schalk, *Black Disability Politics*, 8–9; Schalk, "Coming to Claim Crip."

23. McRuer, "Crip," 120.

24. See Price, "Bodymind Problem," 269; Schalk, *Bodyminds Reimagined*, 5–6.

25. Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*; see also Godden, "Anglo-Saxons on the Mind"; Riyeff, "Dualism in Old English Literature."

26. Invoking pre-Cartesian approaches to body and mind also rejects the racist and sexist applications of Cartesian dualism used to denigrate women and people of color, which have been noted by, e.g., Schalk, *Black Disability Politics*, 15.

disability in medieval Christianity was in making tangible the intangible, and so the perceptible body serves this purpose more readily than does the mind.

Many medieval bodyminds merit interpretation as impaired or even disabled. Modern social and cultural models delineate between impairments as physiological realities and disability as the social construction of those realities as negative, though the cultural model adds that the impairment itself is not necessarily neutral either.[27] Following Alison Kafer, my approach to disability recognizes that "*both* impairment and disability are social," and thus we must attend to the broader "cultural ideals of normalcy and ideal form and function" that "affect everyone, not just people with impairments."[28] I distinguish between impairment, a physiological reality that is understood within one's social context, and disability, a socially constructed embodied experience that may be founded in an impairment, but may in fact be completely divorced from a medically recognized physiological reality. Both Kafer and the social/cultural models resist the medical model for disability, which stigmatizes impairments as needing to be "fixed," that is, requiring treatment, management, cure, institutionalization, or, failing that, elimination.[29] While access to medical care is of course valuable and necessary, the underlying assumption of the medical model—that disability is inherently undesirable—sits uncomfortably close to what Garland-Thomson calls "eugenic logic," the idea that "our world would be a better place if disability could be eliminated."[30] As Garland-Thomson explains, eugenic logic refuses not only the inherent worth of the human lives that experience disability, but also the narrative, epistemic, and ethical values of disability, and so to conserve disability in the world is to assert a "counter-eugenic logic." Similarly, the cultural and social models for understanding disability advocate for pursuing quality of life *with* disability and the value of diverse bodyminds for the richness of human experience, both in the present and in our shared histories.

Despite the absence of the term *disability* or an approximate analogue in any medieval language, the term serves well for my purposes here.[31] There

27. On social and cultural models of disability, see Goodley, *Disability Studies*, 11–20; Snyder and Mitchell, *Cultural Locations of Disability*, 6–21. For how they can or cannot be applied to the Middle Ages, see Eyler, "Breaking Boundaries, Building Bridges," 6–8. On these and other models in a theological context, see Creamer, "Disability Theology."

28. Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 7, 8 (emphasis in original).

29. On the medical model for disability, see Goodley, *Disability Studies*, 6–9. Kafer discusses reasons to resist the medical model without completely rejecting medical care in *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 4–10.

30. Garland-Thomson, "Case for Conserving," 339–40.

31. See Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe*, 4–5; Mustakallio, Krötzl, and Kuu-

is no doubt that in the Middle Ages there existed "a system of power that shape[d] bodymind norms and expectations," what Schalk calls the system of "(dis)ability."[32] In such a system, there were certainly also individuals whose bodyminds evaded those "norms and expectations" for mental or physical form, function, or ability, bodyminds we should recognize as disabled in our modern language, even as we adapt the term to the system of (dis)ability specific to the time period. Though anachronistic, the label of *disability* remains valuable for marking the political power of disability histories for our modern era, especially in combination with *crip*.

In claiming cripness for medieval experiences of non-normative bodyminds, I aim to reclaim often overlooked crip histories.[33] "Claiming crip," in Kafer's words, "can be a way of acknowledging that we all have bodies and minds with shifting abilities, and wrestling with the political meanings and histories of such shifts."[34] I find it quite fitting to "claim crip" for the non-normative embodiments of the Middle Ages, particularly in early medieval England. Where *disability* entered English from Anglo-Norman French, *crip* derives from Germanic via the Old English *crypel*, although *crip* did not appear until the twentieth century.[35] While a person living in early medieval England could not have called themself "disabled" and likely would not have called themself "crip," they could have called themself or someone they knew "crypel," a word that participated in a larger conceptual system regarding the body. This project thus recognizes the medieval people who lived in non-normative bodyminds in a world that certainly had systems of power tied to bodily and mental normativity, and therefore even without the word *disability* produced distinctive experiences for marginalized bodyminds. Claiming crip for our medieval predecessors provides present-day communities with a history long denied and honors those crip ancestors' place in our histories.[36]

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liala, "*Infirmitas* in Antiquity and the Middle Ages"; Orlemanski, "Literary Genre." On the absence of a singular term for disability in other premodern languages, see Upson-Saia, "Resurrecting Deformity."

32. Schalk, "Critical Disability Studies," n.p.; see also Schalk, *Bodyminds Reimagined*, 6. Ninon Dubourg's recent work—*Disabled Clerics*—illuminates one such medieval system for constructing hierarchies of embodiment and managing the production of disabled identity.

33. On claiming crip for medieval people, see Spencer-Hall, "Chronic Pain and Illness," 63–64.

34. Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 13; see also Schalk, "Coming to Claim Crip."

35. *DOE*, "crypel, noun" (see also "crēopere"); *OED*, "ability, n."; "crip, n."; "cripple, n. and adj."; "disable, v." On OE *crypel*, see Roberts, "Expression of 'Crippled.'"

36. On crip ancestorship, see Milbern, "On the Ancestral Plane"; Milbern and

Moreover, it benefits all of us to use the long history of crip inclusion in epistemological systems as a promise that there is a future for crip embodiments.[37] A future for all of us.

The term *crip* has "edgy and powerful valences," as McRuer puts it.[38] Part of this book's project, however, is to show that crip cultural systems, crip relationships, crip worldviews, have a long history, even if they have gone unnamed. Recognizing this history should not stop us from seeking new crip futures, but rather strengthen our pursuit through better knowledge of this history. Crip theory has important activist roots, as scholar-activists like Kafer, McRuer, and Schalk have shown.[39] Even though the Old English texts I study here are by no means activist, in a modern sense, I would assert the importance of these histories for activist movements, to recognize the eschatological inflection of crip experiences that many culturally Christian and English-speaking communities have inherited. Invoking our medieval crip ancestors reminds us of the community we have had, much longer than we have had a name. Our crip ancestors did not fight quite the same fights for independence, self-determination, and human rights, and so they were not activists in the modern sense. Nevertheless, they existed, and their persistence earns them a place in the histories we write about disability, Christianity, and the European Middle Ages.

Piepzna-Samarasinha, "Crip Lineages, Crip Futures"; Spencer-Hall, "Chronic Pain and Illness." I call them "our" predecessors to emphasize that they precede all contemporary humanity in living in this world in crip bodyminds, regardless of genetic ancestry, ethnicity, or cultural heritage. "Our" is weighty, and I do not use it here to claim possession of this history on racial grounds as a matter of whiteness. Rather, "our" medieval crip ancestors belong to the modern disability community that is—as medieval Christendom and early medieval England were—beautifully diverse. In the pursuit of crip ancestorship, I do not hold myself apart from the crip and disabled communities I am discussing in transtemporal terms. As a chronically ill scholar, I include myself in these communities with first-person pronouns. In this, I follow, *inter alia*, Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 19; Schalk, *Black Disability Politics*, 2. I cannot, however, claim to be a member of specifically medieval crip communities, and so I delineate historical specificity in those instances with third-person pronouns.

37. On desiring a "future for crip," see Kafer, "After Crip"; Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 1–4. In turning Kafer's call to imagine new disability futures toward disability pasts, I am in company with Alicia Spencer-Hall, who adds: "These alternative imagined futures are painted in ever more detail by imagining our disability *histories* differently"; "Chronic Pain and Illness," 63 (emphasis in original).

38. McRuer, *Crip Times*, 13.

39. See, e.g., Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*; McRuer, *Crip Times*; Schalk, *Black Disability Politics*.

As I have argued elsewhere, bringing crip theory to bear on medieval Christian contexts enables us not only to theorize disability's ideological and epistemological functions in medieval Christian cultures (to adapt Schalk's phrasing), but also to question assumptions that it functioned exclusively as a basis for oppression.[40] In the reliance of Christian eschatology upon disability, the phenomenon I call crip eschatology makes disability central to theological epistemologies: ways of conceptualizing matters of faith. The promises of resurrection and salvation in the afterlife foregrounded crip embodiments, both in the earthly life and the afterlife, in order to make Christian doctrine known. In this way, cripness became pervasive, something potentially embedded in the eschatological anticipation of all living Christians at the time. To crip, as McRuer explains the verb, "exposes the ways in which able-bodiedness and able-mindedness get naturalized and the ways that bodies, minds, and impairments that should be at the absolute center of a space or issue or discussion get purged from that space or issue or discussion."[41] Locating crip eschatology in medieval literature reveals that Christian eschatology has always already been cripped, with crip at its center, even as it lay the conceptual ground that underwrites much of the modern world's displacement of disabled and crip embodiments to the margins.

To be clear, I am not claiming that all medieval Christians were disabled, a historicist version of the universalizing claim that "we are all disabled," which erases and denies inequality in political, medical, and cultural institutions.[42] Disability does touch all of us; as Garland-Thomson puts it, "If we live long enough, we will all become disabled."[43] Nonetheless, to make disability universal risks losing the utility of the word. Throughout this book, I use the term *disability* to indicate experiences of non-normative embodiments for which we have evidence of unequal treatment, exclusion, and discrimination, while *crip* and *cripness* describe the larger phenomena in which assumptions of able-bodiedness or wholeness as default were decentered or made more nuanced by the interweaving of literal and figural conceptions of disability. Medieval Christian eschatology may have made all bodies in some way crip, and indeed made crip bodies normative through disability's conceptual

40. Parker, "Crip Eschatological Anticipation," 4; I refer to the line quoted above from Schalk, *Black Disability Politics*, 8.

41. McRuer, *Crip Times*, 23.

42. See Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 13.

43. Garland-Thomson, *Staring*, 46. Jasbir Puar rightly notes, however, that living long enough to become disabled relies on the privilege of longevity; *Right to Maim*, 12.

prominence in Christian salvation history; but medieval Christian eschatology did not make all earthly bodies disabled.

Crip eschatology was by no means an affirming or liberatory worldview in which to live; many of its component parts were harshly ableist or even proto-eugenicist.[44] Indeed, both Blickling Homily II and the Gospel narrative erase blindness from society when Christ heals the blind man, even if blindness is persistently present in the text. The homily, moreover, promises an afterlife characterized by the absence of such diversity of bodily experience, in which, "nis þær ænig sar gemeted, ne adl, ne ece, ne nænig unrotnes" ["there is no suffering found, nor sickness, nor pain, nor any sadness at all"] (25). The aim to eliminate pain, sickness, suffering, and sadness is not quite eugenic; the desire to conserve disability does not, for example, extend to refusing pain medication or devices that improve comfort. However, as the discussion of patristic eschatology below reveals, early Christian theology of the Resurrection anticipated the end of nearly all bodily variation, not just the end of suffering. Attending to varied facets of a culture shaped by crip eschatology reveals nuances in our crip ancestors' lives that resist broad modern assumptions that being disabled in the Middle Ages was a purely negative experience.[45] Recent work in medieval disability studies has emphasized what Alicia Spencer-Hall affirms: "Disability in the Middle Ages *may* have been understood in terms of sin, but this was certainly not the *only* interpretation of non-normative bodies."[46] In our aversion to prejudicial views of the Middle Ages that flatly assume that medieval disability was only understood in terms of sin, we have not yet pressed on the question: what did it mean for disability to be associated with sin, whether metaphorically or literally, and how did disability function in medieval Christian theology as a result? The association is so pervasive as to be taken for granted, and that pervasiveness reveals the extent to which such metaphors suffused the lives ordinary people lived in early medieval England.

This book is thus not only about early medieval Christianity, but also

44. See Parker, "Healing the Unborn."

45. The subtitle of a chapter in Winzer, *History of Special Education*, which was reproduced in the first edition of *The Disability Studies Reader* (ed. Davis), tidily attests to such assumptions: the essay is titled "Disability and Society before the Eighteenth Century: Dread and Despair." Other modern discussions of disability characterize the Middle Ages exclusively as a period in which disability was equated to sin; e.g., Quayson, *Aesthetic Nervousness*, 4–13.

46. Spencer-Hall, "Chronic Pain and Illness," 57 (emphasis in original); see also Garner, *Hybrid Healing*, 213–17; Hsy, Pearman, and Eyler, "Disabilities in Motion"; Pearman, *Women and Disability*, 4–5.

about early medieval Christians, most of whom never penned a single word that survives to tell their story. Analyzing the conceptual systems in which everyday people moved in early medieval England gives us valuable insight into the lives of many whose stories are not directly told in the written records. Because any abstraction of disability is also a reflection of concrete realities, acknowledging the crip eschatology within which people lived gives us better and more representative understandings of both disabled and temporarily able-bodied people living in this period. This reflection has limits, however.[47] Most of the actual, real experiences of disability in the early Middle Ages are irretrievably lost to us. While we can get closer to those crip ancestors through literature and by theorizing the role of crip eschatology in daily life, we should not pretend to know these ancestors, their lives, or their feelings toward their own or others' bodies. We can only hope to scratch the surface of what were surely rich and full lives, that contained as many multitudes as those we live today.

Disability and the Middle Ages

Much of the extant work on disability in the Middle Ages has focused on the High and late Middle Ages (the eleventh through fifteenth centuries), with work on English literature largely focused on the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[48] Many early models for disability in medieval literature were premised on contextualizing disability amid contemporary interpretations of marked embodiments. For example, Edward Wheatley's religious model for medieval disability describes paradoxical interpretations of disability in medieval Christianity: on one hand, the impaired body could signify sin and fallenness from divine grace, while on the other hand, impaired bodies could signify an opportunity to demonstrate God's power through healing

47. See, e.g., Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*, 9; Quayson, *Aesthetic Nervousness*, 30.

48. Major works on the medieval history of disability have included Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe*; Metzler, *Social History*; Richardson, *Difference and Disability*; Rushton, *Disability and Medieval Law*; Shoham-Steiner, *On the Margins*; Skinner, *Living with Disfigurement*; Stiker, *A History of Disability*, 65–89. Early work applying critical disability studies to the Middle Ages is summarized in Godden and Hsy, "Analytical Survey." Scholarship on disability in late medieval English literature cannot be listed in full here, but see, for example, Godden, "Neighboring Disability"; Godden, "Prosthetic Ecologies"; Pearman, *Disability and Knighthood*; Pearman, *Women and Disability*; Wheatley, *Stumbling Blocks*.

the body.[49] Further work on medieval Christian approaches to disability is needed to understand the larger conceptual systems at play. The present study follows the prompting of Julie Singer's transhuman model, to redirect the field's priorities away from solely identifying and naming what might be recognizable as disability in the Middle Ages (though this is important work that should continue) and toward the theorizing of medieval disability in broader terms.[50] This move mirrors scholarship in contemporary disability studies, which has trended from modeling and taxonomizing disability representation in literature toward analyzing the powerful cultural systems that influence all bodyminds.[51]

Thus far, both the early Middle Ages broadly and Old English literature in particular have received less attention than the later medieval period through the critical lens of disability studies.[52] Scholarship on literary representation of disability in early medieval England has only begun to analyze discursive systems for understanding illness and health, sometimes with spiritual implications.[53] During the early Middle Ages, the earliest intersections of Christianity with the English language, following the mission of St. Augustine of Canterbury in 597 CE, form an important period in global disability history. The reconciliation of concepts surrounding disability in Latin Christianity and the English language produced worldviews that have gone on to be globally influential, due to the missionary and imperialist efforts of Christian institutions, the British Empire, and more recently, the United States. Early medieval England is also a particularly fruitful area of study due to the relatively large surviving corpus of early vernacular literature; we are thus afforded a significant body of texts that, although much has been lost, reveals greater nuances in the eschatologi-

49. Wheatley, *Stumbling Blocks*.

50. Singer, "Transhuman Model."

51. Important examples of the earlier work of modeling and taxonomizing disability representation in literature include Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy*; Dolmage, *Disability Rhetoric*; Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*; Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*; Quayson, *Aesthetic Nervousness*. The latter category, analyzing disability within cultural systems reflected in literature, includes Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*; McRuer, *Crip Theory*; Schalk, *Bodyminds Reimagined*.

52. On disability in OE sources, see, e.g.: Bruce Wallace, "Grendel and Goliath"; Bruce Wallace, "Intersections"; Bruce Wallace, "Unhælu"; Garner, "Deaf Studies"; Haberfield, "Approach with Caution"; Heckman, "Cancer, Leprosy, and Blood"; Lee, "Body and Soul"; Lee, "Body Talks"; Lee, "Changing Faces"; Lee, "Disability"; Parker, "Healing the Unborn"; Ronen, "A Still Sound Mind"; Tovey, "Kingly Impairments."

53. For example, see Porck, *Old Age*, 76–109, on stigmatized aging embodiments.

cal interpretation of disability than are available from other early medieval vernaculars in which fewer texts survive.

In addition to studies of disability in early medieval English literature, this book builds on much more extensive work in related fields. Archaeology has for a long time analyzed disability in the early medieval period, though often from a medicalizing angle, even when analyzing the cultural indications of burial practices for treatment and care of disabled people.[54] Histories of medicine have similarly engaged with disability on the levels of both individual experience and cultural trends; both Caroline (Caz) Batten and Lori Ann Garner's recent studies of early medieval English medical texts include chapters bringing critical disability studies into conversation with constructs of health and medicine.[55] Linguistic methods likewise have proven valuable in seeking a historically specific concept akin to disability; both Karen Bruce Wallace and Fay Skevington have offered the Old English term *unhælu* (literally "unwholeness") as an appropriate term for a wide range of impairments and disabilities in the Old English lexicon.[56] Building on these archaeological, medical, and linguistic foundations, this book is the first extended examination of systemic ideologies reflecting experiences of disability in early medieval English literature.

Disability and Christian Eschatology

Because medieval understandings of the body persistently contemplated eschatological embodiment (that is, death and the Resurrection), a consideration of disability and the afterlife in medieval literature is long overdue. As contemporary theologian Julia Watts Belser notes, "Eschatology is a powerful site for thinking about disability because it calls us to consider what place we hold for disability in our imagined futures."[57] In medieval Christendom, this shared faith system so deeply pervaded both daily life and conceptual thinking that we cannot apprehend how medieval Christians thought through

54. E.g., Brownlee, "Perceptions of Disability"; Hadley, "Burying the Distinctive." A recent archaeological study more conversant with the social model of disability is Zakrzewski, Evelyn-Wright, and Inskip, "Anglo-Saxon Concepts of Dis/Ability."

55. Batten, *Health and the Body*; Garner, *Hybrid Healing*, 206–47; see also Skinner, *Living with Disfigurement*; Sweany, "Anglo-Saxon Medical Imagination." I am grateful to Caz Batten for sharing their prepublication manuscript with me.

56. Bruce Wallace, "Unhælu"; Skevington, "*Unhal*." See also Lee, "Disability," 23–38; Roberts, "Expression of 'Crippled'"; Sweany, "Anglo-Saxon Medical Imagination," 23–81.

57. Belser, "Politics of Healing," 178.

disability without considering how they thought about the afterlife. Conversely, we can also much better understand medieval Christian eschatology by recognizing its cripness: its reliance upon and entwinement with disability.

The eschatology of the Christian church was interwoven from its first-century origins and throughout the patristic period with understandings of the nature of the human body, including disability.[58] The earliest Christian writings debated and later asserted the necessity of a physical, fleshly body for a person to be completely and properly resurrected for the Last Judgment.[59] In the New Testament, St. Paul the Apostle had described a spiritual resurrection, with the promise of a "corpus spiritale" ["spiritual body"] (I Corinthians 15:44), because "caro et sanguis regnum Dei possidere non possunt" ["flesh and blood cannot possess the kingdom of God"] (I Corinthians 15:50).[60] Despite the assertion of that body being spiritual, rather than "animale" ["natural"] (I Corinthians 15:44), Christian writers in the first and second centuries CE nonetheless drew upon Paul's description in I Corinthians to explain a fleshly resurrection.[61] Texts as early as the so-called Second Letter of Clement of Rome (in fact an anonymous homily likely originating from Corinth, ca. 150) affirmed that the Resurrection body would be one of flesh, while Tertullian of Carthage (ca. 160–after 220) asserted that the body would be resurrected the same in all its parts, except made whole.[62] The

58. Caroline Walker Bynum explores patristic Resurrection theology as it pertains to the body in detail, though without extended attention specifically to disability; *Resurrection*, 21–114. On disability and early Christianity, see Massmann, "'Those Who Cannot See'"; Moss, *Divine Bodies*; Moss, "Heavenly Healing"; Soon, "Disability and New Testament Studies"; Upson-Saia, "Resurrecting Deformity." For my purposes here, I consider the "patristic" period of Christian theology to span from the end of the Apostolic Age, ca. 100, through the death of Isidore of Seville in 636.

59. See Bynum, *Resurrection*, 60–63; Daley, *Hope of the Early Church*, 5–6; Lehtipuu, *Debates*, 109–57; Moss, *Divine Bodies*, 66–88. As Candida R. Moss notes, Cartesian priorities for the afterlife only call for the continuation of mind, which in Christian dualism would be the soul; but in a premodern Christianity, the body was part of the self that needed to carry on into the afterlife in order for selfhood to carry on into the afterlife; *Divine Bodies*, 118–19.

60. On the legacy of Paul's description of the Resurrection body in Christian thought, see especially Bynum, *Resurrection*; see also Bovon, "Soul's Comeback"; Moss, "Heavenly Healing," 1003–4.

61. See, e.g., Clement of Rome's *Epistula ad Corinthios* (in Jurgens, *Faith of the Early Fathers*, I:6–13) and Justin Martyr, "First Apology."

62. See Ehrman, "Second Letter of Clement," particularly 9:4 at 178–79; Jurgens, *Faith of the Early Fathers*, I:42–44; Tertullian, *Treatise on the Resurrection*, 182. On disability and gender in Tertullian's view of an embodied afterlife, see Henning, *Hell Hath No Fury*, 11–14.

Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed of 381, which revised the Nicene Creed of 325, codified the doctrine of the resurrection of the body in its concluding phrase: "We await the resurrection of the dead and a life of the age to come."[63] Similar phrasing continues to be affirmed by many Christians under the simplified name of the Nicene Creed to this day.

Many of the major early Christian theologians considered what would happen to disability in the Resurrection, alongside debate over other forms of embodied difference such as stigmatized sexual characteristics, skin tones, and body sizes, but also matters shared by all earthly bodies, such as gastrointestinal function, reproductive systems, and a need for sleep.[64] Modern theologians and scholars of Christianity still debate whether disability will be healed, to what extent, and with what degree of individual choice in the Christian afterlife. Some firmly assert the view held by numerous early Christian theologians that disability will be erased in the Resurrection.[65] A significant body of work endorses a "liberatory theology of disability," founded upon Nancy L. Eiesland's groundbreaking argument for "a theology of coalition and struggle in which we identify our unique experiences while also struggling for recognition, inclusion, and acceptance from one another and from the able-bodied society and church."[66] Eiesland reads the resurrected Christ as disabled, and thus asserts the validation of disabilities within the divine plan for humanity: not to be erased, but to persist, both in the earthly life and in the afterlife.[67]

Recent work by historians of Christianity, most notably Candida R. Moss,

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63. Jurgens, *Faith of the Early Fathers*, I:399. As W. A. Jurgens notes, this phrase was added to the Nicene Creed between 362 and 374 and was only formally adopted in 381 CE; *Faith of the Early Fathers*, I:398. For the Greek, see World Council of Churches, *Confessing the One Faith*, 11.

64. See Moss, *Divine Bodies*; Moss, "Heavenly Healing."

65. See, e.g., Gould, "Heavenly Healing Part 1," and Gould, "Heavenly Healing Part 2." Moderate stances suggest that disability will not be erased, but rather transformed, e.g., Whitaker, "Continuity of Embodied Identity."

66. Eiesland, *Disabled God*, 29.

67. Eiesland, *Disabled God*, 89–105. Further discussions of a liberatory theology premised on reading Christ as disabled include Blair, "Christian Theology and Human Disability"; Creamer, *Disability and Christian Theology*; Creamer, "Disability Theology"; Rappmann, "Disabled Body of Christ"; Reynolds, "Theology and Disability"; Yong, *The Bible, Disability, and the Church*. Despite bringing disability into the center of eschatological thought, as Eiesland does, the crip eschatology of medieval Christianity is not the liberatory theology endorsed by Eiesland and others; the work of the present study is descriptivist history, not the development of new ways of imagining disability in Christianity.

has re-examined the early development of ideas about disability in Christian eschatology, a brief summary of which is warranted here.[68] Alongside assertions in early Christianity that the resurrected body would be unimpaired ran another current of thought, that in order to retain the same identity as the living person, the Resurrection body must retain impairment.[69] The resurrected body of Christ served as a model for the imagined resurrected bodies of all humankind. After his Resurrection in two of the Gospels, Christ uses his body as proof of his identity. In the Gospel of Luke, the risen Christ says to the Apostles, "Videte manus meas et pedes, quia ego ipse sum. Palpate, et videte, quia spiritus carnem et ossa non habet, sicut me videtis habere" ["See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Handle, and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see me to have"] (Luke 24:39). This Gospel does not make explicit that Christ's hands and feet are wounded, but in the Gospel of John, Christ directs the disciples to view the evidence of his wounds as proof of his Resurrection. Before Christ arrives, the Apostle Thomas says, "Nisi videro in manibus eius figuram clavorum et mittam digitum meum in locum clavorum et mittam manum meam in latus eius, non credam" ["Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails and put my finger into the place of the nails and put my hand into his side, I will not believe"] (John 20:25). Thomas requires visible and tactile evidence to prove Christ's bodily continuity, that the same body that died has been resurrected. And by this evidence, the doubting Thomas is convinced: "Deinde dicit Thomae, 'Infer digitum tuum huc, et vide manus meas, et adfer manum tuam, et mitte in latus meum; et noli esse incredulus sed fidelis.' Respondit Thomas et dixit ei, 'Dominus meus et Deus meus'" ["Then he [Christ] saith to Thomas: 'Put in thy finger hither, and see my hands; and bring hither thy hand, and put it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing.' Thomas answered, and said to him: 'My Lord, and my God'"] (John 20:27–28). Christ here recognizes, acknowledges, and validates Thomas's desire for compelling corporeal evidence of the Resurrection based on the marks of Christ's wounds. Moss argues that in the Gospel Greek, these marks should be read as no longer wounds, but rather scars, transforming them from acute bodily condition to ongoing bodily state, aligning them more closely with disability.[70]

Medieval texts and images frequently depicted Christ's wounds as an aid

68. Moss, *Divine Bodies*; Moss, "Heavenly Healing."

69. On this aspect of Christian eschatology in ongoing theological discussion, see Moss, *Divine Bodies*, 1–4 and 22–40; Powell, "Disability and Resurrection"; Whitaker, "Continuity of Embodied Identity."

70. Moss, *Divine Bodies*, 26–28.

to faith, even though Christ tells Thomas in the Gospel of John, "Quia vidisti me, Thoma, credidisti; beati qui non viderunt et crediderunt" ["Because thou hast seen me, Thomas, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen and have believed"] (John 20:29). While the Gospel does not state whether Thomas actually touched Christ's wounds, medieval Christian renditions of the scene often assumed that he did.[71] For example, the Old English poem *Christ and Satan* recounts that one Didymus (another name for Thomas) "mid hondum hælend genom / sylfne be sidan þær he his swat forlet" ["with his hands, seized the Savior/Healer himself, at the side where he had shed his blood"].[72] The emphasis on Thomas's hands seizing Christ's side underscores physical contact between these two bodies, although it glosses over the matter of whether Christ's wound has healed.

Medieval visual iconography likewise often depicted Thomas prodding Christ's side, but maintained the wound. For example, the Benedictional of St. Æthelwold selects the doubting of Thomas to illustrate Christ's resurrected body (figure 1).[73] In this image, Christ raises his bare right arm, while a slightly kneeling Thomas extends a single, long finger toward the wound in Christ's side, as several other apostles look on. As Robert Deshman observes, Peter's presence in the scene, standing among the apostles behind Thomas and holding his iconic key to heaven, links the doubting of Thomas to Judgment Day, as a connection between Christ's Resurrection, the Resurrection of humankind, and the selection of those who will achieve salvation.[74]

Thomas's need for this embodied proof in the Gospel narrative reveals concerns that the Resurrection of Christ cannot be true unless the body that appears before the Apostles is the same body of the Christ who died on the Cross. As Moss argues, "These wounds are not only a marker of Jesus' identity, they are the primary marker of his identity, the manner in which he is recognized, and the proof that he really is Jesus."[75] Christ's body demonstrates that wounds serve a rhetorical purpose as markers of identity, and in his case

71. Moss notes the Johannine author's evasion of the actual touch and summarizes the patristic exegetes debating this issue. See *Divine Bodies*, 27–28. On the larger Doubting Thomas tradition, including its manifestation in medieval and early modern art, see Most, *Doubting Thomas*.

72. Clayton 338, lines 542–43. The designation "Didymus" for Thomas appears in the Bible, e.g., John 11:16.

73. The Benedictional of St. Æthelwold is now BL, Additional MS 49598. It was created at the behest of then-Bishop Æthelwold at Winchester around 973; see Deshman, *Benedictional*, 260–61, and chapter 3 below.

74. Deshman, *Benedictional*, 73.

75. Moss, "Heavenly Healing," 1001; see also Moss, *Divine Bodies*, 24–32.

Fig. 1. Doubting Thomas scene in the Benedictional of St. Æthelwold. (From the British Library collection: London, British Library, Additional MS 49598, fol. 56v.)

as markers of divinity. As I will discuss further in chapter 6, however, Christ's resurrected body resists a sense that wounds—even markers of death by a method reserved for criminals—are necessarily disabling. Christ's wounds are not only destigmatized, but recoded to positively signify the eschatological hope of resurrection for all Christians.[76]

Beyond the body of Christ himself, patristic authors also understood the embodied afterlife through the tortures and martyrdoms of their fellow Christians.[77] As Caroline Walker Bynum writes, "the body that rises is quintessentially the martyr's body," conquering partition, fragmentation, and any form of bodily mutability.[78] The signs of violent injury as markers of difference upon the martyrs' bodies were integral to their veneration, making bodily impairment, and its potential construction as either disability or enhanced ability, central to early Christianity. The wounds of the Crucifixion and martyrdoms, and the fragmented holy bodies on which they appear, were not broadly read as disabling, but they were quite crip: imbued with meaning by the specter of disablement, by the reality of the human body's fragility, and by the promise of a different embodiment in the afterlife. The crip bodies of Christ and the saints become the foundation for Christian eschatology, a crip eschatology that not only began with crip embodiments, but also has relied on them for millennia.

Though the bodies of Christ and the martyrs gave positive valences to impairment, patristic theologies of the Resurrection for ordinary, nonmartyred bodies sought to justify hoping for the erasure of disability from the resurrected body. For example, in a treatise *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, Gregory of Nyssa (ca. 335–ca. 395) dramatized a conversation between himself and his dying sister Macrina.[79] The semiautobiographical Gregory protests that illness, injury, and infirmity make resurrection in one's same body unappealing. Yet the impaired body cannot simply be healed in the afterlife, either, because the norming of such bodily variation would compromise the material continuity of identity, making the resurrected body a different body from the one that died, and thus it would not be the same person when body and soul were reunited. As the text's spiritual authority, Macrina ultimately

76. The recoding of disability to serve as a sign of holiness or sanctity occurs throughout the Judaic and Christian traditions; see Bruce, "Constructions of Disability."

77. On the crucial role of saints' cults in the formation of the Christian church, see Brown, *Cult of Saints*.

78. Bynum, *Resurrection*, 58.

79. Gregory of Nyssa, "On the Soul and the Resurrection"; for the Greek, see Gregory of Nyssa, *De anima et resurrectione*.

discards this notion, asserting that the Resurrection body will be returned to a prelapsarian state (that is, the embodiment that existed before Adam and Eve's Fall and banishment from Eden) in which age, impairment, and injury are not and have never been markers of identity.

A similar view is advanced by Augustine of Hippo (354–430) in *De civitate Dei contra paganos* (The City of God against the Pagans), written between 413 and 426.[80] Augustine writes that post-Resurrection embodiment will be distinct from both pre- and postlapsarian earthly bodies and impervious to sickness or injury, but also susceptible to the pain of punishment.[81] Augustine asserts that all the same material parts of the body will be restored in the Resurrection, and yet,

> Nulla erit deformitas quam facit incongruentia partium ubi et quae prava sunt corrigentur, et quod minus est quam decet unde Creator novit inde supplebitur, et quod plus est quam decet materiae servata integritate detrahetur.
>
> [There will be no deformity produced by unharmonious parts, in that place where both anyone that is distorted shall be straightened, and those with little of what is seemly will be made whole from a source that the Creator knows, and moreover those with more beyond what is seemly will have that excess removed, while protecting the completeness of bodily matter.][82]

Augustine further affirms that all bodily variations, including bodies that are "macris pinguibusque" ["too thin or too fat"], will be transformed to harmonious beauty.[83]

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80. For a thorough study of Augustine's biography and involvement in the development of Christian theology in the fifth century, see Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*. On Augustine's theology and disability, see Claes and Dupont, "Augustine's Sermons and Disability"; Massmann, "'Those Who Cannot See'"; Upson-Saia, "Resurrecting Deformity."

81. See Augustine, *City of God: Books 12–15*, XIII.20, XIII.22; Augustine, *City of God: Books 21–22*, XXI.9.

82. Augustine, *City of God: Books 21–22*, 292, XXII.19; Augustine, "*City of God* XXII.19," 159.

83. Augustine, *City of God: Books 21–22*, 292, XXII.19; Augustine, "*City of God* XXII.19," 159. Augustine also taught the complete reformation of the body from the most utter disintegration, which was taken up widely from Julian of Toledo in the seventh century to Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century; see Schmitz-Esser, *Corpse*, 35–36.

Augustine's concerns about bodily beauty most directly address the aesthetic preference of "quam decet" ["what is seemly"]; that is, one would prefer to be neither too fat nor too thin, and thus hopes for a more ideal body type in the afterlife. Augustine's sense of eschatological aesthetics resonates with notions of disability: the forms of the body Augustine describes are a lack, an excess, and being "prava" ["distorted"].[84] Indeed, even the aesthetic notion of a "seemly" size can be disabling, for the body that is judged to be less than ideal moves through the world less easily than that which is already on earth the perfectly proportioned body Augustine imagines for the afterlife. The Resurrection body's seemliness reinforces normative expectations of the body, because, as Bynum notes, Augustine's sense of what will be seemly in heaven follows what is seemly on earth.[85] In keeping with Garland-Thomson's definition of disability as "the attribution of corporeal deviance—not so much a property of bodies as a product of cultural rules about what bodies should be or do," the Resurrection body in Augustine's eschatology is one constrained by what the body on earth "should be or do."[86] Augustine's eschatology is thus already crip, by virtue of its reliance on standards for—and deviations from—normative earthly embodiments.

Such an erasure of diverse forms after the Resurrection imagines a perfected body that everyone can anticipate, but this body carries a norming effect for earthly bodily forms. The Resurrection body, by erasing bodily difference, enforces a scope of permissible variation akin to what Elizabeth B. Bearden has identified in early modern discourses as the "natural" or what Lennard J. Davis describes in the development of a statistically defined "normal": a range of acceptable bodily difference.[87] In Augustine's crip eschatology, resurrected bodies will not be identical, but they will all conform to some standard of "quam decet" ["what is seemly"]. Augustine positively moralizes the seemly body, one without disability, as that to be attained alongside, hopefully, salvation. The Resurrection body, much like the early modern "natural" body and the modern "normal" body, thus stigmatizes bodies that fall outside of these categories by driving a desire to become "seemly." As I will discuss further in chapter 3, however, the negative moral valence ascribed to the impaired or disabled body is still not absolute. Augustine's crip eschatology asserts the

84. Augustine, *City of God: Books 21–22*, 292, XXII.19; Augustine, "*City of God* XXII.19," 159.

85. Bynum, *Resurrection*, 99–100.

86. Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*, 6. On the impacts of eschatologies that erase disability on earthly understandings of bodily aesthetics and ability, see Moss, *Divine Bodies*, 89–113.

87. See Bearden, *Monstrous Kinds*, 79–108; Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy*.

perfection of the Resurrection body through the absence of bodily impairments, with only this exception: that the martyrs will retain scars of their suffering, re-encoded as markers of glory. Moreover, in order to imagine the Resurrection body, Augustine and the other theologians discussed here first imagine what earthly features—most notably disability—that body will lack. As a result, the representation and experience of the disabled body is integral for parsing the nature of the Resurrection body in patristic eschatology.

While for many of the patristic authors I have discussed there is no manuscript or catalog evidence that they were directly known in early medieval England, such early authors certainly influenced the Christian theological discourse of Augustine and his contemporaries, and thereby the whole of Christian theology thereafter.[88] Augustine's *De civitate Dei* was available in early medieval England; Michael Lapidge identifies four surviving manuscripts made or owned in England containing at least part of *De civitate Dei* from the eighth through twelfth centuries, as well as references to *De civitate Dei* and other works by Augustine in the writings of Aldhelm, Bede, Alcuin, Lantfred, Ælfric, and Byrhtferth.[89] Early medieval English authors read patristic crip eschatology and enfolded it into their thoughtworlds, but they were also still connected to precedent vernacular Germanic ideologies. As Leslie Lockett notes of patristic texts that shared Augustine's views in *De civitate Dei* on the nature of the soul, "the vast majority of these works were known only in the most elite educational milieux, and mostly before 740 and after 980."[90] The period in which the copying of Old English literature flourished, the late ninth through the early eleventh centuries, was thus a crucial crossroads of Latin Christian and vernacular English ideas about the body and eschatology. Although patristic thought was widely influential for major English authors like Bede and Ælfric, that influence did not necessarily extend far beyond the best-read among the literate elite; as Lockett shows, ideas about body-soul dualism seem not to have widely pervaded Christian thought in England until the early eleventh century, postdating the composition of every literary text I discuss here.[91] Thus, I follow Lockett in not taking

88. On the distinctive theology of early medieval England and its relationship to the patristic theology that preceded it, see Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth*.

89. Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, 284. Even where surviving manuscripts fail to demonstrate how the early medieval English accessed patristic theology, close contacts with Continental centers of learning and the migration of monastic scholars may have provided access to such texts; see, e.g., McKitterick, "Anglo-Saxon Missionaries."

90. Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, 215.

91. Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, particularly 179–81, 213–27, 427–29.

for granted that all early medieval English Christians knew of, understood, or agreed with patristic views like Augustine's. Rather, we must look to the evidence produced in England for insight into culturally specific eschatological ideas about disability.

Scope and Chapters

By re-examining Old English literature with the tools of disability studies and crip theory, *Light of the Everlasting Life* rewrites standard histories of disability, of the body, and of medieval Christian eschatology. This project fills in some of the sizeable gap, where the early Middle Ages are concerned, both in disability studies and in the history of the body in Christianity.[92] I take as my scope the literature and culture of England between the reigns of King Alfred (r. 871–899) and King Cnut (r. 1016–1035), a period of relative unification that included the Benedictine Reform, the vernacularization of English Christianity, and the production of a significantly higher number of surviving manuscripts than earlier in the Old English period.[93] I prioritize vernacular Old English texts, which had a wider potential audience than those written in Latin.[94] Many of the Old English texts I discuss are translated or adapted from Latin and Greek, which reveals that the crip eschatology I describe is not exclusively a vernacular

92. The most thorough study of the body in medieval Christian eschatology, Caroline Walker Bynum's 1995 *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–1336*, self-awarely omits the centuries "between Augustine and Peter Lombard" (that is, the late fifth through the eleventh centuries); see Bynum, *Resurrection*, xvii. Recent work filling that gap regarding the Carolingians includes Coon, *Dark Age Bodies*; Leja, *Embodying the Soul*. Among histories of disability in literature, numerous otherwise excellent transhistorical studies of disability have similarly skipped from late antiquity to the late Middle Ages, or even straight to the early modern era. To list a few: Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis* (who jump from *Oedipus Rex* to *Richard III*); Quayson, *Aesthetic Nervousness*, 4–7 (from Isidore, d. 636, to the later Middle Ages); Stiker, *History of Disability* (from Western antiquity to a chapter on medieval "systems of charity," 65–89, with examples from late antiquity and the later Middle Ages). Even the consistently excellent essays in *A Cultural History of Disability in the Middle Ages*, which purport to cover the period between 800 and 1450 (Hsy, Pearman, and Eyler, "Disabilities in Motion," 8), rarely venture earlier than 1100, with the notable exception of Sexton, "Atypical Bodies."

93. The reader seeking a general history of England in the tenth and eleventh centuries is advised to consult Stafford, *Unification and Conquest*. On the religious institutions of England in the tenth century, see Giandrea, *Episcopal Culture*.

94. I make an exception for the Venerable Bede, a portion of whose *Historia ecclesiastica* I discuss at length in chapter 3, though I also attend to the Old English translation thereof.

phenomenon; Latin and Greek Christian texts participated in this crip eschatology, as surely did vernaculars other than English.

The overwhelming majority of the texts I analyze here were either composed or copied in their surviving form during the tenth century. Parts of my argument extend to include texts written in earlier periods of Old English literature but which were being read and copied in the tenth century, and so the bulk of my analysis pertains to a "long tenth century." Most of the surviving manuscript witnesses to the texts I discuss here date to after the reign of Æthelstan (r. 924/925–939), that is, after the formation of a unified English kingdom out of what were previously variable numbers of kingdoms and subkingdoms. Where appropriate, I note the particular kingdom or region with which a text is associated. I refer to the cultural zone that produced these Old English texts as early medieval England, not to gloss over regional variances but rather to underscore the continuity of that variance, whether regions shared a king or not. England has never been a cultural monolith, and so this exploration of Old English literature assumes diversity, unless evidence suggests otherwise.[95]

A curious slant arises in the figural and literal representations of disability in the texts I explore here: vision impairment and the associated pair of wounds and scars, which we might summarize as literal vulnerability, appear much more frequently than other sensory impairments, mobility impairments, cognitive impairments, or mental disability.[96] Alfred's historical experience of chronic illness is upstaged by blindness metaphors; St. Swithun often heals

95. Throughout this book, I prefer the terms "early medieval England" for the geographic area and political entity and "the early medieval English" for the people, rather than "Anglo-Saxon England" and "the Anglo-Saxons," respectively. I do this in recognition of the anachronism of the latter terms, but more importantly because those latter terms share a long history of racist, colonialist, and white supremacist usage. See, e.g., Ellard, *Anglo-Saxon(ist) Pasts*; Momma, "Theater of Race," 422–24; Rambaran-Olm, "Wrinkle in Medieval Time"; Rambaran-Olm and Wade, "What's in a Name?"; Wilton, "What Do We Mean by *Anglo-Saxon*?" The American history of the term "Anglo-Saxon" serving racist ends also intertwines with ableist and eugenicist histories that sought to eliminate disability, as was one goal of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America founded in 1922; see Dorr, "Race, Medicine, and Eugenics"; Smith, "Campaign for Racial Purity." While still imperfect as terms, because we should not assume homogeneity in the territory that is now known as England (see Harris, *Race and Ethnicity*, e.g., 1–2), "early medieval England" and "early medieval English" are the best terms available, to my knowledge, for writing inclusive and capacious histories of the period.

96. In literal terms, all humans may be wounded and are thus vulnerable. I associate this vulnerability with disability because it reminds us that we may become (more) disabled, not because disability necessarily makes someone more vulnerable, an assumption which has rightly been criticized; see, e.g., Scully, "Disability and Vulnerability."

the blind; St. Matthew is blinded in *Andreas*; and *Christ in Judgment* relies heavily upon the experience of sight in the afterlife. Meanwhile, my chapters on St. Æthelthryth and Cynewulf are predominantly about vulnerable—wounded and scarred—bodies; St. Andrew is tortured in *Andreas*; and what is seen during the Apocalypse in *Christ in Judgment* ultimately comes down to the wounds of sin and the wounds of Christ. This seeming disproportion is not because other impairments do not appear in Old English sources. In addition to other forms of impairment appearing in the present volume, I have elsewhere written on mobility impairments, deafness, mental disability (under the common spiritualization of being "afflicted by spirits"), and even the concept of death and decay as disabling, as well as disabilities both congenital and acquired.[97] A wide range of medical conditions and physiological experiences have been identified in early medieval English medical texts and across the Old English corpus.[98] Many of those other sources also affirm the prevalence of what I call crip eschatology. But in locating texts that most prominently reveal the workings of crip eschatology, vision impairment and vulnerability persistently come to the foreground. I would suggest that this is for three reasons.

First, biblical precedent provides for the importance of both vision and vulnerability for relating matters of faith. Christ repeatedly healed blindness, as in the episode outside Jerusalem that is recounted by Blickling Homily II and discussed above.[99] Moreover, blindness and sight stand in for spiritual doubt and faith, respectively, when Saul of Tarsus is temporarily blinded and then healed, leading him to become a follower of Christ, eventually renamed as the same Apostle Paul who would write of a spiritual resurrection in I Corinthians, as also discussed above.[100] Christ's wounds—or as Moss reads them, scars—were similarly prominent in the New Testament, as they were essential to his identification after his Resurrection, confirming that he was indeed the crucified Christ, as we have noted in the Gospels of Luke and John. These precedents invited medieval Christians to contemplate faith and salvation through vision and vulnerability.

97. Parker, "Crip Eschatological Anticipation"; Parker, "Healing the Unborn."

98. See, e.g., Batten, *Health and the Body*; Bruce Wallace, "Unhælu"; Cameron, *Anglo-Saxon Medicine*; Garner, *Hybrid Healing*; Kesling, *Medical Texts*; Meaney, "Practice of Medicine"; Sweany, "Anglo-Saxon Medical Imagination"; Trilling, "Health and Healing."

99. See also Matthew 9:27–31, Matthew 12:22–23, Mark 8:22–26, John 9:1–12. Christ's healing of the man born blind (John 9) is discussed in chapter 5 below and is the basis for Wheatley's religious model for disability, discussed above.

100. See Acts of the Apostles 9:1–20.

Second, both vision impairment and vulnerability to wounds and scars are common enough experiences that they would speak to a broad range of audience members. While subtle vision impairment might have been less or differently disabling in the Middle Ages than today, given less reliance on textual literacy, the development of vision impairment without prospect of accommodative technology might nonetheless have been an expected part of aging.[101] Vision was of particular importance in medieval Christianity, which Edward Wheatley argues "was profoundly 'ocularnormative,'" a term coined by David Bolt to describe the privileging of visual perception over other senses.[102] Vision and vision impairment thus would have significantly affected one's religious life. Wounds and scars, meanwhile, would certainly have been a prevalent experience in early medieval England, made more potentially dangerous by the typical diet's inhibition of healing.[103] Prior to the era of antibiotics, even a small wound could develop into an ongoing impairment if slow to heal, and in the worst cases, infected wounds could become life-threatening. Social stigma surrounding blindness and disfiguring scars surely also raised concerns, which I discuss further in chapters 1 and 3, respectively.

Third, both vision and vulnerability provide quite serviceable metaphors for concerns related to eschatology, such as faith leading to salvation and the Resurrection producing bodily integrity in the afterlife. Vision predates Christianity as a metaphor for perception and understanding, and so the impairment of that physical faculty could easily be made to carry the spiritual concern of losing understanding or faith.[104] Wounds, meanwhile, reflect the compromised boundaries of the human self, the rupture of the skin-barrier that separates self from everything else.[105] It is a fundamental shock to integrity, foreshadowing the decay of the grave, and thus also inviting hope of

101. Cameron, *Anglo-Saxon Medicine*, 11–12; Porck, *Old Age*, especially at 77, 79–80, 84, 99–103, 125.

102. Wheatley, "Blindness," 70; Bolt, *Metanarrative of Blindness*, 14; see also Biernoff, *Sight and Embodiment*, on concepts of sight in late medieval culture.

103. See Banham and Voth, "Diagnosis and Treatment of Wounds"; Skinner, *Living with Disfigurement*. On the early medieval English diet and its effect on health, see Cameron, *Anglo-Saxon Medicine*, 6–9; Lee, "Body and Soul," 295–96. Nutrition continues to be investigated as part of wound treatment in modern medicine, see, e.g., Brown and Phillips, "Nutrition and Wound Healing."

104. See, e.g., Ericksen, *Reading Old English Biblical Poetry*, 67–99; Koosed and Schumm, "Out of the Darkness"; Wheatley, *Stumbling Blocks*.

105. See, e.g., Merback, *The Thief, the Cross, and the Wheel*, especially 113–21; Mittman and Sciacca, "Robed in Martyrdom"; Tracy and DeVries, "Penetrating Medieval Wounds," 1–4.

reformation in the Resurrection. And yet, scars mark one's identity, promise a way of knowing another person or their story when other forms of recognition fail.[106] Wounds and scars made the resurrected Christ recognizable as himself, and so too do they make us "us." Vision and vulnerability thus served the work of crip eschatology quite well regarding matters of faith and bodily integrity. These are not the only forms of bodily impairment considered in the chapters that follow, but the prominence of concerns about vision and vulnerability is revealing of the mechanisms by which human bodies qua bodies facilitated and shaped the eschatological considerations of medieval Christianity.

The chapters in part 1 illustrate variations on spiritual prosthesis, the reliance of crip eschatology upon both figural and literal representations of disability, surveying some of the most important prose writers of pre-Conquest England—King Alfred the Great (and his milieu), Ælfric of Eynsham, and the Venerable Bede—as well as related visual artifacts that support the representational utility of disability in early medieval England.

We begin with the basic unit of association between ideas about disability and ideas about the afterlife: the metaphoric relationships between disability, sin, and salvation. Chapter 1, "King Alfred's Vision," examines the translation program of King Alfred the Great (d. 899), particularly the Old English translations of Gregory the Great's *Liber regulae pastoralis*, Boethius's *De consolatione Philosophiae*, Augustine's *Soliloquia*, and the first fifty Psalms, as well as the Alfred Jewel. This chapter argues that the promotion of eschatological hope in the Alfredian translation program relied upon the metaphorical association between sight and salvation, frequently through its corollary, the metaphorical association between blindness and damnation. The metaphorical utility of sight and blindness in these texts illustrates a rhetorical form of spiritual prosthesis, in which the texts rely on disability on the level of figurative language.

Chapter 2, "St. Swithun's Crutches," extends spiritual prosthesis to the level of narrative, in which the genre of the saint's life relies upon disability and healing to make crip eschatological promises. This chapter analyzes Ælfric of Eynsham's tenth-century homily on St. Swithun, a Winchester bishop who was purported to have performed many healing miracles, tracing the function of disabled bodies in the hagiographic homily not just as a

106. The iconic theorization of scars as identification is Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 3–23. On the interpretability of bodies in the Middle Ages, particularly through marks on the skin, see, e.g., Dickason, "Sacred Skin"; Foys, "Body as Media"; O'Brien O'Keeffe, "Body and Law"; and the essays in Walter, *Reading Skin*.

narrative prosthesis but also as a spiritual prosthesis that Ælfric uses to make promises about the Resurrection and salvation. I argue that the crutches that Ælfric describes decorating Swithun's tomb become part of the reliquary for the saint's remains, no longer physically prosthesizing living earthly bodies, but now spiritually prosthesizing Christian eschatology.

Turning to a theological level of spiritual prosthesis, chapter 3, "St. Æthelthryth's Scar," moves beyond living disabled bodyminds to consider the interpretability of dead bodies marked as crip. St. Æthelthryth, a seventh-century noblewoman, abbess, and saint who died of a neck tumor, was later discovered not only to have remained uncorrupt in the grave, but also to have received miraculous postmortem healing of the wound made by lancing the tumor on her neck. This chapter reads four different depictions of St. Æthelthryth's uncorrupt saintly body: Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, the Old English *Bede*, Ælfric's *Life of St. Æthelthryth*, and the portrait of the saint in the Benedictional of Saint Æthelwold. By identifying the crip temporalities enfolded in Æthelthryth's narrative, I argue that Æthelthryth's earthly body served as illustration of the body that was promised to every Christian upon the Resurrection in the afterlife. St. Æthelthryth's scar spiritually prosthesizes promises of the Resurrection and salvation, but crips those eschatological promises by maintaining the crip embodiment of the scarred saint.

The chapters in part 2 investigate systems of aberrance, the networks of aberrant bodies that articulate crip eschatological promises, using embodiments beyond but still including disability to spiritually prosthesize medieval Christianity. Where part 1 considered prose writing, part 2 turns to more explicitly literary, poetic texts from two of the four major poetic codices of Old English: the Exeter Book and the Vercelli Book, both of which were copied in the second half of the tenth century.

Chapter 4, "St. Andrew's Blood," examines the anonymous hagiographic poem *Andreas*, which survives in the Vercelli Book, as a model for a system of aberrance at work within a single text. I argue that in *Andreas*, the stigmatized bodies of cannibals, their animalized victims, the saint's tortured body, and the transformed bodies of converted Christians construct a system of aberrance that pits positively valanced bodily aberration against negatively valanced aberration, in order to construct the poem's narrative of conversion. The combined variously aberrant bodies function in concert in *Andreas* to promise salvation.

Expanding our view to multiple related texts, chapter 5, "Cynewulf's Wounds," considers the four poems linked by the coded runic signatures of Cynewulf: *Ascension* and *Juliana* in the Exeter Book and *Fates of the Apostles*

and *Elene* in the Vercelli Book. In these runic signatures, ending poems that frequently illustrate the suffering of Christ and his saints, Cynewulf describes himself as "wounded by sins" and asks for the prayers of his audience. The system of aberrance constructed across the four signed poems incorporates not only the bodies of saints, non-Christians, and demons within each poem, but also the body of the poet Cynewulf himself, suggesting how at least one person in early medieval England utilized a system of aberrant embodiments to construct his own individual crip eschatological hope.

The payoff of eschatological anticipation is the afterlife, and so in chapter 6, "The Body of Christ," we turn to the Apocalypse, Resurrection, and Last Judgment and revisit the matter of sight that had prevailed in the Alfredian texts of chapter 1. *Christ in Judgment* in the Exeter Book contemplates the prospect of being seen as a resurrected human: a joyful experience for the blessed but horrific for the damned. Sight is also crucial to the representation of Christ himself in *Christ in Judgment*, as the act of seeing the Savior, vividly wounded and scarred, collapses the crip timeline of salvation history around the crip body of Christ. The relationship between Christ's wounds and the resurrected humanity builds the entirety of Christian salvation history, from Creation to the Apocalypse, into a system of aberrance and crystallizes the centrality of crip embodiments to eschatological hope.

In the crip eschatology of early medieval England, disability was a partner in the construction of eschatological hope as well as fear. Disability represented the threat of damnation but also the promise of salvation. Even as the erasure of disability was evidently sought on many fronts, disability writ large was conceptually unerasable from medieval Christianity. This inescapably crip eschatology embedded disability, both figural and literal, at the deepest roots of salvation history and used disability as the light by which medieval Christians might glimpse the everlasting life.

Part I

Spiritual Prosthesis

One

King Alfred's Vision

Conceptual Metaphors of Sight and Salvation

King Alfred the Great of Wessex (ca. 848–899) earned the appellation of "Great" by repelling Viking invasions, by establishing a defensive network of fortified settlements across the countryside, and by creating a scholarly and educational program that produced several translations of Latin Christian texts into the vernacular and promoted literacy in Old English among the nobility.[1] The fifth son of King Æthelwulf of Wessex, Alfred only became king after the deaths of all his elder brothers, amid attacks by Viking armies that by the time he took the throne in 871 had left Wessex the only remaining English kingdom under independent self-rule. Alfred the Great was also chronically ill.[2]

In his youth, Alfred was troubled by *ficus* (almost certainly hemorrhoids), as is recorded by his biographer Asser, a Welsh cleric and scholar who worked closely with the king.[3] According to Asser's *Vita Ælfredi*, Alfred stopped at

1. Simon Keynes notes that Alfred was "first hailed as 'the Great' at St. Albans in the mid-thirteenth century"; "Alfred the Great," 14. By that time, Alfred was also inaccurately being touted as the first king of a united England, an honor which more accurately belongs to his grandson Æthelstan; see also Keynes, "Cult," 231–32. On Alfred and his reign, see Abels, *Alfred the Great*, and the essays in Discenza and Szarmach, *Companion*; Reuter, *Alfred the Great*.

2. On Alfred's illnesses, see Abels, *Alfred the Great*, 96–102; Ellard, *Anglo-Saxon(ist) Pasts*, 175–280; Enright, "Disease, Royal Unction, and Propaganda"; Kershaw, "Illness, Power, and Prayer"; Pratt, "Illnesses"; Pratt, *Political Thought*, 137–38.

3. See Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, 90, 255–56n143. On potential alternatives to hemorrhoids, see Pratt, "Illnesses," 59–63. Asser was a Welshman summoned to

the shrine of the otherwise unknown St. Gueriir while on a hunting trip shortly before his marriage. There the king

> diu in oratione tacita prostratus, ita Domini misericordiam deprecabatur, quatenus omnipotens Deus pro sua immensa clementia stimulos praesentis et infestantis infirmitatis aliqua qualicunque leviori infirmitate mutaret, ea tamen condicione, ut corporaliter exterius illa infirmitas non appareret, ne inutilis et despectus esset. Timebat enim lepram aut caecitatem, vel aliquem talem dolorem, qui homines tam cito et inutiles et despectos suo adventu efficiunt.
>
> [lay prostrate in silent prayer a long while in order to beseech the Lord's mercy, so that Almighty God in his bountiful kindness might substitute for the pangs of the present and agonizing infirmity some less severe illness, on the understanding that the new illness would not be outwardly visible on his body, whereby he would be rendered useless and contemptible. For he feared leprosy or blindness, or some other such disease, which so quickly render men useless and contemptible by their onslaught.] (§74)[4]

While neither leprosy nor blindness were conceived of as uniformly negative across the European Middle Ages, Asser's account suggests that Alfred perceived a particularly sharp scorn in his cultural moment.[5] The examples

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Alfred's court to support his scholarly agenda. He had likely been bishop of St. David's in Wales and was later made bishop of Sherborne from between 892 and 900 until his death in 909. Asser's *Vita Ælfredi* was apparently completed in 893; the only documented manuscript was a copy made ca. 1000, which would have been Otho MS A. xii in the Cotton collection, had it not been destroyed in the Ashburnham House fire of 1731. See Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, 49–58, 223–27. The text is reconstructed from transcriptions of the now-lost manuscript, supplemented by extensive passages that were excerpted into other medieval chronicles; see Asser, *Life of King Alfred*, xiii–lxv.

4. All quotations of the *Vita Ælfredi* are from Asser, *Life of King Alfred*; translated passages are from Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, 67–110. Parenthetical citations provide the section number in both editions.

5. On late medieval perceptions of blindness, see, e.g., Wheatley, "Blindness"; Wheatley, *Stumbling Blocks*. Like the manifold connotations of blindness that I discuss in this chapter, leprosy had complex associations with both sin and the demonstration of holiness throughout the Middle Ages, though discussions thereof also tend toward late medieval sources; see, e.g., Brody, *Disease of the Soul*; Lee, "Changing Faces"; Miller and Nesbit, *Walking Corpses*, particularly 100–106; Orlemanski, "How to Kiss a Leper." On the association of both blindness and leprosy with sexual sin, see, e.g., Wheatley, *Stumbling Blocks*, 152–53.

of leprosy and blindness, as conditions to be feared, invoke some of the ill and impaired embodiments listed in Leviticus as preventing individuals from holding religious office, which were adopted metaphorically in Gregory the Great's *Liber regulae pastoralis* (Book of Pastoral Rule), one of the texts translated into Old English during Alfred's reign, and which I discuss further below.[6] Beyond the earthly implications of such disabilities, moreover, a broader examination of texts associated with Alfred's scholarly program reveals metaphorical tendencies that fixated particularly on blindness as symbolizing an inability to perceive spiritual truths and the path to salvation.

Alfred's supposed anxieties about vision impairment or a progressively disabling skin condition reveal the historically specific signification of disabilities like blindness and leprosy in late-ninth-century Wessex.[7] Asser's statement that Alfred "timebat [. . .] caecitatem" ["feared [. . .] blindness"] in particular stands out, given the frequently observed prominence of sight across the corpus of translations from Latin into Old English that are associated with Alfred's reign.[8] Despite the anxiety we are told the king experienced regarding the prospect of vision impairment, little attention has been paid to the pervasive specter of blindness alongside sight in the corpus of texts associated with King Alfred.[9] This chapter traces the adoption and adaptation of sight and blindness metaphors across a set of texts associated with the Alfredian translation program, which demonstrate the metaphoric utility of vision and vision impairment as a spiritual prosthesis for Christian eschatology.

Though we have no evidence that Alfred experienced vision impairment,

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6. Paul Kershaw has previously observed the resonance between Alfred's prayer not to experience blindness or leprosy and Gregory's discussion in *Liber regulae pastoralis* of Levitican "blemishes" that prevented individuals from holding office, as well as additional moral connotations of blindness and leprosy that were current in ninth-century England; "Illness, Power, and Prayer," 213–19. On practical approaches to disability among the medieval clergy, see Dubourg, *Disabled Clerics*.

7. In pre-Conquest England, the stigma associated with blindness was such that violent blinding could evidently prevent one from becoming king, as was attempted with Alfred's grandson Æthelstan (r. 924/925–939) and later succeeded with Alfred Ætheling, who died from those wounds (d. 1036). See Firth, "Allegories of Sight"; O'Brien O'Keeffe, "Body and Law," 212–15.

8. See, e.g., Faulkner, "Mind in the Prose Psalms," 609–14; Godden, "Text and Eschatology," 177–209; Hindley, "Sight and Understanding"; Hitch, "Alfred's Cræft"; Karkov, *Art*, 218; Wilcox, "Alfred's Epistemological Metaphors."

9. In one brief exception, Nicole Marafioti notes in the OE *Boethius* "the occasional pointed comment about spiritual blindness"; "Earthly Justice and Spiritual Consequences," 129. Kershaw also notes parallels between Psalm 87's complaint of afflicted eyes (for which an Alfredian translation does not survive) and Alfred's request against blindness as reported by Asser; "Illness, Power, and Prayer," 217–18.

the illness he did experience also carried spiritual weight. Asser reports that God granted Alfred's prayer and replaced the *ficus* with chronic gastrointestinal pain, a progression that modern interpretation has aligned with what is now called Crohn's disease.[10] This pain was so intense that even when the illness abated, "timor tamen ac tremor illius execrabilis doloris unquam eum non deserit, sed quasi inutilem eum, ut ei videtur, in divinis et humanis rebus propemodum effecit" ["his fear and horror of that accursed pain would never desert him, but rendered him virtually useless—as it seemed to him—for heavenly and worldly affairs"] (§74). Even with an affliction much less open to contempt (in Alfred's reported view) than blindness or leprosy, Alfred was still impaired to the point of feeling "useless" at times, as Asser recounts he had feared.

Scholars have not typically identified Alfred as disabled; some have even resisted the idea that Alfred experienced chronic illness at all.[11] Indeed, not all chronic illnesses are disabling. If, however, we take Asser's account as a reflection of reality, not merely as embellishment of the king's piety, Alfred's impairment impacted his functional ability and emotional state sufficiently that under any modern model, we might recognize Alfred as at least intermittently disabled by his chronic illness. Even if Asser's account is embellished, the culture in which Asser wrote evidently found rhetorical value in disability for conceiving of matters both spiritual and secular; that is, disability functioned as a tool to communicate in language claims about, in Asser's phrasing, both "heavenly and worldly affairs."

Alfred's prayer for a "less severe illness," other than blindness or leprosy, suggests that a particular kind of impairment—chronic gastrointestinal pain—can have positive spiritual, and even temporal, effects. Paul Kershaw has argued that in Alfred and Asser's contemporary contexts, a king being troubled by illness helped to signify piety that could bolster royal power,

10. Craig, "Alfred the Great"; see also Pratt, "Illnesses," 73–74. Erik Wade has, however, justifiably noted problems with Gillian Craig's out-of-hand dismissal of possible diagnoses related to sexually transmitted infections or anal intercourse; "Skeletons in the Closet," 282.

11. For a summary of arguments that Alfred was not ill, see Kershaw, "Illness, Power, and Prayer," 203–4. For an example, Alfred P. Smyth uses the depiction of the king's chronic illness as part of his claim that Asser's *Vita* is a later hagiographic forgery; *King Alfred the Great*, 199–216. I agree with Richard Abels and Michael Lapidge's extensive rebuttals to Smyth's claim on textual and historical grounds; Abels, *Alfred the Great*, 318–26; Lapidge, "Asser's Reading," 44–47. For discussions of Alfred concerned with his lived experience of the illness, see Ellard, *Anglo-Saxon(ist) Pasts*, e.g., 177, 191–92; Tovey, "Kingly Impairments."

though if excessive still could undermine that power.[12] The fear of blindness and leprosy, on the other hand, suggests a fear of the wrong impairment that can be read in the wrong way, that is, with negative spiritual and temporal effects. Alfred's anxiety reveals illness, impairment, and disability to be laden with meaning, and the idea of disability becomes a means by which both positive and negative spiritual states might be known. In the same way, regardless of whether or to what extent Alfred himself might be thought of as disabled, the translation program associated with his reign preserved culturally specific ways of interpreting disability in the Old English vernacular.

The Alfredian program of translation from Latin into Old English made several Christian theological and philosophical texts available in a European vernacular for the first time. The epistolary preface to the OE *Pastoral Care* attributed to Alfred states the translation program's purported aim: to provide those books "ða ðe niedbeðearfosta sien eallum monnum to wiotonne" ["which are most needful for all men to understand"].[13] The surviving translations potentially attributable to King Alfred himself include Gregory the Great's *Liber regulae pastoralis* (Book of Pastoral Rule), Boethius's *De consolatione Philosophiae* (On the Consolation of Philosophy), Augustine of Hippo's *Soliloquia* (Soliloquies), and a prose rendition of the first fifty Psalms.[14] Within the larger translation movement, Bishop Waerferth of Worcester translated the *Dialogi* (Dialogues) of Gregory the Great; less certainly associated are anonymous translations of Orosius's *Historiae adversum paganos* (Histories against the Pagans), Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (Ecclesiastical History of the English People), and the collection of medical texts known as *Bald's Leechbook*.[15] The precise nature of Alfred's involve-

12. Kershaw, "Illness, Power, and Prayer." On the relationship between Alfred's illnesses and constructs of royal piety, see also Abels, *Alfred the Great*, 101; Clark, *Compelling God*, 174–209; Pratt, "Illnesses"; Tovey, "Kingly Impairments." Alfred's piety would continue to be part of his reputation for centuries; King Henry VI, himself a particularly pious king, would attempt to have Alfred canonized in 1441; Keynes, "Cult," 237.

13. Fulk, *Old English Pastoral Care*, 8 (epistolary preface, section 5).

14. On attribution of these texts to Alfred, see Bately, "Alfred as Author and Translator"; Faulkner, "Mind in the Prose Psalms"; Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, 29; Thijs, "Early Old English Translation," 152.

15. Thijs, "Early Old English Translation," 152. On the relation of the OE *Bede* to the Alfredian translation program, an earlier Mercian tradition, or neither, see Rowley, *Old English Version*, 36–56. I discuss the OE *Bede* further in chapter 3. On the suggestion that *Bald's Leechbook* might have been associated with Alfred's court, see Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, 34. The Alfredian era also saw the development of the Alfredian law codes and the initial composition of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, both of which deal more with literal bodies than metaphorical bodies and thus exceed the scope

ment in any of these translations is still hotly debated.[16] While compelling arguments have been made that Alfred wrote or at least was involved in the creation of the OE *Pastoral Care*, *Boethius*, *Soliloquies*, and *Prose Psalms*, Malcolm R. Godden provides comparably compelling reasons to doubt Alfredian authorship or even the coherence of an Alfredian program, suggesting that some of the texts attributed to Alfred may have been composed as late as the 930s, decades after the king's death.[17] Even if these acts of translation were a collaborative effort, the work of someone at Alfred's court, or simply perceived later as associated with the king's interests, they nonetheless resonate with Alfred's prayer to avoid blindness and suggest something of the everyday attitudes that Alfred and his community held toward sight and blindness, which may represent more widely held thought patterns if more than one mind lies behind the translations. It is in recognition of that resonance, rather than an assumption of royal authorship, that this chapter takes up the inner circle of Alfredian texts to examine the spiritual implications of sight and blindness during Alfred's reign and the decades following.

The rhetorical function of disability in texts from the Alfredian corpus enables us to reconstruct ways that late-ninth- and early-tenth-century West Saxons conceived of disability, likely alongside members of other early medieval communities, given that Alfred drew scholars from Mercia, Wales, and the Continent to Wessex.[18] The pervasiveness of sight and blindness metaphors that I discuss in this chapter suggests that the conception of vision underlying such rhetoric was widely interpretable at least among the learned elite, but feasibly also among the general population, both during the period of these texts' translation and continuing as late as the twelfth century, when

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of the present chapter. On Alfred's laws, see Jurasinski and Oliver, *Laws of Alfred*; on matters related to disability therein, see Garner, *Hybrid Healing*, 228–32.

16. For a summary of scholarship on the matter of Alfredian authorship, see Discenza and Szarmach, "Annotated Bibliography on the Authorship Issue."

17. See, e.g., Bately, "Alfred as Author and Translator"; Bately, "Alfredian Canon Revisited"; Bately, "Integrity of the Alfredian Canon"; Bately, "Lexical Evidence"; Carnicelli, *King Alfred's Version*, 29–40; Frantzen, *King Alfred*, 45, 68–69, 90–91, 106–7; O'Neill, *King Alfred's Prose Translation*, 73–96; Szarmach, "Augustine's *Soliloquia*," 232–33; Thijs, "Early Old English Translation." For Godden's doubts, see Godden, "Alfredian Project"; Godden, "Alfredian Prose"; Godden, "Did King Alfred Write Anything?"; Godden, "King Alfred and the *Boethius* Industry." For alternative backgrounds possible for authors of the OE *Boethius* and *Soliloquies*, which likely did share an author and were perhaps composed as late as the 930s, see Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, 360–73; Godden and Irvine, *Old English Boethius*, I:140–51.

18. See Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, 26–28.

the latest surviving manuscript witnesses were copied. As a result, the association between sight and salvation that is demonstrated by the Alfredian corpus could have informed real lived experiences of countless people who experienced varying degrees of vision impairment, people whose perspectives were never recorded.

My goal throughout this book is to examine conceptions of disability and the afterlife that emerged at the earliest intersections of Christianity and English language and culture. As scholars including Leslie Lockett and Kathleen Davis have observed, the Alfredian translation program represents an early surge in the process of aligning Christian thought to English thought and the English language.[19] The texts associated with the Alfredian program are thus a logical beginning to our consideration of crip eschatology in early medieval England. This chapter traces the rhetorical and didactic uses of the conceptual metaphor that {SIGHT IS SALVATION} in the Alfredian corpus across the four texts most securely associated with Alfred—the OE *Pastoral Care*, *Boethius*, *Soliloquies*, and *Prose Psalms*—as well as the Alfred Jewel.[20] These texts evince the adoption and adaptation of sight and blindness metaphors that increase both the metaphors' reliance on lived experiences of vision impairment and the degree to which such metaphors are explicated as revealing the path to salvation. This chapter argues that in the Alfredian translation program, metaphors of sight and blindness convey ideas about resurrection and salvation in the afterlife. As a rhetorical level of spiritual prosthesis, disability metaphors use lived experiences of disability to convey ideas about spiritual matters; in this case, lived experiences of sightedness and vision impairment serve to explain the perception of divine truth and faith in Christian teachings. As a result, the rhetoric of disability makes possible—and makes crip—the eschatology embedded in the Alfredian textual program.

Blindness Metaphors in the Old English *Pastoral Care*

Alfred's anxieties about blindness, as evident in Asser's biography, connect closely to the metaphorical and spiritual connotations of blindness in the

19. Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, 313–73; Davis, "Performance of Translation Theory." On the culture of translation in early medieval England, see, e.g., Hurley, *Translation Effects*; Stanton, *Culture of Translation*.

20. Following George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in *Metaphors We Live By*, I use small capitals to typographically denote conceptual metaphors, with the addition of curly braces to better support screen-reader accessibility.

thoughtworld of early medieval Christianity, and particularly that of early medieval English Christianity. The modern metaphorical phrase {SEEING IS BELIEVING} attests to the persistence of a conceptual metaphor that pervades texts from the Alfredian translation program, including variants such as:

{SIGHTEDNESS IS FAITHFULNESS};
{LIGHT IS (SPIRITUAL) TRUTH};
{SIGHT IS SALVATION};

and conversely:

{OBSCURED/IMPAIRED VISION IS IGNORANCE/SPIRITUAL DOUBT};
{DARKNESS IS (SPIRITUAL) UNTRUTH}; and
{BLINDNESS IS DAMNATION}.

For this cluster of medieval Christian conceptual metaphors, I favor {SIGHT IS SALVATION} as the summative metaphor, because it illustrates both the corporeal and eschatological stakes of the metaphor that shall be unpacked in this chapter. I do not mean to conflate these metaphors; rather, I aim to show that wherever we find metaphors such as {SIGHT IS KNOWLEDGE}, {DARKNESS IS IGNORANCE}, or {BLINDNESS IS DAMNATION}, we should recognize the presence of their corollary metaphor, {SIGHT IS SALVATION}. This metaphor is, perhaps, obviously present in Christian discourse both medieval and modern; because the notion that {SIGHT IS SALVATION} pervades the language and culture so thoroughly—hiding in plain sight, as it were—it reveals the suffusion of disability metaphors in Anglophone vocabulary of salvation as well.[21] The thematic grouping around the {SIGHT IS SALVATION} conceptual metaphor underscores the central argument of this chapter: the Alfredian milieu perceived the world eschatologically through a rhetorical framework of disability.

In characterizing {SIGHT IS SALVATION} as a conceptual metaphor, I am following the model of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory, which establishes that "Metaphor is pervasive in everyday life,

21. On the correlation between sight and salvation in broader OE literature, see Ericksen, *Reading Old English Biblical Poetry*, 67–99; Firth, "Allegories of Sight"; O'Brien O'Keeffe, "Appraising the Senses." On earlier precedents, see Claes and Dupont, "Augustine's Sermons and Disability," 333; Koosed and Schumm, "Out of the Darkness"; Moss, "Heavenly Healing," 997n21. Garner observes the similar use of deafness as metaphor for spiritual lack; *Hybrid Healing*, 217.

not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature."[22] As Lakoff and Johnson argue, there are real-world consequences to the metaphors we use, even if the metaphors themselves do not mimetically depict reality; for example, the metaphor that {ARGUMENT IS WAR}, while not an inherent reality, encourages more bellicose debate through the vocabulary of attack and defense. The metaphors utilized by a given cultural or linguistic tradition function systematically to shape the reality experienced by participants in that tradition. As a result, "The concepts that govern our thought are not just matters of the intellect. They also govern our everyday functioning, down to the most mundane details. Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people."[23] Attending to such metaphorical concepts in the surviving texts of early medieval England thus permits modern access to how the people who created those texts perceived the world, got around in it, and related to other people.

Several recent studies have demonstrated the value of Lakoff and Johnson's approach to metaphor for understanding the thoughtworld of early medieval England. For example, Leslie Lockett has thoroughly documented the interplay between metaphoric and literal understandings of the mind as hydraulic in the body, so that phrases seeming to be metaphorical to a modern reader (for example, swelling with anger, turbulent emotions) could also be taken literally by early medieval discussants.[24] Attending closely to disability metaphors in Alfredian texts, specifically those relating to vision impairment, reveals how those metaphors were used to understand Christian soteriology, the branch of theology concerned with salvation. By recognizing the rhetoric of disability metaphors that would have impacted daily life in Alfredian Wessex, we may thus access something of the everyday lived experiences of people with disabilities, not just kings like Alfred, but also people whose stories are typically not inscribed in literal terms in the surviving record.

Scholars in Alfred's milieu inherited the conceptual metaphor that {SIGHT IS SALVATION} from their Latin sources. The Old English *Pastoral Care*, a translation of Gregory the Great's late-sixth-century *Liber regulae pastoralis* (Book of Pastoral Rule) that was produced sometime before 897, explicates scripture as metaphorical guidance for the leadership and teaching

22. Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 3.

23. Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 3.

24. Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, especially 54–178. See also, e.g., Cavell, *Weaving Words and Binding Bodies*, 5–7; Scott, "Illness as a Burden."

responsibilities of bishops.[25] Gregory, followed by his Alfredian translator, interprets a wide variety of metaphors, including disability metaphors such as {BLINDNESS IS SPIRITUAL IGNORANCE}. As noted above, the OE *Pastoral Care* explains who should not take on spiritual leadership through the Levitican law of Moses that no person should be permitted to make offers to God, "gif he ænig wom hæfde" ["if he had any blemish"], including "gif he blind wære" ["if he were blind"] or "torenige, oððe fleah hæfde on eagan" ["had blurry vision or a white spot in his eye"], among several other marked embodiments.[26] In accordance with the Gregorian source, the OE *Pastoral Care* explains:

> Se bið eallenga blind, se ðe noht ne ongiet be ðam leohte ðære uplecan sceawunge, ond se se ðe bið ofseten mid ðæm ðistrum ðisses anwearden lifes, ðonne he næfre ne gesiehð mid his modes eagum ðæt towearde leoht, ðy ðe he hit lufige, ond he nat hwider he recð mid ðæm stæpum his weorca.
>
> [He is entirely blind, who perceives nothing by the light of the heavenly display, and who is oppressed by the shadows of this present life, when he never sees with his mind's eyes that light that is to come, so that he might love it, and he does not know where he runs through the steps of his deeds.][27]

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25. For a detailed discussion of the *Liber regulae pastoralis* in the early Middle Ages, particularly in England, see Schreiber, *King Alfred's Old English Translation*, 5–22. On the manuscript witnesses of the OE *Pastoral Care*, see Fulk, *Old English Pastoral Care*, 539.

26. Fulk, *Old English Pastoral Care*, 70, I.11.1. Gregory follows Leviticus closely with this list of embodiments. In Leviticus 21:17–21, God instructs Moses to tell his brother Aaron: "Homo de semine tuo per familias qui habuerit maculam, non offeret panes Deo suo. Nec accedet ad ministerium eius. Si caecus fuerit, si claudus, si parvo vel grandi vel torto naso, si fracto pede, si manu, si gibbus, si lippus, si albuginem habens in oculo, si iugem scabiem, si inpetiginem in corpore vel hirniosus, omnis qui habuerit maculam de semine Aaron, sacerdotis, non accedet offerre hostias Domino nec panes Deo suo" ["*Whosoever* of thy seed throughout their families hath a blemish, he shall not offer bread to his God. Neither shall he approach to minister to him. If he be blind, if he be lame, if he have a little or a great or a crooked nose, if his foot or if his hand be broken, if he be crookbacked or blear-eyed or have a pearl in his eye or a continual scab or a dry scurf in his body or a rupture, whosoever of the seed of Aaron, the priest, hath a blemish, he shall not approach to offer sacrifices to the Lord nor bread to his God"; italics in original].

27. Fulk, *Old English Pastoral Care*, 70, I.11.2. The OE *Pastoral Care* additionally

This explanation, which begins a list of other disabled embodiments that could exclude individuals from the priesthood in Leviticus and what those embodiments symbolize, reveals an awareness of two parallel tracks of interpretation: the literal reading that one may not make offerings to God if they are literally, physically blind, and the metaphorical reading that the more important concern is whether a would-be priest is spiritually blind. The OE *Pastoral Care* follows Gregory in prioritizing the metaphorical reading. The remainder of this chapter will show, however, that other Alfredian translations frequently incorporate additional descriptions of literal, physical, lived experiences of sight and vision impairment, beyond what comes from the Latin, to explain matters of faith and knowledge of the divine.

Rather than perpetuating {SIGHT IS SALVATION} as a "dead" metaphor, in which the literal meaning of the metaphorical referent no longer holds for users of the metaphor, Alfredian texts routinely reconnect sight and spiritual perception to physical experiences of sightedness and vision impairment, keeping the metaphor alive. The vernacular versions of the OE *Boethius*, *Soliloquies*, and *Prose Psalms* demonstrate a preference for more of the lived realities of disability in their disability metaphors than had been included in the Latin to support the eschatological promises made by these texts. As a result, experiences of disability continued to shape both the conveyance and the content of eschatological hope.

Lived Experiences of Impaired Vision in the Old English *Boethius*

In the OE *Boethius*, changes made in translating from Latin into Old English reveal attachment of the {SIGHT IS SALVATION} metaphor to real, lived experiences of vision impairment and blindness, toward the purpose of spiritual consolation. The *Boethius* survives in two forms: the B-text (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 180, copied in the late eleventh or early twelfth century) attests the translation of Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius's *De consolatione Philosophiae* (ca. 524) into Old English prose, while the C-text (BL, Cotton MS Otho A. vi, copied in the tenth century) attests a version of the OE *Boethius* in prosimetric alternation, aligned in most moments with the prosimetrum of the *De consolatione*.[28] Because the *Boethius* in its two forms

follows Gregory in explaining that blurry vision indicates an ability to perceive divine truth that is dimmed by sinful works, while a white spot on the eye signifies ignorance, particularly through thinking oneself wise when one is not; see Fulk, *Old English Pastoral Care*, 74, 76, I.11.5.

28. The only other item in Bodley 180 is an Old English prayer. Otho A. vi is a

survives alongside a substantial commentary tradition upon the *De consolatione* that was widely available in early medieval England, the text clearly held significant intellectual influence, which would only have expanded with the text made doubly available in Old English.[29] Thus, the choices of phrasing used to bring the *De consolatione* into the vernacular indicate what conceptual metaphors were expected to resonate with an Old English–speaking and -reading audience.

The *Boethius* depicts the consolation of an incarcerated and despairing speaker by Wisdom, a renaming of the *De consolatione*'s Philosophy. Early in the text, the speaker laments: "Me ablendan þas ungetreowan woruldsælþa and me þa forletan swa blindne on þis dimme hol and me þa bereafodon ælcere lustbærnesse þa ða ic him æfre betst truwode" ["These faithless worldly joys have blinded me and left me thus blind in this dark hole and robbed me of all pleasure, when I had always trusted them best"] (B:2.4–6).[30] The speaker is Boethius himself in the Latin source, whom the Old English version simply refers to as *Mod*: the human mind, heart, or mood.[31] Mod complains of their

composite manuscript, joining the tenth-century C-text of the OE *Boethius* with late-twelfth- and thirteenth-century texts related to Edward the Confessor. On the manuscript witnesses of the OE *Boethius*, see Godden and Irvine, *Old English Boethius*, I:9–49. While for many years scholars have assumed that the Alfredian translator originally developed the translation in prose, then the same translator or another readapted the text into prosimetrum, Kevin Kiernan argues that the prosimetrical version was the earlier, adapted into consistent prose as late as the twelfth century, when OE poetry was no longer as appealing as in Alfred's time; "Alfred the Great's Burnt *Boethius*," 25–26. The two versions may also have been planned from the beginning as an *opus geminatum* or "twinned work"; see Weaver, "Hybrid Forms."

29. On the extensive commentary tradition on Boethius's *De consolatione*, including the relation of the OE *Boethius* to the commentaries, see Bolton, "Study of the *Consolation of Philosophy*"; Godden, "King Alfred and the *Boethius* Industry"; Hobson, "Translation as Gloss"; Love, "Latin Commentaries"; Pratt, *Political Thought*, 272–77.

30. All quotations from the OE *Boethius* are from Godden and Irvine, *Old English Boethius*. Chapter and line numbers are given in parentheses, preceded by "B" to indicate the prose B-text from Bodley 180 or "C" to indicate the prosimetric C-text from Otho A. vi. Where the B- and C-texts agree in all but orthography, as is generally the case for passages that are prose in both versions, I note the corresponding passage or its absence, the latter usually due to fire damage. In all cases, see Godden and Irvine, *Old English Boethius*, for details of the two readings.

31. As Lockett has demonstrated, the mind in the vernacular psychology of early medieval England was understood as the physical, hydraulic organ that controlled the body's actions; see *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, 17–53, as well as Cavell, *Weaving Words and Binding Bodies*, 213–30. On the inconsistent rendering of Latin words for mind and soul in Alfredian texts, see Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, 317–25. In order to empha-

betrayal by earthly possessions, which have abandoned them though they thought those possessions were secure, and have inhibited their ability to find hope or pleasure in their life now that they find themself "thus blind in this dark hole," a phrase that has no parallel in the Latin *De consolatione*. The accusative-first formulation "me ablendan" emphasizes Mod's personhood by syntactically prioritizing the identity of the "blinded" individual and the first-person expression of an experience of impairment. Mod's claim of blindness, however, is purely figural; there is no suggestion in the OE *Boethius* or the Latin *De consolatione* that the speaker's sight has been literally, physically impaired.[32] Though not previously discussed in the substantial scholarship on changes made from the Latin in the translation of the *Boethius*, the addition of Mod identifying as metaphorically blind stands out because it takes up the metaphoric deployment of blindness that pervades the Latin *De consolatione*, almost always in the voice of Philosophy, with whom Boethius converses, and moves it to the voice of the first-person speaker.[33] As in the Latin, the OE *Boethius* uses metaphoric blindness to signify negative spiritual states, under the larger metaphorical rubric that {SIGHT IS SALVATION}. The *Boethius* thus models the receipt of this metaphor from patristic Latin texts, its interpretation, and its subsequent redeployment in the English vernacular.

Many references to sight and blindness in the *De consolatione* and OE *Boethius* operate under the metaphorical structures that {IGNORANCE IS BLINDNESS} and {BLINDNESS IS DARKNESS}, and that therefore ignorance can be represented through both blindness and darkness.[34] Countering this is the metaphor that {UNDERSTANDING/FAITH/TRUTH ARE LIGHT}. For

size the embodiment of the mind, represented by the translated Boethian figure in the *Boethius*, I name this figure Mod, with all the semantic range of personhood, cognition, and emotion embedded in that word. In this, I am also following, e.g., Irvine, "Protean Form"; Pratt, *Political Thought*, 264–307.

32. The closest Mod comes to a literal vision impairment are descriptions of their eyes being filled with tears that blur their vision; for example, just before the *Boethius* adds the phrase "blind in this dark hole," it renders the Latin's lament that Death "flentes oculos claudere [. . .] negat" ["will not close my weeping eyes"] (*De consolatione* 1m1.16) into Mod describing themself "wepende and gisciende" ["weeping and sobbing"] (B:2.3). All quotations from the Latin *De consolatione Philosophiae* are from Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*, cited parenthetically by book, meter or prose section, and line number; translations are S. J. Tester's unless otherwise noted.

33. On changes made in the OE *Boethius*, see, e.g., Bately, "Boethius and King Alfred"; Bolton, "How Boethian Is Alfred's Boethius?"; Discenza, "Old English *Boethius*"; Frantzen, *King Alfred*, 47–49; Pratt, *Political Thought*, 280–87.

34. On darkness in OE literature, see Missuno, "Sinister Sound of Shadows" and the other essays in Wehlau, *Darkness, Depression, and Descent*.

example, the *Boethius* adapts a section of the Latin *De consolatione* describing the inability of the "improbi" ["wicked"] (4p4.67) to recognize divine truth; both versions frame ignorance-as-blindness as an inability to perceive light. In the Latin, Boethius asks for confirmation that the judgment of men cannot be trusted; Philosophy agrees,

> Nequeunt enim oculos tenebris assuetos ad lucem perspicuae veritatis attollere, similesque avibus sunt quarum intuitum nox inluminat dies caecat. Dum enim non rerum ordinem, sed suos intenuentur affectus, vel licentiam vel impunitatem scelerum putant esse felicem.
>
> [For they cannot raise eyes accustomed to darkness to the light of manifest truth, and they are like the birds whose sight night enlightens but day makes blind. For while they have regard not to the order of the world but their own desires, they think the freedom to commit evil and go unpunished for the evil done is a happy thing.] (4p4.95–100)

Boethius uses "caecat" ["blind"] to describe nocturnal animals' inability to see during the day, making blindness a means of understanding the inability to perceive divine truth.

The OE *Boethius* moves this metaphor substantially further. When Mod states that ordinary people would not be willing to listen to Wisdom's teaching, Wisdom answers:

> Nis þæt [nan] wundor. Hwæt, þu wast þæt ða men þe habbað unhale eagan ne magon fuleaðe locian ongean þa sunnan þonne hio beorhtost scinð, ne furðum on fyr ne on nanwuht beorhtes hi ne lyst locian, gif se æppel lef bið. Swa bioð þa synfullan mod ablend mid hiora yfelan willan þæt hi ne magon gesion þæt lioht þære beorhtan soðfæstnesse þæt is se hehsta wisdom. Ac him bið swa þam fuglum and þam diorum þe magon bet locian on niht þonne dæg. Se dæg blent and þiostrað hiora eagan, and þære nihte þiostro hi onlihtað. Forþy wenað þa ablendan mod þæt þæt sie sio mæste gesælð þæt men seo alefed yfel to donne, and sio dæd him mote bion unwitnod.
>
> [That is no wonder. Behold, you know that those men who have unwhole eyes cannot easily look toward the sun when it shines brightest, nor indeed do they wish to look at fire nor any bright thing, if the apple [i.e., eye] is weak. So are sinful minds blinded with their evil intent so that they cannot see the light of the bright truth, which is

> the highest wisdom. But for them it is as for the birds and animals that can better see by night than by day. The day blinds and darkens their eyes, and the darkness of night makes them shine. Thus thinks the blinded mind that the greatest felicity might be that men be crippled by doing evil, and that for that deed he might be unpunished.] (B:38.176–82; cf. C:P27.126–32)

In the Old English, the phrase "þu wast" ["you know"], followed by a description of visual impairment with no basis in the Latin, anticipates an awareness of at least one possible aspect of a lived experience of blindness: a sensitivity to bright light. Such an expectation suggests that any early medieval English readers or listeners learned enough to engage with Boethius, but not necessarily learned enough to do so in Latin, would have experienced vision impairment themselves or known someone with "lef" ["weak"] or "unhale" ["unwhole"] eyes, whose experience they understood.

The relationship between sin and blindness here is syntactically performed in the sequence "synfullan mod ablend," using *mod*, the same word that names the Boethius figure in the OE *Boethius*, to refer to any sinful mind. Thus, just as literal blindness is an aspect of the physical eyes, spiritual blindness is made an aspect of the physical mind. The syntax contains the mind between the description of a *mod* as sinful and its state of being blinded. In the Latin, Philosophy uses "cæcat" in the metaphor of night animals, but not at all in the description of men, and so the state of being blind (*caecus*) is never so closely juxtaposed to human sinfulness. The *Boethius* thus innovates by bracketing the mind with words for sinfulness and having been blinded, forming a diptych of the sinful mind and the blinded mind within the syntactical affordances of Old English.

In this case, at least, metaphoric disability is not real disability, but rather a rhetorical construction that relies upon perceptions of real disability for its effectiveness. As the word *swa* (so) indicates, the phrase "synfullan mod ablend" is legible to Mod and the text's audience because "þu wast" ["you know"] something about the real lived experience of blindness. This reliance of metaphorical disability upon real disability has consequences, however, for perceptions of real disability. Later in the passage, the word "alefed," typically associated with the physical meaning of "crippled," "weakened," or "impaired," carries spiritual connotations: by being "alefed yfel to donne" ["crippled by doing evil"], the sinful individual thinks that they are experiencing the highest felicity.[35] The metaphorical link between physical vision impairment

35. See *DOE*, "alefan."

and spiritual impairment presents the "ablendan mod" ["blinded mind"] as deceived into interpreting being "alefed" as being enabled; the implicit corollary is that to be even metaphorically "alefed" is in reality to be disabled.

Metaphoric blindness evokes the physicality of the eyes, the organ of sight, but the *Boethius* also physicalizes cognition through the metaphorical association between eyes that see and the perceiving mind, which in early medieval England was widely understood to be a physical organ.[36] The OE *Boethius* traces the relationship between sight and spirituality through the repeated use of the metaphor of "eyes of the mind," most of which are carried from the Latin *De consolatione*.[37] As David Pratt notes, the metaphoric motif of eyes of the mind stems from numerous patristic sources and appears repeatedly in the Alfredian corpus.[38] Miranda Wilcox has traced a corresponding movement of metaphors for cognition—the ship of the mind and, more relevant to our project here, the eyes of the mind—from classical antiquity to the European Middle Ages and argues that increasing familiarity with late antique texts during the Alfredian moment led to greater nuance in such metaphors for cognition.[39] Wilcox points out several instances in the OE *Pastoral Care* where Latin references simply to the *oculi* (eyes) were adapted into the *eagan modes* (eyes of the mind), adding a further physical, but also mental, component to the image.[40]

The application of eyes and sight to the mind exposes the metaphor that {SEEING IS BELIEVING} in early medieval somatic psychology, revealing that perception was understood to function both corporeally and cognitively, whether it was performed by the literal eyes in the head or the metaphorical eyes of the mind. For example, Wisdom prays that

> openum eagum ures modes we moten geseon þone æþelan æwelm ealra goda, þæt eart ðu. Forgif us þonne hale eagan ures modes þæt we hi þonne moton afæstnian on þe, and todrif ðone mist þe nu hangað beforan ures modes eagum and onliht þa eagan mid ðinum leohte; forþam ðu eart sio birhtu ðæs soðan leohtes, and þu eart sio sefte ræst soðfæstra, and ðu gedest þæt hi ðe gesioð.

36. See Godden, "Anglo-Saxons on the Mind"; Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*.

37. E.g., 1m2.2; 1m2.24; 1p2.17–18.

38. See Pratt, "Persuasion and Invention," 212–16. On the metaphor of the "eyes of the mind" in patristic thought, see also Miles, "Vision."

39. Wilcox, "Alfred's Epistemological Metaphors."

40. Wilcox, "Alfred's Epistemological Metaphors," 187.

> [with open eyes of our mind we might see the noble wellspring of all goods, which is you. Then grant to us healthy eyes of our mind that we might fix them on you and drive away the mist that now hangs before our mind's eyes and illuminate these eyes with your light; because you are the brightness of the true light, and you are the soft rest of the more righteous ones, and you permit that they see you.] (B:33.243–48)[41]

Seeing with "eagum ures modes" ["eyes of our mind"] functions much like seeing with physical eyes, which can be healthy—and by extension unhealthy—or obscured by mist, much like the obscuring of darkness.[42] Moreover, the purpose of the mind's eyes, like that of normatively able-bodied physical eyes, is to "gesioð" ["see"]: in this case, to "see" God.

The OE *Boethius* later extends spiritual perception through the eyes of the mind to include the possibility that the eyes of the mind might experience blindness. Wisdom describes the dangers of material objects such as gold, silver, and gems, because "swiðor hi ablendað þæs modes eagan þonne hi hi ascirpan" ["they blind the mind's eyes more than they sharpen them"] (B:34.200).[43] These phrases align physical sightedness with mental perception; instead of focusing the eyes, worldly wealth blurs the mind's "vision," even to the point of "blinding" the eyes of the mind. Moreover, the materiality of Wisdom's representatives of wealth (gold, silver, gems) physicalizes the moral corruption of a desire for wealth. Such objects may be beautiful to look at, but even as they appease earthly, physical vision, they impair spiritual, mental vision.

The *Boethius* takes literal experiences of vision impairment—sensitivity to light, dimming, and blurring—of which its audience may be aware even without firsthand experience, and uses them to expand upon the Latin *De consolatione*'s references to blindness. In doing so, the *Boethius* reveals the

41. The C-text makes substantial changes to this passage; see C:M20.263b–281.

42. This passage draws upon the Latin *De consolatione*'s request: "Da pater augustam menti conscendere sedem, / Da fontem lustrare boni, da luce reperta / In te conspicuos animi defigere visus" ["Grant, Father, to my mind to rise to your majestic seat, / Grant me to wander by the source of good, grant light to see, / To fix the clear sight of my mind on you"] (3m9.22–24). Notably, what Tester translates as "sight of my mind" is in the Latin the sight of the *animus*, or the rational soul, which the Latin meter has extensively described as incorporeal.

43. Cf. C:M21.25–27. The versifier makes substantial changes to account for meter, with the result that alliterating half-lines emphasize the physical placement of the mind in the chest: such treasures "modes eagan / ablendað on breostum" ["blind the eyes of the mind in the breast"] (C:M21.26b–27a).

metaphorical currency of {SIGHT IS SALVATION} and {BLINDNESS IS DAMNATION}. The OE *Boethius* thus grounds soteriological matters in lived experiences of disability, using the spiritual prosthesis of disability metaphors.

Lived Experiences of Sightedness in the Old English *Soliloquies*

Where the OE *Boethius* reveals the utility of lived experiences of vision impairment embedded in the {SIGHT IS SALVATION} metaphor for conveying spiritual concepts, the OE *Soliloquies* uses that metaphor to comment on the disability of earthly bodies in relation to resurrected bodies of the afterlife, through the limitations of sighted humans' earthly vision. Likely produced by the same individual as the OE *Boethius*, the *Soliloquies* translates Augustine of Hippo's *Soliloquia*, an early and incomplete text that Augustine wrote in 387 CE.[44] Both the *Soliloquia* and the OE *Soliloquies* dramatize a dialogue between Augustine and Reason about whether humans can gain true knowledge of God in the earthly life or the afterlife. The *Soliloquies* survives predominantly in one manuscript: BL, Cotton MS Vitellius A. xv.[45] More famously known as the shelfmark for the *Beowulf* manuscript, Vitellius A. xv comprises two parts: the early-eleventh-century Nowell Codex, containing *Beowulf* and four other texts, and the Southwick Codex, dated to the second quarter of the twelfth century and containing the *Soliloquies* (fols. 4r–59v), followed by an imperfect Old English version of the Gospel of Nicodemus, the prose *Solomon and Saturn*, and an imperfect homily on St. Quintin.[46]

The *Soliloquies* interrogates the human ability to know through the normative human ability to see, an analogy which persistently resorts to vision impairment as a way of contemplating impaired understanding. Reason tells Agustinus, the Old English rendering of Augustine, that "Seo gesyhð þonne is angyt, gyf heo ðonne hal eagan hæft, þæt is hal angyt" ["Sight, then, is understanding; if [the soul] has healthy eyes, that is healthy understanding"]

44. The OE *Boethius* and OE *Soliloquies* reference one another in OE, as well as each other's Latin sources, in addition to sharing other stylistic correspondences; see Hubbard, "Relation." Malcolm Godden and Susan Irvine attribute the OE *Boethius* and the OE *Soliloquies* to a single author, likely working in southern England between ca. 890 and ca. 930; *Old English Boethius*, I:146. On the unfinished state of the *Soliloquia*, see Lockett, *Augustine's* Soliloquies, xii–xiii.

45. A portion of the *Soliloquies* known as "Augustine's Prayer" also survives in an eleventh-century manuscript, BL, Cotton MS Tiberius A. iii; on this witness, see Szarmach, "Alfred's *Soliloquies*."

46. Carnicelli, *King Alfred's Version*, 3.

(I.46).[47] Leslie Lockett argues that the reason for translating the *Soliloquia* at all in an Alfredian context was to wrestle with conceptions of mind and thought that differed between vernacular Germanic and Latin Christian traditions.[48] For Lockett, the consideration of mind and thought participated in the adoption of Latinate ideas about a unitary soul, but for our purposes, this explanation of the *Soliloquia*'s interest to readers in early medieval England also underscores the importance of the {SIGHT IS SALVATION} metaphor at the intersection of Latin Christian thought and vernacular Old English. If {SIGHT IS UNDERSTANDING}, in the context of the *Soliloquies*, what is understood is plainly divine truth and thus the path to salvation.

Book I of the *Soliloquies* frequently correlates sight and perception of the divine, typically adapting or extending imagery from the Latin in much the same way that we have already observed in the *Boethius*.[49] Reason explains the impossibility of perceiving the divine prior to the Resurrection through the analogy of attempting to perceive the sun through physical eyes. Reason prescribes a program to train unhealthy eyes to perceive more and more earthly light before perceiving the sun itself as an analogy to explain the necessity of training the mind's eyes to come closer to perceiving divine truth, "þæt þu gesyhst myd þines modes eagan God swa sweotole swa þu nu gesyhst myd ðæs licuman æagan ða sunnan" ["so that you will see God with your mind's eyes as clearly as you now see the sun with your body's eyes"] (I.44). Reason ultimately outlines a therapeutic plan whereby perception of the divine (or its analogy, the sun) may be achieved through significant effort, a gradient program, so that one with "unhale æagan" ["unhealthy eyes"] (I.78) first looks at a wall, then precious metals, then fire, then stars, moon, a sunbeam, and then finally the sun itself. This program partly destigmatizes illness and vision impairment by normalizing it within the human experience. Reason even acknowledges one benefit of vision impairment: "þa þe unhale æagan hæbbað magon beon ieð on þistrum þonne on leohte" ["those with unhealthy

47. All quotations from the OE *Soliloquies* are from Lockett, *Augustine's* Soliloquies, 181–303, cited parenthetically by book and section number. I do not quote passages of the Latin *Soliloquia* for reasons of space, but for the Latin text, see Lockett, *Augustine's* Soliloquies, 1–179. Lockett provides an edition of the surviving Latin text that is likely the closest available to what was used by the translator of the OE *Soliloquies*, from Brussels, KBR, MS 8558–63, part 1, which was made in the mid-tenth century in southern England; Lockett, *Augustine's* Soliloquies, xiii–xiv.

48. Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, 326–28.

49. On the Alfredian adoption of metaphors from Augustine, including the notion of eyes of the mind, see Hitch, "Alfred's Cræft"; Wilcox, "Alfred's Epistemological Metaphors."

eyes are able to be in darkness more easily than in light"] (I.60). Given the text's persistent metaphorical associations of darkness with sin, however, it is unclear whether a ninth- or tenth-century reader would take ease of movement in the dark as a practical advantage or a spiritual disadvantage; perhaps it would read as both.

Reason positions even normative human vision as impaired, by explaining that vision of the sun, let alone the divine, is limited for all living humans. Agustinus even becomes willing to identify himself as experiencing vision impairment, saying, "Se læce þe ic wilnige þæt me gehele, he wot hu hala æagan ic habbe [. . .] To hym ne secge ic næfre ma þæt ic hala æagan habbe ær ic þone wisdom selfne geseo" ["The physician that I want to heal me, he knows what degree of health my eyes have . . . To him I will never say again that I have healthy eyes until I see wisdom itself"] (I.84). The speaker expresses a willingness to claim a vision-impaired identity for the sake of placing faith in the diagnosis of a spiritual healer, whether Reason or Christ. In this, the discussion of sight as understanding of the divine in Book I of the *Soliloquies* follows that of Augustine, setting up the premise that all earthly sight is inadequate because it cannot truly perceive the divine.

Following Book II's argument that the soul is immortal, Book III of the OE *Soliloquies* further articulates the limitations of normative earthly sight, adding original material that relies rhetorically on lived experiences of sightedness. Book III is particularly revealing about Alfredian conceptual understandings of sight, because unlike Book I and much of Book II, Book III is not a translation from the *Soliloquia*, but a new composition in Old English based on other sources.[50] Book III of the OE *Soliloquies* continues the Augustinian format of a dialogue with Reason, but it draws upon other Augustinian and non-Augustinian sources to explore the nature of sight and the promise that the blessed will literally see God in the afterlife. Retaining the premise that sight is desirable and related to positive eschatological outcomes, Book III explains the promise of knowing God fully in the afterlife as a matter of

50. On the sources for Book III of the OE *Soliloquies*, see Godden, "Text and Eschatology"; Treschow, "Echoes of the 'Periphyseon'"; on the sources of the *Soliloquies* generally, see Carnicelli, *King Alfred's Version*, 28–37; Pratt, *Political Thought*, 321–25; Lockett, *Augustine's* Soliloquies, xiv–xvi. The fragmented and disheveled state of the Southwick Codex witness, in which the scribe seems to have unwittingly copied a misorganized set of leaves, complicates a reading of Book III. I follow Godden's reorganization of the miscopied surviving text; "Text and Eschatology." On the state of the text and the manuscript, see also Carnicelli, *King Alfred's Version*, 1–3; Gatch, "King Alfred's Version," 17; Ker, *Catalogue*, 279–81; Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, 299.

seeing God fully, using earthly experiences of literal vision as a spiritual prosthesis to support that aim. In the process, the OE *Soliloquies* constructs all earthly sight as impaired relative to the literal sight promised for the Resurrection body and the metaphorical sight of the soul in its perception of God.

Book III of the *Soliloquies* bolsters ninth-century West Saxon conceptual metaphors with Augustinian authority. As Malcolm R. Godden has observed, "Rather presumptuously, we might think, King Alfred took it upon himself to write the third book where Augustine had failed—and still more presumptuously, to pass it off as a continuation of the dialogue between Augustine and Reason."[51] Because the fiction of the dialogue continues to the end of the *Soliloquies*, it would be perfectly reasonable for a reader of the Old English to faithfully take the whole text as a true translation of Augustine, not realizing that the Alfredian translator has substantially changed the text's ultimate claims about sight in the afterlife.[52] Where Augustine adamantly denied that the clearest sight of God would be granted to the damned, the *Soliloquies* indicates that even the damned will have full sight of God (III.9), but to their detriment, an eschatological sight to which we will return in chapter 6. The Alfredian translator builds significantly upon the metaphors and analogies deployed by Augustine. Ruth Waterhouse identifies three of these: "ship/anchor-cable/anchor," "lovers and clothes," and "lord and king."[53] I would suggest that a metaphor complex of equal, if not greater, importance is that of {SIGHT IS SALVATION}, through which the most original Alfredian addition in the *Soliloquies*, Book III, claims that the Resurrection body will be able to literally see and figuratively see (that is, know) God just as he is; by comparison, the earthly body is both physically and spiritually impaired.

The *Soliloquies*' allegorical figure of Reason, acting much like Wisdom

51. Godden, "Text and Eschatology," 189; see also Godden, "Player King." Godden has since increasingly questioned the Alfredian authorship of the *Soliloquies* or any of the texts associated with the king; see Godden, "Alfredian Prose"; Godden, "Alfredian Project"; Godden, "Did King Alfred Write Anything?"

52. As Mary Kate Hurley has shown, another putative Alfredian text, the OE *Orosius*, similarly presents its most original material as derived from its source, using the phrase "cwæð Orosius" ["Orosius said"] when introducing material that Orosius did not in fact provide; Hurley, "Alfredian Temporalities." On Alfred's departures from *Soliloquia*, see Ganze, "Individual in the Afterlife"; Gatch, "King Alfred's Version"; Waterhouse, "Tone in Alfred's Version."

53. Waterhouse, "Tone in Alfred's Version"; on Alfredian metaphorical complexes, see also, e.g., Heuchan, "God's Co-Workers"; Hindley, "Sight and Understanding"; Jones, "Lady and the Letter"; Szarmach, "Augustine's *Soliloquia*"; Wilcox, "Alfred's Epistemological Metaphors."

in the OE *Boethius*, assures the narrator that after Judgment Day, all will receive sight of God, both the saved to their joy and the damned to their despair. Due to the limitations of physical sight, the narrator cannot know whether they will be saved before that time; they must have faith in that future sight, until the time when seeing will obviate the need for believing. The metaphor that {SIGHT IS SALVATION} thus reveals itself to be only a metaphor; the earthly sight, however bright or sharp, will always be inadequate to see God and thus faith is required right up until the Resurrection and Last Judgment, the moment when salvation is actually determined. How one behaves in the absence of this "true" sight—that is, whether or not they have faith in God during the metaphorical vision impairment of earthly existence—determines their place among the blessed or the damned. Thus, living with a form of impaired vision is an inescapable prerequisite to any afterlife at all. While on earth, {BLINDNESS IS DAMNATION}, but also potential for salvation; in the afterlife, {SALVATION IS SIGHT}, but according to the OE *Soliloquies*, so also is damnation.

The ubiquitous relative impairment of earthly sight naturalizes vision impairment as a feature of both mental and ocular sight. Reason explains earthly sight in terms of both the eyes of the mind and the eyes of the body:

> Ac þæt mod is mid þam lichaman gehefegod and abysgod, þæt we ne magon myd þæs modes eagum nan þing geseon swylc swilc hyt is, ðe ma þe ðu myht hwilum þære sunnan scyman geseon þonne þa wolcnan sceotað betweon hyre and þe, and þeah heo scyneð swiðe beorhte þær þer heo bið.
>
> [But the mind is by the body made heavy and preoccupied, so that we cannot with the mind's eyes see any thing just as it is, any more than you might see the sun's shining at times when the clouds dart between it and you, and still it shines very brightly there where it is.] (III.7)

The mind's eyes are unable to see anything as it truly is—certainly not God—as if one is trying to look at the sun, when clouds pass in front of it. Reason initially suggests that this ocular inability is the fault of the body, for being in the body and weighed down thereby, the mind is "gehefegod and abysgod" ["made heavy and preoccupied"]. In a similar way, Reason rhetorically limits the capabilities of the mind's eyes: they are explained to be unable to see things just as they are through the analogy of the eyes of the body being unable to see the brightness of the sun through clouds. The impedi-

ment to seeing the sun that clouds provide follows the moral connotations of the {SIGHT IS SALVATION} metaphor. Just as the body is an impediment to the eyes of the mind seeing God, clouds (or any other impediment to vision) get in the way of seeing the brightness of the sun (itself a metaphorical stand-in for divine truth).

Limitations on mental sight are not merely the fault of the body, however. They are also a matter of spatial distance:

> Ne furðum þeah þer nan wolcne si betweon þe and hyre, þu hy ne myht ful sweotole geseon swilce swilc heo is, forðam þu ne eart ðer þær heo is. Ne þin lichama þær beon ne mæg, ne þin lychamlican æegan þær nawer neah cuman ne magon, ne þer neah geseon.
>
> [Further, even if there might be no cloud between you and it [the sun], you could not see it completely clearly just as it is, because you are not there where it is. Neither can your body be there, nor can your bodily eyes come anywhere near to there, nor see there from nearby.] (III.7)[54]

Even with no clouds intervening, neither the mind's eyes nor the body's eyes can truly perceive the sun as it is, because the body simply cannot be where the sun is. Reason goes on to clarify that human eyes (of mind or body) likewise cannot perceive the moon just as it is, due to its distance from us. Reason turns the impossibility of truly seeing anything into a lesson in faith:

> Nu þu hæfst gehyred þæt we naðer ne myd þæs lichaman eagan ne myd þæs modes eagan nanwiht ne magon of þisse weorulde geseon eallunga swa swa hyt is. Ac of ðam dæle þe we hys geseoð, we sceolum gelifan þane del þe we hys ne geseoð.
>
> [Now you have heard that neither with the bodily eyes nor with the mind's eyes can we see anything entirely as it is from this world. But from the part that we see of it, we should believe in the part that we do not see of it.] (III.8)[55]

54. Book III's assertion that no earthly eyes can see the sun is foreshadowed in the earlier material drawn directly from Augustine's *Soliloquia*; see I.60, I.74.

55. As Lockett notes, the phrase "ne myd þæs lichaman eagan" does not appear in the Vercelli A.xv witness, but was supplied by Thomas A. Carnicelli in *King Alfred's Version*; see Lockett, *Augustine's* Soliloquies, 346. I follow Lockett in maintaining the

It is both the bodily eyes and the mind's eyes that cannot see the truth of things while living in the physical body and in the earthly world. The characterization of all earthly sight as inadequate to see God provides a leveling of ability; all earthly sight is comparably constrained simply by being directed through the body's eyes and the mind's eyes.

Indeed it is through faith in "þane del þe we [. . .] ne geseoð" ["the part that we do not see"] (III.8) that the earthly individual might avoid damnation, and so not seeing is essential. The inability to see God, the spiritual impairment of the bodily eyes and the mind's eyes on earth, becomes prerequisite to the complete otherworldly sight that is promised in the afterlife. Reason continues,

> Ac us ys gehaten butan ælcum tweon, swa swa we of þisse weorulde weorðað and seo sawle of þære carcerne gæð þæs lichaman, aletan byd þæt we gewiton ælces þinges þe we nu wilniað to witanne, and micle mare þonne þa ealdan men, þa ealra wissestan on þisse weorulde, witan magen. And efter Domes Dæge, us ys gehaten þæt we moten God geseon openlice, ealne geseon swylce swylce he ys, and hyne a syððan cunnan swa georne swa he nu us can.
>
> [But it is promised to us without any doubt, that just as we move from this world and the soul departs from the prison of the body, then it is granted that we will know everything that we now wish to know, and much more than old men, the wisest of all in this world, might know. And after Judgment Day, it is promised to us that we might see God openly, see [him] entirely just as he is, and know him eternally as readily as he now knows us.] (III.8)

Reason's description of death underscores the body's oppressive nature as "þære carcerne [. . .] þæs lichaman" ["the prison of the body"] (III.8). Death frees the soul from the limitations of the body's eyes and the mind's eyes, providing instead the glories of the sight of the afterlife, and particularly the glories of seeing God fully at the Last Judgment. The implication remains that earthly sight, whether the sight of the body's eyes or of the mind's eyes, is always impaired by comparison to sight in the afterlife, cripping the earthly embodiment by way of an eschatological metaphor.

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phrase, as it completes the "neither X nor Y" logic of the sentence in keeping with the surrounding text.

The *Soliloquies* goes on to present sight as a defining feature of the Christian afterlife for all, not just the blessed, complicating the association between sin and vision impairment. Reason affirms,

> Ealle we geseoð God, ge þa þe her wyrste beoð ge þa þe her beste beoð. Ealle þa godan hyne geseoð, heom to frofran and to gefean and to are and eaðnesse and to wuldre. And þa yfelan hyne geseoð swa ylce swa þa godan, heom þeah to wite.
>
> [We all will see God, both those who here are worst and those who here are best. All the good will see him, as a comfort and as a gladness and as an honor and an ease and as a glory to them; and the evil will see him just like the good, but as a punishment to them.] (III.9)

Extending enhanced sight to both the blessed and the damned in the afterlife collapses the earthly moral associations between sight and salvation that emerge in the *Boethius* and earlier in the *Soliloquies*. The sight and perception of the afterlife is here desirable for the blessed and a torment to the damned. Refusing the constructed binary of {BLINDNESS IS DAMNATION} / {SIGHT IS SALVATION}, this formulation of the afterlife makes everyone sighted, some to their joy and some to their despair. This portrayal of the afterlife relies on the specter of vision impairment and the spiritual prosthesis of {SIGHT IS SALVATION}. And yet, in the afterlife that is envisioned, there is no space for vision impairment, with or without stigma; that possible embodied experience is completely erased in the Resurrection body.

Physical and Moral Blindness in the Old English *Prose Psalms*

The Old English *Boethius* and *Soliloquies* demonstrate how an Alfredian translator expanded the {SIGHT IS SALVATION} conceptual metaphor from their Latin sources to underscore the powerful earthly and eschatological connotations of blindness and sight. The *Boethius* and *Soliloquies* both evince extensive elaboration and adaptation from their Latin sources. The Old English *Prose Psalms* follow the content of their scriptural source much more closely, but nonetheless add minor details of lived experiences of vision impairment to the {SIGHT IS SALVATION} metaphorical complex of the Psalms.[56] Because the Psalms were pervasive in medieval Christian practice,

56. The *Prose Psalms* are predominantly based on the Roman Psalms (a first-century translation of the Psalms into Latin), though they show enough influence from other

the vision and blindness metaphors in the *Prose Psalms* reveal the pathways by which such metaphors might impact the lives of people living with vision impairment beyond limited scholarly circles.

The OE *Prose Psalms* survive only in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Fonds latin 8824, an eleventh-century manuscript known as the Paris Psalter.[57] In the Paris Psalter, the *Prose Psalms*, along with prose introductions by the same author, appear in side-by-side columns with the Latin Psalms on folios 1r–63v.[58] The *Prose Psalms* comprise the vernacular column for only the first fifty Psalms; the remainder are provided in an Old English verse translation composed in the mid-tenth century.[59] Patrick P. O'Neill argues that the translation practice employed in creating the *Prose Psalms* frequently grappled with challenging passages in the Latin and clarified their phrasing in the Old English, reflecting an interpretation of the Psalms in the Alfredian moment.[60] The *Prose Psalms* make relatively little alteration to the

versions (including the Gallican Psalms, a fourth-century translation by Jerome which was incorporated into the Vulgate and is quoted below) that the translator clearly had access to multiple Latin versions of the Psalms; see O'Neill, *Old English Psalms*, xi. In England, the Roman Psalms remained in use even after the Norman Conquest, despite the increasing popularity of the Gallican Psalms in Continental Europe and Ireland even in Alfred's time. On the textual history of the Psalms leading up to their reception in early medieval England and the development of the OE *Prose Psalms*, see O'Neill, *King Alfred's Prose Translation*, 31–34; O'Neill, *Old English Psalms*, vii–xv; Toswell, *Anglo-Saxon Psalter*, 5, 10–13. On the OE *Prose Psalms*, particularly their sources and structure, see also O'Neill, "Prose Translation."

57. The Paris Psalter was produced between 1030 and ca. 1050, most likely at St. Augustine's, Canterbury; on the Paris Psalter as a manuscript, see Krapp, *Paris Psalter*, vii–xiii; O'Neill, *King Alfred's Prose Translation*, 1–22. A second copy of the OE introductions that accompany the prose paraphrases of the OE *Prose Psalms* survives—with significant damage from the Cotton Library fire of 1731—in the Vitellius Psalter, BL, Cotton MS Vitellius E. xviii (written ca. 1060 at Winchester). The survival of the Vitellius Psalter fragments of Alfredian introductions, in which Patrick P. O'Neill observes signs of a complete OE *Prose Psalms* source distinct from that in the Paris Psalter, suggests that numerous copies of the Alfredian OE *Prose Psalms* tradition may have been circulating into the eleventh century; see O'Neill, *King Alfred's Prose Translation*, 28–30.

58. See O'Neill, *King Alfred's Prose Translation*, 23–30; O'Neill, "Old English Introductions." On the Paris Psalter in the context of early medieval English psalters broadly, see Toswell, *Anglo-Saxon Psalter*, 99–130. In addition to the Roman Latin Psalms that appear in columns alongside the first fifty Psalms in the Alfredian prose, followed by a separate metrical translation for the remaining Psalms, the manuscript also includes Latin canticles, a litany of saints, and nine assorted prayers; see O'Neill, *King Alfred's Prose Translation*, 11–19.

59. See Krapp, *Paris Psalter*, vii–xx; O'Neill, *King Alfred's Prose Translation*, 9–10.

60. O'Neill, *King Alfred's Prose Translation*, 45; see also Toswell, *Anglo-Saxon Psalter*, 3 and 75.

{SIGHT IS SALVATION} metaphors in the first fifty Psalms, suggesting that for an English audience, the metaphor needed only minor clarification, but also that adding details of lived experiences of vision and vision impairment was nonetheless desirable.

Both the biblical Psalms and the OE *Prose Psalms* consistently follow the metaphorical pattern that {SIGHT IS SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE}, {OBSCURED VISION IS SPIRITUAL DOUBT/DAMNATION}, {LIGHT IS SPIRITUAL HOPE}, and {DARKNESS IS SPIRITUAL DESPAIR}. Frequently throughout the *Prose Psalms*, the speaker describes their eyes as in turmoil and in need of God's light. Psalm 12 pleads, "Beseoh to me, Drihten, min God, and gehyr me. Onliht mine eagan, þæt hi næfre ne slapan on swylcum deaðe" ["See me, Lord, my God, and hear me. Illumine my eyes so that they never sleep in such death"] (12.3–4[4]).[61] This translates from the Latin: "Respice, et exaudi me, Domine, Deus meus. Inlumina oculos meos ne umquam obdormiam in morte" ["Consider, and hear me, O Lord, my God. Enlighten my eyes that I never sleep in death"] (Psalms 12:4).[62] Recognition by God is here framed as being seen and heard, physicalizing and anthropomorphizing divine favor in stark contrast to the "deaðe" ["death"] of damnation. Placing death opposite the illumination of one's eyes—here given with no indication that they are anything other than literal, physical, human eyes—suggests that to not see, or to see only darkness, was aligned with death and, furthermore, negative spiritual consequences.

The OE *Prose Psalms* also add details evocative of lived experiences of vision impairment for affective effect. In Psalm 37, the speaker laments: "Min heorte is gedrefed and min mod oninnan me, for þæm min mægen and min strengo and min cræft me hæfð forlæten, and þæt leoht and seo scearpnes minra eagena, þe ic ær hæfde, nis nu mid me swa swa ic hy geo hæfde" ["My heart is disturbed and my mind turns in on me, because my might and my strength and my skill have forsaken me, and that light and the sharpness of my eyes, which I previously had, is not now with me as I long ago had them"] (37.9[11]). The Old English offers a significant expansion from the Latin, which reads: "Cor meum conturbatum est; dereliquit me virtus mea, et

61. All quotations of the OE *Prose Psalms* are from O'Neill, *Old English Psalms*, cited by Psalm number and the verse number according to the Paris Psalter divisions; traditional verse numbering according to the Vulgate, where it differs, is provided in brackets.

62. Quotations of the Latin Psalms are of the Gallican version of the Vulgate, available in the DOML edition cited throughout this book; the Roman version is available in Weber, *Le Psautier Romain*. The selected passages, while not identical between the Gallican and Roman versions, do not differ in ways that impact my comparison to the OE *Prose Psalms*.

lumen oculorum meorum et ipsum non est mecum" ["My heart is troubled; my strength hath left me, and the light of my eyes *itself* is not with me"] (37:11).[63] The Alfredian adaptation refers to not just the light, but also the sharpness of the eyes leaving them, and it expands the passage's phrasing in order to convey the idea that light and the eyes' sharpness had previously been available. The Old English version suggests intimate knowledge of one possible progression of vision impairment, one that involves both dimming and blurring. Regardless of whether the Alfredian translator had experienced dimming or blurring themself, this expansion from the Latin suggests a regrounding of the {SIGHT IS SALVATION} metaphor in the literal physical experience, not just of sight, but also of vision impairment. In order to invoke the emotional impacts of spiritual despair, the Old English goes above and beyond the Latin in describing ocular impairment, under the metaphor that {IMPAIRED VISION IS DISTANCE FROM SALVATION}.

The {SIGHT IS SALVATION} metaphor undergirds much of the *Prose Psalms*' depictions of sin and hope, as it does in the Latin Psalms, which pervaded medieval Christian practice. Such metaphorical frameworks for thinking about sight and salvation as light and illumination would have appeared again and again, day after day, in the spiritual practices of the early medieval English. King Alfred himself very likely knew the Psalms better than any other text, both in Latin, and, if the *Prose Psalms* are indeed his, in Old English as well.[64] While Boethius and Augustine were studied among learned elites, the Psalms in early medieval England (and across medieval Christianity) were an integral part of daily life for both professional monastics and an expanding proportion of the laity, including devout secular individuals such as King Alfred. As M. J. Toswell writes, the Psalms "served many functions in Anglo-Saxon England, functions which were common to all Christendom: central text of the daily Offices, part of every liturgical service of the church, and probably also the first text learned by oblates—therefore serving the dual purpose of introducing the oblates both to the central text of the daily Offices and to Latin, the language of their spiritual life. [. . .] Finally, the Psalms were part of the process of penance and part of the developing tradition of private prayer and devotion."[65] The conceptual metaphors documented in the Alfredian *Prose Psalms* thus reflect a persistently present way of thinking about

63. Italics in original.

64. On Alfred's personal relationship to the Psalms, see Toswell, *Anglo-Saxon Psalter*, 64–82.

65. Toswell, *Anglo-Saxon Psalter*, 3. On the educational uses of the Psalms in early medieval England, see also Brown, "Psalms."

vision and vision impairment with high spiritual stakes in the elite scholarship of the Alfredian milieu, and perhaps also in the general population of ninth- and tenth-century Wessex.

Chasing Salvation through Sight with the Alfred Jewel

The spiritually prosthetic effect of metaphors about sight and blindness extends beyond the textual milieu of Alfred's reign; it also emerges in the material record of the period through objects such as the Alfred Jewel and Fuller Brooch, both of which include a figure that has been identified as personified Sight.[66] The Alfred Jewel (figure 2) is of particular interest here, because it is not only an object depicting Sight, but likely was also an object designed to support sighted reading, and the spiritually proper sight of bishops in Alfred's realm. The Alfred Jewel is thus a spiritual prosthesis of the most material order, tangibly aiding activities expected to lead one toward salvation.

The Alfred Jewel's name derives from an inscription around the edge that reads "+AELFRED MEC HEHT GEWYRCAN" ["Alfred ordered me made"], though only circumstantial evidence supports identifying the Alfred of the Jewel with King Alfred.[67] The Alfred Jewel and similar objects are typically described as *æstels*. This term appears in the preface of the OE *Pastoral Care*, which states, "to ælcum biscepstole on minum rice wille ane onsendan; ond on ælcre bið an æstel" ["to each bishopric in my realm I will send one [a copy of the *Pastoral Care*], and in each will be an *æstel*"].[68] Though OE *æstel* is rarely attested, scholarly consensus tends toward reading the word as referring to a decorative pointer used to guide sighted reading.[69]

66. On the Fuller Brooch and sight, see Bruce-Mitford, "Fuller Brooch"; Hinton, *Alfred Jewel*, 63–64; Pratt, *Political Thought*, 187–89.

67. The Alfred Jewel, made in a style consistent with a late-ninth-century date, was found in 1693 in North Petherton, near Athelney in Somerset. Athelney is notable in the history of King Alfred's reign as the natural fortress where Alfred took refuge in 878 and from which he launched a guerrilla war to retake Wessex from the invading Danes under Guthrum; Alfred later allegedly founded a monastery there. The Alfred Jewel is now at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. See Abels, *Alfred the Great*, 156–57, 243; Hinton, *Alfred Jewel*, 11–29 (the latter of which reproduces several additional images of the Alfred Jewel).

68. Fulk, *Old English Pastoral Care*, 8 (epistolary preface, section 6).

69. On the meaning of *æstel* and discussion of the nature of such an object, including the possibility that it was a bookmark, a reliquary for a fragment of the True Cross, or, as I accept here, the handle of a pointer for reading, see Collins, "King Alfred's *Æstel*

Fig. 2. Alfred Jewel. (Image © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.)

The Alfred Jewel—which, despite the name, is not actually a jewel—is shaped like a teardrop and features a *cloisonné* enameled human figure under cut rock crystal in a gold setting.[70] At the point of the teardrop, the head of a serpent forms the socket for a rod, now lost, which, if our interpretation of the term *æstel* is correct, would have been used to guide a sighted reader of a Gospel or other spiritual text. The pale enameled figure represented in the Alfred Jewel wears a green shirt against a blue background, holds two

Reconsidered"; Harbert, "King Alfred's Aestel"; Howlett, "Alfred's Æstel"; Page, "Yet Another Note"; Parker, "*Æstel* and Divine Law." I specify sighted reading here to indicate the availability to the early medieval English of other modes of what we would call reading today.

70. On the amuletic value of quartz and white stones in prehistoric and medieval Europe, see Meaney, *Anglo-Saxon Amulets*, 88–96.

stylized flowers, and has eyes that are unusually large for early medieval English portraiture; this figure has been identified as a personification of Sight.[71] Catherine E. Karkov posits that because sight in the broader corpus of Alfredian prose can "elevate or betray, leading one forward to the light of God and truth, or backward into sin and perdition," the Alfred Jewel functions as a guide to proper sight and the Wisdom of God.[72] Furthermore, Charles D. Wright has suggested that the flowers held by Sight on the Alfred Jewel draw upon an apocryphal tradition that God formed the eyes out of flowers; they would thus be not only what one sees, but the matter used to form the physical eyes with which one sees.[73]

Uniquely among all cut (rather than solely polished) rock crystal surviving from early medieval England, the Alfred Jewel is itself roughly the shape of the human eye. It has been suggested that this shape takes advantage of a pre-existing, probably Roman, piece of rock crystal.[74] The makers of the Alfred Jewel did not need to use rock crystal to protect the enamel, however; all other surviving *cloisonné* enameling from early medieval England remains uncovered, as in the Minster Lovell Jewel, another probable *æstel*.[75] Crystal is an appropriate material, however, both for its association with Christ and for possible connotations that it could cure physical ailments. The ninth-century medical text *Bald's Leechbook* claims that the Patriarch of Jerusalem sent King Alfred advice that "se hwita stan" ["the white stone"] is good for various healing purposes.[76] It is thus tantalizingly possible that the rock crystal in the Alfred Jewel was chosen both for its medical association with bodily wholeness and its formal resemblance to the human eye.

All six of the possible additional *æstels* proposed by David A. Hinton (the Minster Lovell Jewel, Bowleaze Cove Jewel, Warminster Jewel, and objects

71. Bakka, "Alfred Jewel and Sight"; see also Howlett, "Iconography of the Alfred Jewel."

72. Karkov, *Art*, 216.

73. Wright, "Why Sight Holds Flowers."

74. Kornbluth, "Alfred Jewel." The Warminster Jewel, now at the Salisbury Museum, also features a reused polished rock crystal, but no enamel.

75. The Minster Lovell Jewel is a ninth-century object of gold and enamel, found in Oxfordshire and now held at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford; for images, see Hinton, *Alfred Jewel*, 30–31, 94. The jewel is round with a flattened face, made of gold with beaded gold decorations and an enameled geometric design in green, white, and two shades of blue on its face.

76. Cockayne, *Leechdoms*, 290. On the possible gift from the Patriarch, see Meaney, "Alfred, the Patriarch, and the White Stone," 66. On the association of crystal with Christ, see Karkov, *Art*, 216; Overbey, "Seeing through Stone," 251.

found in Warwickshire, Yorkshire, and Norway) are round, oval, or teardrop-shaped.[77] Two of the additional *æstels* in particular manifest the human eye, not only in their shape but also in their design: the Bowleaze Cove Jewel and Warminster Jewel both feature a blue bead at the center of a gold or gold-and-crystal setting.[78] Karkov suggests, "Such symbolism could be connected with the mind's eye and the quest for wisdom that features so prominently in Alfred's writings, even though there is no direct link between either the Bowleaze or Warminster Jewels and the king. [. . .] It is possible to read the Bowleaze Cove Jewel as a cipher for both the reader and the act of reading. It mimics the eye of the reader, but it also turns its gaze back at the reader in a way that promotes reflection on what is read and how it is read."[79] *Æstels* such as the Alfred, Bowleaze Cove, and Warminster Jewels thus place the metaphoric mind's eye in one's hand, physically manifesting the action of applying one's mind to the text on the page through the sense of sight.

The use of the crystal in the Alfred Jewel, moreover, magnifies an ocular observer's awareness of the act of seeing, because it is an effect of the rock crystal to literally magnify the image underneath, subtly bending and distorting the small figure when viewed from different angles. Sight's enormous eyes look down and to his right, a posture Egil Bakka describes as servile, but if the *æstel* is held in one's hand while reading with the pointer aimed at the text to be read, then Sight's eyes would look toward the words on the page.[80] With a touch of the uncanny, the reflection of light on and through the crystal distorts the enamel image and gives the figure the appearance of movement, perhaps even of being about to look from the page to the viewer. The Alfred Jewel thus represents Sight and aids sight, but also mimics sight in unsettling ways.

The metaphors that {TO SEE IS TO KNOW}, so {SIGHT IS COGNITION}, and furthermore that {SIGHT IS SALVATION} may well have had a material presence in a process of literal sight and cognition: the act of sighted reading. Though the *æstels* other than the Alfred Jewel have no known connection to the Alfredian court, Leslie Webster suggests that they are innovations of the Alfredian moment, manifesting the strong investment in wisdom and learning during Alfred's reign.[81] Webster also suggests that the Alfred Jewel's form

77. Hinton, *Alfred Jewel*, 30–39.

78. Images of the Bowleaze Cove and Warminster Jewels are reproduced in Hinton, *Alfred Jewel*, 33–34.

79. Karkov, *Art*, 218.

80. Bakka, "Alfred Jewel and Sight," 282.

81. Webster, "*Ædificia nova*," 82–83.

and imagery may have evoked Solomon, as well as Sight, and thus underscored the pursuit of wisdom that an object such as an *æstel* might support.[82] Given the frequent eye shape of the surviving examples, the object of the *æstel* itself may have been associated with sight even when a figural representation of Sight did not appear on the object, and even outside the especially learned circles of Alfred's court.

Prior scholarship on the Alfred Jewel, however, has not considered the figure of Sight in connection to disability. As we have seen, multiple texts associated with the Alfredian translation program treat metaphorical vision impairment as an ever-present corollary to metaphorical sight. Attending to the specter of vision impairment in the likely usage of an object such as the Alfred Jewel reveals one way in which Alfred and his contemporaries seem to have sought to address anxieties about sight through the act of sighted reading: by guiding sight, supervising sight with a figure of Sight, and reminding sighted readers of the eschatological stakes of sight. Indeed, because Alfredian texts are just as preoccupied with vision impairment as they are with vision, I would suggest that the Alfred Jewel, with its layers of "proper" spiritual sight, offers apotropaic protection against the specter of spiritual, but perhaps also literal, blindness. In this way, it is both a material and a spiritual prosthesis.

The Alfred Jewel may have supported earthly political objectives as well. Karkov suggests that we might read the Sight figure as typologically representative of Christ, or even of Alfred himself, because it "may be understood as a manifestation of all those qualities that Alfred viewed as most necessary for a leader, whether of a kingdom or a church: wisdom, judgement, authority, insight and obedience to earthly and divine law—and hence of the pious people and united nation that the king's policies and written texts were trying to construct."[83] If we read the Jewel as potentially aligning Alfred with this large-eyed, reading, seeing figure, then it also aligns well with the king's anxieties about sight and vision impairment as an impediment to his kingship as described by Asser. Perhaps the most necessary quality of all for a leader, in Alfred's view, is clear sight, both literal and metaphorical. Thus, if objects such as the Alfred Jewel were indeed those that accompanied texts like the *Pastoral Care* when sent out to Alfred's bishops, they functioned in further apotropaic fashion to protect Alfred's sightedness as a ruler. Reading with such an *æstel* would be like reading with the king, but with the ever-present prospect that

82. Webster, "Art of Alfred," 57–65.
83. Karkov, *Art*, 217.

the ruler behind the crystal, whether Sight, Christ, or Alfred, might also look back and see you.

If holding the Alfred Jewel is to hold sight in one's hand, then the Jewel carries with it all the Alfredian metaphoric correlations of {SIGHT IS SALVATION} and {BLINDNESS IS DAMNATION} that I have discussed in this chapter. As a pointer toward what one is reading by means of sight, the Alfred Jewel also becomes a pointer toward salvation. As I have suggested elsewhere, the *ǣ-* in *ǣstel* hints at law (OE *ǣ*), even divine law, and thus the correct path to the eternal life.[84] The Alfred Jewel guides sight toward salvation, but this reading suggests that the Alfred Jewel might also have been used to ward off both literal and metaphorical blindness. Read as a shield against such blindness, the Alfred Jewel becomes a material manifestation of the metaphorical vision impairment it aims to dispel, even as it remained, as Matthew Kempshall argues, a witness to the importance of vision and wisdom to piety that is asserted in the *Pastoral Care*, which it perhaps accompanied.[85] The Alfred Jewel is a real object in the real world, potentially one of several that were sent to all the bishops in England, one that underscores the very real eschatological stakes of disability metaphors in the Alfredian textual program. The spiritual stakes of blindness are less explicitly invoked in the symbolism of the Alfred Jewel than in Alfredian texts like the OE *Pastoral Care*, *Boethius*, *Soliloquies*, and *Prose Psalms*. Such texts indicate, however, that where the {SIGHT IS SALVATION} metaphor pertained in late-ninth- and early-tenth-century Wessex, so too did its obverse: {BLINDNESS IS DAMNATION}.

Metaphors West Saxons Lived By

Both sight and salvation were persistent concerns of the Alfredian translation program. The metaphorical equivalence of the two—as {SIGHT IS SALVATION}—throughout the texts discussed here shows a pervasive conceptual understanding that damnation could be represented by blindness and salvation could be represented by sight. In the *Pastoral Care*, *Boethius*, *Soliloquies*, *Prose Psalms*, and the Alfred Jewel, we have seen permutations of an Alfredian spiritual prosthesis, the metaphorical dependence of texts upon the {SIGHT IS SALVATION} metaphor for depicting sin and salvation. This dependence was not only inherited from the Latin sources of these texts but was also taken up, reimagined, and kept alive by invoking lived experi-

84. Parker, "*Æstel* and Divine Law."

85. Kempshall, "No Bishop, No King," 125–26; see also Saltzman, "Reflexivity of Forgetting."

ences of sight and vision impairment. To adapt Lakoff and Johnson's phrase, these were metaphors that Alfred and the West Saxons lived by in the crip eschatology of early medieval England. They reflected and shaped everyday experiences of the world, associating sinfulness and impairment with stigmatizing effects, even while also naturalizing vision impairment as an inherent part of earthly embodiment. The {SIGHT IS SALVATION} metaphor became a frequent shorthand for eschatological matters in Alfredian texts, one that maintained complex ties to both embodied experience and concerns for salvation. Despite its ubiquity, {SIGHT IS SALVATION} was not at all a dead metaphor, but rather one that continually drew on experiences of sightedness and blindness in order to retain its effectiveness.

It is entirely possible that neither the texts discussed here nor the Alfred Jewel were created by Alfred, at his command, or in some cases even during his lifetime, as Godden has argued.[86] Nonetheless, they document the development of an English-language tradition for thinking through the metaphors that surround {SIGHT IS SALVATION}, dating to the late ninth century and copied into the tenth century and beyond. These metaphors thus bring greater clarity to the scene in Asser's *Vita Ælfredi*, in which Alfred prays specifically for a hidden illness, because "timebat enim lepram aut caecitatem, vel aliquem talem dolorem, qui homines tam cito et inutiles et despectos suo adventu efficiunt" ["he feared leprosy or blindness, or some other such disease, which so quickly render men useless and contemptible by their onslaught"] (§74). Asser does not say that blindness would put in jeopardy Alfred's hopes of salvation, but perhaps he did not need to. As the permutations of {SIGHT IS SALVATION} discussed in this chapter show, vision impairment was a widely legible shorthand for damnation and sin, both of the particularly wicked and of every human living with the consequences of original sin.

The Alfredian intellectual program relied upon disability metaphors as a spiritual prosthesis to support eschatological promises about salvation and the afterlife. By persistently linking real vision impairment with metaphors of spiritual blindness, the Alfredian corpus records the inheritance of a crip eschatological rhetoric from Latin sources, which these translations then adopted and enhanced in early English Christian prose. Just as eschatological hope depended upon the rhetorical deployment of disability for its efficacy, we shall see in the following chapters that the crip eschatology of early medieval England also made promises about the Resurrection and salvation in the afterlife through narratives structured by disability.

86. Godden, "Did King Alfred Write Anything?"

Two

St. Swithun's Crutches

Healing Miracle Narratives and the Relics of Disability

Near the end of his late-tenth-century homily on St. Swithun, Ælfric of Eynsham (ca. 955–ca. 1010) describes a practice that does not appear in any of his Latin sources: cure seekers leaving crutches as votive offerings at the shrine of St. Swithun at Winchester. As a result,

> Seo ealde cyrce wæs eall behangen mid criccum and mid creopera sceamelum fram ende oð oþerne on ægðerum wage, þe ðær wurdon gehælede: and man ne mihte swaðeah macian hi healfe up! Þyllice tacna cyþað þæt Crist is ælmihtig God, þe his halgan geswutelode þurh swilce weldæda.
>
> [The Old Minster was entirely hung, from one end to the other and on either wall, with crutches and with the stools of cripples who had been healed there, and nevertheless they could not hang even half of them up! Such signs attest that Christ is the Almighty God, who reveals his saint through such good deeds.] (§27)[1]

1. All quotations from Ælfric's *Life of St. Swithun* are from Lapidge, *Cult*, 590–609, cited parenthetically by Lapidge's section numbers, with reference to *LS* II:205–41. I use Michael Lapidge's prose edition of *Swithun* because it has the most thorough grounding in all available manuscripts, while for other homilies in Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*, I use Mary Clayton and Juliet Mullins's edition (*LS*), which provides verse line breaks in the *Lives of Saints*, because it is likewise the best available.

In the medieval cults of saints, most votive offerings took the form of a lit candle, a specially made image, or even a model of the specific body part that a petitioner requested be healed (often made of wood, or of more realistic-looking wax).[2] It is thus striking that Swithun's shrine would be bedecked in mobility aids—actual prostheses—implying that the former owners of these "crutches and stools" no longer need them: their impairments have been healed.[3]

Hanging from the walls of the Old Minster, these mobility aids serve a new prosthetic function: they now support the narrative of the saint's life and its spiritual promise of resurrection and salvation. These crutches and stools claimed to provide concrete evidence of St. Swithun's healings at his shrine. The word *sceamelum* (from *sceamol*) or stool here refers to short, miniature stools that a person who could not walk on legs might use to pull themself by their hands and arms.[4] Such mobility devices are depicted in numerous medieval manuscript miniatures. For example, the illustration for Psalm 11 in the early-eleventh-century Harley Psalter depicts a row of figures plaintively reaching up toward Christ; at the end of the row, a figure uses a hand crutch, a horizontal bar with legs to elevate it off the ground, and looks back over his

2. See Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead?*, 107–8. Wax figures of body parts discovered in Exeter Cathedral in 1943, dating to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, show evidence of having been hung up by string; they perhaps decorated the walls at Exeter Cathedral in much the same way Ælfric describes at Winchester's Old Minster; Radford, "Wax Images." The Church of Bom Fim in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil, provides a contemporary example of body part votive offerings decorating a sacred space in the Western hemisphere. As Marcus Wood describes: "The sacristy ceiling is hung with a forest of votive offerings of body parts in the thousands; the wax glows in the reflected sunshine both strangely gruesome and celebratory"; "Museu do Negro," 114.

3. An artistic rendering of Swithun's shrine with crutches hung on the walls, albeit without the crowds that I discuss below, is available in Biddle, *Search*, 57. There are additional accounts of prosthetics serving as votive offerings more recently than the early Middle Ages. Elizabeth B. Bearden, for example, notes a scene in Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra's *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda* (completed in 1616) in which travelers are stunned to find a saint's shrine packed full of votive prosthetics; "Monstrous Births," 79–80. In many modern churches, small candles fulfill the function of votive offerings, but some modern Christian sites have retained the tradition of leaving prosthetic objects as votive offerings, such as the Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes in France, where penitents seek healing through the intercession of St. Bernadette (d. 1879; canonized 1933). As a mid-twentieth-century account in an American news outlet records: "The collection of cast-off crutches at the side of the grotto indicate that for some the pilgrimage brought new life"; Beene, "Bernadette's Shrine," n.p.

4. See Metzler "Have Crutch, Will Travel," 108–14. On medieval technology of mobility aids, see also Godden, "Mobility Impairment," 39–43.

Fig. 3. Hand crutches in the Harley Psalter. (From the British Library collection: London, British Library, Harley MS 603, fol. 6v, detail.)

shoulder at Christ (figure 3).[5] The figure using a hand crutch presents viewers with both an apparent need for divine aid and the appropriate solution, inviting the viewer to follow his gaze toward the *Hælend*, both Healer and Savior.[6]

5. The Harley Psalter is BL, Harley MS 603. Hand stools functioned similarly; without the horizontal crossbar, one small stool would be held in each hand. For additional images of medieval crutches and stools, see Baswell, "King Edward," 18, 20; Godden, "Mobility Impairment," 40–42.

6. The Harley Psalter's illustrations are modeled on those of the ninth-century Carolingian Utrecht Psalter (Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS Bibl. Rhenotraiectinae

Ælfric's homily relies on disabled bodies for his spiritual message as well. Though the former owners of the "criccum" ["crutches"] and "sceamelum" ["stools"] hanging in Swithun's shrine no longer need these mobility aids, Ælfric still refers to those who purportedly have been healed as "cripples" (with "creopera" from *creopere*), sustaining the disabling label beyond the healing of physical impairment. As Ælfric specifies, rather than offering models signifying the aspirational healed body, recipients of St. Swithun's healing miracles left behind their now-useless prostheses, commemorating the formerly disabled body and validating the place of disability in salvation history. In much the same way that these physical crutches had facilitated the power to move under one's own direction, the spiritual prosthesis of habits for representing disability in hagiographical narratives gave medieval crip eschatology its religious and cultural potency.[7]

The crutches on the walls carry explicit eschatological connotations for Ælfric. Immediately following the passage quoted above, Ælfric pivots from the revelation of God's power through his saints to anti-Judaic anticipation of the conversion of the Jews during the Apocalypse, when "bugað þa earmingas on ende þissere worulde [. . .] mid geleafan to Criste" ["the wretched ones at the end of this world will bow in faith to Christ"] (§27).[8] For Ælfric, the crutches and stools occasion both appreciation for the power of God and anticipation of the Christian afterlife. In Ælfric's *Life of St. Swithun*, the eschatologically inflected affirmation that "Christ is the almighty God" intersects with the material practice of bolstering saintly prestige through the remnants—the relics—of disability.[9] This chapter argues that these relics of disability, both material crutches and the healing miracles Ælfric describes, functioned prosthetically in early medieval England as a narrative support for the spiritual promises of resurrection and salvation, demonstrating the aspect of crip eschatology I call spiritual prosthesis on the level of hagiographical narrative.

I Nr. 32), which was repeatedly copied and became influential in English manuscript art; see Noel, *Harley Psalter*. That such an image program would be influential, featuring impaired bodies that mark the path to salvation, provides an analogue in visual culture to the spiritual prosthesis that I argue was common in hagiography.

7. Richard H. Godden has observed that later medieval terms for crutches included Middle English *potente*, Old French *potence*, and likely Latin *potens*, all of which meant "power"; "Mobility Impairment," 42–43.

8. Ælfric's antisemitism and anti-Judaism have often been noted; see, in particular, Scheil, "Anti-Judaism"; Scheil, *Footsteps of Israel*, 291–93.

9. It is not an exclusively medieval or religious phenomenon to think of prosthetic devices, separated from their users, as relics; early prosthesis theorist David Wills describes his father's crutch and cane as "relics"; *Prosthesis*, 307.

Ælfric of Eynsham has long been recognized as "the most important writer of Old English religious prose."[10] He was a monk and ordained priest at Winchester's Old Minster, then from 987 chaplain at the abbey of Cerne in Dorset, until he took up a position as abbot at the newly founded abbey at Eynsham in 1005.[11] His *Lives of Saints* (written ca. 994–998) are highly stylized and carefully adapted texts in a rhythmic and alliterative mode, largely drawing upon material from Latin sources, and which Ælfric dedicated to his lay patrons in Dorset, the prominent ealdorman Æthelweard and his son and successor Æthelmær.[12] As Helmut Gneuss notes, Ælfric's larger homiletic project—encompassing *Catholic Homilies I* and *II*, the *Lives of Saints*, and several homilies beyond these series—produced "preaching texts, in the people's own language, that could be used throughout England, for the entire liturgical year, an achievement which until then had had no parallel either in England or on the European continent."[13] Texts such as Ælfric's *Life of St. Swithun* thus brought narratives of saints from Latin into the much more widely accessible vernacular, creating a distinctly English reliance upon disability in the cult of saints.

The act of translating Latin hagiography in the *Lives of Saints* asserts the prominence of early medieval England and speakers of English as a linguistic and cultural community within early medieval Christendom.[14] Like many of

10. Magennis, "Ælfric Scholarship," 5.

11. For a detailed biography of Ælfric and discussion of his works, training, and style, see Clemoes, "Ælfric"; Gneuss, *Ælfric of Eynsham*; Kleist, "Ælfric's Corpus"; and the essays in Magennis and Swan, *Companion to Ælfric*, especially Hill, "Ælfric."

12. On this dating of *Lives of Saints*, see *LS* I:xxiii–xxiv. For other proposed date ranges, see Clemoes, "Chronology of Ælfric's Works"; Hill, "Ælfric," 55–56; Lapidge, *Cult*, 577. Lapidge identifies Ælfric's style as alliterative prose; *Cult*, 578–79. See also *LS* I:xxv–xxvi and John C. Pope's discussion of Ælfric's distinctive rhythms in Ælfric, *Homilies*, I:105–36. Others—most extensively Thomas Bredehoft, e.g., "Ælfric and Late Old English Verse"—have identified such a style as verse. As Ælfric's homiletic form is of higher importance to me than whether he meant to write in prose or verse, I decline to choose a side in the scholarly debate that has been ongoing for over a century regarding what to call Ælfric's works. On Æthelweard and Æthelmær's relationship to Ælfric's work, see Cubitt, "Ælfric's Lay Patrons"; Gretsch, "Ælfric, Language and Winchester," 130–36.

13. Gneuss, *Ælfric of Eynsham*, 13–14. Ælfric's use of English supported the Benedictine Reform, a process of monastic reform endeavoring to align ecclesiastic professions to the *Rule of St. Benedict*, but also consolidating church power in England among a relatively small circle that included Ælfric; see Stephenson, *Politics of Language*, 135–87. On the Benedictine Reform, see also Hudson, *Bishop Æthelwold*; Stafford, *Unification and Conquest*, 180–200.

14. On the relationship between language, national identity, and eschatological pros-

the hagiographic homilies in this collection, Ælfric's *Life of St. Swithun* was the first text written in a vernacular about the saint, though Ælfric demurs from any claim to originality. In the Old English part of his "Preface" to the *Lives of Saints*, Ælfric writes: "Ne secge we nan þincg niwes on þissere gesetnysse, / forþan ðe hit stod gefyrn awriten on Leden-bocum, þeah þe þa læwedan men þæt nyston" ["We say nothing new in this composition, because it previously stood written in Latin books, though laypeople did not know it"].[15] Many of the healing miracles Ælfric recounts are abridged versions of narratives in prior Latin texts, yet bringing them into the vernacular is a significant occasion; as Ælfric points out, even though the stories in the *Lives of Saints* had previously been written in Latin, "læwedan men þæt nyston" ["laypeople did not know it"]. Bringing texts such as the *Life of St. Swithun* into the vernacular makes them public texts in a way they had not been previously, especially because writing them in the form of homilies makes possible that even the illiterate might access these texts aurally. As Ælfric notes in the Latin "Preface," his audience includes those who might choose "huic operi operam dare, sive legendo, seu audiendo" ["to devote their attention to this work, either by reading or listening"].[16] Despite his assertion that he says nothing new, Ælfric does still add material to the *Life of St. Swithun*: no previous text survives that mentions crutches and stools bedecking Swithun's shrine at Winchester.

Although healing miracles are common in medieval hagiography, Ælfric's homily on St. Swithun attends uncommonly closely to practices of cure seeking in late-tenth-century England, because nearly the entire narrative is made up of recent miracles occurring in spaces with which Ælfric was familiar. Ælfric's homily, while still structured carefully as a narrative, rings with the authenticity of personal experience. The healing cult of Swithun that Ælfric describes provides numerous avenues by which to explore the treatment and signification of disabled bodies in tenth-century Winchester, as well as early medieval England more broadly. As John P. Sexton has asked regarding Ælfric's homily,

> What did it mean that Swithun's shrine was envisioned as the object of a mass pilgrimage of the sick and the disabled? How did the shrine's

pects in Ælfric's works, see, e.g., Gretsch, "Ælfric, Language and Winchester"; Lees, "In Ælfric's Words"; and on the decision to bring Swithun's narrative into the vernacular, see Stephenson, *Politics of Language*, 6–14. On the perils of translation as Ælfric knew them, see Godden, "Ælfric and the Alfredian Precedents," 142–47.

15. *LS* I:8.

16. *LS* I:2/3, trans. Clayton and Mullins.

> appearance, surrounded by the discarded paraphernalia of disability, influence visitors' experience of Swithun and his church? How did a member of Swithun's cult respond to impaired persons in the streets of Winchester, and how did those persons react to the hagiography that told them they could be transformed by sufficient faith? Why does Ælfric, known as an unusually skeptical hagiographer when recording miracles, offer these repetitive iterations of the healing of the blind, the lame, the deaf, and the bedridden? What, exactly, did adherents to saints' cults think cures were effecting upon the disfigured or afflicted body? In other words, what is achieved in the creation or restoration of an unremarkable or able body, and how stable is the image of that "normal" self? How should we understand Ælfric's assertion that, as a former member of the community at Winchester, he himself had "very often seen" the miracles attested in this life? What, specifically, did the terms Ælfric uses (*unhæl*, *creopera*, *adliga*, *untrum*, *paralisyn*, *blind*, or *dumba*) signify to an Anglo-Saxon audience? And, perhaps most crucially, what does physical difference *mean* in a text like this?[17]

This chapter begins to answer some of Sexton's many provocative questions by offering simply that disability meant an opportunity to demonstrate the power of God to resurrect the body and the power of the saint to intercede on one's behalf in divine judgment. In the spiritual prosthesis of the saint's *Life*, disability conveyed the promise of salvation.

Swithun's healing miracles and the relics of disability function as a spiritual prosthesis supporting assertions that saintly intercessions with Christ might help ordinary Christians attain salvation. As Ælfric points out, "Þyllice tacna cyþað þæt Crist is ælmihtig God, þe his halgan geswutelode þurh swilce weldæda" ["Such signs attest that Christ is the Almighty God, who reveals his saint through such good deeds"] (§27). The crutches and stools left at Swithun's shrine affirm the divinity and power of Christ. The evidence of miracles of healing—both physical offerings of voided prosthetics and the textual narrative of the saint's life—prosthesizes Christian doctrine, and specifically Christian eschatology, by making manifest the power attributed to God. The relics of disability become reliquaries for the saint, decorative

17. Sexton, "Atypical Bodies," 33, emphasis in original. Sexton's answer tends in the direction in which I am headed—"The allegorical meaning of such bodies, not their material and historical existence, justifies their centrality to hagiography"—though I would propose that material and historical existence also mattered for the role of such bodies represented in hagiography, because acts like the hanging of crutches on Swithun's shrine assert these bodies' material reality; "Atypical Bodies," 34.

honorifics that evidence in physical form the saint's holiness and the power of God to heal bodies through him. These reliquarized prostheses reveal that without a term for "disability" or "crip" (though they had *creopere*), medieval Christians had access to an analogous concept that human identity was rooted in the mutability of bodily form and function. The medieval Christian earthly body was often, even pervasively, a crip body. Moreover, such crip bodies made tangible the ineffable promise of salvation in the afterlife. The body may suffer and the body may die; but just as through God's power this saint may heal the body, so through that same intercession this saint may procure salvation for the soul.

Narrative strategies, such as Ælfric's description of abandoned crutches and stools documenting Swithun's healing prowess, provide a convenient analogy for clergy and hagiographers to demonstrate the process of spiritual healing for the laity. Similarly to the way metaphors of blindness and sight materialized sinfulness and salvation in the translation program of Alfred the Great, healing miracles at the Old Minster in Winchester—where Alfred, incidentally, was initially buried—materialized the process by which one might transition from a state of damnation to a state of salvation.[18] Healing miracles in saints' lives thus manifest spiritual prosthesis on the level of narrative, in which narratives of disability and healing make possible hagiographic promises about salvation.

Hagiographic texts—legends of saints, medieval Christianity's holy heroes—pervaded the narrative discourse of the medieval church; in England, vernacular homilies that were often about saints served as widely accessible entry points into Christian religious thought. Christian theology in the tenth century was largely transacted in Latin and thus conceptually and rhetorically distanced from the daily lives of speakers of non-Latinate languages. In contrast, vernacular Old English homilies integrated Christian concepts and theological models into the everyday language of the early medieval English lifeworld. The unnamed masses who were the majority of early medieval English society engaged with the church in large part through the cults of

18. Upon his death in 899, Alfred was initially buried in the Old Minster until his son and successor moved him to the New Minster in 901. His remains were subsequently moved to Hyde Abbey in 1110, but were lost in 1539 during the Dissolution of the Monasteries; see Keynes, "Cult," 325. Ælfric has been observed elsewhere using illness and physical impairment as a sign of sinfulness or damnation, much in the same metaphorical vein as I have discussed vision impairment signaling spiritual impairment in chapter 1; see, e.g., Lees, "In Ælfric's Words," 291–94.

popular saints.[19] Hagiography on native, English saints like Swithun brought the spiritual prosthesis of healing miracles particularly close to home for the early medieval English. Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* provided homilies for only five saints linked to the territory that would become England: Alban, Æthelthryth, Swithun, Oswald, and Edmund.[20] Unlike other homilies in the *Lives of Saints*, the *Life of St. Swithun* has virtually nothing to say about the saint's life; rather, the homily is almost entirely made up of a sequence of subsidiary miracle narratives, making it a distinctive opportunity to examine the narrative formulae that govern healing miracles.

I posit that all saints' legends in some way participate in spiritual prosthesis, as well as some form of crip eschatology, though not always through the same means. Many frequent tropes of hagiography tie the genre to medieval concepts of disability: votive offerings; holy spaces, objects, and contact relics; miracles of healing and punishment; fragmentation, reunification, and veneration of the saint's body (as I will discuss in chapter 3); torture and imperviousness to torture (as I will discuss in chapters 4 and 5).[21] These emphases are distinct and sometimes contradictory, yet also sometimes overlapping; they all indicate the importance of saints' cults for developing an understanding of bodies generally, and especially of disability, within early medieval Christian eschatology. In Ælfric's *Swithun*, the dependencies of the faith are evident in the dependencies of the narrative, but that narrative has real—and crip—eschatological consequences. The crutches and stools hung around Swithun's shrine, quotidian relics of disability, reveal the importance of the impaired body for the construction of Swithun as a saint. The saint's life leans on representations of disabled bodies to convey its doctrinal message and provide instruction to the faithful. The literal crutch left by an anonymous cure seeker thus becomes a figural, spiritual crutch for the figurehead of Christian doctrine. As spiritual prostheses, these crutches bear up the most important message of the Christian church, one of few doctrinal beliefs that have remained constant throughout the multimillennial history of Christianity; the relics of disability prosthesize the promise of salvation.

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19. See Rollason, *Saints and Relics*.

20. Ælfric also wrote a homily for St. Cuthbert in the second series of *Catholic Homilies*. On Ælfric's lives of native English saints, see, e.g., Gretsch, *Ælfric*, 157–229; Woolf, "Saints' Lives," 62–64. For the other native saints in *Lives of Saints*, see *LS* II:173–91 (Alban); II:193–203 (Æthelthryth); III:1–21 (Oswald); III:185–205 (Edmund). On Æthelthryth, see also chapter 3 below.

21. For a far-reaching discussion of tropes of saints' cults and medieval hagiography, see Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead?*

The Cult of St. Swithun

The context of Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* amid the cult of St. Swithun makes the *Life of St. Swithun* a productive case study for the narrative usefulness of healing miracles.[22] The homily relates the revelation of Swithun's sanctity, the translation of the saint's bodily remains into the Old Minster, and the development of a substantial cult, predominantly through increasingly impressive quantities of healing miracles. Even in Ælfric's time, little was known of the historical Swithun, who was bishop of Winchester from 852 to 863, and so narratives such as Ælfric's typically begin with the saint's recognition as such through manifold miracles preceding and following his translation.[23] On July 15, 971, Bishop Æthelwold of Winchester (*fl.* 963–984) oversaw the translation—that is, the exhumation and reinterment—of Swithun's remains from his original stone sarcophagus outside the west door of the Old Minster to a temporary reliquary near the altar inside the Old Minster.[24] Between 971 and 974, Swithun's remains were again translated into an elaborate reliquary commissioned by King Edgar (r. 959–975).[25]

The cult of Swithun quickly exploded into unprecedented popularity after his translation, following trends of the time toward a greater lay interest in saints' cults and relics.[26] According to Michael Lapidge, Swithun came to be "one of the best-known and most widely culted Anglo-Saxon saints, both in England and on the Continent."[27] Lantfred, a monk at Winchester, penned

22. On the cult contexts of St. Swithun in which Ælfric was writing, see Gretsch, *Ælfric*, 162–94; Hudson, *Bishop Æthelwold*, 105–9.

23. Michael Lapidge concludes that Swithun served as bishop of Winchester from October 30, 852, until his death on July 2, 863; *Cult*, 3–7. Those dates would place Swithun as bishop of Winchester during more than a decade of Alfred's youth, when the future king would have been coming to terms with his emergent chronic illness (see chapter 1).

24. Lapidge, *Cult*, 16–18. Swithun's original sarcophagus may be the same one discovered by archaeological excavations of the Old Minster near its altar; see Biddle, *Search*, 15–16, 19. On the sequence of Swithun's translations and associated architectural changes, see Biddle, "Archaeology, Architecture, and the Cult of Saints," 24–25. On the practice of translating saints' remains into more prominent or accessible locations for veneration as part of a saint's cult, which dates to the fourth century, see Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead?*, 10–13; Brown, *Cult of Saints*, 86–105; Lapidge, *Cult*, 9–12.

25. See Crook, "King Edgar's Reliquary"; Lapidge, *Cult*, 18–19, 35.

26. On the quick spread of the veneration of St. Swithun following his translation, both in England and abroad, see Lapidge, *Cult*, 25–65; Rollason, *Saints and Relics*, 186–87.

27. Lapidge, *Cult*, 3.

Swithun's first hagiographic text, *Translatio et miracula S. Swithuni*, between 972 and 975.[28] Two decades later, between 994 and 996, Wulfstan Cantor of Winchester adapted Lantfred's prose *Translatio* into Latin verse with the *Narratio metrica de S. Swithuno*.[29] These early Latin hagiographies were monumental undertakings; Lapidge describes Lantfred's *Translatio* as "one of the most substantial Latin prose texts which have survived from Anglo-Saxon England" and Wulfstan's *Narratio* as masterful Virgilian hexameter that amounts to the "longest surviving pre-Conquest Anglo-Latin poem."[30] As such, while Lantfred and Wulfstan's texts were valuable resources in the development of later liturgical and hagiographic texts about Swithun, they were hardly accessible to the general community of Winchester (or England) beyond the Latin-literate professional religious. A shorter Latin text that might have been more easily read by the minimally to moderately Latin-literate, the anonymous *Epitome translationis et miraculorum S. Swithuni*, was written between 984 and ca. 998.[31] Lapidge argues that Ælfric first recast Lantfred's text into the *Epitome*, then produced the Old English homiletic *Life* that is our primary interest in this chapter.[32] The much shorter Latin *Epitome* would have proven valuable for accessing the stories of Swithun; even more so, Ælfric's subsequent Old English homily on St. Swithun in his collected *Lives of Saints* would have provided the most accessible version yet of Swithun's miracles for the lay population, which was Ælfric's target audience.[33] Prioritizing Ælfric's vernacular allows us access to what Christian communities beyond the professional religious might have learned about the relationship between disability and salvation in this saint's cult, which, alongside the material culture of crutches and stools he describes, brings us something of the experiences of ordinary people who participated in the cult of St. Swithun.

Despite the quick increase in the number of distinct texts about Swithun, the manuscript record is limited for the pre-Conquest texts; Lantfred's *Translatio* survives in four manuscripts, Wulfstan's *Narratio* in two, the *Epit-*

28. Lantfred was an accomplished Latinist whom Lapidge argues likely trained at Fleury, see *Cult*, 218–24. On the date of the *Translatio*, see Lapidge, *Cult*, 235–37. On Lantfred's early form of miracle-collection, see Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, 49–59.

29. Wulfstan Cantor was a monk and precentor at Winchester, as well as a prolific poet; see Lapidge, *Cult*, 335–41.

30. Lapidge, *Cult*, 66, 67.

31. Lapidge, *Cult*, 558.

32. See Lapidge, *Cult*, 553–61.

33. See Lapidge, *Cult*, 68.

ome in one, and Ælfric's homiletic *Life* in three.[34] Most impressively, a codex survives from the very end of the tenth century, which collects the *Translatio*, *Narratio*, and several other short texts on Swithun, attesting to the rapid development of interest in the saint and his cult; Lapidge observes that the manuscript was marked for use in the liturgy.[35] Much more may have originally been produced in the early decades of Swithun's cult that does not survive or is only hinted at by surviving documents. All of the three manuscript witnesses to Ælfric's *Life of St. Swithun* date to the eleventh century: BL, Cotton MS Julius E. vii (fols. 96v–103r) provides the only complete copy of *Swithun* and is also the most complete surviving copy of Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*; BL, Cotton MS Otho B. x (fols. 37r–42v) was substantially damaged in the Cotton Library fire of 1731; and Gloucester, Cathedral Library, MS 35 consists of three fragmentary leaves that survive in a later binding.[36] Many more copies of the *Life of St. Swithun* may have once traveled across England, since hagiographic homilies from the *Lives of Saints*, in full or in parts, survive across several additional manuscripts.[37] Swithun's fame certainly spread across southern England, even after the Norman Conquest, though he was somewhat eclipsed by St. Thomas Becket following the later saint's martyrdom in 1170.[38] By the end of the Middle Ages, churches dedicated to St. Swithun were arrayed across England south of the Humber.[39]

While Ælfric draws much of his *Life of St. Swithun* from previous Latin

34. See Lapidge, *Cult*, 21. For more details on surviving manuscripts, see Lapidge, *Cult*, 238–48 (Lantfred); 364–67 (Wulfstan); 555–57 (*Epitome*); and 579–85 (Ælfric).

35. The manuscript is BL, Royal 15 C. viii, which Lapidge dates to no earlier than 995, but likelier 996–ca. 1000; see Lapidge, *Cult*, 23, 239–40.

36. Lapidge describes Otho B. x as "one of the most abominably difficult manuscripts I have ever encountered"; *Cult*, 586. On the relative value of these witnesses for reflecting Ælfric's *Life of St. Swithun*, see Lapidge, *Cult*, 579–85. Notably, though Julius E. vii is the earliest and most complete manuscript for the *Lives of Saints*, it shows signs of significant adaptation from Ælfric's stated plan for the collection; see Hill, "Dissemination"; *LS* I:xiii–xiv, I:331–337.

37. These are listed in Hill, "Dissemination," 243–44, but see also Kleist, "Ælfric's Corpus," 154–55, and the manuscripts referenced in *LS*.

38. See Lapidge, *Cult*, 25–34.

39. See Jones, *Saints in the Landscape*, 68. Graham Jones posits that this popularity related to Swithun's fame as a "rain saint"; i.e., due to the prognostic notion that if it rains on St. Swithun's Day (July 15), it will rain for forty more days, a disastrous prospect for farmers! See Jones, *Saints in the Landscape*, 185–87; Lapidge, *Cult*, 42–48. Whether these churches were dedicated to Swithun to ward off excess summer rain or not, their geographic spread suggests that stories of Swithun's healing miracles very likely spread across southern England as well.

texts, the detail about crutches and stools hanging from the walls of the Old Minster is not taken from any of the earlier lives, suggesting that as a long-time resident of Winchester, Ælfric found it valuable to include these local details in the first vernacular life of the saint.[40] Lantfred's *Translatio* twice mentions that the mechanisms of punishment—a ring used to bind a man's arm and a set of manacles—were hung in the shrine of Swithun, and refers to crutches left behind as evidence that a healing has occurred, but he does not describe crutches and stools hanging from the walls of the shrine.[41] Ælfric's prioritization of the prosthetic votives decorating Swithun's shrine may simply reflect a change in practice from Lantfred's day to his, about twenty years later, but they also reflect a change in what each text highlights about Swithun's cult. While Ælfric still includes some of Swithun's miracles of liberation, his homily foregrounds instead the saint's power to heal.

Anatomy of a Healing Miracle

The cult of any medieval saint depended upon knowing the name of a saint, identifying their dates in the calendar to be celebrated, and developing texts relating miracles that reveal the power of the saint.[42] As Ælfric reports for Swithun, "his wundra geswutelodon his gesælða mid Gode" ["his miracles made clear his happiness with God"] (§1). Though Swithun's first reported miracle was that he appeared in a vision to a smith, who was tasked with making Swithun's sanctity known, his subsequent miracles are predominantly miracles of healing, which Ælfric uses to demonstrate the intercessory power of the saint.[43] In addition to demonstrating Swithun's happiness with God, these healing miracles integrate disability into the hagiographical narrative in

40. Ælfric relies particularly upon Lantfred's *Translatio* and the *Epitome*; see Lapidge, *Cult*, 575.

41. See Lapidge, *Cult*, 306–7, 318–19, 332–33. On Lantfred's greater interest in presenting Swithun as a liberation saint, see Sexton, "Saint's Law."

42. See Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead?*, 95–112. Saints' cults also commonly fixated on a saint's corporeal remains, which could be crip themselves, as I will discuss further in chapter 3.

43. A fixation on healing miracles is not uncommon in medieval Christian saints' cults, as healing had been one of Christ's common miracles in the Gospels and was the primary part of his command to the Apostles to "infirmos curate; mortuos suscitate; leprosos mundate; daemones eicite" ["heal the sick; raise the dead; cleanse the lepers; cast out devils"] (Matthew 10:8). See Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead?*, 334, 349–65. On miracle collections and historical practices of cure seeking, see Lynch, *Making Miracles*; Salter, *Saints*.

a consistent pattern of three stages: the narrative identifies a cure seeker, the cure seeker comes into contact with the saint, and with a cure provided, the cure seeker disappears from the narrative.[44]

Swithun's first recipient of healing follows this model. Ælfric describes this cure seeker as "sum earm ceorl egeslice gehoferod and ðearle gebiged þurh ðone bradan hofer" ["a certain unfortunate freeman, horribly hump-backed and exceedingly bent over as a result of a broad hump"] (§7). The modifiers *egeslice* (horribly) and *ðearle* (exceedingly) underscore the high degree to which this hump impacted the freeman's form and function. Lantfred had attributed this miracle to Swithun as the 969 healing of an unreformed cleric named Æthelsige, who had a humped back.[45] Ælfric does not name the recipients of Swithun's healing miracles; in the homily, Ælfric introduces Æthelsige solely by his class and his physical state that is presented as in want of healing: the broad hump. This brief introduction is sufficient for the narrative to identify the cure seeker.

In the next stage of the healing miracle, the cure seeker comes into contact with the saint. As Ælfric recounts,

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44. I follow Salter, *Saints*, in using "cure seeker" to designate a community member seeking some kind of medical intervention from a saint's cult. For my purposes, that medical intervention—the "cure"—need not be the elimination of all bodily difference, but rather an alteration to the seeker's form or function that they experience positively. In critical disability studies, both scholars and activists resist medicalizing notions that if a cure—complete removal of non-normative features of one's bodymind—is available, then it is always desirable; that is, the assumption that if it is possible to eliminate one's disability, then one should want to do so. Texts like Ælfric's *Life of St. Swithun* seem to carry a similar assumption, unhindered by limitations of what is medically possible, that it is desirable to have a normative bodymind. While a nuanced discussion of what the early medieval English conceived of as a "cure" exceeds the scope of the present project, it is apparent in Ælfric's *Swithun*, for example, that many cure seekers' narratives indicate a negative experience, such as pain or difficulty functioning independently, which is then removed through the healing miracle. Such a notion of "cure" seems more concerned with quality of life than with pathologizing or eliminating diverse bodily forms and functions, the latter of which is a common critique of the desire for cure in modern medicine. Moreover, many medieval sources embrace illness and impairment as a pathway to piety, as we have seen in chapter 1, with Alfred's prayer for a hidden illness, and as we will see with St. Æthelthryth's tumor in chapter 3. For a poignant meditation on the modern problematics of cure, see Clare, *Brilliant Imperfection*.

45. See Lapidge, *Cult*, 14. Alison V. Hudson notes that Swithun's earliest miracles, instructing a smith to make his sanctity known to an unreformed cleric called Eadsige and the healing of another unreformed cleric, Æthelsige, made the belated advent of Swithun's miracles, over a century after his death, an indication of the saint's approval for the Benedictine Reform movement and effected the incorporation of such unreformed clerics into the Benedictine fold; *Bishop Æthelwold*, 102.

> þam wearð geswutelod on swefne gewislice þæt he sceolde gefeccan æt Swiðhunes byrgene his lichaman hæle and þære alefednysse. He aras ða on mergen micclum fægnigende, and mid twam criccum creap him to Winceastre and gesohte ðone sanct (swa swa him gesæd wæs), biddende his hæle gebigedum cneowum.
>
> [then it became obvious to him in a dream, clearly, that he should receive at Swithun's grave his bodily health and [be relieved of] that infirmity. He then rose in the morning with great rejoicing, and with two crutches crept himself to Winchester and sought the saint (just as was told to him), praying for his health on bended knees.] (§7)

Though Ælfric later notes that the hump on Æthelsige's back "gehefgode" ["burdened"] (§7) him, much of the narrative of this man is about what he is in fact able to do. Æthelsige is the only cure seeker in the homily shown traveling by means of crutches.[46] With the aid of two crutches (*twam criccum*), Æthelsige brings himself to Swithun's shrine, rather than being carried as is the next man to be healed in Ælfric's homily. The verb Ælfric uses for Æthelsige is *creap*, from *creopan* (to creep), suggesting a slow and laborious movement, but the reflexive *him* that follows underscores the self-directed nature of the movement. Æthelsige may move slowly and with great effort, but with his mobility aids (the two crutches), he is able to move himself.[47] Between this scene and Ælfric's near-closing comments about crutches and stools hung on the walls of the Old Minster, crutches bookend the homily. Early in the story, a man uses crutches to move about, and by the homily's end crutches are left behind, no longer needed, at the shrine of St. Swithun.

Finally, the healing miracle comes to fruition by both eliminating the bodily deviation from the cure seeker and enabling the cure seeker to exit the narrative. In Æthelsige's case,

> He wearð þa gehæled þurh þone halgan bisceop swa þæt næs gesyne siððan on his hricge hwær se hofer stode, þe hine gehefgode oð þæt.

46. Another form of mobility aid does appear in the case of a careless serving man who is fettered but uses a staff to get to the saint's shrine: "He bestæl ut mid his stæfe hoppigende and gesohte ðone sanct Swiðhun mid geomerunge" ["He sneaked out, hopping with his staff, and sought St. Swithun with lamentation"] (§25).

47. In Lantfred's version of this episode, Æthelsige claims to have been partially cured by the vision in his dream, which enables him to travel to the saint's shrine; Ælfric omits this detail. Full analysis of the Latin account exceeds the scope of the present discussion, but see the episode in Lapidge, *Cult*, 266–75.

> Þa nyston þa munecas be ðam mæran halgan and wendon þæt sum oðer halga gehælde þone mann; ac se ceorl sæde þæt Swiðhun hine gehælde, for ðan þe he sylf wiste gewissost be ðam.
>
> [He became healed through that holy bishop so that nothing was thereafter seen on his back where the hump had stood, which had burdened him until then. The monks did not know then about the worthy saint and believed that some other saint healed the man; but the freeman said that Swithun had healed him, because he himself knew most certainly about that.] (§7)

Two absences prove the healing: there is now nothing to be seen where the hump once stood, and Æthelsige is no longer burdened. Ælfric closes this sequence by commenting that the monks did not know anything about Swithun at this time, but the man who was healed still affirmed it was the saint's doing. The monks who "nyston" ["did not know"] (§7) contrast with Æthelsige, who "sylf wiste gewissost be ðam" ["himself knew most certainly about that"] (§7). This comment places knowledge of the body—the impaired body and the healed body—squarely with the individual person whose body is in question. In a homiletic context, this pronouncement affirms for a listening audience a sense of agency and self-knowing about their own bodies, particularly self-knowledge of crip bodies, because the spiritual valence of Æthelsige's miraculous transformation is known certainly to him.[48] The monks may know much that is unknown to the ordinary layperson, but about their own bodies, this homily suggests that each person may know more.

Æthelsige's embedded miniature narrative ends here, with no further consideration of his story beyond the attribution of the healing to Swithun. Ælfric extracts the plot arc of Æthelsige's story from Lantfred's *Translatio*, reducing the narrative to such an extent that his choice of details to retain reveals which details were most vital to the purposes of the vernacular homiletic *Life*. For Ælfric, the essential anatomy of a healing miracle calls for identifying, centering, and eliminating the bodily deviance that undergoes healing. This structure functions as a simplified version of what David T. Mitchell describes as the formula for narrative prosthesis:

48. On the perceived agency of impaired persons in early medieval cure and care narratives, see Ronen, "A Still Sound Mind," particularly 21–22, 25–28 on cure seekers in *vitae* of St. Swithun.

> First, a deviance or marked difference is exposed to a reader; second, a narrative consolidates the need for its own existence by calling for an explanation of the deviation's origins and formative consequences; third, the deviance is brought from the periphery of concerns to the center stage of the story to come; and fourth, the remainder of the story seeks to rehabilitate or fix the deviance in some manner, shape or form.[49]

Indeed, many medieval healing miracles follow all four steps of narrative prosthesis, on smaller or larger scales.[50] I combine Mitchell's first two steps into the single stage of identifying the deviance for the purpose of healing miracles; while Ælfric and other hagiographers sometimes indicate the origin of an illness or disability, as we shall see below, it seems not to have been essential enough to be included in the identification of every cure seeker's reason for wanting healing. Following identification, hagiographical centering of the bodily deviance occurs when the cure seeker comes into contact with the saint, most often through physical travel to the vicinity of the saint's shrine. Finally, where general narrative prosthesis recognizes an array of means by which a story may seek "to rehabilitate or fix the deviance," including cure, reinterpretation, or removal of the deviant body, the healing miracle ends in affirmation that the body has been healed through the intercessory power of the saint.

Medieval healing miracle stories are not merely a subtype of narrative prosthesis, however. An important difference must be noted: Miracles of healing were not recorded simply as narrative devices for entertaining fiction; medieval healing miracles were recorded because they were supposed to have been real. As a result, the narrative patterns that surround disability carry real, spiritual import, far beyond the way all literature reflects and informs real lived experiences of disability. Of course, we cannot say how widely or how deeply medieval people believed in their miracle stories; that is not recorded for us.[51] We can, however, know how the texts present themselves and assess

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49. Mitchell, "Narrative Prosthesis," 20; see also Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*.

50. The appearance of narrative prosthesis in various saints' lives and miracle stories has previously been observed by, e.g., Chace, "Animal, Vegetable, Prosthesis"; Skoda, "Representations of Disability."

51. On the question of miracles and their perception by the laity, see Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead?*, 333–409; Justice, "Did the Middle Ages?"; Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*; Ward, *Miracles*. Scholars of medieval miracle narratives generally find signifi-

the horizon of expectations the genre of hagiography appears to have held. Ælfric's *Life of St. Swithun*, in particular, is a homily, a preaching text, and thus shares a format with other texts—even other texts by Ælfric—that describe the life and miracles of Christ, theological admonishments away from sin, and the promises of the Christian afterlife. Hagiographic healing miracles seem to have been meant to be as real as the life of Christ to faithful Christians but made more immediate through their local setting, and so when those healing miracles prosthesize hagiographic narratives, they also prosthesize the spiritual promises of Christianity. As Ælfric explicitly tells his audience, Swithun's miracles demonstrate that he is a saint whose intercessory power can heal the earthly body and that by extension his intercessory power may heal and save the soul.

This is how narrative prosthesis becomes spiritual prosthesis. Texts such as saints' lives rely on disability—as in the trope of the healing miracle—for their narrative efficacy. The healing miracle serves to magnify the power of God through the saint, but for such a miracle to occur, the narrative must first stage the body that is ill, injured, or impaired, a body that in some way deviates from what is to be aspired to, a body that is insistently crip. Even after it is healed, that body is still cripped by its history of and vulnerability to marked corporeal difference. A crip body that can be restored or amended serves as an occasion for the saint to demonstrate their blessedness and capacity to intercede with God on that body's behalf, or on that soul's behalf when it comes time for Judgment. Saints' lives thus rely on disability to make promises about individual hopes for salvation in the Christian afterlife. The trope of the healing miracle that demonstrates sanctity was pervasive across medieval hagiography, and hagiography was pervasive across medieval Christendom.[52] Though this chapter analyzes just one saint's life and this book remains focused on early medieval England, the prevalence of saints'

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cance in the fact that medieval audiences found these stories worth telling and hearing, regardless of the extent to which they believed in the truth of such miracles. Even if such stories were taken metaphorically, they were still continuously presented as if true, because their presentation as true held meaning for the larger Christian worldview.

52. Lapidge traces an evolution of miracle tropes from earlier saints' cults through Swithun's healing miracles, showing that these are not new phenomena with this cult, but rather endemic features of the cults of saints since their earliest foundations; accounts of the translation of SS. Gervasius and Protasius in 386 and the discovery of St. Stephen's relics described in 415 include the healings of numerous impairments to demonstrate the sanctity of the remains. See Lapidge, *Cult*, 10, 13–14, as well as 232–35 on Lantfred's use of such sources. On healing miracles in the cult of saints more broadly, see Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead?*

lives and healing miracles across medieval Christendom suggests that across the European Middle Ages, Christian eschatology was very much dependent upon ideas about disability for the promises of salvation that it made to ordinary medieval Christians.

Spiritual Dividends from Narrative Prosthesis: Three Embedded Narratives

The details Ælfric provides about some plaintiffs for healing prove revealing of the process by which healing miracles use disability to promise salvation. I call subsections of the homily *embedded narratives* when Ælfric follows one or more cure seekers as a temporary protagonist—rather than the overarching protagonist, the saint—through an inset narrative arc from introduction to resolution. Ælfric's embedded narratives follow the three stages of a healing miracle that align well with narrative prosthesis: identifying the cure seekers by their complaints, bringing the cure seekers into Swithun's orbit, and demonstrating the saint's power through the removal of the complaint. The subjects of these embedded narratives of healing include: a man with a severe disease (§8), three blind women and their mute guide (§11), a paralyzed thane (§13), a blind thane (§15), a blind man who was abandoned by his guide (§16), a man blinded and deafened for a crime of which he was innocent (§18), a man whom Swithun had punished for graveside blasphemy with a senseless swoon (§19), a boy who broke an arm and a leg falling from a horse (§22), and an elderly thane who was unable to leave his bed (§23). These embedded narratives iteratively and collectively demonstrate Swithun's healing ability and the power of Winchester as a site for healing; analyses of three healings of vision impairment (§§11, 15, 16) serve to demonstrate the collective force of such stories.

The embedded narrative of three blind women and their mute guide depicts a community of cure seekers who worked together to access the saint. Ælfric first identifies the bodily deviance that incites cure seeking: "On þam dagum wæron on Wihtlande þreo wif: þa twa wæron blinde geond nigon geara fæc, and þæt þrydde ne geseah þære sunnan leoht næfre" ["In that day, there were three women on the Isle of Wight: two were blind for the interval of nine years, and the third had never seen the sun's light"] (§11). The women are characterized solely by being from the Isle of Wight and by the duration of their respective vision impairments. Notably, the origins of the impairments differ: two women have acquired vision impairments—though it is not stated how the impairment was acquired, Ælfric does say both have been

blind for nine years—and the third has been blind since birth. This distinction is important for demonstrating the intercessory power of St. Swithun, who, it turns out, can heal both acquired and congenital disability.

The next stage in the embedded narrative illustrates the process by which these three women make their way to the narrative center: Swithun's shrine at Winchester. "Hi begeaton þa earfoðlice him ænne latteow, ænne dumbne cnapan, and comon to þam halgan" ["With difficulty, they obtained a guide, a mute boy, and came to the saint"] (§11). By describing this process as accomplished "earfoðlice" ["with difficulty"] (§11), Ælfric hints at the real challenge of traveling with vision impairments in tenth-century England from the Isle of Wight to Winchester, which would have required transport over land as well as water. The "mute boy" who guides the women makes travel more accessible, albeit with some limitations. The implications of the guide's own disability—being unable to speak—remain unexplored in the homily, but it cannot be coincidental that he is also disabled and that his disability would prevent him from guiding the blind women aurally, just as their vision impairment would prevent them from receiving communication from the guide by hand gestures.[53] Indeed, the adverb *earfoðlice* might not only describe how the women found their guide, but also how they worked with him, given the access friction of their respective embodiments: the guiding arrangement proceeds with difficulty.

Nonetheless, the three women and their unspeaking guide arrive at the Old Minster, the spatial center of the saint's narrative. At the Old Minster, they spend the night in prayer: "Ane niht þær wacodon and wurdon gehælede—ge ða blindan wif, ge se dumba latteow. Þa sæde se cnapa þam cyrcwearde þæt, and cwæð þæt he næfre ær naht cweðan ne mihte, and bæd þæt hi sungon þone gesettan lofsang" ["They held vigil one night there and were healed—both the blind women and the mute guide. Then the boy related this to the sacristan, and said that he never before had been able to speak, and asked that they [the monks] sing the appropriate song of praise"] (§11).[54] After keeping vigil at the shrine of St. Swithun for just one night, all four individuals are

53. That the guide is a boy may also supplement the accessibility of travel for reasons of gender; the dangers of traveling alone as women may have been mitigated by the presence of a male chaperone, though with variable results depending on the boy's age.

54. Lapidge notes that the appropriate song is the "Te Deum"; *Cult*, 597. The *Life* later records that per Æthelwold's instructions, the "Te Deum" was sung "swa oft swa ænig wanhal mann wurde gehæled" ["as often as any person in poor health might be healed"] (§17). The Winchester monks' negligence of this song and scolding from Swithun in a dream-vision forms another episode in the homily underscoring the saint's prolific healings.

healed.[55] As in all of the embedded narratives in this homily, Ælfric tidily resolves the deviance introduced by the women and guide's disabilities: Swithun heals them and the deviance is eliminated. Evidence is not given of the women's vision, but Ælfric does provide the "proof" of the guide's healing: he speaks to the sacristan and asks the monks to sing appropriate songs of praise. The guide's cure thus seems to be quick and complete, erasing the disability that had previously occasioned difficulty. Just as the three women and their guide's disabilities are resolved within the narrative, the narrative itself dispenses with the women and their guide; Ælfric never mentions them again in the homily. In this, as in many of the embedded narratives Ælfric includes, a disability produces an exigency; the cure seekers gain contact with the saint's cult; then the saint intercedes to eliminate the disability, and the (formerly) disabled person, having served their narrative purpose to demonstrate the power of the saint, disappears from the remainder of the homily.

Ælfric's embedded narratives of healing miracles also work to define Swithun's shrine at Winchester as an English Christian center for such miracles. A blind English thane seeks healing in Rome, but does not receive it until he comes to the shrine of St. Swithun:

> Sum þegn wæs on Engla lande, on æhtum swiðe welig, se wearð færlice blind. Þa ferde he to Rome: wolde his hæle biddan æt þam halgum apostolum. He wunode þa on Rome—and ne wearð gehæled—feower gear fullice; and gefran þa be Swiðhune hwilce wundra he worhte siððan he gewende þanon. He efste þa swiðe and to his earde gewende; and com to ðam halgan were and wearð gehæled þær, and ham gewende mid halre gesihðe.
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> [A certain thane was in England, very rich in possessions, who became suddenly blind. He then traveled to Rome: he would pray for his health from the intercession of the holy apostles. He dwelled in Rome—and was not healed—four full years; and he found out about Swithun and the wonders that he had worked since he [the thane] had departed from there [England]. He then quickly hastened to return to his homeland and came to the holy man and became healed there [at Swithun's shrine] and returned home with healthy sight.] (§15)

55. As with the miraculous healing of Æthelsige, each of these details come from Lantfred's *Translatio*; see Lapidge, *Cult*, 288–89. Ælfric pares the story down to a more expedient account.

The thane's ability to travel to Rome in search of healing is explained by his wealth, rather than any details of accommodations. The thane is "very rich in possessions," which suggests he would be able to employ guides or other aids to his travel as needed. The embedded narrative's premise that he had traveled to Rome (and presumably also navigated the unfamiliar city to visit shrines of various saints there) attests to the possibility of someone like this thane making his world quite accessible. Of course, we do not know what challenges this thane might have faced if and when his environment proved inaccessible to him; we do not even know if he was a real person. But from this embedded narrative we can assess how accessible the world was thought to be for a wealthy blind person by Ælfric and his homiletic audience. They evidently found it plausible that a blind thane—at least one with significant wealth—would be able to successfully travel from England to Rome and back.

The wealthy thane's embedded narrative suggests that greater healing power may be accessed in one's "earde" ["homeland"], underscoring the centrality of a distinctly English space in the cult of St. Swithun. Rather than implying that Swithun is more powerful than the apostles whose shrines were in Rome, Ælfric positions Swithun as distinctly capable of interceding on behalf of English cure seekers. Even though Rome was and is the center of Catholic Christianity, Ælfric provides a supplementary local center, Winchester, to serve as both the focus of St. Swithun's cult and the geographical draw for cure seekers from across England. Even after traveling across vast geographic spaces in pursuit of healing, the thane finds what he seeks only when he appeals to an appropriately local saint.[56] As with the three blind women and their mute guide, the embedded narrative of the thane who traveled to Rome efficiently fits our three-stage model: blindness produces an exigency that directs the thane's behavior, the thane is drawn from a faraway space back to the "center" of Winchester, and the thane's embedded narrative is resolved by his healing.

In the subsequent embedded narrative, Ælfric relates the case of another blind man, also unnamed but distinguished by being abandoned by his guide. In this example, the act of bringing the impaired body from the margins to the center takes place not on a physical plane but on a spiritual plane: rather than coming into contact with the saint's cult by physically traveling to the

56. This motif is not rare in medieval hagiography. I have written elsewhere about a fifteenth-century Middle English example of a man whose arm is dislocated by an angel at the Holy Sepulcher itself in Jerusalem; he is not healed until he returns to England to relocate the lost remains of a native English saint; see Parker, "Proleptic Fantasy," 117–18.

Old Minster, this cure seeker accesses Swithun's intercessory power through the act of prayer. As Ælfric writes,

> Sum wer wæs eac blind wel seofon gear fulle, se hæfde ænne latteow þe hine lædde gehwider. Ða sume dæg eode he swa swa he oft dyde, and se latteow wearð gebolgen and þone blindan forlet: arn him aweg, and se oðer nyste hu he ham come; ac clypode to Gode mid inneweardre heortan and mid angsumnysse cwæð: "Eala, þu mihtiga Drihten manna and engla, geseoh mine yrmðe: ic geseon ne mæg and min lyðra latteow forlet me þus ænne. Gemiltsa me, Drihten, þurh ðone mæran Swiðhun, and forgif me gesihðe for ðæs sanctes geearnungum!" Eft he clypode þus and cwæð to ðam halgan: "Eala, þu milda bisceop, þe manega wundra of cumað þurh þone lifigendan God: leof, ic þe bidde þæt þu me geþingie to þam mihtigan Hælende—ic gelyfe þæt he wille gewislice þe tiðian." He wearð þa gehæled and hæfde his gesihðe, and ham eode bliðe buton latteowe ana—se ðe lytle ær þanon wæs gelæd þurh ðone oþerne; and his magas ðancodon mycclum ðæs Gode.
>
> [A certain man was likewise thoroughly blind for seven full years, who had a guide that led him everywhere. Then one day he went out, just as he often did, and the guide became angry and left the blind man, ran away from him, and the other man [the blind man] did not know how he might come home; but he called to God in his inward heart and anxiously said: "O you mighty Lord of men and angels, see my affliction: I cannot see and my wicked guide had abandoned me thus alone. Have mercy on me, Lord, through the celebrated Swithun and give me sight through the saint's worthiness!" Afterward, he called thus and said to the saint: "O you merciful bishop, through whom many wonders come from the living God: dear one, I ask that you intercede for me with the mighty Healer/Savior—I believe that he will certainly grant it to you." He then became healed and had his sight, and went home happily and alone, without the guide—he who a little previously had been led by the other; and his family gave great thanks to God.] (§16)

This embedded narrative also follows our three-stage model: the man's blindness is described and its consequence—reliance on an unreliable guide—produces a crisis; prayer brings the abandoned man into spiritual, though not spatial, proximity to St. Swithun; and the healing of the man

allows him to proceed without his guide, returning home and thus departing from the homily.

The man abandoned by his guide, like the thane who traveled to Rome, invites us to consider how accessible the world of late-tenth-century England was—or at least was thought to be—for individuals with vision impairments. The guide leads this man "gehwider" ["everywhere"], functioning prosthetically to aid this man. But this reliance poses a problem: a prosthesis might fail, especially if that prosthesis is a fallible human assistant. The abandoned man's guide, in contrast to the faithful guide of the three blind women in the earlier embedded narrative, reveals the potential for the world to suddenly become inaccessible, even when one's disability is usually sufficiently accommodated. Such a circumstance showcases the saint's intercessory power particularly strongly: getting to the shrine of St. Swithun is not an accessible option to the man abandoned by his guide, but prayer is accessible to him, and that turns out to be all he needs to garner Swithun's aid.

In all three of these embedded narratives about the healing of vision impairments, Ælfric's homily relies upon miniature, iterative narrative prostheses: the individual(s) are revealed to be different and the consequences of that deviance are displayed, the difference is brought to the center of the saint's purview, and the difference is eliminated. In each of these cases, though, both the impairments themselves and the elimination of the impairments have spiritual consequences. As we have seen in chapter 1, vision impairment bore particular spiritual connotations through the metaphor that {SIGHT IS SALVATION}.[57] As Ælfric uses the healing of vision—and other—impairments, there are additional spiritual consequences. Blindness becomes not just a way of physicalizing distance from salvation, but also an opportunity to showcase the intercessory power of the saint to provide healing miracles.

All three of these embedded narratives are drawn from Lantfred's *Narratio*.[58] In Ælfric's homily, however, they become iterative examples mapping out the eschatological promise of salvation through the intercession of the

57. Ælfric certainly read the OE *Boethius* and was aware of other Alfredian texts, so it is entirely possible that he recognized visual ability as a stand-in for spiritual status, in part because of that metaphor's use in the Alfredian corpus of OE texts, even if the metaphor was also circulating widely. On the extent of Ælfric's familiarity with the Alfredian corpus, see Bolton, "Alfredian Boethius"; Godden, "Ælfric and the Alfredian Precedents."

58. The three blind women and their mute guide are drawn from Lantfred's chapter 5; the blind thane who traveled to Rome from chapter 16; the blind man abandoned by his guide from chapter 18. See Lapidge, *Cult*, 597, 599.

saint, for the benefit of a vernacular audience. In a passage that is original to this homily, Ælfric declares,

> Ne mage we awritan, ne mid wordum asecgan, ealle þa wundra þe se halga wer Swiðhun þurh God gefremode on ðæs folces gesihþe—ge on gehæftum mannum, ge on unhalum mannum—mannum to swutelunge þæt hi sylfe magon Godes rice geearnian mid godum weorcum, swa swa Swiðhun dyde þe nu scinð þurh wundra.
>
> [We cannot write, nor in words say, all the miracles that this holy man Swithun has worked through God in this people's sight—either in imprisoned persons or in impaired persons—to make clear for these people that they themselves might earn God's kingdom with good deeds, just as Swithun did who now shines through miracles.] (§27)

Ælfric affirms that the purpose of Swithun's miracles—and by extension a homily about his miracles—is to demonstrate the possibility of attaining "God's kingdom" by behaving rightly. In other words, the homily uses healing miracles as a narrative stand-in for the matter of salvation, modeling in physical terms the same processes that occur when a saint might intercede on one's behalf for the salvation of their soul. Notably, sight appears here as a means of witnessing Swithun's miracles, further illustrating its correlation with eschatological hope: it is by Swithun performing these miracles "in this people's sight" that the people of Winchester and of England are to learn the path to salvation.

The miracles performed through Swithun illustrate for the people who witness them, as well as for Ælfric's homiletic audience, that salvation is a prospect one might hope for and pursue, because "hi sylfe magon Godes rice geearnian mid godum weorcum" ["they themselves might earn God's kingdom with good deeds"] (§27). This is the very core of eschatological hope: a belief in an afterlife where salvation is possible and that one might personally attain it. The narrative prosthesis of embedded healing narratives serves as a foundation for this eschatological hope, because the miracles of Swithun make tangible the process of salvation.

Variously Unwell

In addition to embedded narratives following a variant of narrative prosthesis, Ælfric also deploys increasing quantities of impaired cure seekers, with little

or no description of their circumstances, condition, or experiences. Before the saint is even translated into the Old Minster, Ælfric recounts, "Þær wurdon gehælede æt ðære halgan byrgene eahta untrume menn ær ðan þe he of ðære byrgene up genumen wære wundorlice þurh God" ["Eight unwell people were miraculously healed through God at the saint's tomb before he was brought up from that tomb"] (§9). As soon as Swithun's remains are translated, the numbers of those healed quickly increase beyond quantification. Ælfric writes,

> Þær wurdon gehælede þurh ðone halgan wer feower wanhale menn binnan ðrym dagum; and geond fif monþas, feawa daga wæron þæt ðær næron gehælede huru ðry untrume, hwilon fif oððe syx, seofon oððe eahta, tyn oððe twelf, syxtyne oððe eahtatyne. Binnan tyn dagum þær wurdon twa hund manna gehælede, and swa fela binnan twelf monðum þæt man hi getellan ne mihte.
>
> [Four people in poor health became healed through the saint within three days, and throughout five months, there were few days when there were not at least three of the unwell healed, sometimes five or six, seven or eight, ten or twelve, sixteen or eighteen. Within ten days there were two hundred people healed, and so many within twelve months that one could not count them.] (§10)

Ælfric strategically maps out the increase in healings, starting with the consistency of at least three being healed per day, through increases in ever larger intervals, until he arrives at the largest number—two hundred healings in ten days (or twenty per day)—and finally, uncountable masses.[59]

The spaces around the Old Minster serve as the backdrop for high numbers of cure seekers to flow in and out of Winchester in ways that would have resonated for audiences familiar with the compound. Immediately following this increase in numbers, Ælfric observes: "Se lictun læg afylled mid alefedum mannum, swa þæt man eaðe ne mihte þæt mynster gesecan; and þa ealle

59. Both the rhetorical strategy of increasing numbers and the subsequent description of the churchyard are drawn from Lantfred's *Translatio*; see Lapidge, *Cult*, 286–87. Lapidge observes that in Lantfred's *Translatio*, increasing numbers of pilgrims travel from increasingly distant locations for healing; Lapidge, *Cult*, 21. In Ælfric's homiletic *Life*, the locations from which pilgrims travel are omitted, except for the three blind women from the Isle of Wight discussed above, as well as another cure seeker from the Isle of Wight, an elderly thane who was too ill to leave his bed (§23).

wurdon swa wundorlice gehælede binnan feawa dagum, þæt man þær findan ne mihte fif unhale menn of þam micclan heape" ["The churchyard lay filled with impaired persons, such that one might not easily get to the minster; and then they all became healed so miraculously within a few days, so that one might not find five unhealthy people from that great mass"] (§10). Twice Ælfric's phrasing suggests the proximity of this crowd of persons to death and the grave; the "lictun," which I translate as "churchyard," specifically evokes a graveyard or the enclosure in which people would be buried near a church.[60] That the churchyard "læg" ["lay"] filled with this crowd evokes lying down, lying at rest, even lying dead.[61] The group of impaired persons filling such a space is not explicitly described as medically nearer to death than any of the living, but this scene and Ælfric's phrasing put them spatially and rhetorically close to death. Ælfric also recounts the cathedral precinct being filled "mid alefedum mannum" ["with impaired persons"] (§10), to the point that it became difficult to navigate the space. A monk, such as Ælfric, or anyone making their way into the minster, would of necessity pass by and through physically diverse crowds representing a vast array of embodiments and experiences of the body. Once those embodiments were miraculously healed and departed, it would have been as though a great many people occupying the space of death suddenly returned to life, foreshadowing the promised Resurrection of the Christian afterlife.

Even though the monastic community's access to the space was temporarily impeded by the masses of cure seekers, the large number of cure seekers who purportedly arrived at the shrine speaks to a high degree of accessibility in the space. Travel to Winchester was made feasible by mobility aids like crutches and sensory aids like guides, as we have seen in the stories of Æthelsige and the three blind women from the Isle of Wight, respectively. Entry into the space of Winchester's Old Minster, likewise, must have been made accessible to these cure seekers, if Ælfric's account comes from his firsthand experience of the space.[62]

60. See *B-T*, "líc-tún." On the OE vocabulary of burial places, see Thompson, *Dying and Death*, 103–7.

61. See *B-T*, "licgan."

62. While the physical features of the Old Minster that may have promoted accessibility exceed the present discussion, recent archaeological work analyzing religious spaces from the ancient world has demonstrated the value of disability studies and mobility design theory for understanding how both disabled and temporarily able-bodied participants in historical religions navigated their holy spaces; see Zucconi, "Reading Ancient Temples."

Ælfric's homily made Swithun's shrine textually available as well, to those who could not travel to Winchester, whether their reasons were related to disability or not. We know that the homily traveled; the most complete surviving manuscript witness of the *Life of St. Swithun*—BL, Cotton MS Julius E. vii—likely was in Bury St. Edmunds shortly after 1020.[63] The homily grants textual access to the cult of St. Swithun. Audiences in regions like East Anglia, most of whom would never visit Winchester, could thus both learn of the saint's purported healing prowess and imagine themselves included in the community of cure seekers whom the saint might heal.[64] What such audiences imagined of the sea of impaired persons in the cathedral precinct, we cannot know. Ælfric's emphasis on the difficulty of passage, though, encourages one to imagine a packed crowd, bodies in all shapes, sizes, and abilities, filling the scene more prominently than any church art or architecture. In such a scene, it is not so much the tomb or reliquary of St. Swithun that takes center stage, but rather the many diverse bodies that adorn its environs; the bodies themselves magnify the saint as much as any reliquary art. The individuality of such persons, crowded into the homily as they are into the cathedral precinct, is obscured by such collectivization, but as a result the abstraction of disability as a sharable human trait becomes fundamental to Ælfric's depiction of the Old Minster as this homily would have brought it to other parts of England.[65]

Periodically throughout the homily, Ælfric returns to the motif of an enumerated—not individuated—group of people being healed. The use of numbers often comes from Lantfred or the *Epitome*, but Ælfric frequently alters the number of those healed or the number of days in which it occurred.[66] Between the healing of a paralyzed thane (§13) and the blind thane who returned from Rome to be healed by Swithun (§15), Ælfric writes: "Fif and twentig manna mislice geuntrumode comon to þam halgan, heora hæle biddende: sume wæron blinde, sume wæron healte, sume eac deafe, and dumbe eac sume; and hi ealle wurdon anes dæges gehælede þurh þæs halgan ðin-

63. See Lapidge, *Cult*, 580–81. On the readership of Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* more broadly, see Hill, "Dissemination"; Treharne, "Making Their Presence Felt."

64. Jennifer A. Lorden argues that because Ælfric had moved to Cerne by the time he was working on the *Lives of Saints*, his *Life of St. Swithun* caters to an audience without firsthand experience of Winchester's holy sites; see "Landscapes of Devotion," 303–8.

65. As I have argued elsewhere, such collections of embodiments suggest a shared understanding of "disability," even without a distinct term in medieval languages, as a category of differences that a saint might heal; Parker, "Healing the Unborn."

66. See, e.g., Lapidge, *Cult*, 597n31, n33.

gunge, and him ham gewendon" ["Twenty-five variously unwell people came to the saint, asking for their health: some were blind, some were halt [had a mobility impairment], some also deaf, and also some mute; and they all were healed in a single day through the holy one's intercession, and brought themselves home"] (§14). Later, after several more embedded narratives about individual cure seekers, Ælfric records an even more impressive group healing: "Hwilon comon to ðam halgan hundtwelftig manna mislice geuntrumode mid manegum brocum; and þa wurdon ealle wundorlice gehælede binnan þrym wucum, and hi wendon ham þancigende þam Ælmihtigan and þam arwurðan Swiðhune" ["For a time there came to the saint a hundred and twenty people variously unwell with many afflictions; and then they all became miraculously healed within three weeks and they returned home thanking the Almighty and the venerable Swithun"] (§21). These accounts of unnamed masses of healed people punctuate the homily's embedded narratives of individuals with the magnitude of the scale of Swithun's healings. The deindividuated masses make up, by number, the vast majority of Swithun's healings. Just as the embedded narratives of healed cure seekers had bolstered the narrative's glorification of Swithun through qualitative support, so too do masses of anonymous cure seekers who are healed impress Swithun's blessedness upon the reader through quantitative support.

Ælfric does not go into anything resembling clinical detail regarding what Swithun heals for these enumerated masses of people. Many are labeled by an impairment, but Ælfric also repeats many of the same broad descriptors, such as the exceedingly vague "mislice geuntrumode" (§§14, 21), which I translate as "variously unwell." This phrase is nearly unique to Ælfric in the surviving Old English corpus.[67] The word *untrum* comes to us today in the sense of "un-trim," as in deviating in some way from a "whole" or "properly" arranged body.[68] In *Swithun*, Ælfric makes the phrase even broader, encompassing any number of "un-trim" or "mis-arranged" embodiments, with the modifier *mislice* (variously).[69] The phrase is symptomatic of the lack of differentiation with

67. Ælfric also uses versions of the phrase elsewhere in his *Lives of Saints* in the homily for St. Thomas (*LS* III:278, line 196), in the *Catholic Homilies I* homily on St. Bartholomew, which discusses at length the signification of divine promises through "untrumnesse" (*Catholic Homilies: First Series*, I.31, 443), and in what John C. Pope calls his Supplementary Homily 2, on Christ's healing miracle at the pool of Bethesda (*Homilies*, 231, line 25). The only non-Ælfrician use of this phrase of which I am aware is in the Blickling Homily on St. Michael; see Morris 209.

68. *B-T*, "un-trum"; see also "ge-untrumian."

69. *B-T*, "mislíce."

which Ælfric treats many of the recipients of Swithun's healing. Ælfric de-emphasizes the individual personhood of the recipients of Swithun's healing, as inhabitants of the many, many crip bodies he describes. Ælfric depends on lack of specificity to efficiently get across the magnitude of Swithun's divine influence. For the purposes of venerating Swithun in this homily, Ælfric does not always need to specify who the healed individuals are; after an adequate number of embedded narratives, numbers alone are sufficiently impressive. The details of disability become relatively unimportant. All that is needed are these basic elements: bodies are "mislice geuntrumode" ["variously unwell"]; such bodies come to the cult center; and through Swithun's intercession and the might of God, they are healed.

Ælfric is precise about the role Swithun plays in intercession, that the healings are not enacted through the power of the saint but through God. In his introduction, Ælfric writes, "Þa geswutelode God þone sanct Swiðhun mid manegum wundrum þæt he mære is" ["At that time, God revealed the sanctity of Swithun with many miracles for which he is famous"] (§1). Later, following the healing of a man who was wrongfully punished, Ælfric writes, "We ne moton us gebiddan swa to Godes halgum swa swa to Gode sylfum, for ðan þe he is ana God ofer ealle þing. Ac we sceolon biddan soðlice þa halgan þæt hi us þingion to þam þrymwealdendan Gode—se þe is heora Hlaford—þæt he helpe us" ["We should not pray to God's saints the same as to God himself, because he alone is God over all things. But we should pray truly to the saints so that they might intercede for us with the heaven-ruling God—who is their Lord—so that he may help us"] (§18). Ælfric's protocol for saintly intercession suggests an expected correlation for the reader of (or listener to) this text between miracles ostensibly enacted through saints and the beneficence of God in granting salvation. The centrality of healing to the saint's life, well-evidenced in Ælfric's *Swithun*, functions as an authorial shortcut for the matter that is really at issue here: the Christian hope of salvation. When God heals the ailing body through the intercession of the saint, this makes manifest the process by which the intercession of a saint might secure the salvation of an individual's soul after death.

In *Swithun*, Ælfric makes the abstract notion of salvation tangible through the correlation between healing the crip body and securing salvation for the wandering soul. The narrative of Ælfric's saint's life clearly emphasizes the pattern of healing over identities of individuals, because it leaves every beneficiary of a healing miracle anonymous, and sometimes completely generic. In order to draw crowds to the church through the cult of the saint, the church depends upon miracles of healing and the narratives that describe

them. The narrative of the saint's life is likewise dependent on a renewable supply of crip bodies to demonstrate the power of a saint to intercede on one's behalf when it counts: in the intercession for salvation, which cannot be evidenced except by analogies such as the miracle of healing.

The Shrine of St. Swithun

In addition to the convenient analogy of healing, which materializes abstract concepts of church doctrine, the early medieval English church could also benefit from the use of saints' cults—and particularly homiletic saints' lives like Ælfric's—to publicize miracles of healing, bringing power and prestige to a religious community.[70] Very often, the translation of a saint's relics served not only to increase the honor given to the saint but also to bring visitors to the relics under the control of religious officials. Following Swithun's translation in 971, Bishop Æthelwold had the Old Minster rebuilt so that it encompassed the site of Swithun's original tomb.[71] The addition of an ambulatory around Swithun's shrine during the Old Minster's rebuilding may have served to facilitate pilgrim foot traffic.[72] While it would have given all pilgrims greater access to the saint, this change also may have made the space more accessible to cure seekers with impairments that required guides, prostheses, or other mobility aids.

Healing miracles demonstrate the sanctity of Swithun and, in doing so, justify the building of a shrine to magnify the saint and the reputation of the religious community at the Old Minster in Winchester. As David Rollason observes, "Once the laity had been attracted to the shrine they formed a captive audience for the lessons which could be taught through the medium of preaching [. . .] and through recitation of miracle stories."[73] The renown of a saint benefited religious communities in a cycle of positive feedback. Once a miracle is attributed to a saint, more individuals come seeking miracles; individuals of all classes make their way to that church, not only bringing alms and donations but also bringing their minds to learn about church doctrine. The telling and retelling of miracle stories to these crowds would serve to ensure that many would return and that more would come to seek the saint's intercession.

Entering the space of Swithun's shrine in the Old Minster would have

70. See, e.g., Rollason, *Saints and Relics*; Salter, *Saints*.
71. Lapidge, *Cult*, 19–20; see also Rollason, *Saints and Relics*, 183–86.
72. See Hudson, *Bishop Æthelwold*, 172–73.
73. Rollason, *Saints and Relics*, 188.

been a transcendent experience, especially for pilgrims visiting from rural parts of southern England and beyond.[74] The towering architecture, colorful wall paintings, and shimmering reliquary that housed the saint's remains all would have induced awe. The graves of kings and bishops surrounded the original tomb site of St. Swithun.[75] This magnificent space was decorated with ornate stone carvings, intricately worked precious metals, and the relics of disability. The crutches and stools added to the shrine's message about who can access salvation: it is not just the kings and bishops buried in this sacred space, but also the ordinary people who use crutches and stools like those hanging from the walls. The crutches and stools also show us a participatory aspect of the saint's cult across class categories. As Ælfric presents the scene, the shrine is not just being created by the nobility who funded major projects and the clergy who managed the site, it is also physically being constructed, added to, and magnified by the ordinary laity who brought their crutches and stools to the shrine and filled the churchyard with their diverse bodies.

The relics of disability that Ælfric describes hanging in the Old Minster are not as incongruous with other features of the saint's shrine as they may initially seem; the costly artwork in the Old Minster also emphasized crip embodiments. We are told by Wulfstan Cantor that the reliquary made for Swithun at King Edgar's command between 971 and 974 was "argento albentem, gemmisque auroque rubentem" ["luminous with silver, glowing with jewels and gold"].[76] On it,

> Qua passio Christi
> sculpta beata nitet, simul et surrectio, necne
> eius ad astriferos ueneranda ascensio caelos:
> plura inibique micant, quae nunc edicere longum est.
>
> [The blessed Passion of Christ glistens there, engraved on the shrine,
> and likewise the Resurrection, and also His awe-inspiring Ascension

74. Some aspects of the experience of such long-demolished buildings may be recovered through three-dimensional renderings based on archaeological work, though none of the extant three-dimensional renderings of the Old Minster, to my knowledge, include crutches on the walls. The Old Minster at Winchester was the first archaeological site in the United Kingdom to be reconstructed digitally; see Reilly, Todd, and Walter, "Rediscovering and Modernising." For a thorough description of the Old Minster's development, see Biddle, *Search*; on its final form, from the 990s until its demolition in 1093, see Kjølbye-Biddle, "Old Minster."

75. Crook, "St Swithun of Winchester," 57–59.

76. Lapidge, *Cult*, 494/495, line 44, trans. Lapidge.

> to the starry heavens: many other scenes glisten there too, which it is a long undertaking to describe at this time.][77]

Among many scenes on the reliquary, the most important that Wulfstan chooses to note are those of Christ's Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension, a sequence that dramatizes a body tortured unto death, then restored to corporeal life, and ultimately drawn bodily into the heavens, "the central events of salvation history," as Barbara C. Raw observes.[78] Christ's body, depicted on Swithun's reliquary, modeled the transition from impairment to healing to blessed eternity, a process that Swithun's healing miracles brought into the tenth-century present, explicitly showing the power of God to make the physical body whole, both in healing and in the Resurrection, and implicitly demonstrating the process for following Christ into the afterlife.

These images of Christ were not the only scenes on the reliquary, but C. R. Dodwell has suggested that the program as a whole was likely unified by the topic of eternal life.[79] In the larger context of Swithun's healing cult, the scenes on Swithun's reliquary emphasize how the human body attains eternal life, depicting the aspirational model for all bodies, that of Christ himself, becoming impaired, then resurrected, and gaining access to heaven. Even more so, these scenes—framed in the gold and silver of the reliquary and beyond that surrounded by the crutches and stools hanging on the walls of the Old Minster—would have conveyed a powerful message: the power of God through the saint can change the earthly body from impaired to healed, and so too can the power of God resurrect the once-earthly body and bring it into the afterlife transformed. The crutches and stools decorating Swithun's shrine make this message tangible for the shrine's visitors. It is not just Christ's body that can be changed; it is every earthly body. The experience of Swithun's shrine, like the healing miracle narratives in Ælfric's *Life of St. Swithun*, blended disability and the divine to provide a spiritual prosthesis for the promise of salvation.

Even after the Old Minster was demolished in 1093 and Swithun's shrine was moved into the new Norman cathedral, this reliquary would have brought

77. Lapidge, *Cult*, 492/493, lines 12–15, trans. Lapidge. John Crook suggests that this reliquary is depicted in the partially surviving late-twelfth-century wall painting in the Morley Library at Winchester Cathedral; see Crook, "King Edgar's Reliquary." The painting does not include the scenes Wulfstan reports being on the reliquary itself.

78. Raw, *Anglo-Saxon Crucifixion Iconography*, 19.

79. Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon Art*, 198–200.

with it the saint's ties to resurrection and salvation.[80] Whether the saint's crutches and stools traveled with him to the new shrine or not, it is possible that for a hundred years—from Ælfric's writing of his *Life of St. Swithun* to the demolition of the Old Minster—relics of disability adorned the shrine of this healing saint, testifying to the importance of disability in the way the professional religious and laypeople alike thought about salvation.[81]

One fundamental detail about the shrine's depiction of Christ's Resurrection remains lamentably out of our reach: What did his body look like? Did it retain the marks of his wounds from the Crucifixion? Or did it promise that the Resurrection body would become whole, unmarked, and unimpaired? To explore such questions further, in the next chapter I turn from Swithun's healing miracles to the miraculous saintly body of St. Æthelthryth, which illustrates how religious thinkers in early medieval England sought to understand the theological promise of the Resurrection through questions about crip earthly bodies.

80. On the transfer of Swithun's shrine on July 15, 1093, see Kjølbye-Biddle, "Old Minster," 13.

81. See notes 2 and 3 above for later examples of body part votive offerings or prosthetic devices bedecking saints' shrines. In England, the best examples that survive to the present of crip bodies and their prosthetic devices decorating saints' shrines are the stained-glass depictions of healing miracles that adorn many late medieval cathedrals.

Three

St. Æthelthryth's Scar

Marking Crip Eschatology on the Saintly Body

St. Æthelthryth, Abbess of Ely, died in 679 after a tumor on her neck was lanced by a *læce* (leech).[1] Ælfric of Eynsham's homily in his *Lives of Saints* (ca. 994–998) reports that when she developed the painful tumor, Æthelthryth said,

> Ic wat geare þæt ic wel wyrðe eom
> þæt min swura beo geswenct mid swylcere untrumnysse,
> forðan þe ic on iugoðe frætwode minne swuran
> mid mænigfealdum swur-beagum.
>
> [I truly know that I am well worthy that my neck should be vexed with such great impairment, because I in my youth decorated my neck with manifold necklaces.] (54–57)[2]

1. *Læce* (leech) is an Old English word describing a physician. On Æthelthryth's cult, see Black, "*Nutrix pia*"; Blanton, *Signs of Devotion*; and particularly for the late tenth century, see Gretsch, *Ælfric*, 162–72, 195–231; Hudson, *Bishop Æthelwold*, 109–10. Later in the Middle Ages and beyond, St. Æthelthryth would also be known as Etheldryth, Etheldreda, and Audrey. I follow Virginia Blanton in using the modern spelling of the saint's OE name; see *Signs of Devotion*, 3–4n10.

2. All quotations from Ælfric's *Life of St. Æthelthryth* are from *LS* II:193–203, cited parenthetically by line number. On Ælfric of Eynsham and his *Lives of Saints*, see chapter 2 above.

In the saint's purported comments, the tumor becomes a punishment for past sin and a sign of her penitence, a cripping of soteriology: the theology of salvation. In the humility expected of a prospective saint, Æthelthryth never mentions that she anticipates being praised for her piety; instead, she fixates on the penance she performs before death and the earthly sin of youthful vanity that required such penance. The disabling illness, which ultimately proves fatal, entwines Æthelthryth's sins, her saintly virtues, and the legibility of her body all under the mirrored eschatological and soteriological concerns: how does the saint's body—in life and death—reflect the state of her soul?

The standard narrative of St. Æthelthryth (ca. 636–679) describes the saint remaining a virgin through two marriages, founding monastic orders at Ely, developing a tumor on her neck from which she subsequently dies, and receiving postmortem healing of that tumor, often followed by the saint's miracles of healing and punishment. Out of more than sixty native female saints attested from early medieval England, the cult of St. Æthelthryth stands out as both the most widely venerated and the most thoroughly invested in the legibility of the body.[3] Æthelthryth had been one of the most prominent native female saints in the Venerable Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (Ecclesiastical History of the English People, completed 731), which narrated the establishment and character of Christianity among the *gens Anglorum* (the English people) and was widely read both in England and on the Continent from within decades of its completion.[4] Bede (672/673–735) had memorialized Æthelthryth with both a Latin prose account of her life and an abecedarian Latin hymn on virginity (composed between Æthelthryth's translation in 695 and the writing of the *Historia*). Æthelthryth's story came into the Old English vernacular with the translation of the *Historia* in the late ninth or early tenth century—the earliest manuscript witness dates to between ca. 883 and 930—which may have been related to either the Alfredian translation program or one out of Mercia but was at least developed in the same cultural moment as texts associated with Alfred, such as

3. Pulsiano, "Blessed Bodies," 6.

4. Bede spends a comparable amount of space on St. Hild, Abbess of Whitby (*HE* 404–14), and also briefly discusses St. Æbbe (*HE* 392, 424); several nonnative virgin saints are mentioned in his hymn to Æthelthryth (*HE* 396–98). On the *Historia*'s contexts, see Bertram Colgrave's "Historical Introduction," xvii–xxxviii, and on the manuscripts, which are too numerous to list here, see R. A. B. Mynors's "Textual Introduction," xxxix–lxxiv, in their coedited *HE*. On Bede's education and works, see Brown, *Companion to Bede*, especially 1–16. On brief references to Æthelthryth in Stephen of Ripon's *Vita Sancti Wilfridi* (ca. 715) and Bede's *Chronica maiora* (ca. 725), which note her uncorruption but neither tumor nor scar, see Black, "'*Nutrix pia*,'" 170–73.

those discussed in chapter 1.[5] Bede's *Historia* served as Ælfric's main source for his tenth-century homily on Æthelthryth in his *Lives of Saints*.[6] Ælfric certainly knew Bede's *Historia* in both Latin and Old English; it is Ælfric, in his second series of *Catholic Homilies*, who provides the earliest attribution of the OE *Bede* to King Alfred.[7]

Æthelthryth is the only native English female saint to whom Ælfric devoted an entire homily.[8] From Bede, Ælfric inherited a considerable fascination with Æthelthryth's tumor and its healing, as well as an appreciation for her geographic and temporal proximity relative to popular virgin saints of late antiquity.[9] In adapting the narrative into a vernacular homily, however, Ælfric's version subtly transforms the manifestation of Christian eschatology through Æthelthryth's body, namely through his description of her tumor and its postmortem healing, in comparison to Bede's Latin and the much more literal vernacular rendering of the OE *Bede*. Tracing these

5. For the OE *Bede* passage on Æthelthryth, see Miller, *Old English Version*, 316–25. On dates, see Rowley, *Old English Version*, 2, 16. There are five surviving manuscript witnesses of the OE *Bede* from the tenth and eleventh centuries, one of which may have been copied as early as the late ninth century; Rowley, *Old English Version*, 15–35. Another quite brief text, an entry in the *Old English Martyrology*, brought Æthelthryth's story into the vernacular in the late ninth century, around the same time as the OE *Bede*. The *Martyrology* mentions Æthelthryth's scar, but the entry is so brief I do not examine it at length here; the entire discussion of both tumor and scar is as follows: "Ond hire wæs micel wund open on ðæm swyran ða heo mon on byrgenne dyde; ond þa hi mon eft updyde of þære byrgenne, ða wæs hit gebatad þæt þær næs butan seo swaðu on" ["And there was a large wound open on her neck when she was put into the grave; and then when they took her up from the grave afterward, then it had abated, so that there was nothing but a scar there"]; Kotzor, *Das altenglische Martyrologium*, II:129.

6. Stephen Harris provides thorough treatment of Æthelthryth in Bede's *Historia*, as well as Bede's verse *Hymn to Æthelthryth* in *Bede and Aethelthryth*. On Bede's legacy in the later Old English period, and in particular Ælfric's adaptation of Bede into his homilies, see Rowley, "Bede," especially 225–27.

7. See Ælfric, *Catholic Homilies: Second Series*, 72; Rowley, "Bede," 225–27.

8. Ælfric's *Life of St. Æthelthryth* survives in two manuscripts: BL, Cotton Julius MS E. vii, made in the early eleventh century (at 94v–96v) and Cambridge, University Library, MS Ii.1.33, made in the second half of the twelfth century (at 34v–36v). Julius E. vii is the same manuscript that contains the only surviving complete copy of Ælfric's *Life of St. Swithun*, immediately following *Æthelthryth* at fols. 96v–103r. On additional witnesses of the *Life of St. Æthelthryth*, now lost, see the notes to the edited text in *LS* II:379.

9. As Joseph Grossi has demonstrated, Bede had connected Æthelthryth pointedly to the region of East Anglia, while Ælfric's use of East Anglian saints like Æthelthryth and Edmund worked toward absorbing them into a larger English identity; see *Angles on a Kingdom*, 69–101, 196–99.

changes reveals nuances in the questions being asked about the form of the Resurrection body by the end of the tenth century when Bede's *Historia*, the OE *Bede*, and Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* were circulating.

A crucial piece of evidence for Æthelthryth's sanctity according to early hagiographers of the saint was the assertion that when Æthelthryth's body was exhumed after sixteen years in the grave, her body remained uncorrupted (as was attributed to many saints), and the wound from the lanced tumor was healed. Representations of this miracle disagree, however, on one crucial point: whether St. Æthelthryth retained a scar on her neck as both evidence of the healing and proof that this was indeed the same woman's body. Bede's *Historia* recounts the leech Cynefrith saying "Tenuissima tunc cicatricis uestigia parerent" ["There now appeared [. . .] only the slightest traces of a scar"] (394/395).[10] The OE *Bede* follows Bede's Latin quite closely: "Þa seo þynneste dolgswæð ond seo læsseste æteawde" ["The thinnest and smallest trace of a scar showed"] (322).[11] In contrast, Ælfric omits any reference to a scar, saying only "Þa wæs seo wund gehæled, þe se læce worhte ær" ["Then was the wound healed, which the leech had previously made"] (93). This seemingly minor shift, from the "slightest traces of a scar" to no suggestion of a scar at all, encapsulates within it eschatological concerns over the nature of the Resurrection body, and how it would or would not reflect marks of that body's experiences in life. Moreover, the Benedictional of St. Æthelwold, which was made for Bishop Æthelwold while Ælfric was studying under him at Winchester, includes a portrait of Æthelthryth that manifests this ambiguity, representing the saint's neck in such a way that it both may and may not depict the scar. The Benedictional thus leaves the question of whether a Resurrection body might bear a scar up to the viewer's interpretation.

Æthelthryth's uncorrupt body models the promise of the Resurrection for all human bodies, and so differences in whether she retains her scar or not reveal crucial nuances in the crip eschatology of early medieval England: its simultaneous resistance to and dependence upon signifiers of disability.

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10. All quotations from and translations of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* are from *HE* (cited parenthetically by page number), wherein the edition of the Latin is by R. A. B. Mynors and translations are by Bertram Colgrave (see *HE* vii), unless otherwise noted.

11. All quotations from the OE translation of Bede's *Historia* are from Miller, *Old English Version*, cited parenthetically by page number. Sharon M. Rowley argues that the translation as a whole makes much more significant changes from Bede's Latin than we see in the section on Æthelthryth; *Old English Version*, particularly 2–3. OE *dolg* can mean both wound and scar (*B-T*, "dolh"); in this case, the trace of a wound would still be a scar, but see my further discussion of the slippery boundaries of the word in chapter 6.

Reading Æthelthryth's scar reveals the spiritually prosthetic function of St. Æthelthryth's body as a support not just for hagiographical narrative, but also for theological questions about the afterlife. Æthelthryth's body, like those of many uncorrupt saints and Christ himself, illustrates what is promised for the Resurrection body. Across early medieval sources, however, Æthelthryth's scar refuses to answer the open question of whether and how resurrected bodies would be marked by wounds, scars, or any form of disability. In an earthly world not yet arrived at the Apocalypse, these texts collectively present a kind of Schrödinger's scar: it may be there, or it may not. Christians cannot know which afterlife embodiment is promised until they reach the afterlife, and even then it may not be promised to the nonsaintly. Audiences of these texts may thus imagine both a scarred and an unscarred saint, as well as both a marked and unmarked resurrection of their own body. Similarly, within each narrative, interpretations of the saint's body at different stages of life inform one another, producing a crip timeline that uses bodily impairment to bridge between past, present, and future, as another means of supporting eschatological promises. All versions of Æthelthryth's body are interpretable based on this scar; hers is both the saintly body that is crip—that is marked by a reminder of an impairment—and the saintly body that is healed. This is the body promised in the Christian afterlife: that which both might be and is pointedly not disabled. It is a crip vision of the afterlife, not necessarily disabled, but certainly inflected by and interpreted through disability.

This chapter argues that the representations of Æthelthryth's body, and particularly her scar, that were circulating in late-tenth-century England spiritually prosthesized Christian eschatological promises about the nature of the Resurrection body. These representations attempt to make knowable whether the Resurrection body will still signify comparably to the living earthly body through legible marks in the skin, even if those marks are interpreted negatively, rather than as positively coded scars of martyrdom. These collected representations of Æthelthryth—Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*, the OE *Bede*, Ælfric's *Life of St. Æthelthryth*, and the Benedictional portrait—leave unresolved the question of whether a heavenly Æthelthryth retains her scar. They attempt to prosthesize the eschatological promise of the Resurrection, to answer the open question, but their disagreement forces the question to persist. Like a material prosthesis, the representations of Æthelthryth's scar provide functional support to this crip eschatology but do not erase the need for the prosthesis in the first place. Where chapter 1 explored spiritual prosthesis on the rhetorical level of metaphor and chapter 2 articulated spiritual prosthesis on the narrative level of hagiogra-

phy, this chapter extends spiritual prosthesis to a larger theological level, to consider the conversations between texts and between authors that enabled one woman's tumor—one saint's scar—to model eschatological promises about the Resurrection and salvation.

Scars, Disability, and the Resurrection

Because scars are not universally experienced or recognized as disabling, some discussion is first warranted of how scars relate conceptually to disabled bodyminds and their place in Christian eschatology. I find it valuable to distinguish between wounds as the active injury and scars as the remnant witness to a past injury, which bear overlapping relationships to disability. Both wounds and scars reveal that harm has come to a body, compelling the viewer to seek a narrative, to fill in an explanation for how that harm occurred. In the reminder that one's own human body may be wounded, one's instinct is to find out how this harm happened to someone else. As Tobin Siebers has observed, scars differentiate otherwise indistinguishable bodies, conclusively identifying a person as themself and yet inviting further questions about the source of the scar, the earlier wound, and the story of that person's corporeal text.[12] Both wound and scar may serve a further disabling function, as prospectively disfiguring. Compassion and sympathy seem to prevent the label of the still-healing wounded as disfigured, but the scar—the mark that remains when the healing has finished—has a long history of stigmatizing treatment as disfigurement.[13]

Wounds can become disabling, but they are not always such. More importantly, the very possibility of the body becoming wounded illustrates the human body's capacity for disability, an aura of crip that surrounds us all. I agree with Siebers: "The capacity to be wounded, injured, or traumatized is not always considered a feature of disability, but it should be."[14] In most bodies, the experience of anything from a paper cut to a major laceration calls attention to itself through pain, which reveals the vulnerability of the human body in literal, etymological terms; "vulnerable" stems from Latin *vulnerabilis*, and ultimately, *vulnus*: wound.[15] In visual or textual art, the representation

12. Siebers, *Disability Aesthetics*, 123–29.

13. On wounds, scars, and disfigurement in medieval contexts, see Dickason, "Sacred Skin," Skinner, *Living with Disfigurement*, and the essays in Kirkham and Warr, *Wounds in the Middle Ages*; Tracy and DeVries, *Wounds and Wound Repair*; Walter, *Reading Skin*.

14. Siebers, *Disability Aesthetics*, 102.

15. *OED*, "vulnerable, adj."

of the wounded body, or the body marked by scars of past wounds, serves as a reminder that the body may suffer; the body may die; the body may live, even without pain, and yet gain disability. Siebers claims trauma and disability as aesthetic resources "discovered by modern art," but medieval Christian art—both visual and textual, emphasizing the wounds of Christ and the saints—reveals a long-standing leveraging of this resource, perhaps not for exclusively aesthetic purposes, but certainly for spiritual purposes.[16]

Medieval people clearly recognized wounds and scars as interpretable. Law codes from early medieval England reflect the negative consequences of injury, including the stigma of wounds and scars. For example, Lisi Oliver has observed that calculations of *wergild* (monetary compensation) for personal injuries, established by the laws of Æthelberht (ca. 600), took into account both the degree to which an injury impaired function of a body part and also its level of visibility.[17] Wounding a person such that their nose or ear became pierced would cause similarly little impact to senses of smell and hearing, respectively, but harming a person's nose called for a higher compensatory payment; Oliver concludes, "The difference in price between the 3-shilling ear-piercing and the 9-shilling nose-piercing probably reflects the fact that an injury to the nose is more immediately apparent than one to the ear."[18] Facial scars continued to run the risk of stigma in England beyond the Norman Conquest. The extensive facial scarring of the future King Henry V (r. 1413–1422), due to an arrow wound received during the Battle of Shrewsbury (1403), potentially fueled his reputation for martial prowess, and yet the scar itself was deliberately occluded in depictions of the king from his lifetime and was largely written out of the record in later periods.[19] Scars could be badges of pride, or marks of dishonor.

Scars also feature prominently in Christian Resurrection theology. According to Augustine of Hippo's expectations for the Resurrection, martyrs will retain signs of their passions, which will not be counted as deformity but will become positive markers of sanctity, "non enim deformitas in eis sed dig-

16. Siebers, *Disability Aesthetics*, 2. Elsewhere in the same book, Siebers does acknowledge the medieval Christian use of wounded bodies in a reference to the Doubting Thomas motif; *Disability Aesthetics*, 125. On wounded bodies as spectacles in medieval art, see, e.g., Merback, *The Thief, the Cross, and the Wheel*.

17. Oliver, *Beginnings*, 100–101.

18. Oliver, *Beginnings*, 101.

19. See Arner, "Disappearing Scar"; Livingston, "Prince Hal's Head-Wound"; Matusiak, *Henry V*, 58.

nitas erit" ["for it will not be deformity in them, but distinction"].[20] As when Christ's wounds are recoded as signs of divinity, Augustine asserts a positive moral valence for the marks of martyrs' wounds. Augustine continues:

> Nec ideo tamen si aliqua martyribus amputata et ablata sunt membra, sine ipsis membris erunt in resurrectione mortuorum quibus dictum est: *Capillus capitis vestri non peribit*. Sed si hoc decebit in illo novo saeculo ut indicia gloriosorum vulnerum in illa inmortali carne cernantur, ubi membra ut praeciderentur percussa vel secta sunt, ibi cicatrices, sed tamen eisdem membris redditis non perditis, apparebunt.
>
> [Moreover, if limbs have at any time been severed or torn away from the martyrs, they will not therefore be without those limbs in the resurrection of the dead, because for them it was said: "No hair on your head will perish." But if in that new age it is seemly that the tokens of their famous wounds be seen in that immortal flesh, then where limbs had been detached by being struck or carved away, there will be visible scars, but nonetheless the same limbs will be restored, not lost.][21]

The martyrs will thus bear scars marking their injuries, but their parts that have been dismembered shall be reattached and normatively functional.[22] The scars aestheticize the martyrs' bodies as texts reporting their passions, because they are evidence of the suffering that person has endured for their faith in Christ. Augustine asserts that these will be marks of honor, but he seems to expect some potential stigmatization of such scars. By insisting that "non sunt tamen deputanda vel appellanda vitia virtutis indicia" ["the tokens of virtue will not be named or considered defects"], Augustine suggests that some of his readers would be inclined to view scars negatively, even on martyrs, revealing that at least in Augustine's fifth-century worldview, scars could be stigmatized as "vitia" ["defects"].[23]

Within this theological precedent, Æthelthryth's scar is both justified and

20. Augustine, *City of God: Books 21–22*, 294, XXII.19; Augustine, "*City of God* XXII.19," 160. See also Bynum, *Resurrection*, 94–98; Moss, "Heavenly Healing," 1010.

21. Augustine, *City of God: Books 21–22*, 294, XXII.19 (italics in original); Augustine, "*City of God* XXII.19," 160.

22. As Caroline Walker Bynum notes, the debate over whether Resurrection bodies would retain marks such as scars extended from the second century through the work of late medieval theologians such as Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century; "Why All the Fuss?" 19–22.

23. Augustine, *City of God: Books 21–22*, 294, XXII.19; Augustine, "*City of God* XXII.19," 160. See also Moss, "Heavenly Healing," 1009–10.

perplexing. In Augustine's framework, the martyrs' scars are objects of desire and testaments to martyrs' special place in Christian thought as those who suffered for Christ. Æthelthryth, however, is not a martyr. She suffered, to be sure, and died, but her tumor is never framed in early medieval texts as a persecution; rather, Æthelthryth's tumor is presented as a purgation of her own prior sin. Still, preserving her scar as a signifier of the purgatorial function of the tumor perhaps makes her out to have suffered piously like a martyr. Further consideration of Æthelthryth's full narrative, with particular attention to the legibility of her body for the construction of this woman as a saint, reveals that her body does not completely answer questions about marked bodies and the Resurrection, either for saints or for ordinary Christians, but that her body does illuminate what kinds of questions those ordinary Christians were asking.

Æthelthryth's Crip Timeline

Both Bede and Ælfric narrate Æthelthryth's persistent virginity as an interpretable bodily state that manifests her spiritual status with God, giving credit to God and the saint in varying degrees. Both authors foreground the form and function of the saint's body as a signifier of her social roles, eventually signifying her sanctity. Bede, in particular, hurtles forward and back in Æthelthryth's timeline, collapsing the signification of her body in her early life with what her body will later signify as a saint. The interpretability of Æthelthryth's body thus functions in crip time, a temporality organized around and conveyed through the body's relationship to disability, to which we will return later in this section.

Bede's *Historia*, the OE *Bede*, and Ælfric's homily all introduce Æthelthryth's marriages through the sociopolitical value of her body's assumed reproductive capacity and the prospective dynastic benefits of marrying her, making her refusal to participate in sexual reproduction more striking. Bede foregrounds Æthelthryth's marriage to King Ecgfrith of Bede's native Northumbria, which historically occurred around 660, noting her previous marriage to Tondberht of the South Gyrwe: "Sed illo post modicum temporis, ex quo eam accepit, defuncto, data est regi praefato" ["But he died shortly after the marriage and on his death she was given to King Ecgfrith"] (390/391). Through marriage to Æthelthryth, Ecgfrith forges a dynastic relationship to another powerful family, with the effect of "peace-weaving," that is, securing bonds and alliances through marriage and cultural exchange.[24] Æthelthryth's

24. While the most frequently cited examples of peace-weavers are women—such

salient features at this introduction are her family affiliations (that is, the piety and nobility of her father) and prior marriage, both biosocial markers. As Katherine Bullimore argues, Ecgfrith's union with Æthelthryth was vital for Northumbrian political security because of such markers; the marriage formalized alliances with southern kingdoms through her sister Seaxburh (married to the king of Kent), as well as a series of East Anglian kings, members of Æthelthryth's extended family.[25] Moreover, by hopefully producing heirs with Æthelthryth, Ecgfrith could secure dynastic continuity and stability for Northumbria through children carrying blood ties to these other kingdoms.

Æthelthryth does not produce heirs, however. While Bede praises Æthelthryth for her actions, Ælfric emphasizes the power of God to preserve the saint's virginity. In Bede's accounting, Æthelthryth is the agent who preserved her virginity: "Cuius consortio cum XII annis uteretur, perpetua tamen mansit uirginitatis integritate gloriosa" ["Though she lived with him [Ecgfrith] for twelve years she still preserved the glory of perfect virginity"] (390/391). The OE *Bede*, which follows the original Latin quite closely here, similarly reports: "Þæs gemanan myd þy heo wæs twelf winter brucende, hwæðre heo mid ecre onwalhnesse mægðhades wuldorlice awunade" ["When she had cohabitated for twelve years in this marriage, nonetheless she gloriously preserved the wholeness of virginity in perpetuity"] (316). In the OE *Bede*, Æthelthryth is likewise the agent who "awunade" ["preserved"] her virginity, suggesting that she exercised control over this pious bodily state. Similarly, the Ælfrician homily announces that it will be about "ðære halgan Æðeldryðe, þam Engliscan mædene, / þe wæs mid twam werum and swaðeah wunode mæden" ["the saintly Æthelthryth, the English virgin, who was with [married to] two men and nonetheless remained a virgin"] (2–3), phrasing that attributes the preserving action to Æthelthryth. Ælfric even uses the same verb as the OE *Bede*, *wunian*, to describe Æthelthryth's maintenance of her virginity. Mere lines later, however, Ælfric makes Æthelthryth passive in her marriage to Tondberht (whom he does not name):

> Æðeldryð wearð þa forgifen anum ealdor-menn to wife,
> ac hit nolde se Ælmihtiga þæt hire mægðhad wurde

as *Beowulf*'s Hildeburh or Wealhtheow—Megan Cavell has recently demonstrated that the function of peace-weaving was not restricted to any one gender; *Weaving Words and Binding Bodies*, 280–95.

25. Potential future alliances would have augmented the arrangement; for example, Seaxburh's daughter Eormenhild (Æthelthryth's niece) would marry the king of Mercia; see Bullimore, "Unpicking the Web."

mid hæmede adylegod, ac heold hi on clænnysse,
forðan þe he is ælmihtig God and mæg eall þæt he wile
and on manegum wisum his mihte geswutelað.

[Æthelthryth was given in union to an ealdorman as a wife, but it did not please the Almighty that her virginity become destroyed by sexual intercourse, but he preserved her in cleanness, because he is almighty God and may reveal his might through all that he wishes and in many ways.] (8–12)

Ælfric presents Æthelthryth's virginity as something that pleases God and is made possible through God. Ælfric uses language quite similar to what we have already seen in his homily on St. Swithun, which, due to the proximity of their saints' days, immediately follows Æthelthryth in the calendrical order of the *Lives of Saints*.[26] Just as God "geswutelode" ["revealed"] Swithun as a saint through his miracles, God also here has the power to "geswutelað" ["reveal"] (12) Æthelthryth as a saint by preserving her virginity even from her husbands.[27] In contrast to Swithun's healing effect on other bodies, it is Æthelthryth's own body that reveals her sanctity and the power of God, but it is God who "heold hi on clænnysse" ["preserved her in cleanness"] (10).

Ælfric also attributes to God the preservation of Æthelthryth's virginity during her second marriage to Ecgfrith, even as Æthelthryth's body begins to signify her saintly status.[28] Ælfric writes,

Twelf gear wunode ungewemmed mæden
on þæs cynincges synscype, swa swutele wundra
hyre mærða cyðaþ and mægðhad gelome.
Heo lufode þone hælend þe hi heold unwemme
and Godes ðeowas wurðode.

26. Æthelthryth's homily is timed for her feast day on June 23, Swithun's for the celebration of his deposition on July 2. While St. Swithun's Day is today reckoned as July 15, the date of Swithun's translation, Michael Lapidge notes substantial evidence that Swithun was celebrated on July 2, as well as on other significant dates in the liturgical calendar, during the Middle Ages; see Lapidge, *Cult*, 74–86, as well as Gretsch, *Ælfric*, 163–64.

27. For the passage in Ælfric's *Life of St. Swithun*, see Lapidge, *Cult*, 606, §27.

28. Ælfric's attention to several pairs of virginal spouses testifies to his investment in spousal chastity in the *Lives of Saints*; Æthelthryth's legend serves as an early medieval English corollary to the married virgin martyrs of late antiquity. See Upchurch, "Virgin Spouses as Model Christians."

> [For twelve years, she remained an unspotted maiden in that king's cohabitation, even as clear wonders frequently made known her glory and virginity. She loved the Healer/Savior who preserved her unblemished, and honored God's servants.] (15–19)

The word *synscype* (cohabitation) is formed from predecessors to "sin-ship," a state of "living in sin" (that is, being sexually active). While Æthelthryth is implicated in this *synscype* by cohabitating with Ecgfrith, Ælfric counterbalances this state with the claim—on which he does not elaborate—that Æthelthryth's virginity during this time was attested to by "clear wonders."

Though neither Bede nor Ælfric share what wonders make Æthelthryth's virginity known during her lifetime, they corroborate Æthelthryth's virginal bodily state through the testimony of Bishop Wilfrid of York. Bede notes that some people doubted Æthelthryth's virginity, but that Wilfrid was certain of it, because "adeo ut Ecgfridus promiserit se ei terras ac pecunias multas esse donaturum, si reginae posset persuadere eius uti conubio, quia sciebat illam nullum uirorum plus illo diligere" ["in fact Ecgfrith had promised to give him estates and money if he could persuade the queen to consummate their marriage, because he knew that there was none whom she loved more than Wilfrid himself"] (392/393).[29] Ecgfrith's attempt to bring in a third-party mediator reflects the high economic and political value of producing an heir with Æthelthryth, as well as Ecgfrith's failure to change the status of Æthelthryth's body from virgin to consummated wife. Ælfric takes up this evidence of Æthelthryth's virginity as well, summarizing Bede's account that Bishop Wilfrid reported Ecgfrith offering him "mycel / on lande and on feo" ["much in land and wealth"] (21–22) if he would persuade Æthelthryth to "bruce his synscipes" ["endure his cohabitation"] (23). In affirming Æthelthryth's virginity, "þeah ðe heo wer hæfde" ["even though she had a husband"] (27), Bede and Ælfric present the saint's body as interpretable, but in the negative, through markings that it lacks: the physical indicators of the sexually active body, the most visible of which would have been pregnancy.

Both references to miracles attesting to Æthelthryth's virginity and Wilfrid's testimony address the question: How can the body of the saint certainly be known to be virginal? That is, how can the body of a twice-married woman be confirmed as not having undergone the socially ordained changes attributed to sexual activity? Neither sexual activity nor inactivity are functioning

29. The OE *Bede* translates this passage with little alteration; see Miller, *Old English Version*, 316.

as disability here, but Bede and Ælfric's spiritual frameworks clearly held the former in less esteem than the latter.[30] These authors' urge to interpret Æthelthryth's body in relation to her sanctity, even in the early years of her lifespan, reveals an asynchronous aspect of the saint's interpretable body in relation to her identification as a saint. The real confirmation of Æthelthryth's sanctity emerges with the postmortem healing of her tumor and the preservation of her body from the decay of the grave. As many scholars have noted, maintenance of the saint's virginity aligns thematically with God's maintenance of the saint's undamaged body after death, even to the point of restoring bodily wholeness.[31]

Bede's *Historia* frequently jumps forward and back in Æthelthryth's lifetime, pairing moments in her embodied timeline that illuminate one another. Immediately following Bishop Wilfred's testimony in support of the truth of Æthelthryth's virginity, Bede notes that Æthelthryth's chastity was also proven by her uncorruption after death. Bede affirms, "Nam etiam signum diuini miraculi, quo eiusdem feminae sepulta caro corrumpi non potuit, indicio est quia a uirili contactu incorrupta durauerit" ["And the divine miracle whereby her flesh would not corrupt after she was buried was token and proof that she had remained uncorrupted by contact with any man"] (392/393). Bede collapses the years between Æthelthryth's marriage to Ecgfrith and the discovery of her uncorruption, and thus Bede crips the saint's timeline, matching the moment of her husband futilely seeking access to the saint's body and the actual access achieved by the nuns who disinter Æthelthryth and discover her to be undecayed. Bede's enfolded narrative timeline for Æthelthryth is characteristic of his broader approach to history as simultaneously linear and coeternal; as George Hardin Brown comments, "Bede's historical outlook is [. . .] at once achronological (typical, symbolic, allegorical, timeless) and temporal (continuous, distinct, unique)."[32] Bede frequently draws historical significance through the alignment of temporally disparate events; distinctively, in his presentation of Æthelthryth, what Bede aligns are temporally disparate significations of the saint's body.

The continuity between Æthelthryth's living embodiment and her postmortem embodiments functions as an eschatologically inflected form of crip

30. As Karen Bruce Wallace notes, however, if the absence of children resulted from infertility, it would mark a noblewoman as *unhal*, an analogue to disability in early medieval England; "Intersections," 52.

31. See, e.g., Blanton, *Signs of Devotion*, 45; Grossi, *Angles on a Kingdom*, 77–79.

32. Brown, *Companion to Bede*, 113.

time, the slippery out-of-sync temporality brought into being by disability.[33] Crip time invokes lived experiences of disability in which the body does not conform to normative expectations for experiences of or behaviors in time; the crip body is more mutable, more static, more youthful, more aged, and moves through time differently than is considered the norm. Temporalities within literary texts can be crip, too, by organizing time through disability (or disability through time), or when disability renders possible or impossible the linear progression of narrative time. In Æthelthryth's case, interpreting the saint's past and future embodiments through one another evokes a narrative form of the "wormhole of backward and forward acceleration" described by disability theorist Ellen Samuels as a feature of crip time.[34]

Æthelthryth's body is made crip by its relationship to disability: the tumor that will end her life and the scar that may or may not replace it in death. The saint's cripness pervades these texts' narrative forms and spiritual agendas, collapsing both the linearity of the saint's life and the linearity of salvation history around the interpretation of the saint's tumor and postmortem healing as signs of sanctity and the power of God. If we follow Bede and Ælfric in reading Æthelthryth as truly virginal, then the saint is untimely in the long duration of her youthful chastity, through twelve years of marriage, as both hagiographers highlight. Æthelthryth's untimeliness becomes crip through Bede and Ælfric's insistence on reading her virginity through the lens of her uncorruption and the accompanying healed incision. Æthelthryth's crip time further becomes eschatological through the affirmation of her sanctity and, as I will discuss below, Ælfric's invocation of Æthelthryth's uncorrupt body as confirmation that God may resurrect all bodies in the afterlife.

Ælfric does not mention Æthelthryth's uncorruption after death until he reaches that point in her timeline. After providing Wilfrid's testimony, Ælfric instead makes Æthelthryth's body interpretable merely by claiming that she remained "ungewemmed" ["unstained"] (27), a word that carries both moral and physical connotations and that is also used by the OE *Bede* to translate Bede's "incorrupta" regarding Æthelthryth's future absence of decay. As

33. On contemporary theories of crip time, see Kafer, "After Crip," especially her definition at 428n15; Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 25–46; Samuels, "Six Ways." For observations about crip time in twelfth- and thirteenth-century monastic contexts, see Kennedy, "Crip Time."

34. Samuels, "Six Ways," n.p. To this, we might compare the sometimes fast, sometimes slow pacing of Ælfric's *Life of St. Swithun*, in which embedded narratives of distinct healing stories alternate with ever larger and increasingly depersonalized collective healing miracles; such a narrative structure likewise engages in crip time.

a physical descriptor, *ungewemmed* can mean "unspotted," "immaculate," "uncorrupted," or "uninjured," while as a moral descriptor, it can mean "undefiled," "unstained," "inviolate," or again, "immaculate."[35] Both *ungewemmed* and *incorrupta* highlight through the negative construction of *un*-stained, *un*-corrupted the possibility—even the threat—that Æthelthryth's body might become stained and thereby be made legible in an entirely different way, through sexual intercourse and potentially pregnancy.

This is another way in which the saint's body and the saint's timeline become crip. Both Bede and Ælfric present Æthelthryth in terms of a deviation from expected bodily roles: her body is kept inaccessible to her husband; her womb refuses to perform the noblewoman's duty to provide an heir. And yet she is not stigmatized by this, at least by the monks Bede and Ælfric who record her story. (Ecgfrith seems to have been unimpressed.) Because it is seen as God's will that Æthelthryth remain virginal, it is in fact lauded by these monastic authors that she does. As Bede puts it in his poem in praise of virginity: "Quid petis, alma, uirum, sponso iam dedita summo?" ["Queen, wherefore seek a mate, with Christ thy groom?"] (398/399); earthly heteronormative reproduction seems illogical when spiritual espousal is available. Æthelthryth's biological clock runs on a spiritual time scale, unbothered by earthly reproduction. Indeed, Bede notices that instead of being mother to an heir for Northumbria, Æthelthryth became "uirginum Deo deuotarum perplurium mater uirgo" ["virgin mother of many virgins dedicated to God"] (392/393).[36]

When Æthelthryth leaves her second husband for a monastic life, she further removes her body from secular time scales.[37] Æthelthryth took the

35. *B-T*, "un-gewemmed."

36. Ælfric echoes the label of mother, though he forms it as "modorlice" ["motherlike"] (39). On Æthelthryth as a virgin mother of virgins, see Black, "'*Nutrix pia*.'" On female relatives of Æthelthryth later venerated as saints, see Blanton, "King Anna's Daughters"; Blanton, "Presenting the Sister Saints." On Æthelthryth's refusal of heteronormative timelines, see Weston, "Chaste Bodies and Untimely Virgins," especially 203–5, 210. Æthelthryth's resistance to participation in heteronormative reproduction and her eventual self-replication through monastic institutions quite plainly evoke queerness and queer time as well as cripness and crip time. For reasons of space and continuity of theme across the whole of this study, I omit further discussion of Æthelthryth as a queercrip saint, one who defies cisheteronormativity and normative ablebodiedness alike. On the illuminating intersections of queer and crip theory in the study of medieval saints, see, e.g., Gutt, "Holy Queer and Holy Cure."

37. The laws of Æthelberht (ca. 600) state that a woman had a right to leave an unpleasing marriage, though Christine Fell observes that this does not remain in later law codes; *Women in Anglo-Saxon England*, 57. Stephanie Hollis, on the other hand,

veil at Coldingham, where Ecgfrith's aunt Æbbe was abbess, and a year later (in 672 or 673), Æthelthryth founded her own double monastery at Ely, on property in the East Anglian fenlands she had received from her first husband, where she would serve as abbess. In the monastery, Æthelthryth's body and what she does with it continue to inform readings of her spiritual status. As Bede reports, Æthelthryth wore only wool, not linen; rarely took hot baths and would bathe all the other nuns before herself; typically ate only one meal per day, except in special circumstances; and "semper, si non infirmitas grauior prohibuisset, ex tempore matutinae synaxeos usque ad ortum diei in ecclesia precibus intenta persteterit" ["she always remained in the church at prayer from the time of the office at mattins until dawn, unless prevented by serious illness"] (392/393).[38] This last detail reveals Æthelthryth's susceptibility to illness. The saint was not expected to evade illness nor, if she was ill, to continue her pious presence in the church beyond what was required by typical monastic practice. A small subset of manuscript witnesses to Bede's *Historia* reveal that the idea of a saint shirking pious practice was resisted; three manuscripts, which R. A. B. Mynors takes as the "*c*-text" of the *Historia*, omit the *non*, making the phrasing "always, if prevented by serious illness" the saint remained in the church.[39] It is unclear whether this would be read as a practice in request for healing from the illness, or if it would be a medieval form of inspiration, that even when ill the saint would remain in the church. The awkwardness of the Latin phrasing in this subset of manuscripts, and more so their minority among the larger surviving body of witnesses to the *Historia*, suggest that most readers of Bede would have encountered the version where an ill saint is permitted to go back to bed after matins, although the reading that she was expected to excel beyond bodily limitations may have still circulated. The translation in the OE *Bede* aligns with the majority of witnesses to the *Historia*: "symle, gif hire hefigre untrymnesse ne bewere, of þære tide uhtsanges oð hluttorne dæg in cirican in halgum gebedum stod" ["always, if heavy impairment did not prevent her, she stood in holy prayer in

argues that the church's view on marriage dissolution was torn between preserving the institution of marriage and the benefits of allowing noblewomen to leave their husbands to found monasteries, as Æthelthryth did; *Anglo-Saxon Women*, 68.

38. Ælfric echoes Bede's list of pious behaviors in the monastery—including fasting, praying, wearing woolen clothes, and rarely bathing—but omits discussion of whether Æthelthryth's prayers increased or decreased when she was ill; see lines 31–48.

39. The manuscripts are Kassel, Landesbibliothek 4° MS. theol. 2; BL, Cotton MS Tiberius C. ii; and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Hatton 43. See Mynors, "Textual Introduction," in *HE*, xlii–xliii, on the evidence of use and transmission of these manuscripts.

the church from the time of matins to clear day"] (318), confirming the reading that Æthelthryth might rest from her prayers while ill or impaired and still be considered adequately saintly.

Both Bede and Ælfric narrate Æthelthryth's life as the foundation for the climax of her story: her tumor, death, and confirmation as a saint through uncorruption in the grave. In order to set up Æthelthryth's status as a holy virgin whose sanctity is confirmed by interpretation of her body, they must lay the groundwork both for believing that Æthelthryth remains virginal through two marriages and for interpreting the saint's spiritual status through her physical status. In other words, the hagiographers must establish a premise for the spiritual prosthesis to come: spiritual truths may be known through the body. Moreover, as they will eventually assert, spiritual truths that will be relevant to all bodies may be known through this saint's body. And by cripping the timeline from the earthly present to the eschatological future, the anticipation of the afterlife may be informed by the interpretation of the saint's body on earth.

Bede's Æthelthryth: "The slightest traces of a scar"

Bede and Ælfric's narratives of Æthelthryth's death differ significantly, and so it is illuminating to examine each narrative in turn. In the *Historia*, Bede inverts the timeline of Æthelthryth's development of the neck tumor and death; he first describes her death with no mention of the tumor, and then only after reporting her exhumation explains the tumor, the saint's interpretation thereof, and the leech's assertion that the wound is healed. Bede's narrative inversions place moments across Æthelthryth's timeline in proximity to one another, as we have already seen with his reference to her uncorruption that immediately follows Wilfrid's testimony in support of the truth of Æthelthryth's virginity. Bede's convoluted narrative timeline facilitates the interpretation of Æthelthryth's body as crip.

In the initial account of Æthelthryth's death, Bede illustrates her sanctity through the miracle of prophecy. Bede writes that Æthelthryth foretold how many from her monastery would be taken by the same plague that killed her:

> Sunt etiam qui dicant, quia per prophetiae spiritum et pestilentiam, qua ipsa esset moritura, praedixerit, et numerum quoque eorum qui de suo monasterio hac essent de mundo rapiendi palam cunctis praesentibus intimauerit. Rapta est autem ad Dominum in medio suorum post annos septem ex quo abbatissae gradum susceperat.

> [There are indeed some who say that, by the spirit of prophecy, she not only foretold the plague that was to be the cause of her death but also openly declared, in the presence of all, the number of those of the monastery who were to be taken from the world by the same pestilence. She was taken to the Lord in the midst of her people, after holding the rank of abbess for seven years.] (392/393)[40]

While Bede acknowledges that Æthelthryth foretold the plague from which she would die, he does not describe what happened to her body or what her body experienced.[41] It is only after narrating the succession of Seaxburh, Æthelthryth's sister who had been wife to the king of Kent, into the role of abbess at Ely and Seaxburh's decision to exhume and reinter Æthelthryth's body after she had been buried sixteen years, that Bede describes the neck tumor and its miraculous healing.[42]

When Seaxburh has Æthelthryth's body exhumed, the body's uncorruption—its refusal of the normative bodily process of decay—reveals a saintly degree of bodily stasis. In Bede's description of the exhumation: "Cumque corpus sacrae uirginis ac sponsae Christi aperto sepulchro esset prolatum in lucem, ita incorruptum inuentum est, ac si eodem die fuisset defuncta siue humo condita, sicut et praefatus antistes Uilfrid et multi alii qui nouere testantur" ["When the tomb of the sacred virgin and bride of Christ was opened and the body brought to light, it was found to be as uncorrupt as if she had died and been buried that very day. Bishop Wilfrid and many others who knew about it testify to this"] (394/395). The saint's miraculously undecaying body functions in crip time; Æthelthryth's body appears to have only just died and been buried that day and yet sixteen years have passed. In refusing disintegration, her body also refuses to follow expected patterns for the progression of the body in time. The saint's body is crip in its persistent wholeness, the strangeness of which is evident in Bede's apparent need to provide testimonial witness, both by Wilfrid and numerous others.

Bede folds narrative time back in on itself, returning to the earlier moment

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40. The sources disagree on when exactly the tumor developed. Ælfric says eight years after she became abbess; Bede says seven.

41. While its medical nature is unclear, it has been suggested that Æthelthryth's tumor may have been a plague buboe; see Lee, "Body Talks," 148–50; Maddicott, "Plague in Seventh-Century England," 13.

42. Seaxburh also would eventually be lauded as a saint, as would several other women in the same family; on the royal and religious implications of this lineage of saintly women at Ely, see Blanton, "Presenting the Sister Saints."

of Æthelthryth's final (living) days to justify the miracle of her uncorruption. Bede frames it as further evidence of Æthelthryth's virginity: "Sed certiori notitia medicus Cynifrid, qui et morienti illi et eleuatae de tumulo adfuit, qui referre erat solitus quod illa infirmata habuerit tumorem maximum sub maxilla" ["But more certain proof is given by a doctor named Cynefrith, who was present at her death-bed and at her elevation from the tomb. He used to relate how, during her illness, she had a very large tumour beneath her jaw"] (394/395). The physician's testimony is "more certain" even than the bishop's, introducing into the narrative the tumor that serves to confirm Æthelthryth's identity, even after the tumor is already in the narrative's past. This uncorrupted body is ascertained to truly be the saint's, not some recently buried corpse, because her body is marked by a medically confirmed impairment, indeed, the same impairment that had killed her.

The medical testimony of the leech Cynefrith highlights the power of God to preserve and heal the body in life and in death. Cynefrith's account of how he treated Æthelthryth provides a rare witness (albeit recorded at a remove by Bede) to a practice of medical care given to a known historical individual:

> "Iusseruntque me" inquit "incidere tumorem illum, ut efflueret noxius umor qui inerat. Quod dum facerem, uidebatur illa per biduum aliquanto leuius habere, ita ut multi putarent quia sanari posset a languore. Tertia autem die prioribus adgrauata doloribus et rapta confestim de mundo, dolorem omnem ac mortem perpetua salute ac uita mutauit."
>
> ["I was ordered," he said, "to cut this tumour so as to drain out the poisonous matter within it. After I had done this she seemed to be easier for about two days and many thought that she would recover from her sickness. But on the third day she was attacked by her former pains and was soon taken from the world, exchanging pain and death for everlasting health and life."] (394/395)

The temporary relief of Cynefrith's treatment pales in comparison to the "perpetua salute ac uita" ["everlasting health and life"] that the saint achieves in death. The suffering of illness becomes a crip shadow that contrasts the everlasting life to come. Likewise, in the OE *Bede*, the saint "eal þæt sar ond þone deað mid ecre hælo ond liife onwænde" ["exchanged all that pain and death for everlasting health and life"] (320). In contrast to notions that death is a loss of health, Bede's quotation of Cynefrith asserts that death is, in fact,

a restoration of health, an eschatological attainment beyond the health that can be provided by earthly medicine. We need not assume that an actual physician named Cynefrith said this, for it is telling enough that Bede would put in the voice of an earthly physician this deference to Christ the Physician, to the promise of health and life after death.

In order to affirm the line of causality from virginity to uncorruption to sanctity, and thereby the promise that more ordinary piety will be rewarded thus bodily in the afterlife, Bede must demonstrate that the undecayed body is indeed that of Æthelthryth. Cynefrith continues his account of Æthelthryth's body:

> Uidique eleuatum de tumulo et positum in lectulo corpus sacrae Deo uirginis quasi dormientis simile. Sed et discooperto uultus indumento monstrauerunt mihi etiam uulnus incisurae, quod feceram, curatum, ita ut mirum in modum pro aperto et hiante uulnere, cum quo sepulta erat, tenuissima tunc cicatricis uestigia parerent.
>
> [Then I saw the body of God's holy virgin raised from the tomb and laid on a bed like one asleep. They drew back the cloth which covered her face and showed me the wound I had made by my incision, now healed, so that instead of the open gaping wound which she had when she was buried, there now appeared, marvellous to relate, only the slightest traces of a scar.] (394/395)

Bede's phrasing in this moment positions Æthelthryth as if she is still alive, when the saint is laid on a bed "quasi dormientis simile" ["like one asleep"]; the repose of the living and the dead become entwined in the textual moment that reveals Æthelthryth's miraculous wholeness and the mark of her prior unwholeness. Cynefrith attests that the scar replaces the wound he had made, providing a direct link to the state of Æthelthryth's living body as she approached death, while nonetheless overwriting the mark of fatal pain with a mark that evokes healing and triumph over suffering. As Virginia Blanton observes, "The scar not only positively identifies the holy body but also provides visual evidence of Æthelthryth's perfection *post mortem*: the mark indicates how the saint's body has been literally closed by God as evidence of Æthelthryth's purity during her life."[43] The scar demonstrates the saint's spiritual happiness with God.

43. Blanton, *Signs of Devotion*, 13. On the function of Æthelthryth's postmortem healing in the construction of her sanctity, see also Holtan, "Writing Sanctity upon the Body."

Transporting the reader back into Æthelthryth's life, in yet another convolution of the narrative timeline, Bede then reports what is said to have been the saint's own interpretation of her tumor:

> Ferunt autem quia, cum praefato tumore ac dolore maxillae siue colli premeretur, multum delectata sit hoc genere infirmitatis, ac solita dicere: "Scio certissime quia merito in collo pondus languoris porto, in quo iuuenculam me memini superuacua moniliorum pondera portare; et credo quod ideo me superna pietas dolore colli uoluit grauari, ut sic absoluar reatu superuacuae leuitatis, dum mihi nunc pro auro et margaretis de collo rubor tumoris ardorque promineat."
>
> [It is also related that when she was afflicted with this tumour and by the pain in her neck and jaw, she gladly welcomed this sort of pain and used to say, "I know well enough that I deserve to bear the weight of this affliction in my neck, for I remember that when I was a young girl I used to wear an unnecessary weight of necklaces; I believe that God in His goodness would have me endure this pain in my neck in order that I may thus be absolved from the guilt of my needless vanity. So, instead of gold and pearls, a fiery red tumour now stands out upon my neck."] (394, 396/397)

This report of the saint's reaction affirms that the tumor was a negative, painful experience, one that leads the saint into the crip time of remembering the necklaces of her youth, now heavy again on her neck in the form of the present tumor. But the saint also reinterprets that pain positively, as expurgation of her youthful sin in wearing those necklaces.[44] Bede does not comment on Æthelthryth's interpretation, but rather immediately begins to list the miracles attesting to her sanctity: the linens in which her body had lain expel demons and heal diseases, while the contact relic of her first coffin heals eye pain and vision impairment.[45]

44. The sin here is one of pride; shining necklaces, it seems, were not inherently negative items. Barbara Yorke observes that not long after this moment in *HE*, Bede recounts Abbess Hild of Whitby's piety being foretold by her mother's dream, in which a precious necklace gleaming with light symbolizes Hild; *HE* 410–11. Yorke has argued that Æthelthryth's attitude toward necklaces subverts what seems to have been a common practice of elite women continuing to wear high-status jewelry, even after becoming nuns; "Weight of Necklaces." Bede also describes Hild enduring a painful sickness for more than six years, which he likewise depicts as purgatorial, though without the saint's own reminiscence on any earlier sin; see *HE* 412–15.

45. See *HE* 396–97.

Although Cynefrith contrasted pain with "perpetua salute ac uita" ["everlasting health and life"], the saint herself welcomes pain as freeing her from past sin. For the leech, illness is a shadow contrasting the everlasting life; for the saint, illness lights the way to salvation. That Æthelthryth's body might be marked with a reminder not only of bodily disintegrity, but also of sin, reveals the greater importance of demonstrating continuity between the earthly body and the afterlife body—that is, confirming that this body is indeed the body of St. Æthelthryth—than of erasing all markers of embodied difference to the point of compromising individual identity. Like Christ, whose resurrected body retained the wounds of Crucifixion, the saint retains the scar that documents her suffering. Cynefrith's inspection of Æthelthryth's scar confirms not only that she is the same Æthelthryth who had the tumor, but also that her body is transformed from an ordinary earthly body to the otherworldly body of a saint. The scar makes possible the hagiographical episode in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* by proving its subject's sanctity. Nonetheless, as Blanton comments, "The scar reminds us that the corpse, which seems phantasmal, is a material body; Æthelthryth is human and her body is imperfect."[46] Earthly embodiment and otherworldly embodiment collide in Æthelthryth's scar. The body of the saint thus preserved is nonetheless a crip body, marked by a history of impairment, maintaining temporal associations to periods of the saint's life when her body already served as a sign of her spiritual state, through the temporal folds of Bede's narrative.

Ælfric's Æthelthryth: "Then was the wound healed"

In his homiletic adaptation of Bede's account, Ælfric radically revises the relationship between Æthelthryth's body and the eschatology of the Resurrection. Ælfric rewrites the story in chronological order, sorting out Bede's temporal convolutions for the benefit of the homily's likely aural audience. Where Bede juxtaposed moments across his Æthelthryth's timeline, showing parallels between interpretations of the saint's body, Ælfric's more linear timeline draws explicit comparison between Æthelthryth's earthly embodiment, particularly its persistent wholeness in death, and God's power to resurrect all humankind in the afterlife.[47] The narrative straightening that Ælfric performs "de-crips" the narrative timeline but highlights the crip eschatological timeline that undergirds the saint's body. The spiritual prosthesis of

46. Blanton, *Signs of Devotion*, 45.
47. On Ælfric's changes to the narrative timeline, see Gretsch, *Ælfric*, 215–18.

Æthelthryth's body in Ælfric's version functions slightly differently than in Bede's *Historia* or the OE *Bede*. Rather than using the scar to affirm the identity of the saint and the spiritual link between pious behavior and blessedness, Ælfric's homily uses Æthelthryth's uncorrupt body to prosthesize the eschatological promise of the Resurrection. Ælfric's alterations to the depiction of Æthelthryth's postmortem healing even suggest that the marks of illness may be erased in the Resurrection or, perhaps, a hope that they might no longer be worth noticing.

Restoring the chronological order of Æthelthryth's timeline, Ælfric explains the moral implications of the neck tumor at the moment of its introduction, before the saint has yet died. The tumor is explicitly a punishment for earthly vanity in Æthelthryth's earlier secular life:

> Þa on þam eahteoðan geare siððan heo abbudisse wæs,
> heo wearð geuntrumod, swa swa heo ær witegode,
> swa þæt an geswel weox on hire swuran
> mycel under þam cynn-bane and heo swiðe þancode
> þæt heo on þam swuran sum geswinc þolode.
> Heo cwæð: "Ic wat geare þæt ic wel wyrðe eom
> þæt min swura beo geswenct mid swylcere untrumnysse
> forðan þe ic on iugoðe frætwode minne swuran
> mid mænigfealdum swur-beagum."
>
> [Then in the eighth year after she became abbess, she became unwell just as she had previously foretold, for a swelling grew on her throat, large under her chin-bone, and she gave thanks that she suffered pain on her neck. She said, "I truly know that I am well worthy that my neck should be vexed with such great impairment, because I in my youth decorated my neck with manifold necklaces."] (49–57)

Ælfric labels the saint with the same term we have seen in his *Life of St. Swithun* for the many disabled people whom the saint heals: Æthelthryth is now "geuntrumod" ["unwell"]. As Bede had done, Ælfric articulates the spiritual punishment in Æthelthryth's voice, though without making it reported speech. Because Æthelthryth is still alive within the Ælfrician homily's narrative timeline, it is directly her voice that interprets the tumor as a *contrapasso* for her manifold necklaces, linking her perceived spiritual failing to a bodily impairment, implicitly enforcing the parallel correlation between spiritual uprightness and bodily wholeness.

Ælfric's language also frames the tumor as a trade of earthly jewelry for bodily malady, making the body part of a material, yet spiritual exchange. Æthelthryth says, "Me nu þis geswel scynð for golde / and þæs hata bryne for healicum gym-stanum" ["For me now this swelling shines instead of gold, and the burning heat for precious gemstones"] (59–60). Ælfric's use of the verb *scinan*, which is not drawn from a parallel in Bede, similarly encodes the material tumor with spiritual value. Ælfric uses variations on *scinan* repeatedly elsewhere in the *Lives of Saints*, for example to describe St. Agnes's divine protection from lascivious view when she is stripped and brought to a brothel by her persecutors.[48] In Agnes's case, her shine serves as a sign of sanctity. For Æthelthryth, however, shining is ascribed to both the tumor and her golden necklaces, merging two Old English formulae: the shining body of the saint and the shining of gold.[49] That which shines on Æthelthryth's neck is able to signify her past sin, her redemptive suffering, and her future sanctity.[50] The necklaces signified her desirability when she lived in the secular world of princesses and peace-weaving, but the tumor comes to signify her desirability as a saint. The shine of the tumor marks it as precious and valuable, materially parallel to gold, but nonetheless still an impairment of the body. Though Æthelthryth experiences the tumor negatively through her body, she experiences it positively through its spiritual implications, transforming an impairing excess of flesh into a foundation for her redemption, salvation, and

48. At the brothel, Agnes's persecutors found "scinende Godes encgel" ["a shining angel of God"] (149); "God hyre þa asende scinende tunecan" ["God sent her (Agnes) a shining tunic"] (155), which was "beorhte scinende" ["shining brightly"] (158) and "scinende clað" ["a shining covering"] (159); the brothel becomes a "scinendan stowe" ["shining place"] (163); and lords wonder at "þæs scinendan leohtes" ["the shining of that light"] (168). References to Ælfric's *Life of St. Agnes* are to *LS* I:217–47. I thank Jordan Zweck for pointing out this parallel to me.

49. Descriptions of gold and holy figures or objects as shining appear, for example, in *The Dream of the Rood* (the rood is described as "wynnum scinan, / gegyred mid golde" ["shining with joy, decked in gold"]; 15b–16a in Clayton, where it is titled *The Vision of the Cross*); *Elene* (the True Cross is described as "scinende" ["shining"]; 1114b in Bjork); and *Beowulf* ("goldfag scinon" ["the gold-decorated ones shone"]; 994b in *Klaeber*). In Ælfric's *Life of St. Swithun*, a sick man's vision includes "twegen scinende halgan" ["two shining saints"] and a heavenly church described as "of scinendum golde" ["of shining gold"]; in Lapidge, *Cult*, §23. Swithun himself "scinð þurh wundra" ["shines through miracles"]; in Lapidge, *Cult*, §27. This is merely a sampling of the correlation between shining gold and shining holiness in the OE corpus.

50. The signification of Æthelthryth's tumor and scar would vary over the subsequent course of the Middle Ages to include her prior sins, virginity, and sanctity; see Dickason, "Sacred Skin," 21–24.

ultimately her sanctity. The moment at which Æthelthryth's tumor shines is thus also the moment at which her body begins to transition from a pious nun's body to that of a saint.

Ælfric's phrasing redoubles the formulation of exchange from Bede, who after the saint's death relates that Æthelthryth said, "Dum mihi nunc pro auro et margaretis de collo rubor tumoris ardorque promineat" ["So, instead of gold and pearls, a fiery red tumour now stands out upon my neck"] (396/397). Bede provides only one exchange of "rubor tumoris ardorque" ["a fiery red tumour"] for "auro et margaretis" ["gold and pearls"], which Ælfric breaks down into "me nu þis geswel scynð for golde" ["for me now this swelling shines instead of gold"] (59) and "hata bryne for healicum gym-stanum" ["burning heat for precious gemstones"] (60), doubling the moments of exchange used to describe the tumor.[51] The emphasized material exchange of precious metals and gemstones for an impairing excess of matter highlights the function of Æthelthryth's flesh as material. Æthelthryth's flesh comes to bear a positive spiritual value capable of balancing the negative spiritual value of those necklaces. The spiritual exchange is one of punishment for a sin, but its formulation as an exchange of precious metals and jewels for a painful excess of flesh suggests that the spiritual value of the tumor parallels the earthly value of those materials.

Æthelthryth's interpretation of her own tumor offers a vivid, albeit brief, insight into the available spiritual interpretations of bodily impairment. The embodied experience of the tumor that Ælfric recounts—the pressure of the swelling, the burning heat—is physically impairing, first through the discomfort of physical pain and eventually through Æthelthryth's death. Ælfric's construction of Æthelthryth's experience derogates the practice of wearing ornate jewelry as an experience that should have been just as (spiritually) uncomfortable, even if it could also be socially enabling as a class marker of nobility and wealth. The physically marked body becomes a signifier for metaphorical deviance, not just through the rhetoric of disability metaphors I have described in chapter 1, but also through the presence of an actual disabled body in the medieval text. The aberrant flesh of Æthelthryth's tumor materializes her sinfulness in pridefully desiring to wear necklaces; that it will

51. Ælfric's doubled phrasing possibly builds on the translation pattern of the OE *Bede*, which reads: "Mid þy me nu for golde ond for gimmum of swiran forðhlifað seo readnis ond bryne þæs swiles ond wærces" ["For me now instead of gold and gems on my neck there stands out redness and burning of that swelling and pain"] (322). As Rowley notes, the translator of the OE *Bede* "often uses doublings to add meaning"; *Old English Version*, 6.

eventually be healed likewise materializes Æthelthryth's elevation to sanctity through the return of her body to wholeness. The tumor thus bears multiple significations of sin and sanctity, troubling the moral binary that disability metaphors depend upon—of disability signifying sin and wholeness manifesting blessedness—by making Æthelthryth's disability central to her narrative of sanctity.

Ælfric's narrative proceeds following the historical order of events; rather than report Cynefrith's speech at the time of Æthelthryth's translation, Ælfric brings the details provided by the physician in Bede's version into the linear temporality of the third-person narration. Cynefrith lances the saint's tumor and the result of the procedure is vividly concise: "Þær sah ut wyrms" ["Corrupt matter came out from there"] (64). Æthelthryth's body, with the lancing of the tumor, transforms from being impermeable and untouchable in its virginity to become penetrable, subject to discharge, and receptive to tactile encounters. The precise nature of the *wyrms* that came from the tumor is unclear; it may have been any bodily fluid or fleshy matter, translating Bede's similarly vague "noxius umor" ["poisonous matter"] (394/395).[52] As unhelpful as this phrasing is for a history of medicine, it is revealing for a history of eschatology in relation to the body. The material drained from the tumor manifests the sin Æthelthryth has ascribed to it, more clearly in Ælfric than in Bede because Ælfric moves the saint's interpretation of the tumor as sinful to precede Cynefrith's procedure. Once the material is drained, the saint, in both versions, is expected to recover, but nonetheless dies on the third day.

Ælfric's account of Æthelthryth's translation emphasizes the saint's bodily wholeness. When Seaxburh exhumes Æthelthryth's body, she is found "swilce heo læge on slæpe, / hal eallum limum" ["as if she lay asleep, whole in all her limbs"] (90–91). This phrasing collapses the sixteen years since her death differently than Bede had. Where Bede both notes that Æthelthryth looked like she had just died that day and that she looked "quasi dormientis simile" ["like one asleep"] (394/395), Ælfric maintains her liveliness by not mentioning the possibility of recent death, saying only that she looks as if she is merely sleeping. Moreover, Ælfric makes explicit the correlation between this discovery of Æthelthryth's incorruption in the grave and her virginity: "Hit is swutol þæt heo wæs ungewemmed mæden / þonne hire lic-hama ne mihte formolsnian on eorðan" ["It is clear that she was an unspotted maiden, because her body would not corrupt in the earth"] (107–8). Æthelthryth's dead body

52. Mary Clayton and Juliet Mullins, for example, translate *wyrms* as "pus"; *LS* II:199, line 64.

thus retroactively reveals crucial features of her living body, affirming a continuity between the bodily reflection of spiritual status in life and the bodily affirmation of spiritual status in death. This relationship is not monodirectional, moving only forward in time, but bidirectional, a continuum in which knowledge about the living body informs interpretation of the dead body and vice versa. Although Ælfric untangles the narrative progress of Æthelthryth's story provided by Bede, presenting events in chronological order, moments in Æthelthryth's crip past, present, and future still prove mutually informative, building an interpretation of the saint through her body that pops in and out of sync with the narrative in any given moment.

In addition to reading the timeline of Æthelthryth's life through her crip body, Ælfric's homily interprets the larger eschatological timeline of salvation history through the saint's crip body. In contrast to the *Life of St. Swithun*, in which the saint's healing miracles serve as evidence of God's power, here the body of the saint herself serves, for Ælfric's purposes, as a sign of God's power and a promise of what the Christian afterlife would bring. Unlike Bede, Ælfric explicitly uses the saint's uncorruption as evidence that all people would be resurrected at the Last Judgment:

> Godes miht is geswutelod soðlice þurh hi,
> þæt he mæg aræran ða formolsnodon lic-haman,
> se ðe hire lic heold hal on ðære byrgene
> git oð þisne dæg.
>
> [God's might is truly revealed through her, that he can raise up the corrupted body, since he kept her body whole in the grave, even yet to this day.] (109–12)

According to Ælfric, Æthelthryth's body is "hal" ["whole"] in the grave; his use of this wholeness as evidence for God's ability to resurrect the corrupted body only works if that wholeness is the same wholeness that the Resurrection body will receive. In other words, Æthelthryth's uncorrupt body not only signifies the body that she would individually have in the afterlife, but also indicates the kind of Resurrection body that all people would receive. Although the historical Æthelthryth would have been found uncorrupted in the late seventh century, Ælfric positions his own late-tenth-century historical moment along the continuum between Æthelthryth's time and the day of Resurrection by affirming that the saint remains uncorrupt, "git oð þisne dæg" ["even yet to this day"]. Ælfric and his audience touch the tempo-

ral moments of both Æthelthryth's translation in the past and the promised Resurrection in the future through the homily's invocation of Æthelthryth's uncorrupt, healed body.

The specter of disability complicates Ælfric's promise of wholeness in the Resurrection, however, because the impairment of Æthelthryth's body by her tumor remains present in the narrative: her sanctity is premised upon the tumor having been healed. At the homily's core is the spiritual prosthesis of depending on an impaired embodiment to make promises about the afterlife. Through Æthelthryth's life and death and the state of her body throughout, Ælfric writes, God's might is "geswutelod" ["made clear"] (109). The body that "ne mihte formolsnian" ["does not corrupt"] (108) demonstrates sanctity because it is given the privilege of bypassing the rot of the grave as it awaits the Resurrection and the Last Judgment. Æthelthryth's uncorrupted body makes manifest the spiritual blessedness of her soul through supernatural immunity to decay.[53] In order for Æthelthryth's uncorruption and postmortem healing to be manifestly legible, however, Æthelthryth's body must be represented in the narrative in a way that highlights her need for healing from the tumor on her neck, calling attention to the narrative necessity of impairment for the formation of this particular saint. The body, like the narrative, must represent the saint's former injury in order to demonstrate that she has been healed.

The healing of Æthelthryth's neck forms the basis both for confirming the identification of her remains and for affirming her status as a saint. Ælfric's rendition of this scene, however, does not uphold the importance Bede places on the scar, but rather transforms the spiritual importance of the scar from being a literal, physical phenomenon into a textual, narrative phenomenon. When Ælfric describes the postmortem healing of Æthelthryth's neck, he simply states that the wound is healed and remains silent on whether or not a visible scar takes the wound's place: "Þa wæs seo wund gehæled, þe se læce worhte ær" ["Then was the wound healed, which the leech had previously made"] (93). That the wound is healed leaves open the possibility of a scar but does not confirm such a scar's visibility. There are no affirmations that this is certainly the same woman's body and no descriptions of any marks remaining from the wound that was "worhte ær" ["previously made"] (93). Ælfric does not depart from Bede lightly; his alterations consistently demonstrate

53. As I have argued elsewhere regarding an early Middle English poem, the expectation of decay in the grave could also provoke a form of crip time I call crip eschatological anticipation; see Parker, "Crip Eschatological Anticipation."

particular investments and priorities for the rhetorical work of his homilies. Ælfric explicitly deploys Æthelthryth's body to demonstrate the promise of the Resurrection, but he appears less concerned than Bede had been with proving that the body being exhumed was indeed Æthelthryth. It is also possible that Ælfric deemed such a question irrelevant to the audience of his homilies, or that he rejected the possibility that a nonmartyred saint would have the honor of scars in the afterlife. Whatever the reason for Ælfric's excision, the scar factored into Ælfric's consideration of how to present Æthelthryth's uncorruption, but with the ultimate outcome that Ælfric did not see fit to retain mention of it.

The erasure of Æthelthryth's scar perhaps accords with the vocabulary for virginity chosen by Bede and Ælfric. Bede's word for retaining virginity is one of wholeness, that Æthelthryth "mansit" ["preserved"] her virginity (390/391); that preserved wholeness can also be marked by something like a scar. Ælfric's "ungewemmed" (107), however, means not only "undamaged" but also "unmarked," and so it would make sense to resist the marking of the saint's body by a scar. This could be the case for a saint whose dominant merit is virginity, even though Ælfric is willing to acknowledge postmortem marks on other saints, such as when the virgin, king, and martyr Edmund of East Anglia's head miraculously reattached to his body after death: "His swura wæs gehalod, þe ær forslagen wæs, / and wæs swylce an seolcen þræd embe his swuran ræd / mannum to swutelunge hu he ofslagen wæs" ["His neck was healed, which before had been severed, and on it was a red mark like silken thread around his neck, to reveal to people how he was slain"].[54] Edmund, however, was both man and martyr, and so gendered, as well as theological, reasons may underlie Ælfric's willingness to grant him the honor Augustine had described of retaining marks of his suffering for Christ.

Ælfric follows Bede in describing Æthelthryth's subsequent healing miracles, though in less detail.[55] The bodies that are healed demonstrate her sanctity, but the central body in the narrative is the body that is both empow-

54. *LS* III:198, lines 166–68. Ælfric follows Edmund's first hagiographer, Abbo of Fleury, in noting the red line on Edmund's neck. On Edmund's scar in relation to disability, see Holtan, "Writing Sanctity upon the Body"; Parker, "Embodied Lives and Afterlives," 137–53.

55. Ælfric writes only: "Þær wæron gehælede þurh ða halgan femnan / fela adlige menn, swa swa we gefyrn gehyrdon, / and eac ða þe hrepodon þæs reafes ænigne dæl / þe heo mid bewunden wæs wurdon sona hale" ["Many impaired people were healed there through that holy woman, as we have heard told, and also those who touched any part of that shroud, within which she had been wound, were immediately healed"] (113–16).

ered by sanctity and still marked in the narrative by its former impairment. Æthelthryth's ability to heal these bodies is premised upon her experience of a shining tumor and the healing of that tumor after her death. Even as he omits her scar, Ælfric also creates a narrative record of impairment, as he must in order to adequately convey that impairment's later absence. The saint's life requires the representation of bodily aberrance, even though the narrative overall works to erase such forms of difference, as in the healing of Æthelthryth's wound. The body must be unwhole before it can be made whole, and the specter of disability thus haunts even the uncorrupt bodies of saints.

Æthelthryth in the Benedictional of St. Æthelwold

A final pre-Conquest variation on St. Æthelthryth's scar proves illustrative here. Prior to Ælfric's composition of the *Lives of Saints*, his mentor at Winchester, Bishop (and future Saint) Æthelwold ordered the production of an elaborate benedictional, which today is one of the most remarkably illuminated manuscripts surviving from early medieval England. The Benedictional of St. Æthelwold was made at Winchester around 973 and contains the earliest known portrait of St. Æthelthryth (fol. 90v, see figure 4), in addition to the Doubting Thomas scene discussed above in the introduction (see figure 1).[56] The Benedictional's portrait of Æthelthryth can be read as both including and occluding the scar on her neck. Æthelthryth's portrait appears opposite a scene of Christ presented as ruler of heaven (fol. 91r). Robert Deshman has argued that this pairing presents Æthelthryth as a bride of Christ, based on her prominence as a virgin and a nun.[57] Considering the images with attention to scars as markers of identity—and evidence of holiness—reveals another connection between Christ and Æthelthryth, at least as she had been depicted by Bede: both are confirmed to be themselves after death based on the marks of their wounds. In this opening of the Benedictional, however, their wounds are not overt; like many depictions of Christ in the Benedictional beyond the Doubting Thomas scene, Christ is not clearly wounded, and neither is Æthelthryth's neck clearly scarred.

56. Deshman, *Benedictional*, 260–61. The manuscript is now BL, Additional MS 49598. Stephenie McGucken offers a thorough discussion of the Benedictional's portrait of St. Æthelthryth and its iconographic contexts; "Saints, Mothers, and Personifications," 53–127; see also Gretsch, *Ælfric*, 169–72.

57. Deshman, *Benedictional*, 121–24. Æthelthryth also appears earlier in the Benedictional, among a group of virgin saints on folio 2r; in this miniature, the lines on her neck do not appear distinctive from the other women depicted.

Fig. 4. Portrait of St. Æthelthryth in the Benedictional of St. Æthelwold. (From the British Library collection: London, British Library, Additional MS 49598, fol. 90v.)

Æthelthryth's portrait rewards closer examination. In the Benedictional's many portraits, thin red lines depicting folded and creased skin are the norm, but in the portrait of St. Æthelthryth, one of the lines on her neck is offset, suggestive of a mark of some kind, potentially a scar. Some reproductions of this portrait even seem to show this line to be a darker shade than the others. In-person examination of the manuscript reveals not a difference in pigment, but a difference in texture. The line in question is incised much more deeply into the underlying pink pigment of skin than the other lines on Æthelthryth's neck, which typically appear to be laid upon the surface of underlying layers of pigment. The deeper line extends from the saint's chin out toward her ear, anticipating Ælfric's statement that the tumor was "under þam cynn-bane" ["under her chin-bone"] (52). The potential scar is on the right side of the saint's neck, the same side on which it appears in depictions of St. Æthelthryth from late medieval England.[58] If the artist carved a deeper line here with the intention of depicting the scar, then in doing so he took on the role of the leech Cynefrith, inscribing a mark into the saint's neck; the pale pigment of the saint's skin parted before the artist's tools like flesh before the physician's blade.

The line on Æthelthryth's neck in the Benedictional is not necessarily a scar, however; it could easily be an ordinary crease in her skin etched by an overzealous artisan. Indeed, the cheeks and necks of virtually all the people depicted in the Benedictional are exceptionally lineated; comparing the portrait of Æthelthryth to the same manuscript's Doubting Thomas scene (fol. 56v; figure 1), reveals that lines on necks could be no more than this artist's way of depicting contours and wrinkles. Although most figures in the Doubting Thomas scene wear full beards, Thomas's clean-shaven face and neck are contoured by lines of diverse hue just as much as Æthelthryth's later in the manuscript. Nonetheless, the depth of the crease that might form Æthelthryth's scar in her portrait is striking. For a viewer with knowledge of Æthelthryth's scar from Bede and the eye of faith (that is, faith in the sanctity

58. For example, Æthelthryth's scar is clearly depicted on the right side of her neck in the pictorial cycle painted on a 1455 retable from Ely Cathedral and a historiated initial in *La Vie Seinte Audrée* (an Anglo-Norman *vita* composed in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, attributed to Marie de France) in BL, Additional MS 70513, fol. 100v (ca. 1375–1425). Images of these items are reproduced in Blanton, *Signs of Devotion*, 54, 191. Although thorough discussion of St. Æthelthryth's scar in the saint's late medieval cult exceeds my present scope, these post-Conquest depictions of the saint demonstrate that her scar—and thus cultural frameworks related to disability—continued to be part of the cult of St. Æthelthryth well beyond the early medieval period.

Fig. 5. Detail of St. Æthelthryth's possible scar in the Benedictional of St. Æthelwold. (From the British Library collection: London, British Library, Additional MS 49598, fol. 90v, detail.)

of Æthelthryth), it could certainly read as a scar, even in the contexts of the creased necks throughout the Benedictional.

The Benedictional of St. Æthelwold was made for use at Winchester while Ælfric was there and at the direction of Ælfric's mentor, Bishop Æthelwold; indeed, Virginia Blanton argues that Ælfric was familiar with the Benedictional's content regarding St. Æthelthryth.[59] In Ælfric's narrative, with no mention of the scar, Æthelthryth's neck is made legible as a sign of her sanctity whether it has the scar or not. As with the Benedictional, readers of Ælfric who were familiar with Bede might even assume that the wound

59. Blanton, *Signs of Devotion*, 115.

being "healed" implies the presence of a scar. Omitting explicit reference to the scar also potentially leaves the reader (or aural audience to the homily) no reason to think that the saint's uncorrupt neck is marked at all. But even a pointedly *un*marked neck calls attention to the fact of it once having been marked: Ælfric predicates his description of the discovered healing upon the wound having been "worhte ær" ["previously made"] (93). The text itself is scarred by the former presence of the wound, requiring the impairment of Æthelthryth's neck to demonstrate Æthelthryth's sanctity; the wound continues to reappear textually even after it has been physically healed.

Crip Saintly Bodies and the Eschatological Imaginary

St. Æthelthryth's scar crips the saint's body, predicating her personal history, self-interpretation, and eventual recognition as a saint upon the capacity of the body to become ill, become wounded, and eventually to die. Æthelthryth's uncorrupt saintly body remains crip in its own way, whether or not the scar remains, because it refuses to behave in ways expected of bodies, even if that deviation from the norm is coded positively. The saint's crip body—ill, wounded, dead, healed, scarred, uncorrupt—spiritually prosthesizes Christian eschatology. As Ælfric reminds his readers, Æthelthryth's wholeness in the grave attests to the power of God to restore the bodies of more ordinary Christians who decay in the grave.[60] The saint's body itself is here the relic of disability that attests to the eschatological promises of Christianity. Æthelthryth's scar for Bede is the spiritual prosthesis that confirms who she is, that she is the one made saintly and able to heal the cure seekers who visit her shrine. For Ælfric, however, the wholeness of the saint's healed body is the spiritual prosthesis that promises a whole body to all in the Resurrection. The cult of St. Æthelthryth reveals the cripness of the eschatology that bred it: making Æthelthryth's body *hal* requires her to have previously been *unhal*; that is, it requires the saint to have been crip.

The promise of the Resurrection in the afterlife is made more real, more tangible, through the testimony of Ælfric, who heard it from Bede, who heard it from Cynefrith that Æthelthryth's body was kept uncorrupt by God's power. Even with that chain of transmission, Æthelthryth's body is much closer proof to the early medieval English that there would be a Resurrection than are the bodies of Christ or the martyrs of the early church. In this way, the native English St. Æthelthryth is a supplement, a prosthesis

60. See lines 109–12, quoted above.

in the already crip timeline of salvation history, wherein the cults of saints bearing witness to Christ support the promise of resurrection in the afterlife. Æthelthryth supplements that promise by bringing it geographically and temporally closer to the early medieval English.

Bede and Ælfric both knew how much the early English needed miracles and saints of their own. Bede listed several late antique virgins in his hymn to virginity following the *Historia*'s story of Æthelthryth, before affirming, "Nostra quoque egregia iam tempora uirgo beauit; / Aedilthryda nitet nostra quoque egregia" ["Nor lacks our age its Æthelthryth as well; / Its virgin wonderful nor lacks our age"] (398/399).[61] Elsewhere in the *Lives of Saints*, Ælfric also noted Æthelthryth's importance as a native English saint; near the end of his homily for St. Edmund, Ælfric writes:

> Nis Angel-cynn bedæled Drihtnes halgena,
> þonne on Englalanda licgaþ swilce halgan
> swylce þæs halga cyning and Cuþberht se eadiga
> and Æþeldryð on Elig and eac hire swustor
> ansunde on lic-haman geleafan to trymminge.
> Synd eac fela oðre on Angel-cynne halgan
> þe fela wundra wyrcað, swa swa hit wide is cuð.
>
> [The English people are not deprived of the lord's saints, because in the land of England lie such saints as that holy king [Edmund], and the blessed Cuthbert and Æthelthryth in Ely and also her sister, whole in body for the edification of faith. There are also many other saints among the English people, who work many miracles, just as is widely known.][62]

These native English saints whose bodies lie in the land of England make the promises of Christianity immediately relevant to the English in order to

61. The virgins of late antiquity named in the hymn are Agatha, Eulalia, Thecla, Euphemia, Agnes, and Cecily, all of whom lived (if they were indeed historical figures) in Mediterranean regions of Europe during the third and fourth centuries, and so Æthelthryth, in seventh-century East Anglia and Northumbria, lived significantly closer in time and place to Bede and Ælfric. As Jacqueline A. Fay has observed, placing Æthelthryth among such company asserts the place of the English in Christian history; "Emergent Englishness," 500–501. The OE *Bede*, notably, omits this poem; perhaps the translator was less concerned than Bede or Ælfric about bringing closer to home the promise of salvation modeled by the saints.

62. *LS* III:202, 204, lines 247–53.

edify their faith. The miracles worked in the world by God and his saints—so often worked through crip bodies like Æthelthryth's—support faith in those eschatological promises that cannot otherwise be confirmed until they come to pass in the Apocalypse.

The variations on St. Æthelthryth's scar that I have examined here do not provide a unified theology regarding the maintenance or erasure of scars—or other distinctive, perhaps even disabling, marks—on the Resurrection body. They do, however, affirm the importance of questions about scars and other corporeal markings for anticipation of the Resurrection body in the eschatological imaginary of early medieval England. From Bede's writing in the early eighth century through Ælfric's writing in the late tenth century, interpretations of crip saintly bodies facilitated questions about the eschatological future awaiting all humankind. Authors like Bede and Ælfric paid particular attention to Æthelthryth's body, but she retains the context of other bodies, some of whom we have addressed, like her husband Ecgfrith, her sister Seaxburh, and the leech Cynefrith, and many we have not addressed, including the many additional figures saintly and otherwise who appear in Bede's *Historia* and Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*. While Ecgfrith, Seaxburh, and Cynefrith's bodies are hardly remarked upon, many other contextual figures aberr from normative embodiment, some through disability, and many more through embodiments marked in other ways for both positive and negative interpretation. The relationships between such various embodiments draw our focus for the remainder of this study. The first half of this book has traced the rhetorical, narrative, and theological means by which representations of disability spiritually prosthesized the crip eschatology of early medieval England. The remaining chapters examine complex relationships between aberrant bodies as conceptual systems that supported the eschatological promises of early medieval Christianity.

Part II

Systems of Aberrance

Four

St. Andrew's Blood

Cannibalism, Torture, and Conversion

At the end of the third day of St. Andrew's torture among the cannibal Mermedonians in *Andreas*, the saint prays to Christ that he might be allowed to die, for "Nu sint sionwe toslopen, is min swat adropen, / licgað æfter lande loccas todrifene, / fex on foldan" ["Now my sinews are dissolved away; my blood is shed and lies over the land; my joints are sundered; my hair is on the earth"] (1425–27a).[1] Soon, however, Andrew is made whole, freed from his bonds, and divinely instructed: "Geseoh nu seolfes swæðe, swa þin swat aget / þurh ban-gebrec blodige stige, / lices lælan" ["See now the path of yourself, how your blood has spilled through the breaking of bones, shedding of blood, and bruising of the body"] (1441–43a). In the path of gore, there are now miraculous trees, "geblowene bearwas" ["flourishing groves"] (1448), flowering with the promise of fruit to appease the cannibals' hunger.

In this sequence, the climax of *Andreas*, the saint's blood signifies both the torturous rending of Andrew's body and its spiritual empowerment to enact the conversion of the Mermedonians. The blood that marks the path of Andrew's torture across the landscape of Mermedonia transforms into

1. All quotations from *Andreas* are from Clayton 183–299, cited parenthetically by line number. An earlier form of this chapter's argument appeared previously as "Eschatology for Cannibals: A System of Aberrance in the Old English *Andreas*," in *Monstrosity, Disability, and the Posthuman in the Medieval and Early Modern World*, ed. Richard H. Godden and Asa Simon Mittman (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 227–48, material from which is reproduced here with permission from Springer Nature.

a sign that the cannibals' physical and spiritual hungers will be appeased.[2] Though initially a sign of Andrew's vulnerability, the saint's blood becomes a vector for fertility, with the ability to supernaturally impact the world beyond the boundaries of Andrew's body. This miraculous juxtaposition of Andrew's suffering body and the power of his blood captures a tension between the vulnerability of the body—its ability to endure harm and suffer pain—and its strength. Impairment and empowerment function co-dependently in *Andreas* to spiritually prosthesize Christian eschatological hope: the desire for resurrection and salvation.

Where previous discussion of *Andreas* has worked to parse the saintly and cannibalistic bodies represented within the poem and the theology of salvation evidenced by the poem, reading *Andreas* with attention to disability and bodily difference affords new insights into the somatic and eschatological implications of the various aberrant figures within the poem.[3] Aberrant embodiments function as signifiers of the larger theological scheme of Christianity by facilitating the conversion of the cannibal Mermedonians. While St. Andrew's blood effectively prosthesizes eschatological hope on its own, that eschatology is further supported, further cripped, by the network of aberrant bodies that coexist in the poem.

Composed in the middle to late ninth century, the anonymous Old English hagiographic poem *Andreas* survives only in the late-tenth-century Vercelli Book, a manuscript with consistent eschatological interests.[4] The narra-

2. I use the term cannibal advisedly, given its etymological origins in the discourse of the European colonization of the Caribbean, emerging from the demonym of the Carib people. Anthropophagy simply describes the eating of humans, while the label of "cannibal" additionally entails cultural attributions of savagery that serve as justification to change (i.e., convert) a culture. The terms function as interchangeable in contexts like *Andreas* in which all anthropophagy is performed by cannibals. In this, I follow Watson, *Insatiable Appetites*, 15–18; see also 55–70 on the colonial development of the term "cannibal." In *Andreas*, as I discuss below, cannibalism itself is a sin, but it may also reflect other sins and thus symbolize for the Christian audience of the poem the Mermedonians' need for conversion.

3. On saintly and cannibal bodies in *Andreas*, including the blurring of distinctions between them, see Dendle, "Pain and Saint-Making"; Fee, "Productive Destruction"; Godlove, "Bodies as Borders"; Hermann, *Allegories of War*, 119–49; Michelet, "Eating Bodies." On salvation in *Andreas*, see Boenig, "*Andreas*, the Eucharist and Vercelli"; Hill, "Figural Narrative"; Walsh, "Baptismal Flood"; Wolf, "Apocalyptic Reading."

4. The Vercelli Book (Vercelli, Biblioteca Capitolare di Vercelli, Cod. CXVII) is a late-tenth-century manuscript of OE poetry and homiletic prose written by a single scribe and is now held in northern Italy. In addition to *Andreas* (fols. 29v–52v), it contains *The Fates of the Apostles* and *Elene* (both signed by Cynewulf, see chapter 5 below),

tive follows St. Andrew the Apostle after he receives a summons from God to rescue his fellow apostle, St. Matthew the Evangelist, from the prison of the cannibal Mermedonians. Andrew makes a perilous sea passage with Christ in disguise at the helm, frees Matthew and the other prisoners, endures his own captivity and near-martyrdom, and ultimately converts the cannibals. The poem adapts its apocryphal story from the Greek and Latin tradition of the *Acts of Andrew and Matthew*, which dates to at least the fifth century.[5] A prose homiletic form of the legend in Old English survives in two manuscripts: an eleventh-century manuscript containing several Old English homilies, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 198 (fols. 386r–94v), as well as a fragmentary witness in the late-tenth- or early-eleventh-century Blickling Homiliary, as Homily XIX (fols. 136r–39v).[6] That the story existed beyond *Andreas* affirms that the broad tableau of marked embodiments working together to construct eschatological hope in *Andreas* was not unique and indeed was available in these and many other texts across early medieval Christendom. While *Andreas* follows its sources in most regards, its departures from the surviving witnesses also reveal that engagement with the tradition entailed engagement with the relationship between aberrant bodies and the afterlife, whether those changes were made by the *Andreas* poet or further up the chain of transmission.

I argue that Andrew's tortured saintly body participates in a system of bodily aberrance in *Andreas*. While virtually all narrative bodies interact with others, as we have seen in stories of St. Æthelthryth, many narrative bodies are normative or unmarked, like those of Æthelthryth's husbands, sister, and physician. Systems of bodies become systems of aberrance when the relation-

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as well as twenty-six prose homilies and additional OE poems including *The Dream of the Rood*. On the dating of *Andreas*, see Boenig, "*Andreas*, the Eucharist and Vercelli." On the Vercelli Book, see Krapp, *Vercelli Book*, xi–xciv; Halsall, "Vercelli and the Vercelli Book"; Treharne, "Form and Function."

5. No extant Greek or Latin version of the story seems to be the direct source for *Andreas*, but the Old English poem closely follows the Greek versions and the Casanatensis recension of the Latin. Antecedents and analogues of the legend found in *Andreas* are available in Boenig, *Acts of Andrew*; see also Allen and Calder, *Sources and Analogues*, 14–34.

6. On these manuscripts, both of which almost exclusively contain homilies, see Ker, *Catalogue*, 76–82, 451–55; for the Blickling witness, I follow the homily numbering in Morris, which counts a fragmentary homiletic passage in its reckoning, making the Andrew homily the nineteenth, rather than the eighteenth, as in Ker. An Ælfrician homily on St. Andrew does not relate Andrew's acts in Mermedonia, but rather Christ's calling of the saint and his passion in Achaia; *Catholic Homilies: First Series*, 507–19.

ships between those bodies' deviations from the apparent norm facilitate narrative and thematic meaning making. When the resulting meaning is spiritually inflected, then the system collectively functions as a spiritual prosthesis. I would posit that not all systems of aberrance spiritually prosthesize a crip eschatology; many surely serve other, non-eschatological ends.[7] But because this book traces the crip eschatology of early medieval England, the systems of aberrance I examine in the remaining chapters are all spiritually prosthetic. This chapter and those that follow trace interactions between disability and other embodiments viewed as aberrant, as they are embedded into the aesthetic and conceptual inheritances of Old English poetic traditions. With disability at their center, these systems of aberrance generate a more complex mode of spiritual prosthesis that can act within, across, and beyond texts to facilitate the promises of Christian eschatology.

I designate the term "aberrance" to describe the inflection of bodyminds, whether positively or negatively, through forms and functions that bear conceptual significance, including and beyond disability and the crip prospect of disablement. Aberrant bodies may be animalistic, cannibal, monstrous, saintly, divine, demonic, religiously marginalized, heroic, hypersexualized, immigrant, racialized, gendered, dead, or resurrected, as well as disabled.[8] Of subtle, but vital, relevance to *Andreas* are early medieval notions of race and ethnicity and the intersectional concerns of bodies understood as both racially or ethnically othered and disabled. Paying attention to intersectionality here (and in chapter 5) follows the impetus originally formulated by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw to notice the ways multiple marginalizations of intersecting communities are compounded.[9] Such intersectionality is crucial for disability studies as well; as Alison Kafer argues, "We must trace the ways in which we have been forged as a group [. . .] but also trace the ways in which those forgings have been incomplete, or contested, or refused. We need to recognize that these forgings have always already been inflected by histories of race, gender, sexuality, class, and nation."[10] In *Andreas*, the Mermedonians

7. In this, I broaden the concept from what I argued in "Eschatology for Cannibals," where I described systems of aberrance as specifically centering on disability toward eschatological ends.

8. I do not address all of these aberrant embodiments here or in the chapters that follow; additional embodiments' roles in systems of aberrance remain to be explored in other texts.

9. Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins."

10. Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 12; Kafer is here evoking Simi Linton, *Claiming Disability*, 4. On the necessity of intersectional methods for medieval disability studies, see, e.g., Hsy, Pearman, and Eyler, "Disabilities in Motion," 13–14.

are framed as culturally distinct from English Christians; while early scholars of the poem translated "æl-myrcna" (432a), describing a category inclusive of the Mermedonians, as indicating a darkness of skin, it more likely characterized them as foreigners in cultural, not necessarily racial, terms.[11] More compellingly, Lindy Brady has argued that the landscape of Mermedonia aligns the cannibals with Celtic Britons of Wales and Cornwall, a matter of ethnic difference that would have hit much closer to home for audience members of the Old English poem.[12] The process by which *Andreas* converts such ethnically and religiously marginalized bodies into Christians through St. Andrew's tortured and cripped body reveals the function of this system of aberrance as a support for the crip eschatology of medieval Christianity.

In *Andreas*, aberrant bodies occupy both sides of a medieval Christian moral spectrum from saintly to sinful, such that both negatively and positively coded aberrant bodies work together to articulate the contours of eschatological hope. This chapter takes up *Andreas* to illustrate the central role of disability in a system of aberrance that represents conversion and thus access to salvation. *Andreas* is both heroic, in its stylistic and rhetorical construction, and hagiographical. In such texts, the poetic embellishments of heroic verse intersect with the mythic affordances of hagiography to produce plausible fictions of distant times and places filled with unusual embodiments both appealing and appalling. This system of aberrance continues to trouble the binary between disability signifying sin and bodily normativity manifesting blessedness, suggesting that even if the eventual eschatological destination divides the whole of humanity between the two poles of damnation and salvation, earthly conceptualizations of those futures rely upon the discursive interplay between a multidimensional web of aberrant embodiments. In medieval Christianity, the soteriological future was ultimately binary—any given person will be either saved or damned—but the embodied path to reach it was not.

Aberrant Assemblages

Systems of aberrance utilize many bodies, exhibiting multiple forms of embodied difference, in a complex assemblage of physicalities. In texts like *Andreas*, systems of aberrance attempt to work for the benefit (that is, the

11. Hall, "Two Dark Old English Compounds."

12. Brady, "Echoes of Britons." On racial and ethnic difference in early medieval England, see Harris, *Race and Ethnicity*; on race in medieval thought more broadly, see, e.g., Heng, *Invention of Race*.

salvation) of all the different groups they marginalize, even as they also utilize and reinforce marginalizing notions of bodily difference for some or all of those groups. Individuals with aberrant bodies have their differences highlighted but are also centralized in the narrative construction of Christian eschatological hope. Even cannibals, whose aberrance creates the narrative crisis of *Andreas*, might through such a system of aberrance be saved.

Previous work in studies of both disability and monstrosity directs the scholarly gaze toward aspects of the body that mark it as both liminal and central to cultural identity, which guides my approach to aberrance.[13] Systems of aberrance function substantially differently from structures of bodily variance that have been identified in later historical periods, including the early modern "natural," a range of acceptable bodily variation; the development of statistical "normalcy" and the consequent mapping of all others as abnormal in the nineteenth century; and the more modern construction of the "normate," as the cultural center identified by the absence of all markers of deviance.[14] Concepts of the natural, normal, and normate enforce distinctions between socially privileged and socially disadvantaged groups based on physical difference. In contrast, systems of aberrance reveal how representations of variably marked bodyminds serve purposes designed to elevate both the privileged and the disadvantaged. In early medieval Christianity, the primary shared goal was the hope of salvation.

Aberrance is not, as might be thought, simply a synonym for abjection, because figures who would seem to be abject—degraded and outcast—are in fact quite integral to narratives built around aberrance.[15] Aberrance reframes the liminal, different, and wandering, as not always lacking, not necessarily in want. Aberrance functions systematically, across abjected and non-abjected ways of dealing with difference. Unlike abjection, aberrance allows for wholeness of self within an embodied subjectivity that resists wholeness of body and, in many cases, even depends upon the specter of the injured, suffering, or impaired body for its narrative representation. Andrew is made into a saint through his torture, not in spite of it; the cannibals' conversion is possible because they torture saints.

Disability studies scholars have made frequent use of the word *aberrance*,

13. See, e.g., Cohen, "Monster Culture."

14. See Bearden, *Monstrous Kinds*, 79–108; Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy*; and Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*, respectively. While I examine early medieval English systems of aberrance here, I would not rule out their appearance in other geographies or time periods.

15. See, in particular, Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*.

but without precise definition, leaning on *aberrance* as a catchall term for any kind of bodily difference.[16] This broad use of *aberrance* is analogous to the definition Edna Edith Sayers gives in the context of Icelandic myth and saga:

> Aberrant figures, as the term is used here, may be crippled, blind, gigantic, alingual. They may exhibit facial features or skin color that mark them, in their societies, as racial others. They may be superhumanly wise or subhumanly stupid. They may display behavioral aberrations, indulging in practices the society in question regards as esoteric, illicit, or abhorrent: sorcery, sodomy, or theft, for example.[17]

The tendency toward a generalized use of *aberrance* to describe any kind of embodied difference, whether enabling or disabling, is intentionally evoked in my choice of the word to describe the interplay between various forms of bodily difference, including sensory impairment, violent injury, and variations in physical form that can be both impairing and empowering. Like Sayers, to these I add "behavioral aberrations" that relate to the physical body, such as cannibalism and saintly empowerment to perform miracles, without saying that cannibalism is, for example, a disability.

Forms of the word *aberrance*, while not introduced into English until the later Middle Ages, traveled widely in Latin Christian texts in early medieval England. For example, forms of Latin *errare* (to wander) appear frequently in the Vulgate Bible, in which error and aberration consistently carry negative connotations of sin and deviance.[18] In vernacular terms, Karen Bruce Wal-

16. For example, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson uses *aberrance* to describe the bodily variability of "freaks" in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century circus sideshows that enabled the constructed normalcy of their audiences through their differences; *Extraordinary Bodies*, 17. David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder use *aberrance* as part of their definition of the stakes of narrative prosthesis: "The prosthesizing of a body or rhetorical figure carries with it ideological assumptions about what is aberrant. The judgment that a mechanism is faulty is always already profoundly social"; *Narrative Prosthesis*, 6. Nathaniel Smith Kogan has used *aberrance* to encompass both disability and racialization, arguing that the early American abolitionist Benjamin Lay's "aberrant body visually encapsulated his unconventional life and activism" and thus he "shared the experience with enslaved Africans of being categorized as physically and socially deviant"; "Aberrations," n.p.

17. Sayers, *Oedipus Borealis*, 9.

18. For example, in Proverbs 14:22: "Errant qui operantur malum" ["They err that work evil"]; Psalms 118:110: "Posuerunt peccatores laqueum mihi, et de mandatis tuis non erravi" ["Sinners have laid a snare for me, but I have not erred from thy precepts"]; and Ecclesiastes 10:5: "Est malum quod vidi sub sole, quasi per errorem egrediens a

lace's proposal of Old English *unhælu* (unwholeness), to describe what we would call disability today, structures bodies along a spectrum from whole (*hælu*) to unwhole (*unhælu*), where *unhælu* contains extremes of both excess and lack.[19] Bruce Wallace suggests that configurations of *hælu* and *unhælu* not only demarcate Old English forms of the monstrous, but also might underlie the privileged bodies of saints and heroes.[20] By instead taking up the Latinate *aberrance* and its Christian legacy of depicting sin and salvation, my goal is to show how assemblages of bodies with varying salvific prospects form a narrative foundation for general soteriological hope in texts like *Andreas*. Systems of aberrance reveal how the vernacular spectrum of *unhælu* both conforms to and resists the encoding of sin and deviance through the body within a Christian moral framework.

Eschatologically inflected systems of aberrance collect bodies that are all recognizable as human in order to construct eschatologically oriented subjectivities. These networks of bodies must be recognized as interdependent systems, without which the full picture of what it meant to live in a disabled, crip, or, as I would add, aberrant body in the Middle Ages is lost. To remain focused on the eschatological prospects asserted for human subjects by these systems of aberrance, in this chapter and those that follow I de-emphasize the demonic and angelic bodies in *Andreas*, the signed Cynewulf poems, and *Christ in Judgment*, drawing more upon what they reveal about the humans with whom they interact and leaving the roles of demonic and angelic bodies in systems of aberrance or crip eschatology to be explored by future work.[21] Among human bodies, attending to systems of aberrance moves beyond identifying figural relationships, which have often been recognized in Old English literature, as when Andrew's torture in *Andreas* make him into a

facie principis" ["There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, as it were by an error proceeding from the face of the prince"]. Paul's first epistle to Timothy uses the verb *errare* with the prefix *ab-* (away) to describe the deviant teaching of ignorant preachers: "A quibus quidam aberrantes, conversi sunt in vaniloquium" ["From which things some going astray are turned aside to vain babbling"] (I Timothy 1:6).

19. Bruce Wallace, "Unhælu."

20. Bruce Wallace, "Grendel and Goliath."

21. Demonic bodies are, importantly, incorporated into associations between sin and disability. In *Andreas*, Andrew describes the demon who incites the Mermedonians to torture him as "helle hinca," which Mary Clayton translates as "cripple from hell" (1171a). A notably aberrant angel embodiment is the angelic statue Andrew describes being miraculously animated by Christ, a body of stone on a mission to resurrect the patriarchs (see *Andreas* 717–26).

figure for Christ.[22] Systems of aberrance work through both alignment and contrast, and so Andrew's similarities to Christ are just as important as his differences from Christ, or for that matter the ways he is similar to and different from the Mermedonians.

It is tempting to call some bodies posthuman in a system of aberrance, and indeed, I have done so previously.[23] If aberrant bodies touch upon the posthuman, they do so only lightly; such bodies may be evocative of the posthuman or gesture toward a reimagining of the human, but they always ultimately remain human in order for any crip eschatological project of a system of aberrance to succeed. In *Andreas*, through the transformative process of torture, the saintly body moves beyond what is recognizable as solely human, touching upon the realm of the posthuman, as Asa Simon Mittman and Christine Sciacca have argued of the flayed body of St. Bartholomew.[24] Both the saint's body and those of his antagonists brush up against the boundaries of human exceptionalism, directing our attention to that boundary and its potential non-existence; Andrew's apparent wholeness as a saint emerges through the successful fragmentation of his body. Similarly, the Mermedonians' cannibalism is horrific not just because it makes both the cannibals and their victims verge on becoming other than human, but also because both parties are nonetheless still human during the act of eating and being eaten. The aberrant body may be presented as alienated from its humanity, through torture, through cannibalism, through xenophobic biases that question the humanity of the unknown. Crucially for its soteriological project, however, the system of aberrance in *Andreas* also foregrounds the humanity of such bodies, both in their narrative pasts and their eschatological futures. These bodies must ultimately retain their links to humanity in order to depict eschatological promises of resurrection and salvation and thus bolster the real-world apocalyptic hopes of early medieval Christians.

The Crisis of Cannibalism

The Mermedonian cannibals of *Andreas* are both behaviorally and physically aberrant. The etiology of cannibalism in *Andreas* permits the eventual

22. Examples of such readings include Casteen, "Mermedonian Cannibalism"; Hieatt, "Harrowing of Mermedonia"; Hill, "Figural Narrative"; Wittig, "Figural Narrative."

23. Parker, "Eschatology for Cannibals." My consideration of the posthuman has been particularly indebted to Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman*, and Steel, *How to Make a Human*.

24. Mittman and Sciacca, "Robed in Martyrdom."

salvation of the Mermedonians by rooting the practice of anthropophagy (the consumption of humans) in external causes, namely the absence of more proper food sources:

> Næs þær hlafes wist
> werum on þam wonge, ne wæteres drync
> to bruconne, ah hie blod ond fel,
> fira flæsc-homan, feorran-cumenra,
> ðegon geond þa þeode.
>
> [There was no sustenance of bread for men in that land, nor drink of water to partake, and so they consumed blood and skin, the flesh-homes of men, of strangers, throughout that nation.] (21b–25a)

The Mermedonians eat human flesh because they have nothing else to eat.[25] The preposition *ah* (a form of *ac*, meaning "but," "except," or "so") indicates a causal relationship between the absence of food and a cannibalism of necessity.[26] Elsewhere, the poet refers twice to the Mermedonians' custom of anthropophagy as their "mete-þearfendum" ["need of food"] (27b, 136b), marking cannibalism as not a choice, but a habit developed out of need, *þearf*, in response to environmental factors beyond their control.[27] This explanation almost excuses the Mermedonians, whose hunger is thus not their fault.

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25. The Greek *Acts of Andrew and Matthew*, the Latin Casanatensis version, and the OE homiletic analogue all mention a food source in Mermedonia, which is in keeping with their characterization of the Mermedonians' cannibalism as one of custom, rather than need. After rescuing Matthew and the other captives, Andrew sends them to wait at a fig tree in the lower city and eat its fruit; see Morris 239. In the Greek and Latin Casanatensis versions, Andrew points out that this fig tree will miraculously bear as much fruit as they need, but the rescued captives are borne by a cloud to a mountain where St. Peter waits with them; see Allen and Calder, *Sources and Analogues*, 27, §21; Boenig, *Acts of Andrew*, 13–14. While it is not clear that the rescued captives ever actually eat from the fig tree, we might also read the fig tree as a miraculous provision of the moment, not an existing resource in Mermedonia. A leaf is missing from the Vercelli Book where the fig-tree reference would appear in *Andreas*; Clayton 382. Thus, lacking evidence of how *Andreas* might account for a fig tree in Mermedonia, I take at face value the poem's assertion that the Mermedonians had no access to non-anthropophagous sustenance.

26. *DOE*, "ac."

27. While *þearf* occurs frequently in the OE corpus, the two occurrences of *metepearfende* in *Andreas* are the only surviving references to a need of this specific kind, to my knowledge.

As Carol Wolf has suggested, an early medieval audience might even find themselves sympathetic to cannibals experiencing the vagaries of famine, though Brady demonstrates that cannibalism was also imagined by the early medieval English to be a very real threat within the British Isles.[28] David Hamilton has shown that food and hunger imagery physicalize a typology of spiritual hunger within *Andreas* as a material manifestation of the Mermedonians' spiritual privation through alimentary deprivation.[29] In *Andreas*, the Mermedonians lack bread and water, while earlier sources have them wanting bread and wine; this transformation indicates the cannibals' desperation in the absence of natural resources, even water, more than it figuratively represents a denial of the Eucharist.[30] The Mermedonians' cannibalism nonetheless distorts the Eucharist, refiguring the consumption of Christ's flesh and blood as an act of devotion into the consumption of human flesh and blood as an act of violence.[31]

The uncomfortable similarity between the Eucharist and cannibalism is embedded even within biblical sources. In the Gospel of John, well before the Last Supper introduces the Eucharist, Christ declares, "Qui manducat meam carnem et bibit meum sanguinem habet vitam aeternam, et ego resuscitabo eum in novissimo die. Caro enim mea vere est cibus, et sanguis meus vere est potus" ["He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up in the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed"] (John 6:55–56). Many of Christ's followers who hear this "iam non cum illo ambulabant" ["walked no more with him"] (John 6:67), but the twelve disciples remain, including the Apostles Matthew and Andrew. This passage presents the path to the Resurrection and eternal life through the consumption of human flesh, literally a resurrection out of cannibalism and an act of faith in which many of Christ's audience are not willing to participate. Such dissent from Christ's teachings, a minor detail in the Gospel narrative, encapsulates within it the crisis of cannibalism that *Andreas* explores: anthropophagy is an appalling prospect, even when presented by Christ himself, but in the correct circumstances (that of the Eucharist), the abhorrent practice can transform into the promise of eternal life.

28. Brady, "Echoes of Britons"; Wolf, "Apocalyptic Reading," 162.

29. Hamilton, "Diet and Digestion," 151; see also Earl, "Typological Structure," 78–79.

30. Bolintineanu, "Land of Mermedonia," 152.

31. On the typology of cannibalism in *Andreas*, see Blurton, *Cannibalism*, 15–33; Boenig, "*Andreas*, the Eucharist and Vercelli"; Godlove, "Bodies as Borders"; Hieatt, "Harrowing of Mermedonia"; Michelet, "Eating Bodies."

The Eucharistic typology of cannibalism highlights the Mermedonians' potential to be saved. Their spiritual problem, and the reason their lack of proper food makes them physically aberrant, is that they are eating the *wrong* flesh and drinking the *wrong* blood. As I discuss in more detail below, it is only when Andrew's blood is shed and transformed into fruit that the cannibals can be converted and attain salvation: Andrew's blood stands in for Christ's to provide a more spiritually wholesome diet. What separates the Mermedonians from salvation in *Andreas* may be boiled down to the shift from consuming the flesh and blood of murdered travelers to consuming the transubstantiated flesh and blood of Christ.

The Mermedonians' cannibalism, beyond being a behavioral aberration, also suggests moral and physical aberration. John Casteen correlates cannibalism in *Andreas* to the Old Testament, in which communities that turn from God are punished on five different occasions with famine that begets cannibalism: the misery of hunger is compounded by the misery of consuming one's kin.[32] The Mermedonians' lack of food or water may thus reflect a sinfulness for which they are being punished, rather than simply ecological happenstance. The unavailability of food and subsequent eating of the "fira flæsc-homan" ["flesh-homes of men"] (24a) manifest corporeally the Mermedonians' intangible moral aberrations. In early medieval England, one was what one ate, as is reflected in the OE *Boethius*: "Is þæt formicel gecynd ðæt urum lichoman cymð eall his mægen of ðæm mete þe we þiggað, þeah færð se mete ut þurh þone lichoman. Ac his swæc ðeah and his cræft gecymð on ælcre ædre, swa swa mon meolo seft" ["It is a very powerful disposition that from the food that we eat, all of its strength comes to our bodies, although the food ventures out through the body. But its taste, however, and its power comes into each vein, just as one sifts flour."][33] The essence of food permeates the consumer's body; by this logic, a cannibal's body would be physiologically different from that of a human with an ordinary diet. By suffusing the cannibals' bodies with the bodily matter of other people, rather than meat from animals or plant-based foods, anthropophagy creates a physical change in the Mermedonians' bodies reflective of the sinfulness that may have warranted a punitive famine in the first place.

As "sylf-ætan" ["self-eaters"] (175b), the Mermedonians risk losing their humanity. Yet the horror of self-eating demands that the cannibals remain

32. Casteen, "Mermedonian Cannibalism," 74–78.

33. Godden and Irvine, *Old English Boethius*, P21.95–99 (C-text). On the OE *Boethius*, see chapter 1.

human; they must remain identifiable with the *sylf* that they consume. Through the suffusion of their victims' human flesh throughout the cannibals' bodies, the Mermedonians become more human, even as they also become more than human, at risk of becoming potentially other than human. The Mermedonians must remain human, however, because their potential for salvation drives the narrative of the poem, as we see emphasized in the construction of their cannibalism as being of necessity and in the insistent typological links between cannibalism and the Eucharist. Even as cannibalism in *Andreas* asserts the human need for salvation, the aberrance of the cannibal body also threatens the eschatological hopes of both the Mermedonians and their victims.

In early Christian thought, anthropophagy threatened to interrupt the continuity of human identity from living body, to corpse, to resurrected body. In order to ensure the justice of punishment or reward, patristic theologians concluded that the Resurrection must include the re-composition of a person's body using the same matter of which it was composed in life.[34] The understanding that the food one consumes becomes a part of one's body thus had disconcerting implications where cannibalism was concerned. Augustine of Hippo had asked: "Cum caro mortui hominis etiam alterius fit viventis caro, cui potius eorum in resurrectione reddatur?" ["When the flesh of a dead man becomes also the flesh of another living man, to which of them will it return in the resurrection?"].[35] Augustine resolved this concern by asserting that "reddetur [. . .] caro illa homini in quo esse caro humana primitus coepit" ["flesh will be restored to the man in whom it first took shape as human flesh"], thus enabling resurrection even for the cannibalized.[36] Anthropophagy nonetheless threatens the humanity of the Christian that is consumed. As Karl Steel observes, "The special horror of anthropophagy is therefore its impossibility: a human who has been slaughtered and eaten, who has lost the exemption from being eaten through which it defines itself as not animal, may have ceased to be recognizable as *anthropos*."[37] And if a human might be no longer properly human because they have been eaten, then to what kind of afterlife might they aspire?[38] How might they hope for salvation?

34. On the continuity of identity and concerns about cannibalism regarding the Resurrection of the body in patristic and medieval theology, see Bynum, *Resurrection*, especially 30–33, 40–43, 103–4.

35. Augustine, *City of God: Books 21–22*, 296/297, XXII.20, trans. Green.

36. Augustine, *City of God: Books 21–22*, 298/299, XXII.20, trans. Green.

37. Steel, *How to Make a Human*, 124.

38. On the medieval theological debate regarding the afterlives of animals, in which

Andreas's St. Matthew, imprisoned by the cannibal Mermedonians early in the poem, is not free from anxiety over what will become of him if his body is eaten. The Mermedonians are not bothered by the fate of the souls of those they consume, nor are they concerned about the afterlife at all: "Feorh ne bemurndan, / grædige guð-rincas, hu þæs gastes sið / æfter swylt-cwale geseted wurde" ["They did not mourn the life-force, greedy warriors, how that soul's journey after death-torture was set"] (154b–56). The poem's emphasis on the Mermedonians' disregard for, in this case, Matthew's soul, "puts a question-mark over Matthew's afterlife, if he is eaten by cannibals."[39] Matthew himself seems to carry this uncertainty; he pleads with God not to allot for him "þone wyrrestan [. . .] deað ofer eorðan" ["the worst death on earth"] (86b, 87b). The reference to being cannibalized as the "worst death on earth" does not appear in the Casanatensis version, in which Matthew submits to God's will if it is for him to be consumed by cannibals, but prays for God to restore his vision so he may witness the tearing of his own flesh.[40] In the Old English homiletic analogue, however, Matthew asks for his sight so that he may see what he calls "ða werrestan tintrega" ["the worst torments"] (229), but also that God not deliver him to "þone biterestan deað" ["the most bitter death"] (229).[41] As in *Andreas*, the homiletic Matthew is willing to suffer death for Christ, but would prefer not to be eaten.

The potential consequences of being eaten, for Matthew, are undoubtedly unappealing: the eschatological hope for bodily resurrection would be alimentarily converted into scatological waste.[42] Indeed, in the Gospel of Mat-

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it was frequently argued that animals would not be resurrected, see Steel, *How to Make a Human*, 92–108.

39. Magennis, *Anglo-Saxon Appetites*, 146.

40. Allen and Calder, *Sources and Analogues*, 16, §2.

41. Quotations from both the Cambridge Andrew homily and Blickling Homily XIX are from Morris 228–49 (cited parenthetically by page number), which supplies content missing from the Blickling Homiliary with text from Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 198.

42. Another alternative, if a cannibalized Matthew *is* resurrected, is likewise unappealing because the incorporation of one flesh into another confounds distinct individuality in the Resurrection. As Karl Steel observes, regarding later medieval conversations about humans eating animals and animals eating humans, "Humans would have to share their resurrected bodies with the creatures they had eaten or that had eaten them. This would be an afterlife either populated by humans and animals both, or, more horrifying, one of humans and animals conjoined in monstrous assemblages of eater and eaten"; Steel, *How to Make a Human*, 111. The Mermedonians' cannibalism, if it does not prevent resurrection, nonetheless threatens resurrection with the prospect of a "monstrous assemblage" of cannibal and victim.

thew, Christ asks: "Non intellegitis quia omne quod in os intrat in ventrem vadit et in secessum emittitur?" ["Do you not understand that whatsoever entereth into the mouth goeth into the belly and is cast out into the privy?"] (Matthew 15:17).[43] As comforting as Augustine's conclusion might have been that God could resurrect a materially continuous body from even the most scattered of decomposed flesh, the threat of anthropophagy in *Andreas* undermines Matthew's prospect of resurrection by suggesting that rather than be transformed into a resurrected body, his flesh might simply be cast into the privy. The *Andreas* poet does not leave Matthew's spiritual future in doubt, however; Matthew's eschatological hope is restored when God promises that "neorxna-wang" ["paradise"] (102b) will be opened to him, affirming that he will be able to experience heaven through the Resurrection of the body.

Making Men into Meat

The Mermedonians' treatment of their captives, even before they are eaten, repeatedly distances their human victims from a hope of salvation through the spiritually disabling implications of physical impairment and animalistic behavior. The cannibals blind their victims with spears:

> Swylc wæs þæs folces freoðo-leas tacen,
> unlædra eafoð, þæt hie eagena gesihð,
> hettend heoro-grimme, heafod-gimmas,
> agetton gealg-mode gara ordum.
>
> [Such was that people's peaceless sign, violence of the miserable, that they, bloodthirsty enemies, sad-mindedly destroyed the sight of eyes, the head-jewels, with the points of spears.] (29–32)

The Mermedonians' captives are thus constrained by a violently inflicted sensory impairment. This passage amplifies both the evil of the Mermedonians and the value placed on sighted eyes as "heafod-gimmas" ["head-jewels"] (31b), a precious commodity.[44] As I have discussed above in chapter 1, blind-

43. As Steel notes, such biblical passages justified Christian open-mindedness regarding food laws, but this permissiveness generally did not extend to condone cannibalism; see Steel, *How to Make a Human*, 67–91, 118–35.

44. Gemstones were often correlated with saintly bodies, both for their preciousness and their incorruptibility. See Hahn, *Strange Beauty*; Overbey, "Seeing through Stone," 245–46.

ness in early Christianity frequently signified ignorance, faithlessness, and foolishness, as part of the larger Christian metaphorical system connecting the spiritual with the physical. The blinding of these captives is thus spiritually disabling because it manifests the eschatological stakes of their situation by signifying a lack of faith, as when elsewhere in *Andreas* those who refuse to hear Christ's teaching are referred to metaphorically as "mod-blinde" ["blind in mind"] (814a).[45]

The Mermedonians also cognitively impair their victims through a potion that robs them of their wits and makes them behave like animals:

> Syððan him geblendan bitere tosomne,
> dryas þurh dwol-cræft, drync unheorne,
> se onwende gewit, wera in-geþanc,
> heortan on hreðre; hyge wæs oncyrred,
> þæt hie ne murndan æfter man-dreame,
> hæleþ heoro-grædige, ac hie hig ond gærs
> for mete-leaste meðe gedrehte.
>
> [Then they would bitterly blend together for them, sorcerers through magic, a dreadful drink that unwound the wit, the intellect of men, the heart in the breast; the mind was changed, that they [those who drank] did not mourn after the joys of men, sword-wanting heroes, but they wearily consumed hay and grass in their lack of food.] (33–39)

The Mermedonians' magic potion alters their captives in body and mind: both *onwende* and *oncyrred* are verbs that suggest physical as well as metaphorical change. The alteration is an impairment of the mind that would keep the captive placid, but it is described here as also a dehumanizing move, making the captives uninterested in the joys of men and willing to eat hay and grass in place of other food, as if they have become livestock.[46] The cap-

45. The *Andreas* poet uses blindness in this line to stigmatize the resistance of Jews to Christian teaching. While no Jewish characters appear in the main action of the poem, they maintain a strong rhetorical presence; see Hermann, *Allegories of War*, 155–59; Scheil, *Footsteps of Israel*, e.g., 228–39; Wright, "Jewish Magic." On the physicalization of blindness within the physical *mod*, the mind and heart of OE vernacular psychology, see chapter 1.

46. On the common medieval correlation between intellectual or cognitive disability and animality, albeit not specifically in early medieval England, see Metzler, *Disability in Medieval Europe*, 184–220.

tives must be understood to remain fundamentally human—otherwise the Mermedonians would not really be cannibals—but they are made to aberr from human norms through their treatment as animals.

When Matthew is imprisoned, the Mermedonians' impairments of their victims do not affect him as they do the bodies of more ordinary captured foreigners. Even when the Mermedonians blind and drug the saint, he continues to praise God internally:

> Hie þam halgan þær handa gebundon
> ond fæstnodon feondes cræfte,
> hæleð hell-fuse, ond his heafdes sigel
> abreoton mid billes ecge. Hwæðre he in breostum þa git
> herede in heortan heofon-rices weard,
> þeah ðe he atres drync atulne onfenge.
>
> [They bound there the hands of that saint, and fastened him with devilish craft, hell-bound warriors, and his head's jewels destroyed with the blade of a sword. However, he yet praised in his breast [and] in his heart the guardian of the heavenly kingdom, although he took the horrid drink of poison.] (48–53)

The statement of Matthew's constancy follows *hwæðre* (however) and *git* (yet), indicating the potential for surprise that one who has become physically blinded might remain spiritually clear-sighted. The poet redoubles emphasis on the saint's unexpected spiritual clarity with *þeah ðe* (although), as a marker that this should not have been possible after drinking the terrible potion that, as the poem has already explained, unwinds men's minds. Matthew's cognitive impairment and corresponding potential disablement are mitigated even while he is still imprisoned, when the Mermedonians encounter him as "modes glawne" ["clear in mind"] (143b), suggesting that both the potion and spiritual implications of blindness are not affecting him.

Matthew is, however, still affected by other constraints: he laments to God that he must now act "swa þa dumban neat" ["like a speechless beast"] (67b) in order to avoid suspicion that the potion has not worked, asserting his own behavioral likeness to an animal in correlation with impaired speech. Moreover, Matthew asks for "leoht on þissum life" ["light in this life"] (77a), lest he live out the abuses of the Mermedonians "ablended" ["blinded"] (78a). The saint's body is impaired by the Mermedonians' abuse in ways that materialize a distancing from salvation—through the metaphor of spiritual blind-

ness and the exclusion of animals from salvation—as an earthly extension of the eschatological impairment threatened by the possibility that his flesh being consumed would prevent resurrection in the afterlife.

The comforts God provides in response to Matthew's prayer underscore the saint's anxieties. God sends "wuldres tacen / halig of heofenum, swylce hadre sigel" ["a sign of glory, holy out of heaven, like a bright jewel"] (88b–89). The language here recalls the description of Matthew's eyes as "his heafdes sigel" ["his head's jewels"] (50b), linking the bright sign to the saint's visual impairment. Matthew is able to "see" this sign spiritually despite a physical blindness, but the sign is also described in overwhelmingly visual terms. The *Andreas* poet does not specify whether or when Matthew's eyes are healed, just that God provides at this moment "hælo ond frofre" ["healing and comfort"] (95b). The analogues for *Andreas* explicitly state that Matthew is able to see at this point; the visual nature of God's sign out of heaven suggests that though the *Andreas* poet omits specific reference to Matthew's healing, his sight may well have been restored at this moment all the same.[47]

Matthew's portion of the narrative is a small one—he is mentioned only briefly after the first 160 of *Andreas*'s 1,722 lines—but the impairment of his body, followed by the mitigation of that impairment, introduces the system of aberrance that is expanded by the Mermedonians and Andrew in the rest of the poem. Matthew's bodily wholeness is compromised, as Andrew's will be through violent torture, and yet that damage to the body also serves for both saints as an opportunity for God to empower them. God's reassurance that Matthew will be admitted into paradise promises salvation after the threat of cannibalism, foreshadowing the potential for even the Mermedonians to be saved through their eventual incorporation into the fold of Christianity.

Healing and Harrowing

Following the introduction of Matthew's plight, the narrative of *Andreas* shifts to Andrew, who is called to aid his fellow apostle and eventually journeys to Mermedonia by means of a poetically lengthy (though divinely accelerated) sea voyage. The ship's pilot is Christ, but Andrew is unable to recognize him until after the journey. In the Latin Casanatensis text, Andrew's inability to recognize Christ is explained as an effect on his vision, which Christ has

47. On Matthew's eyes being healed in the analogues, see Allen and Calder, *Sources and Analogues*, 17, §3; Boenig, *Acts of Andrew*, 2; Morris 231.

manipulated to prevent recognition by Andrew and his followers.[48] Such a divinely ordained vision impairment would curiously contrast Matthew's violent impairment at the hands of the Mermedonians; in *Andreas*, however, Andrew simply "ne wiste" ["did not know"] (261a, cf. 380b) with whom he was speaking.

While at sea, Christ the helmsman invites Andrew to tell him tales about how Christ's teachings have been demonstrated to the various unbelieving peoples on earth. Andrew's answer reveals the conceptual relationship between miraculous healings and the miraculous resurrection of the dead in order to illustrate divine power.[49] Summarizing Christ's healing miracles, Andrew reports:

> Sealde he dumbum gesprec; deafe gehyrdon;
> healtum ond hreofum hyge blissode,
> ða þe lim-seoce lange wæron,
> werige, wan-hale, witum gebundene;
> æfter burh-stedum blinde gesegon;
> swa he on grund-wæge gumena cynnes
> manige missenlice men of deaðe
> worde awehte.
>
> [He gave speech to the mute; the deaf could hear; the minds of the halt [people with mobility impairments] and lepers rejoiced, those who for a long time were impaired in their limbs, weary, in poor health, bound by torments; after [his visits to] towns, the blind could see; similarly, on the earthly way of humankind he awakened many different people from death with a word.] (577–84a)

The collection of impairments referenced here—impairments to speech, hearing, mobility, and sight, as well as illnesses, such as leprosy or being "wan-hale" ["in poor health"] (580a)—articulates the potential for these various embodiments to be thought of together. Despite the absence of a singular term in any medieval European language comparable to the category of "disability" today, as I discuss above in the introduction, the conceptual collection of embodiments in this passage suggests a grouping of those who warranted

48. Allen and Calder, *Sources and Analogues*, 24, §17.

49. The healing miracles and resurrection of the Patriarchs are drawn from the Greek version of the legend, but they do not appear in the OE homiletic analogue or the Casanatensis Latin; see Boenig, *Acts of Andrew*, 7–10.

Christ's healing, even without a unifying collective term.[50] Whether or not such individuals in reality would have identified as a community, *Andreas* textually presents the idea of such individuals functioning collectively—systematically, even—in support of the demonstration of Christ's power in the text. The possibility of a particularly medieval disability community serves a narrative purpose here, much like the aberrant bodies of St. Matthew and the Mermedonians. The miracles Andrew relates culminate with the resurrection of "manige missenlice men" ["many different people"] (583), as if the resurrection of the whole body is the logical extension of healing localized bodily impairments, whether somatic or sensory. Because it is "swa" ["similarly"] (582a) to these healings that Christ raises the dead, the miracle of resurrection is presented as simply a more impressive, more extreme form of a healing miracle.

Christ's ability to resurrect the dead serves as the pinnacle of this quick summary of biblical healing miracles, but it also later serves as the climax of Andrew's overarching explanation of how Christ's worthiness has been made known. After nearly two hundred lines recounting Christ's other miracles, his theological debates, and the doubts of many unbelievers, Andrew relates an apocryphal miracle of Christ sending a miraculously proselytizing living stone, implied to be a sculpture of an angel, to resurrect the Old Testament patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (773–91).[51] Christ sends the stone to command the patriarchs to "leoðo gadrigean, / gaste onfon ond geogoðhade" ["gather their limbs, take up their souls and youthfulness"] (781b–82); they then venture forth "modige mearc-land tredan" ["to roam the borderlands bravely"] (802a) and preach until they are taken up into heaven in their resurrected bodies.[52] Andrew thus answers the original question from his "helms-

50. I make a similar argument regarding an OE *Life of St. Margaret* in "Healing the Unborn."

51. On the typological function of and possible influences upon this narrative, see Bolintineanu, "Wonders that Speak," 657–59; Brady, "Echoes of Britons," 672; Ferhatović, "*Spolia*-Inflected Poetics"; Reading, *Reading the Anglo-Saxon Self*, 61–83; Szittya, "Living Stone."

52. The directive to "gather their limbs, take up their souls and youthfulness" evokes common OE formulas for depicting the general Resurrection of all humankind. For example, as I discuss in chapter 6 below, the Exeter Book's *Christ in Judgment* describes the Resurrection as follows: "Sceal þonne anra gehwylc / fore Cristes cyme cwic arisan, / leoðum onfon ond lic-homan, / edgeong wesan" ["Then must each individual rise up alive, before the coming of Christ, take up their limbs and body, and become youthful"] (163b–66a in Clayton).

man" regarding how Christ's teachings are spread widely on the earth.[53] Notably, in this apocryphal miracle, the patriarchs contribute to the spread of Christ's teachings before being bodily assumed into heaven. Adding a stage of earthly preaching between the resurrection of the patriarchs and their entry into heaven demonstrates the alignment of the resurrection of a body on earth and the promised Resurrection body of the afterlife: the logical linchpin for reading healed, uncorrupt, and resurrected bodies on earth as models for the promised afterlife body, as we have seen in the legends of Ss. Swithun and Æthelthryth. In *Andreas*, bodily resurrections become central to preaching Christianity, both within Andrew's sub-narrative (because the patriarchs must be resurrected in order to preach) and for the larger narrative of *Andreas*, in which Andrew tells this story on his way to convert the Mermedonians.

This interlaced narrative of Christ's miracles uses both conventionally (to modern readers) disabled bodies and the resurrected bodies of the famed patriarchs to illustrate the revelation of Christianity across many lands. As I will revisit below, Andrew's miracles in Mermedonia include the resurrection of many Mermedonian youths drowned by a flood of Andrew's creation, by which point Andrew will have already undergone torture that positions the saint as imitating Christ's suffering during the Crucifixion. The imposition of this narrative about Christ resurrecting the dead, as an extension of his miraculous healings of the living, provides another point of comparison between saint and Savior. When Andrew later resurrects the Mermedonian youths, he becomes like Christ not only in the violence that has been enacted upon his own physical body, but also in the "healing" he is able to enact upon the bodies of the dead. Despite Andrew's lengthy tale seeming to digress from the main narrative of the poem, the pattern of a holy figure making whole aberrant bodies that range from disabled to dead, in this sub-narrative, contributes to the eschatological impacts of *Andreas* beyond its traditionally recognized allusive and typological utility. Andrew's tale during the sea voyage extends the poem's system of aberrance to include the miraculous works of Christ himself as antecedents for the miracles of his saints.

"Domlease" Death

After recounting Christ's resurrection of the patriarchs, Andrew joins his companions in miraculous sleep until they arrive in Mermedonia, where

53. Szittya, "Living Stone," 172–74.

Christ appears to the apostle and instructs him to rescue Matthew and convert the Mermedonians, while steeling himself to endure harsh torture. As Robert E. Bjork has observed, Christ's instruction to Andrew aligns the saint's upcoming suffering with Christ's own Crucifixion, directing the saint to follow his example.[54] Further aligning the saint with Christ, Andrew enters the city protected by the same distortion of perception that had concealed Christ's identity during the sea voyage. As Andrew moves about Mermedonia, freeing Matthew and the other captives, the Mermedonians are miraculously made unable to see him: "hine nænig gumena ongitan ne mihte, / synfulra geseon" ["none of the men could perceive him, [none] of the sinful ones [could] see [him]"] (986–87a). Alongside the Casanatensis text's characterization of Andrew's vision as limited when Christ did not wish to be recognized on the boat, the Mermedonians' inability to see becomes part of a larger system of perception and imperception that is perhaps less stigmatized, depending on its source. In *Andreas*, however, where Andrew's vision had not been affected—he simply did not know that it was Christ—the Mermedonians' inability to see Andrew contrasts the blindings they have inflicted. The Mermedonians have blinded their victims, but now, when a disruptive agent enters their city, their own vision impairment makes possible the saint's incursion and the eventual conversion of the Mermedonians.

Andrew's apostolic mission of conversion seems to be set aside, however, when the Mermedonians guarding Matthew's prison are killed without any opportunity to convert or repent. When Andrew approaches the prison,

> Geseh he hæðenra hloð ætgædere
> fore hlin-dura, hyrdas standan,
> seofone ætsomne. Ealle swylt fornam;
> druron domlease. Deað-ræs forfeng
> hæleð heoro-dreorige.
>
> [He saw a troop of heathens together, herdsmen standing before the barred door, seven altogether. Death took them all; they fell, lacking Judgment. Sudden death seized the blood-stained warriors.] (992–96a)

The poem does not state that Andrew killed these guards, only that he saw them. Andrew's nonaction contrasts the poem's homiletic analogue and the Greek *Acts of Andrew and Matthew* tradition, in which Andrew's prayer pre-

54. See lines 950–76; Bjork, *Old English Verse Saints' Lives*, 116.

cedes the guards' death, and the Casanatensis text, in which Andrew both prays and makes the sign of the cross.[55] In *Andreas*, without an earthly agent, the action of taking (that is, killing) may be attributed to a supernatural one, death itself. But the most recent agent is Andrew; he is the one who "geseh" ["saw"] the guards, implying that their deaths are his doing.

The *Andreas* poet describes these guards as *hyrdas*. Although *hyrdas* may simply mean "guards" or "protectors," I translate the word as "herdsmen" to emphasize the resonance of *hyrdas* with *heord* (herd) and recall the animalization of the Mermedonians' captives.[56] Such a relationship to their captives reinforces the humanity of the *hyrdas* by placing them in opposition to the "animals" they guard. In their death, the *hyrdas* are also emphasized as bearers of human souls, presumably souls that can be saved. Language describing the dead *hyrdas* evokes the separation of soul and body: "Þær heoro-dreorige hyrdas lagan, / gæsne on greote, gaste berofene, / fægra flæsc-haman" ["The herdsmen lay there blood-stained, lifeless in the dirt, bereft of spirit, flesh-homes of the doomed"] (1083–85a). These dead guards are still identified by their position—as *hyrdas*—but as the passage moves forward, they are dissociated from living identity: *gæsne* not only means "lifeless," but also "barren," "sterile," or "empty."[57] With the spirit departed, the bodies become only "flæsc-haman" ["flesh-homes"], the word used to describe both the flesh of victims that will be consumed by Mermedonians (154a) and the bodies of Mermedonians themselves (1085a). The kenning encapsulates an ironic absence: the "flesh-home" is no longer home to the *sawel* (soul) or *gast* (spirit). The *hyrdas*' souls have departed, affirming that the Mermedonians are indeed ensouled beings—humans—and thus have the potential to attain the salvation promised to humankind.

The circumstances of the *hyrdas*' deaths, however, threaten to cut these individuals off from the Resurrection and potential salvation. When the *hyrdas* fall, the *Andreas* poet calls them "domlease" (995a), translations of which have included "without renown," "ingloriously," and "powerless."[58] The com-

55. See Allen and Calder, *Sources and Analogues*, 25, §19; Boenig, *Acts of Andrew*, 12; Morris 237. In the homiletic and Greek versions, Andrew makes the sign of the cross to open the prison doors, whereas in the Casanatensis, both a prayer and the sign of the cross precede the guards' death and the opening of the doors.

56. *DOE*, "heord," "hyrde."

57. *DOE*, "gǣsne."

58. See North and Bintley, *Andreas* ("without renown"); Krapp, *Andreas*, and Liuzza, *Old English Poetry* ("ingloriously"); Clayton ("the inglorious ones"); Root, *Andreas* ("powerless").

ponents of the word, though, also suggest eschatological consequences for the Mermedonians' form of death: *dōm* refers to judgment, often specifically the Last Judgment of the Christian Apocalypse, while *-lēas* as a suffix means "without" or "lacking."[59] For *dōmlēas*, the *Dictionary of Old English* provides "inglorious," with the sense of lacking the good judgment to earn glory.[60] In a slightly different sense of lacking earthly judgment, and thus receiving a negative Judgment from God in the afterlife, *dōmlēas* suggests that the *hyrdas* face damnation for their participation in the cannibalistic culture of the Mermedonians. This sense of a horrible and permanent doom is corroborated by the only other surviving witnesses of *dōmlēas* in the Old English corpus: in *Beowulf*, "domleasan" characterizes the tragedy awaiting the Geats after Beowulf's death; in *Christ and Satan*, "domlease" describes the fallen angels.[61]

Given the context of cannibalism in *Andreas*, the anxiety that one's body being eaten would prevent resurrection points toward a further implication of the translation "lacking Judgment": that the *hyrdas* might be at risk not only of negative Judgment, but of eschatological nonexistence. Andrew's rescue of the prisoners empties the Mermedonians' store of food, and so the cannibal community faces potential starvation:

> Þa wearð forht manig
> for þam fær-spelle folces ræswa,
> hean, hyge-geomor, hungres on wenum,
> blates beod-gastes. Nyston beteran ræd,
> þonne hie þa belidenan him to lifnere
> gefeormedon.
>
> [Then, because of that calamitous news, many leaders of the people became fearful, downcast, mentally despairing in the expectation of hunger, the ghastly table-guest. They did not know any better advice than to sustain themselves on the departed as food.] (1085b–90a)

The confirmation that the Mermedonians only know cannibalism is immediately followed by further details of the *hyrdas*' fate: "Duru-þegnum wearð / in ane tid eallum ætsomne / þurh heard gelac hilde-bedd styred" ["For those door-thanes it happened within an hour that all together, through

59. *DOE*, "dōm."
60. *DOE*, "dōmlēas."
61. *Klaeber* 2890a; *Christ and Satan* 230a, in Clayton 316.

hard fortune, their battle-bed was disturbed"] (1090b–92). The disturbance of the *hyrdas*' battle-bed by their fellow cannibals alludes to mistreatment of the body by being butchered and eaten. While *Andreas* in its surviving form omits explicit confirmation that the *hyrdas* are to be cannibalized, the Latin Casanatensis text describes the Mermedonians' preparations to butcher the *hyrdas*, although Andrew intervenes.[62] Editors of *Andreas* concur that the broken alliteration in line 1090 indicates that "something brief is probably missing," just before the *hyrdas*' battle-bed is disturbed.[63] The poet, the scribe of the Vercelli Book, or another party between the two may have removed more explicit reference to intracommunal cannibalism, preferring instead the poetic allusion of a disturbed battle-bed.

It would seem that Mermedonian *flæsc-haman* are a viable option for sustenance when those of foreigners are no longer available. As we have seen above, Christian promises that the Resurrection would resolve and distinguish all bodies, even those consumed after death, were not necessarily enough to prevent narrativized saintly figures such as Matthew from fearing "þone wyrrestan [. . .] deað ofer eorðan" ["the worst death on earth"] (86b, 87b). The *hyrdas* may thus be "lacking Judgment" because in the poem's eschatology—if not in Augustine of Hippo's—being eaten jeopardizes one's promise of being resurrected. Without resurrected bodies, the *hyrdas* might not be able to attend the Last Judgment to receive their *dōm* (judgment), and thus might disappear from existence entirely. In this way, the threat of not returning to one's body in the afterlife implies not just a negative Judgment and eternal damnation, but the possibility of having no afterlife at all.

Though the *hyrdas* are potentially excluded from Judgment, the circumstances of their deaths also include them in the poem's system of aberrance. The possible consumption of their bodies after death crips the afterlife: the condition of a person's bodily remains threatens the potential for salvation, and thus a body may be both socially disabled and spiritually disabled even after death. The *hyrdas*' bodies are never restored; they are not noted to be resurrected at the end of the poem with many of their drowned countrymen, nor are they mentioned again after their battle-bed is disturbed. Nonetheless, their "domlease" death serves the narrative function of illustrating the high stakes of cannibalism, the importance of the earthly body for the future Resurrection body, and the eschatological consequences of mistreating the body on earth. The *hyrdas*' unfortunate fate contributes to the system of aber-

62. Allen and Calder, *Sources and Analogues*, 27–28, §22.
63. See Clayton 382.

rance in *Andreas* by fulfilling the threat to Matthew's body and those of the other captives: the *hyrdas*' bodies manifest the consequences of a cannibalistic society so that St. Matthew does not have to. Reading a system of aberrance in *Andreas* thus helps us to make sense of the apostolic failure of the *hyrdas*' death, because these Mermedonians' lack of access to salvation contributes to the narrative path to salvation outlined by *Andreas* for all Christians who hope not to be consumed by cannibals.

Impairment and Empowerment

Let us now return to the body with which we began: St. Andrew's tortured body. The narrative system of aberrant bodies that works toward the conversion of the Mermedonians—and the promise of salvation—requires that Andrew be vulnerable to impairment, which comes to pass when he allows himself to be captured by the Mermedonians. On the first day of his torture, Andrew is badly beaten:

> Wæs þæs halgan lic
> sar-bennum soden, swate bestemed,
> ban-hus abrocen; blod yðum weoll,
> haton heolfre.
>
> [The saint's body was sodden with painful wounds, dampened with blood, his bone-house broken; blood welled in waves, hot gore.] (1238b–41a)

The poet describes the violence to Andrew's body with brutal images: flesh permeated with wounds, skin drenched in blood, crushed and broken bones. Like the *hyrdas*' deaths, the scenes of Andrew's torture supply the violence promised during Matthew's captivity. The Mermedonians torture Andrew for three days, and he spends the intervening nights imprisoned and beset by demons. Between tortures, the Mermedonians briefly balk at the sight of "Cristes rode / on his mæg-wlite, mære tacen" ["the cross of Christ in his countenance, the celebrated sign"] (1337b–38). Andrew's appearance thus manifests the *imitatio Christi* of his torture by projecting the sign of the cross.[64] Although clearly a positive marking in a Christian context, the sign

64. Thomas D. Hill identifies the sign of the cross on Andrew's forehead as a *sphragis* or "seal," which provides apotropaic protection to the saint by physically marking him as Christian; "Sphragis."

prompts fear and aversion in those who see it. He is marked as both blessed and dangerous.

While most descriptions of torture in *Andreas* take a third-person point of view, the poet also provides insight into the saint's subjective experience. In asking God for his torture to end, Andrew delivers a firsthand account of his suffering:

> Nu sint sionwe toslopen, is min swat adropen,
> licgað æfter lande loccas todrifene,
> fex on foldan. Is me feorh-gedal
> leofre mycle þonne þeos lif-cearo.
>
> [Now my sinews are dissolved away; my blood is shed and lies over the land; my joints are sundered; my hair is on the earth. Death is more desirable for me than this life-sorrow.] (1425–28)

In addition to echoing the language of bloodshed from earlier descriptions, which would be visible to an outside observer, Andrew articulates the internal experience of the torture, that even his sinews and joints are damaged. The description in Andrew's voice of the shedding of his hair and blood—as well as other bodily fluids encompassed in the semantic range of *swāt*—emphasizes the fragmentation of his body into many pieces, scattered across the land, as if the Mermedonians have already begun the process of butchering him for his flesh.[65]

On the final day of his torture, Andrew's impairments turn to empowerment: the trail of Andrew's spilled blood generates flowering trees. God tells the saint, "Geseoh nu seolfes swæðe, swa þin swat aget / þurh ban-gebrec blodige stige, / lices lælan" ["See now the path of yourself, how your blood has spilled through the breaking of bones, shedding of blood, and bruising of the body"] (1441–43a). This is a notable change from the analogues, wherein it is Andrew's hair and flesh, torn from his body, that grow into trees and flowers.[66] But the *Andreas* poet describes only blood as miraculous fertilizer, linking Andrew's suffering to Christ's passion, because it "recalls the blood Christ shed for the salvation of mankind."[67] God emphasizes that the blood was spilled through torture, making Andrew's vulnerability the

65. I thank Haylie Swenson for pointing out to me the connection between torture and butchery as potentially similar means of fragmenting the body.

66. Allen and Calder, *Sources and Analogues*, 31, §28; Boenig, *Acts of Andrew*, 19; Morris 245.

67. Biggs, "Passion of Andreas," 422.

premise for his bodily matter's supernatural fecundity. The trail of blood is a "seolfes swæðe," a path of Andrew's self, the components of his physical body that have trailed in the wake of his tortures. The saint's *swāt* (blood), once contained within his physical body, becomes a *swæð*. The semantic range of *swæð* in Old English included a bandage, a vestige or trace, or—most appropriately—a mark or path made by a body.[68] As a bandage, the *swæð* works to contain Andrew's wounded body within its miraculous fertility; as a vestige or trace, the *swæð* paints a sign of Andrew's torture upon the landscape of Mermedonia; as a path made by a body, the *swæð* lays a route to the Mermedonians' salvation through the bodily matter of the saint. We have seen Old English *swæð* previously as the OE *Bede*'s word for St. Æthelthryth's scar; what for Æthelthryth was a trace of impairment in her flesh is for Andrew a trace made of flesh across the landscape.

God's specification that the path is of Andrew's self suggests that the saint might not be able to recognize it, for having spilled out of his body, his blood has become disconnected from his self, able to perform miracles without his awareness. And, indeed, his blood works marvelous things:

> Þa on last beseah leoflic cempa
> æfter word-cwidum wuldor-cyninges;
> geseh he geblowene bearwas standan
> blædum gehrodene, swa he ær his blod aget.
>
> [When at last he [Andrew] looked about the beautiful field following the king of glory's spoken words, he saw flourishing groves standing adorned with flowers, in the same place he previously had spilled his blood.] (1446–49)

The trees are adorned with "blædum," a word for blossom, but specifically the kind of blossom that develops into fruit.[69] In phonic resonance, *blǣdas* (blossoms) emerge physically out of Andrew's *blōd* (blood), enabling the growth of plants in this barren land and providing a food source other than human flesh for the hungry Mermedonians. Moreover, a homophone of *blǣd* describes heavenly glory, as it does on several occasions in *Andreas*.[70] The trees

68. *B-T*, "swæþ."

69. The analogues more explicitly specify that these trees bear fruit; in the homiletic analogue the trees are "wæstm-berende" ["fruit-bearing"] (Morris 245). See also Allen and Calder, *Sources and Analogues*, 31, §28; Boenig, *Acts of Andrew*, 19.

70. See, e.g., *Andreas* 103a, 356b, 1719b.

spawned by Andrew's blood bear fruit for the Mermedonians to eat in this life—instead of consuming the saint's blood directly—while also offering the eschatological hope of salvation in a glorious afterlife.

Andrew's extremely agonistic torture depends upon the vulnerability of the saint's body to achieve the Mermedonians' conversion: it is only by wounding Andrew's body that the Mermedonians can be miraculously fed. Andrew's blood converts the destruction of torture into an act of creation and enables the Mermedonians' conversion from cannibalism to Christianity by first converting their barren landscape into one that can produce wholesome food. Andrew's aberrant body thus flouts expectations of bodily experience; rather than demonstrating sanctity through wholeness *despite* torture, Andrew's body demonstrates sanctity by effecting the conversion of the Mermedonians *because* he has been grievously tortured. Andrew's blood has the ability to supernaturally impact the world beyond the boundaries of Andrew's body, as if the saint's life-force—Old English *feorh*—is transmittable by blood.[71] That the trail of Andrew's blood is a trail of Andrew's self suggests that blood synecdochically figures individual identity, which dramatically underscores the stakes of the Mermedonians' cannibalism—often emphasized in terms of their consumption of blood—as effectively also threatening to consume their victims' identities.[72]

On the revelation of the fruit trees, the plot of *Andreas* pivots from an emphasis on Andrew's pain, suffering, and even despair, toward his empowerment as a saint. After revealing the trees, the poet describes no further tortures, and God heals the saint's body (1469–77). Once healed, Andrew's body maintains no marks of his wounds at all—"næs him gewemmed wlite" ["his appearance was not marked"] (1471a)—making Andrew's body instead conceptually marked by the absence of wounds, despite their former or potential appearance. The poem thus changes tack from a martyrdom narrative—in which, if a reader were unaware that Andrew would eventually die in Achaia, not Mermedonia, they might justifiably expect the apostle's death—to a conversion narrative, emphasizing the eschatological prospects of the Mermedonians as they become incorporated into the body of Christianity.[73] It is only

71. See Lockett, *Anglo-Saxon Psychologies*, 49–50.

72. *Andreas* highlights the Mermedonians' consumption of blood, e.g., at 23b, 79b, 159b, 1003a, 1271a.

73. We might expect the more learned audience member to have known it was to be a conversion narrative all along. Here I offer a *corrigendum* to my earlier work in "Eschatology for Cannibals," where I erroneously identified the location of Andrew's martyrdom as Ethiopia, which is rather the traditional site of St. Matthew's passion.

by being made vulnerable to torture, injury, and bloodshed that Andrew is empowered to convert the Mermedonians, as numerous previous readings of *Andreas* have observed.[74] Andrew's impairment and empowerment correspond roughly to the monstrous potential to simultaneously exhibit both lack and excess that Karen Bruce Wallace identifies as *unhælu*.[75] The fact of Andrew's sanctity, however, recentralizes him within a Christian moral framework, with a healed body, but one still connected to *unhælu* through both its preceding narrative and the excess of its supernatural fecundity. The hagiographic mode of the poem thus destabilizes the privileged place of *hælu*, of whole bodies; it "complicates the spectrum," to borrow Bruce Wallace's words, by imagining aberrant forms of embodiment that are *unhal* and yet also constitutive of eschatological hope.[76]

Converting Cannibals into Christians

Andrew's crip body does not function alone in its support of eschatological hope. Andrew's tortured, miraculous body participates in the larger system of aberrance in *Andreas*, across the narrative timeline of the text, against Matthew and the other captives' blinded and drugged bodies, the bodies of Andrew's sea-voyage tale, and the monstrous bodies of the cannibals themselves, in order to lay the path not only to conversion, but also to salvation.

After providing food for the Mermedonians, Andrew creates a miraculous flood that both promises to quench the cannibals' bloodthirst and also physically purifies the sinful nation. Typologically, the flood recalls both the Old Testament Noahic flood and the New Testament sacrament of baptism.[77] Thinking of the flood as a baptism also frames it as a prerequisite for salvation, enacting a physical change (the washing of the body) as a symbolic manifestation of a spiritual change (the cleansing of the soul).[78] The flood symbolically and literally washes the Mermedonians clean and welcomes them into the church. The conversion of the Mermedonians, through the provision of food sources and symbolic baptism, resolves the Mermedonians' cannibalism by incorporating them into the Christian faith and reworking their aberrant habits into behaviors more acceptable to Christian eschatology.

74. E.g., Dendle, "Pain and Saint-Making," 46; Fee, "Productive Destruction," 56; Irving, "A Reading of *Andreas*," 231.

75. Bruce Wallace, "Unhælu."

76. Bruce Wallace, "Grendel and Goliath," 121–25.

77. See, e.g., Walsh, "Baptismal Flood."

78. Hill, "Figural Narrative," 270.

Through the process of conversion, the Mermedonians undergo a substantial shift. They are changed from "wæl-wulfas" ["slaughter-wolves"] (149a) and "sylf-ætan" ["self-eaters"] (175b) into "tir-eadigra / wenede to wuldre weorod unmæte" ["an unmeasurable troop of the glory-blessed, who hoped for glory"] (1681b–82). The post-flood Mermedonians "holdlice" ["loyally"] (1639a) and "fromlice" ["piously"] (1640a) hear Andrew's preaching and ask for proper, individual baptism. They are described as Christians (1677b), who love Andrew's teaching so much they "stodon him ða on ofre æfter reotan" ["stood on the shore wailing for him"] (1712) during his departure. The provision of food, baptism, and Christian teaching eliminates the external factors—namely, sin, famine, and concomitant cannibalism—that have been spiritually disabling to the Mermedonians, and with those barriers removed they become model Christians.

Moreover, Andrew directly alters the bodies of many Mermedonians through a miraculous resurrection, which materially foreshadows the universal Resurrection of Judgment Day. Though the fourteen "wyrrestan" ["worst"] (1592b) Mermedonians are subsumed and sent to their well-earned damnation when Andrew's flood drains into the earth (1591–95a), the saint resurrects the youths who have died in the flood: "Het þa onsunde ealle arisan, / geonge of greote, þa ær geofon cwealde" ["He then commanded the youths, whom the flood had killed, to rise up from the dirt, entirely whole"] (1623–24). Though they have only just been drowned, the youths are raised up "of greote" ["from the dirt"], as if the flood has made earthly graves for them. This resurrection manifests both a spiritual reformation and a literal, bodily re-formation, because "ða wæs eall eador / leoðolic ond gastlic" ["each was entirely together, bodily and spiritually"] (1627b–28a). By being remade into whole bodies, these Mermedonian youths are also remade into whole Christian subjects. Andrew himself makes clear that the sequence of death and resurrection means to inspire the Mermedonians' conversion; before resurrecting the youths, Andrew tells the Mermedonians who have survived the flood, "Eow is wuldres leoht / torht ontyned, gif ge teala hycgað" ["The bright light of heavenly glory will be opened to you, if you think rightly"] (1611b–12).

Andreas's system of aberrance culminates with the transformation of the Mermedonians as a means of demonstrating eschatological hope through the body. The conversion depends upon the aberrance of cannibal bodies, the physical and spiritual disability of the individuals who are to be consumed, models for healing and resurrection from the life of Christ, and the creation of saintly empowerment through the violent fragmentation of St. Andrew's body. The Mermedonians ultimately identify a path of sin, conversion, resur-

rection, and salvation for all current or potential Christians, in which the earthly body in numerous forms plots the way to the Resurrection body of the Christian afterlife. Reading a system of aberrance in *Andreas* reveals how contrasting forms of embodied difference function in surprising unison to convey Christian ideas about salvation. Just as Andrew's blood traces a *swæð*—a path created by a body—that leads the Mermedonians to salvation through the provision of non-anthropophagous food, the narrative system of aberrance in *Andreas* traces a *swæð*—a path created by multiple bodies—that sustains the eschatological hopes of early medieval Christianity for the resurrection of the body and the salvation of the soul.

We have thus seen in *Andreas* that interconnected representations of aberrant bodies, whether disabled or marked by other forms of embodied difference, enable Christian eschatological hope. *Andreas* exhibits the systematic use of aberrance toward spiritually prosthetic goals on the level of a single text. Expanding our view, the next chapter traces a system of aberrance that functions across multiple texts claimed by the same poet. Like *Andreas*, the signed poems of Cynewulf generate a system of aberrance that illuminates promises of resurrection and salvation; they also bring the poet into their system of aberrance, through epilogues inflected by Cynewulf's individual eschatological anxieties.

Five

Cynewulf's Wounds

Sinners, Saints, and the Poet's Eschatological Anxiety

Cynewulf fears for his soul. In the epilogues of four Old English poems, the poet Cynewulf turns from religious narratives of Christ and the saints toward anxious eschatological anticipation. He projects abstract, yet intense, scenes of apocalyptic terror and the Last Judgment. Cynewulf does not know his soul's destination—heaven or hell—but he laments that he has been "synna wunde" ["wounded with sins"] and "weorcum fah, / synnum asæled" ["stained by [my] deeds, constrained by sins"].[1] Cynewulf sometimes notes that he is advanced in age and expects to embark on this unknown journey imminently. These epilogues expect the resurrected masses of humanity to quake with fear at the prospect of Judgment, but Cynewulf is already afraid in the moments of the poems. Or perhaps he only presents himself as afraid, a pious humility that serves his requests that readers pray for him, even as he also exhorts his audience to tend to their own souls. So that readers will know for whom to pray, the poet encodes his name in Germanic runes in the verses anticipating Judgment.[2]

1. These phrases appear in *Juliana* 710a and *Elene* 1242b–43a, respectively. All quotations of Cynewulfian poems are from Bjork 1–31 (*Ascension*), 77–127 (*Juliana*), 129–39 (*Fates of the Apostles*), and 141–235 (*Elene*), cited parenthetically by line number. Bjork retains the traditional line numbers for *Ascension* from its previous continuous lineation with *Advent Lyrics* and *Christ in Judgment*, as in Krapp and Dobbie, *Exeter Book*, so the poem runs from lines 440 through 866.

2. A standard thorough treatment of all four runic signatures remains Ralph W. V. Elliott's paired 1953 essays: "Cynewulf's Runes in *Christ II* and *Elene*" and "Cynewulf's Runes in *Juliana* and *The Fates of the Apostles*."

By identifying himself in runes, the poet Cynewulf participates in the system of bodily aberrance in each poem; aligning these poems under the same apparent author also links them into one larger system that facilitates both readers' hope for salvation and that of the poet himself. Cynewulf's poems are able to support eschatological hope through the bodies they depict. The four signed poems survive in the Exeter Book and the Vercelli Book, both made in the late tenth century.[3] In the Exeter Book (fols. 14r–20v), *Ascension*, also known as *Christ II*, narrates the Ascension of Christ, contrasting that event to the Incarnation and characterizing the work of redemption as a series of Christ's leaps; the epilogue anticipates terror at the Second Coming of Christ and the Last Judgment.[4] Later in the Exeter Book (fols. 65v–76r), *Juliana* tells the story of a virgin martyr of the same name who endures horrendous tortures after refusing to marry a pagan prefect; in the *Juliana* epilogue, the poet apprehensively anticipates a mournful journey to a destination determined by his past deeds, so he seeks the saint's intercession for the forgiveness of

3. The Exeter Book (Exeter, Exeter Cathedral Library MS 3501) was copied by a single scribe in the south of England, perhaps in Exeter (Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter*), Crediton (Muir, *Exeter Anthology*, I:2–3), Glastonbury, or Christ Church, Canterbury (Gameson, "Origins"), likely between ca. 965 and 975 (Muir, *Exeter Anthology*, I:1; Niles, *God's Exiles*, vii). For descriptions of the manuscript, see Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter*, 95–147; Ker, *Catalogue*, 153; Muir, *Exeter Anthology*, I:1–44. The texts of the Exeter Book have been edited in Krapp and Dobbie, *Exeter Book*, and Muir, *Exeter Anthology*. Digital images of the Exeter Book have been made available online by Exeter Cathedral Library and Archives and the University of Exeter Digital Humanities Lab at https://theexeterbook.exeter.ac.uk/index.html. On the Vercelli Book, see chapter 4, note 4.

4. *Ascension*'s main sources are Gregory the Great's *Homily on the Ascension* and Bede's hymn *On the Lord's Ascension*, which are translated in Allen and Calder, *Sources and Analogues*, 78–83, with influence from the New Testament (e.g., Matthew 28:16–20; Mark 16:14–20; Luke 24:36–53; Acts 1:1–14); see Brown, "Descent-Ascent Motif"; Calder, *Cynewulf*, 42; Clemoes, "Cynewulf's Image"; Cook, *Christ of Cynewulf*, xliii. The numbering of the Exeter Book Christ poems harks back to a time when the three were all thought one poem, as they are edited in Cook, *Christ of Cynewulf*, and Krapp and Dobbie, *Exeter Book*. I take *Ascension* (*Christ II*) to be separate from *Advent Lyrics* (*Christ I*) and *Christ in Judgment* (*Christ III*), which precede and follow it in the Exeter Book. The separation of the three poems was first suggested in 1705 by Humphrey Wanley in *Antiquae literaturae Septentrionalis liber Alter*, 280–81; see Fulk, "Cynewulf," 8–9; Hill, "Old English Poetry"; Liuzza, "*Christ* and *Guthlac*," 1. Indeed, Dolores Warwick Frese has argued that Cynewulf may have intentionally composed *Ascension* to fit between the other two Exeter Book Christ poems, building on the themes of each for the signed centerpiece work; "Cynewulf's Runic Signatures." For further discussion of *Christ in Judgment*, see chapter 6 below.

his sins.[5] In the Vercelli Book (fols. 52v–54r), *Fates of the Apostles* recounts the Apostles' martyrdoms; this epilogue requests that readers pray for the poet about to embark on his journey, anticipates the decay of the grave, and makes the poet's identity known through a riddle of misarranged runes.[6] Also in the Vercelli Book (fols. 121r–33v), *Elene* relates the pursuit and recovery of the True Cross by St. Helen, mother of Constantine the Great, called Elene in the poem; the *Elene* epilogue presents the poet as aged and wise in the craft of poetry, which has been a comfort in his old age as he laments the stain of his sins.[7]

The four poems that bear Cynewulf's signature are the only extant body of Old English poetry plausibly attributable with some confidence to a single author, and those signatures make Cynewulf one of few named authors of Old English poetry.[8] Everything we know about Cynewulf derives from

5. The legend of St. Juliana originates in the Great Persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire in the early fourth century under Emperor Diocletian. The hagiographic tradition on Juliana reports that she died in Nicomedia (modern-day İzmit in Turkey), probably in 303 CE. Cynewulf's version derives from a recension of the late-sixth- or early-seventh-century *Passio S. Iulianae*, which was known in England by ca. 700. See Lapidge, "Cynewulf and the *Passio S. Iulianae*," wherein the surviving Latin *passio* closest to Cynewulf's source is edited at 156–65.

6. On the possible sources of *Fates of the Apostles*, see Calder, *Cynewulf*, 27–29; Conner, "On Dating Cynewulf," 35–45; McCulloh, "Did Cynewulf Use a Martyrology?" Early scholarship took *Fates* as the conclusion to *Andreas*, which it follows in the Vercelli Book; for a summary of the linguistic evidence for separating the two, see Fulk, "Cynewulf," 7–8.

7. *Elene* is based on a version of the *Acta Cyriaci*, which is translated in Allen and Calder, *Sources and Analogues*, 59–68. Attempts to order the composition of the poems have relied on assessments of quality, troubled by uncertainty over whether poems perceived as lower quality (*Juliana* and *Fates*) are the works of an inexperienced poet or one whom scholars have presumed declined in his old age; see Anderson, *Cynewulf*, 22; Bjork xi–xviii. Although previous chapters have extensively discussed the relationship between OE texts and their sources, in this chapter I focus on the OE poems themselves and the relationships between bodies that emerge therein, through the assemblage of bodies from different sources, whether the distinctive embodiments follow their sources or not.

8. The other prominent poets are Caedmon, Bede (if we accept his authorship of "Bede's Death Song"), and Ælfric (if we read his rhythmical homilies as verse, which would be an expansive corpus; see Bredehoft, "Ælfric and Late Old English Verse"); Fay, "Cynewulf as Author," 35. See also Emily V. Thornbury's "Handlist" of additional named poets (omitting Ælfric) in *Becoming a Poet*, 243–47. For a detailed summary of the process by which scholars identified Cynewulf through his runic signatures between 1840 and 1889, see Calder, *Cynewulf*, 12–15. On early debates regarding the extent of Cynewulf's work, which has at times been proposed to include the entirety of both

these four poems: that he was probably a cleric, speaking an Anglian dialect, with a "religious and literate background such as one might associate with a Benedictine monastery," but that he does not align with otherwise historically documented individuals.[9] Both of the manuscripts in which these poems survive date to the late tenth century, but the Cynewulfian poems themselves may have been composed as early as the late eighth century, though more likely the ninth, or as late as shortly before the manuscripts' production.[10] Nonetheless, the various ways Cynewulf thinks about the afterlife through aberrant embodiments remained meaningful in the late tenth century, when these poems were copied into the Exeter and Vercelli Books.[11] Whether or not a singular poet composed all four poems, the construction of a Cynewulfian persona indicates some sense of interaction between the texts, grouping

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the Exeter and Vercelli Books' poems, see Butler, "Cynewulf Question Revived"; Cook, *Christ of Cynewulf*, lii–lxv; Fay, "Cynewulf as Author." On the largely agreed-upon canon of Cynewulf's poems today, see Fulk, "Cynewulf." *Guthlac B*, the poem likeliest to be an unsigned Cynewulfian poem, is tantalizing because it lacks its end and thus any would-be signature; it is edited with the signed Cynewulfian poems in Bjork 33–75. See also, e.g., Biggs, "Unities"; Fulk, "Cynewulf," 5–7; Roberts, *Guthlac Poems*, 60–62; Sisam, *Studies*, 134. I omit all but the briefest reference to *Guthlac B* in this chapter, as the epilogues are of high importance for recognizing Cynewulf's participation in each poem's system of aberrance.

9. Anderson, *Cynewulf*, 23. See also Bjork viii; Calder, *Cynewulf*, 16; Sisam, *Studies*, 1–28. Rhyme sequences in *Elene* and *Ascension* reveal that Cynewulf's dialect was Anglian, despite West Saxon corruption of the rhyme by scribes of the Exeter and Vercelli Books; see Sisam, *Studies*, 1–2, 119–39. Based on his reconstruction of Cynewulf's rhyming passages, R. D. Fulk suggests that Cynewulf was more likely to be Mercian than Northumbrian; "Cynewulf," 14.

10. Fulk argues that based on the spelling of the poet's name ("Cynewulf" or "Cynwulf," rather than "Cyniwulf"), the poems must have been composed no earlier than ca. 750 if Mercian and no earlier than ca. 850 if Northumbrian; "Cynewulf," 15–19; see also Cook, *Christ of Cynewulf*, lxviii–lxx. Daniel G. Calder has argued that Cynewulf was active in the early ninth century in Mercia; *Cynewulf*, 15–18. In contrast, Patrick W. Conner argues that Cynewulf's source for *Fates of the Apostles* was a martyrology that could not have been written before the late ninth century, making the likely dates for these poems' composition no earlier than ca. 850; "On Dating Cynewulf," 35–45. On the late-tenth-century dates of the manuscripts that provide the latest possible date of composition for the signed Cynewulfian poems, see Ker, *Catalogue*, 153 (Exeter Book), and 460–64 (Vercelli Book), as well as Krapp, *Vercelli Book*, xvi; Krapp and Dobbie, *Exeter Book*, xiii–xiv.

11. Readings of Cynewulfian poems resonating with tenth-century contexts include: Anderson, *Cynewulf*, 17, 23; Abraham, "Cynewulf's *Juliana*"; Estes, "Colonization and Conversion"; Klein, "Reading Queenship."

the aberrant bodies therein represented into a shared system.[12] I discuss the four poems as if a single mind links them; if indeed there were multiple minds involved, then although we would lose access to the crip eschatological anxiety of a singular early medieval individual, we would gain broader access to eschatological anxieties on a communal scale.[13]

Across the four signed poems, Cynewulf places himself in a system of bodily aberrance that imagines eschatological hope and anxiety through the language of bodily wholeness and fragmentation. Literal disability is scarce in these poems (though certainly present), but the language of impairment—with spiritually disabling and enabling consequences—is pervasive. Intersections between disabled, crip, and other marked embodied forms are too numerous to explore comprehensively in this chapter; the discussion that follows prioritizes the realm of disability while endeavoring to highlight signal areas in which bodies are also marked by other forms of difference, most frequently by gender and religion, the latter commonly further tied to ethnicity. The four Cynewulfian poems persistently think eschatologically through bodies that are crip (experiencing the world through disability, whether their own or as a concept) and aberrant (deviating from bodily norms in ways including and beyond disability). The four epilogues, focused on eschatological hope and dread, consistently tie the poems' collective system of aberrance back to Cynewulf himself, as a potentially real early medieval person with real, or at least rhetorically powerful, eschatological anxieties. This chapter will not provide any new insight into who Cynewulf was or when he worked; rather, my aim is to use this poet as one example, who happens to have a name, of an early medieval Christian who anxiously anticipated the afterlife and who, within the crip eschatology of his time, used systems of aberrant bodies to forge a pathway to that afterlife.

Reading across the four signed poems with special attention to the epilogues facilitates the assessment of their shared understanding of embodiment. For example, Jill Hamilton Clements has argued that Cynewulf's runic signatures, which required the reader to reassemble the poet's name and identity, functioned as a model for the reassembly of Cynewulf's corporeal body

12. Jacqueline A. Fay rightly cautions against assuming that one poet with a consistent and accurate self-presentation authored the surviving texts; "Cynewulf as Author." Jennifer A. Lorden, however, argues that even if the Cynewulf poems do not represent a singular author, their intertextual project constructs authority in a way that was meaningful in early medieval England; "Discernment and Dissent."

13. For a compelling reading of Cynewulf as a member of a poetic community, see Thornbury, *Becoming a Poet*, 120–35.

at the Resurrection.[14] Several scholars have noted the ways Cynewulf aligns himself with figures in his poems through resonances between the main poems and the epilogues. Constance B. Hieatt notes that even in the shortest poem, *Fates of the Apostles*, Cynewulf places himself in relation to the Apostles: the "sið-geomor" ["journey-sorrowful"] (1b) poet examines the journeys of the "sið-frome" ["journey-bold"] (77a) Apostles before contemplating his own "sið" ["journey"] (111a) into the afterlife.[15] Considering together the full range of embodiments, both positively and negatively coded, across the four signed poems as a system of aberrant bodies enables us to reckon with the eschatological expectation that Cynewulf presents for himself and for his audience in the epilogues.

As the previous chapter argued, systems of bodily aberrance function in texts as networks of bodies that deviate from expected norms, working in concert to articulate paths to salvation and, obversely, damnation. Like a symphony of many instruments, aberrant bodies perform both harmoniously and discordantly in the service of the same tune. Bodies both positively and negatively coded function as complementary movements exploring the same themes, here eschatological hope and soteriological anxiety. Cynewulf's poems persistently frame figures that are important to the shaping of Christian eschatological hope in physical terms, but specifically physical terms that mark them as aberrant, as outside what a culture takes as the norm. Reading the four signed Cynewulfian poems together as a single system of aberrance, we find a collection of aberrant bodies articulating Cynewulf's path to salvation in much the same way we have seen for the audience of *Andreas*, though with the added personalization that this system serves to articulate eschatological anxiety and hope for one early medieval Christian.

Cynewulf's poems reveal the soteriological anxiety that could be felt by one early medieval poet, or at least an anxiety over salvation on an individual level that carried currency in the world of Old English poetry, from the poems' writing as early as the late eighth century through their copying in the Exeter and Vercelli Books in the late tenth century.[16] Though the four

14. Clements, "Reading, Writing, and Resurrection."

15. Hieatt, "*Fates of the Apostles*," 69–70. See also Anderson, *Cynewulf*, 102; Calder, *Cynewulf*, 31–32, 45, 102, 134; Frese, "Cynewulf's Runic Signatures," 324; Lorden, "Discernment and Dissent," 317–18.

16. It is unclear just how long the Exeter and Vercelli Books were read after they were copied. The Vercelli Book was in Italy by the late eleventh or early twelfth century, where it would have had fewer readers than in England, if any; see Halsall, "Vercelli and the Vercelli Book"; Sisam, *Studies*, 113–18. The Exeter Book was brought to Exeter

signed poems do not survive in a single manuscript, their survival as pairs in two manuscripts with other connections (such as the *Soul and Body* poem that survives in both the Exeter and Vercelli Books) suggests that they had the potential to be consumed together between their composition and their copying; at the very least, *Elene* and *Fates* in the Vercelli Book and *Ascension* and *Juliana* in the Exeter Book continued to be available as pairs once the copies that survive today were made. Rather than look at each poem in isolation, more can be gleaned about Cynewulf's eschatological thinking by reading across the poems, focusing on the relationship between Cynewulf and the aberrant figures he writes, to explore themes in his representation of the anticipated afterlife. This chapter analyzes the four poems in cross-sections, considering sinful bodies, saintly bodies, and then Cynewulf's self-presentation in the context thereof. In contrast to the system of aberrance we have discussed in *Andreas* as a single poem, the Cynewulfian corpus invites a case study of one authorial figure, whose work spread widely enough to appear in two surviving manuscripts and whose works can be identified—by those runic signatures—to potentially have been produced by the same poetic mind. Cynewulf's epilogues situate the poet as an individual early medieval Christian thinking eschatologically through systems of bodily aberrance, revealing the spiritually prosthetic function of a literary system of aberrance for a poet with real eschatological anxieties.

Sinful Aberrance

The foes of Christianity, both human and demonic, appear throughout the Cynewulfian poems accompanied by the figural language of illness, impairment, and disability. Cynewulf uses language of impairment and disability to characterize non-Christian humans—understood from the perspective of these poems to be spiritually impaired and distant from salvation—through physicalizing metaphors. Physicalizing religious difference is a well-established technique, particularly in the process by which anti-Judaic rhetoric (biased against Judaism as a religion) becomes antisemitic (biased against Jews as an ethnic group).[17] The multiply inflected marginalized bod-

by Bishop Leofric (d. 1072) in the mid-eleventh century, but it is likewise unclear how long it was being read for its contents; the Exeter Book at some point underwent a period of use as a cutting board and was substantially stained and burned; see Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter*, 1–20; Krapp and Dobbie, *Exeter Book*, xiv–xv.

17. Many OE texts, but notably *Elene*, are both anti-Judaic and antisemitic; I use the latter term to emphasize the texts' bias against Jews in distinctly embodied terms, a

ies of non-Christians in Cynewulf's poems, particularly *Juliana* and *Elene*, illustrate the baseline association between religiously and ethnically inflected bodies and the language of disability, constructing marginalized embodiments through their mutual stigma.

Metaphoric blindness frequently stands in for spiritual nonperception in the Cynewulfian corpus. The metaphor of blindness appears across three poems: Juliana's torturer and would-be husband Eleusius is "hreoh ond hygeblind" ["rough and thought-blind"] (61a); Elene calls the Jews who refuse to show her the location of the True Cross "mod-blinde" ["mind-blind"] (306a); and *Fates of the Apostles* calls the killer of St. Bartholomew "hæðen ond hygeblind" ["heathen and thought-blind"] (46a).[18] Such descriptors rely upon the same metaphorical currency of blindness that I explored in the Alfredian translation program in chapter 1. Their appearance in Cynewulf's poetry further affirms the prevalence of the metaphor in Christian discourse. Shortly before calling Jews "mind-blind" in *Elene*, Cynewulf evokes the Gospel story of Christ healing a man born blind (John 9). As Elene is chastising the Jews, she says,

> Ge mid horu speowdon
> on þæs ondwlitan þe eow eagena leoht,
> fram blindnesse bote gefremede
> edniowunga þurh þæt æðele spald
> ond fram unclænum oft generede
> deofla gastum.

---

link that Andrew P. Scheil observes only beginning to emerge in the pre-Conquest era. His examples of OE sources beginning to link what he calls anti-Judaism to a distinctive form of embodiment survive in the Blickling Homiliary and the Vercelli Book; see *Footsteps of Israel*, 204–82. In counting the Jews in *Elene* among aberrant bodies, I am identifying the poem's treatment of Jewish bodies as such, not affirming it as reality. On antisemitism in *Elene*, see, e.g., Estes, "Colonization and Conversion"; Heckman, "Things in Doubt"; Hermann, *Allegories of War*, particularly 91–118; Scheil, *Footsteps of Israel*, 219–28. On antisemitism and anti-Judaism in early medieval England, see also Lavezzo, *Accommodated Jew*, 28–63; and the essays in Zacher, *Imagining the Jew*. On the intersections between racializing and ableist treatment of Jews in medieval Europe, see Shoham-Steiner, *On the Margins*.

18. The label *mod-blinde* in *Elene* does not have a parallel in Cynewulf's likely Latin source; see Calder, *Cynewulf*, 160–62. On metaphoric blindness in *Elene*, see Scheil, *Footsteps of Israel*, 211–14; Stepsis and Rand, "Contrast and Conversion." Similarly, on *Fates*'s imagery of sight and light, see Hieatt, "*Fates of the Apostles*."

> [You all spit filth into the face of him who made the light of your eyes anew as a remedy for blindness through his noble saliva, and from the unclean spirits of devils often rescued you.] (297b–302a)

This passage places Christ's healing of the man born blind in opposition to the trope of spiritual blindness that *Elene* uses to characterize the Jews.[19] It also plays on the dual connotations available for spittle, a production of the body that could signal disdain—such as by spitting in someone's face—or, when the saliva is Christ's own, could serve as vector for a healing miracle, as it does in the Gospel: Christ "expuit in terram et fecit lutum ex sputo et linuit lutum super oculos eius" ["spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle and spread the clay on his [the blind man's] eyes"] (John 9:6). Elene uses the Gospel parallel to accuse the Jewish people of rejecting the healing prowess of Christ so they may persist in spiritual blindness.

Mental impairment also characterizes non-Christians in Cynewulf's poems. In *Juliana*, the saint's pagan suitor Eleusius experiences significant psychiatric distress when the saint refuses to marry him and his tortures fail to harm the saint:

> Þa se dema wearð
> hreoh ond hyge-grim, ongon his hrægl teran,
> swylce he grennade ond gristbitade,
> wedde on gewitte swa wilde deor,
> grymetade gealg-mod ond his godu tælde,
> þæs þe hy ne meahtun mægne wiþstondan
> wifes willan.
>
> [Then the judge became tempestuous and grim-minded, and began to tear his garments; likewise, he bared and gnashed his teeth, went mad in his senses like a wild animal, roared furious in mind, and rebuked his gods, which could not overcome the strength of the woman's determination.] (594b–600a)

In this moment, Juliana's garments remain undamaged even by fire, but Eleusius, in his rage, tears his own clothing. Juliana's bodily integrity is

19. Elene evokes the antisemitic trope of spiritual blindness again when chastising a different group of Jews: "Ge blindnesse bote forsegon" ["You rejected the remedy for blindness"] (389).

intact, despite the threat to it, but Eleusius is violently moved and physically changed. Notably, Eleusius's gods are characterized by inability: an inability to overcome Juliana's strength of will. Eleusius is both spiritually and physically impaired by his madness. The prefect's humanity comes into question as he becomes enraged to the point of being "swa wilde deor" ["like a wild animal"] (597b), recalling the animal behavior lamented by Matthew in *Andreas*. Hilary E. Fox identifies Eleusius's lack of mental order in this moment and throughout *Juliana* as symptomatic of both his polytheism and his ineffectiveness as a ruler, in the poem's perspective, reflecting an "absence of that psychic order that made the human image like God."[20] The animalization of Eleusius's body and behavior distances him from what is expected of one who is human, making him aberrant. Cynewulf ultimately makes Eleusius's fate clear. After Juliana's martyrdom, Eleusius and a troop of his men drown at sea; "Hroþra bidæled, / hyhta lease helle sohton" ["Parted from comfort, without hope, they sought hell"] (681b–82).

Elene threatens the Jewish community in *Elene* with a similarly terrible death. When they initially refuse to tell Elene the location of the True Cross, she threatens them: "Eow in beorge bæl fornimeð, / hattost heaðo-welma, ond eower hra bryttað, / lacende lig" ["A flaming pyre will sieze you on the hilltop, hottest of battleflames, and the dancing flame will dissolve your corpses"] (578–80a). Some of the poem's most graphic imagery of violence—outside Constantine's battle scene early in the poem—appears here in Elene's threat to the Jewish community. As Joyce Tally Lionarons has observed, an inversion of the typical hagiographic dynamic is made possible by the antisemitic assumptions of the text: a Christian woman threatens violence against the non-Christian, a stark contrast to Juliana's torture by her non-Christian suitor, to which I will return below.[21] Elene tortures the chosen representative of the Jewish community, Judas (later Cyriacus): she orders him chained and imprisoned in a dry well with no food or water for seven days until he agrees to show Elene the location of the True Cross. When Judas Cyriacus repents, converts, reveals the location of the True Cross, and becomes a bishop, he continues his association with impairment; as we will see below, Cyriacus becomes famed for his miraculous healings.

Cynewulf additionally characterizes polytheism and idolatry in terms of sensory disabilities beyond vision impairment. Juliana refers to "dumbum ond deafum deofol-gieldum" ["dumb and deaf devil-idolatry"] (150). The

20. Fox, "Denial of God," 429.
21. Lionarons, "Cultural Syncretism," 63–64.

idols can neither literally nor figuratively hear or speak back to their worshippers; inability to hear or speak thus embodies the spiritual inadequacies of these idols, mirroring the metaphorical association between spiritual ignorance and blindness in the poem's depiction of Eleusius.[22] Juliana thus concisely highlights the idols' inability to either hear prayers or make replies, but through the shorthand of impairments to which the human body is more literally subject. *Juliana* also employs a similar metaphor, aligning sinfulness with illness, to characterize non-Christians. Juliana's torturer and her father "hæðne wæron begen / synnum seoce" ["were both heathens, sick with sins"] (64b–65a). Such metaphors invite the poems' audience to read sinfulness as impairment and bodily soundness as blessedness.

While she is imprisoned overnight between days of torture, a demon attempts to torment Juliana, but the saint forces him instead to recount his record of tempting humans to sin. *Juliana* characterizes both this demon and the humans he tempts through the language of disability.[23] When Juliana forces him to confess his misdeeds, the demon reports:

> Oft ic syne ofteah,
> ablende bealo-þoncum beorna unrim
> monna cynnes, mist-helme forbrægd
> þurh attres ord eagna leoman
> sweartum scurum, ond ic sumra fet
> forbræc bealo-searwum, sume in bryne sende,
> in liges locan, þæt him lasta wearð
> siþast gesyne.
>
> [Often I have taken away sight, blinded countless warriors by means of evil thoughts; the kindred of men, through poisoned points covered the light of their eyes with a veil of mist, a cloud of darkness; and I have crushed the feet of some with wicked snares; some I have sent into burning, into the embrace of fire, so that the last trace of him was seen.] (468b–75a)

22. Phrasing such as this is common in OE hagiography; for example, I discuss similar descriptions of pagan gods in Parker, "Healing the Unborn." On "dumb and deaf" idols in relation to broader early medieval English understandings of hearing impairment, see Garner, *Hybrid Healing*, 230.

23. There is also a demon in *Elene*, who enters the narrative just after the True Cross has been found. Elsewhere in *Elene*, Cynewulf refers to the "unclænum [. . .] deofla gastum" ["unclean spirits of devils"] (301a, 302a).

The demon describes blinding and fettering sinful men, explicitly tying physical blindness to sinfulness through the dative "bealo-þoncum": "by means of evil thoughts," he blinds warriors, not just spiritually, but with a "veil of mist," a vivid description of one possible lived experience of vision impairment. The demon likewise draws humans' "hyge from halor" ["thought from health"] (440a); *halor* here evokes both health (*hælu*) and salvation. In this context, the demon's long list of other physical attacks—such as causing men to bleed to death (475b–78a), drowning them (478b–81a), and luring them to violent deaths seemingly of their own making (481b–90a)—suggests that his blinding and fettering functions both figuratively and physically, working to spiritually disable his victims even as he also impairs their bodies.

Although the demon in *Juliana* describes spiritual impairment in terms of physical impairment, he also underscores the eventual decay of all nonsaintly human bodies as a kind of physical harm that signifies unworthiness.

> Ic þære sawle ma
> georнor gyme ymb þæs gæstes forwyrd
> þonne þæs lic-homan, se þe on legre sceal
> weorðan in worulde wyrme to hroþor,
> bifolen in foldan.
>
> [I care more eagerly for the soul, about the ruination of the spirit, than for the body, that which in the grave shall become in this world a comfort to worms, committed to the earth.] (413b–17a)

That the demon prioritizes the soul over the body dismisses corporeality for its transiency: the body is already doomed to corrupt in the grave, and so the real prize is the corruption of the soul. The idea that the body is always destined to be food for worms records the notion that the body is always already bound up in sin, precisely because the body is always already bound up in the spiritually disabling implications of decay.

Sinful bodies coexist with the saintly in *Juliana* and *Elene*, demonstrating, as we have seen elsewhere, the moral connotations of bodily deviance. Moreover, they demonstrate the interplay between the stigma applied to non-Christians and sinners and the stigmatized language of disability, beyond the Mermedonian cannibals discussed in chapter 4. As a result, the physicalization of morality—through negatively coded aberrant bodies—characterizes the spiritual fate that Cynewulf fears: sin, damnation, and becoming a comfort to worms.

Saintly Aberrance

The signed Cynewulfian poems do not limit bodily aberrance to figures negatively marked as spiritually deviant. As we have seen in *Andreas*, Cynewulf also presents positive spiritual figures as closely associated with violent harm to the physical body. Christ and the martyrs (here, the Apostles and Juliana) are quintessentially characterized by the physical violence that their bodies experience; just as Christ accomplishes Redemption through the Crucifixion, the martyrs become witnesses to Christ and their faith through the violence and fragmentation their own bodies undergo. Though Christ and the martyrs experience impairment, they are also associated with the healing of impairment, as we have seen with Ss. Swithun and Æthelthryth, as a model for the forgiveness of sins and the incorporation of the forgiven into the newly whole communal Christian body. It is tempting to read a division between violent injuries of Christ and the saints and the language of ongoing disability (such as blindness) used to describe figures of sin: that violence of martyrdom signifies holiness while ongoing disability, even if figural, might signify sinfulness. Figures such as Judas Cyriacus in *Elene*, however, complicate such a divide, as the same character bridges both the signification of sinfulness through impairment and the formation of sanctity through impairment, even to the point of becoming a miraculous healer. Tracing nuances in the aberrance of saintly figures across the signed Cynewulf poems reveals, moreover, that saintly bodies may also deviate from norms in ways that are coded positively but nonetheless mark them as aberrant.

Ascension contemplates the nature of Christ's body, both divine and human, through the distinctive circumstances of Christ's birth as it tells the story of Christ's bodily Ascension into heaven following the Resurrection. The poem opens with the establishment of a known story, that Christ "acenned wearð þurh clænne had" ["became known through a state of virginity"] (444) and "þætte Sunu wære / in middan-geard meotudes acenned" ["that Son of the Measurer was known on earth"] (451b–52). Twice in the first fifteen lines of *Ascension*, Cynewulf uses the word "acenned"—literally "known"—to describe Christ's Incarnation, making the act of becoming flesh into an act of becoming knowable. In this framework, Christ's body became interpretable when "he leomum onfeng ond lic-homan, / monnes magutudre" ["he took up limbs and body, as the offspring of man"] (628–29a) and "mennisc hiw / onfeng buton firenum" ["took on mannish form without sin"] (721b–22a). The Christ who ascends in this poem is crucially also a Christ firmly embodied, a Christ characterized by the unusual features of his Incar-

nation. As Johanna Kramer notes, human access to heaven is made possible by the entry into heaven of Christ's liminal body, both human and divine, a body the broader corpus of Ascension literature from early medieval England used to teach Christians about salvation.[24] A human body without sin, born of a virgin, certainly deviates from the norm, but that deviation is just as certainly viewed positively.

Elsewhere in *Ascension*, Cynewulf characterizes the Incarnation as an act of bringing health: "Hwæt, we nu gehyrdan hu þæt hælu-bearn / þurh his hyder-cyme hals eft forgeaf" ["Behold, we have now heard how that health/salvation-child through his coming here has given health/salvation hereafter"] (586–87). In these lines Cynewulf plays on the dual meanings of both *hælu* and *hals*, both of which can refer to either health or salvation, as my translation indicates. Reading these words as both health and salvation reveals the layering here of Christ's spiritual promises and the bodily nature of how those promises are being conveyed. Christ's body—and specifically the ways his body is aberrant—makes possible the Redemption accomplished in the Crucifixion.

Similarly, *Elene* gives much thought to the embodiment of Christ through its focus on recovering the True Cross.[25] Emphasizing the tortures of the Crucifixion, *Elene* repeatedly refers to Christ as the one who "on galgan wearð [. . .] ahangen" ["came to be hanged on the cross"] (179a, 180a), "ahangen wæs / on Caluarie" ["was hanged on Calvary"] (671b–72a), "ahangen wæs [. . .] on rode treo" ["was hanged on the rood tree"] (205a, 206a), and as "þone ahangnan cyning" ["the hanged king"] (933a, cf. 453a), and the place where the True Cross is found is "on þa dune up ðe Dryhten ær / ahangen wæs" ["up on the hill on which the Lord was previously hanged"] (717–18a). Most poignantly, Elene swears to punish the Jews "þurh Sunu meotodes, / þone ahangnan god" ["by the Son of the Measurer, the hanged God"] (686b–87a). Such phrases juxtapose divinity and divine rulership with the corporeal horrors of Crucifixion. Every time *Elene* refers to Christ with an epithet evoking the Crucifixion, the poem draws upon the language of extreme wounding, impairment that was not survivable. Similarly, the recovery of

> þam næglum þe ðæs nergendes
> fet þurhwodon ond his folme swa some,

24. See Kramer, *Between Earth and Heaven*, particularly 1–3.

25. Other Cynewulfian poems also reference Christ's torture in the Crucifixion; for example, the devil who attempts to torment Juliana begs her to release him in the name of Christ, "se þe on rode treo / geþrowade" ["who on the rood tree suffered"] (447b–48a).

mid þam on rode wæs rodera wealdend
gefæstnod, Frea mihtig

[the nails which passed through the feet of the Savior and likewise his hands together, by means of which he was fastened on the rood, the Ruler, the mighty Lord] (1064–67a)

emphasizes the impairment undergone by Christ during the Crucifixion. Cynewulf specifies that these are the same objects that "þurhwodon" ["passed through"] the hands and feet of Christ, emphasizing their violent use. Indeed, that is their appeal. The invocation of Christ's injury perhaps explains beyond alliterative utility Cynewulf's choice here to call Christ *Nergend*, meaning Savior with a sense of nourishment, rather than the much more common *Hælend*, meaning both Healer and Savior. Christ is still the Savior as the nails are driven into his hands and feet, but Cynewulf avoids calling him the Healer while Christ's body is pointedly unhealed.

Emphasis on Christ's Crucifixion throughout the poem also plays into *Elene*'s antisemitism by emphasizing the poem's blame of Jews for the Crucifixion. Cynewulf asserts that the Jews "God sylfne / ahengon" ["hanged God himself"] (209b–10a). *Elene* even puts acknowledgment of Christ's bodily aberrance—the divinity of his fully human body—into discourse amongst the poem's fictional Jews. While explaining to his community that he knows the location of the True Cross because his father taught him about the Crucifixion, Judas recounts his father calling Christ "sige-bearn Godes" ["the victory-child of God"] (481a). Here the poem frames the Jewish community as willfully disbelieving, since Judas characterizes Christ as Son of God, and yet he acknowledges that the Crucifixion sought to inflict Christ with "sarum" ["wounds"] (479a).[26] This is, of course, a medieval Christian fantasy of Jews, a paranoid imagining of what kinds of things Jews might say among themselves about Christ, acknowledging unrepentantly the wounds made in his body even as at least one of them, Judas, has been informed of his divinity. The divine aberrance of Christ's body serves to shape the poem's antisemitic imaginary, building a conceptual system to understand both Christ's body and Jewish bodies.

The violent martyrdoms of the Apostles and Juliana participate in this

26. On Judas Cyriacus's understanding of Christian doctrine prior to his conversion, see Lorden, "Discernment and Dissent," 310–12.

system as well.[27] In *Fates of the Apostles*, Cynewulf gives brief accounts of how the Apostles met their deaths by martyrdoms of various means in various lands, which often highlight violence. Andrew, for example, "gealgan þehte" ["covered the gallows"] (22b) and Philip

> þanon ece lif
> þurh rode cwealm ricene gesohte,
> syððan on galgan in Gearapolim
> ahangen wæs hilde-corðre.
>
> [at that time quickly sought eternal life through the killing of the cross after he was hanged on the gallows in Hieropolis by a battle-troop.] (38b–41)

As for James,

> ðurh sweordes bite
> mid Iudeum Iacob sceolde
> fore Herode ealdre gedælan,
> feorh wið flæsce.
>
> [through the bite of the sword among the Jews, James must be separated from life before Herod, life from flesh.] (34b–36a)

Bartholomew is "heafde beneotan" ["deprived of his head"] (46b) in the same line that names his killer as "hyge-blind" ["thought-blind"] (46a), alliterating "heafde" ["head"] with "hyge" ["thought"]. Simon and Thaddeus shared "an ende-dæg" ["a single death-day"] (79a) when "gedæled wearð / lif wið lice" ["life became separated from body"] (82b–83a). Where James's death merely alliterates "feorh" ["life"] and "flæsce" ["flesh"] to describe the separation of life from body, Simon and Thaddeus's shared description of death plays on the initial resonance of "lif" ["life"] and "lice" ["body"], with further assonance through the vowel they share with "wið"; the line flows together with

27. In addition to *Juliana* and *Fates of the Apostles*'s representations of martyrdoms, *Elene* makes repeated references to the first martyr, Stephen (see *Elene* 481b–500a, 822b–26). Judas describes Stephen Protomartyr as his brother, who went on to receive baptism and martyrdom. This is one of several temporal issues in the poem; see Hill, "Sapiential Structure," 208.

a smoothness that belies the separation it describes: "lif wið lice" ["life from body"]. Each of these brief descriptors of martyrdom creatively characterize the saintly body as one that is fatally fragmented.

Notably, Thomas dies when "sweord-ræs fornam" ["the sword-rush seized him"] (59b), which Cynewulf frames as "wund for weorudum" ["a wound before the multitudes"] (61a). I highlight this apostle's death in particular because it frames wounding in a positive light, in contrast to the wounds of devils and the wounds of human sinners. Here the wounds Thomas incurs are sacrifices made for the purpose of spreading the Gospel and converting new Christians, as we have seen in *Andreas*, which immediately precedes *Fates* in the Vercelli Book. We might also recall that this is the same Thomas who doubted, who once sought to touch Christ's wounds as proof of his Resurrection, now wounded himself. Thomas's wounds are not just a demonstration of his own sanctity in *imitatio Christi*, his wounds are also part of securing the salvific prospects of the "weorudum" ["multitudes"].

Juliana, of course, is entirely about a martyr and extensively explores the tortures that the saint undergoes before her death. Both Juliana and Elene are remarkable as women behaving unexpectedly for their gender; for Juliana, this aberrance is distinctly embodied, as is recognized by both the narrative voice and other characters in the poem.[28] The demon Juliana contends with in prison describes her as "wig-þrist ofer eall wifa cyn" ["bold in battle over all the kind of women"] (432) and says,

> Ic to soþe wat
> þæt ic ær ne sið ænig ne mette
> in woruld-rice wif þe gelic,
> þristran geþohtes ne þweorh-timbran
> mægþa cynnes. Is on me sweotul
> þæt þu unscamge æghwæs wurde
> on ferþe frod.

28. Discussions of gender in *Elene* have frequently commented on the title character's distinctiveness as a woman, although what makes Elene remarkable as a woman is more often related to behavior than bodily form or function (of course, the behavior is only transgressive because of her bodily form); see, e.g., Clarke, *Writing Power*, 112–22; Lionarons, "Cultural Syncretism"; Olsen, "Cynewulf's Autonomous Women." On Juliana's exceptional status among women, see, e.g., Hermann, *Allegories of War*, 155–59; Lorden, "Discernment and Dissent," 309, 313. On potentially disabling ways of understanding women's bodies in early medieval England, see Bruce Wallace, "Intersections."

> [I truly know that I have previously neither journeyed nor measured anywhere in the whole world a woman like you, [neither one] so bold of thought nor so cross-timbered out of the race of women. It is clear to me that you, unashamed, are in everything wise in mind.] (547b–53a)

Juliana's "cross-timbered" exceptionality from the expected female body—a lauded ability—is part of what determines her sanctity. Moreover, Juliana follows the pattern set by Christ and the Apostles in demonstrating the aberrant strength of her body through its experience of, and even resistance to, violent torture.

When Eleusius tortures Juliana by placing her in a pot of boiling lead, the earthen container explodes, burning seventy-five of Eleusius's men but leaving the saint unharmed (584b–89a). The language of Cynewulf's description reveals the danger to her body, both physical and metaphorical:

> Ða gen sio halge stod
> ungewemde wlite. Næs hyre wloh ne hrægl,
> ne feax ne fel fyre gemæled,
> ne lic ne leoþu. Heo in lige stod
> æghwæs onsund, sægde ealles þonc
> dryhtna Dryhtne.
>
> [Then the saint was still standing, with unstained beauty. Neither her hem, nor garment, nor hair, nor skin marked by the fire, nor her body, nor her limbs. She stood in the flame entirely whole and gave thanks to the Lord of lords.] (589b–94a)

Cynewulf dwells on this moment, piecing out the ways in which Juliana's body remains sound. The repeated negatives—*næs* and five instances of *ne*—emphasize that Juliana's body is not broken and not burned, so that the poem's listener is reminded that the saint's body *could have*, even *should have*, been harmed. The depiction of Juliana standing among scattered fire and hot lead both "ungewemde" ["unstained"] (590a) and "onsund" ["whole"] (593a), giving thanks to God, suggests that the saint is entirely unperturbed by Eleusius's torture. The only hint throughout the poem that the saint experiences the torture negatively at all is her gladdening when she recognizes the imminent end of her "gewin-dagum" ["battle-days"] (611a), though her cheer may reflect joy at the prospect of heaven rather than relief at the conclusion of torture.

In the passage depicting Juliana standing in the fire, the saint's body is emblazoned, divided, and laid bare, not by the fire itself, but by Cynewulf's poetry. The sequence listing parts of the saint's body that remain unharmed enacts on the level of the text the partitioning that Eleusius fails to accomplish within the text. Cynewulf first lists the absent external signifiers that would be harbingers of injury—marked clothing, hair, or skin—then looks closer at the saint's body and limbs. This list enacts through mimetic syntax an assessment first of surface-level bodily signifiers, then of the deeper structural soundness of Juliana's body. The fire does not threaten Juliana's bodily wholeness, but the poetry does, breaking down the pieces that make up her person and offering a fragmented account of her body. Thus Cynewulf's rhetorical method of emphasizing Juliana's resistance to torture divides up Juliana's parts, especially those that are typical gender markers (her clothing and hair), even while assuring the reader that each part individually could not be harmed.

The syntactical division of Juliana's body further highlights the possibility of the saint experiencing physical harm. The understanding that Juliana is *not* injured depends upon that negation and carries with it the reminder that it always was and remains possible that the saint could be harmed. In much the same way that narratives of healing miracles depend upon ill, injured, or impaired bodies to manifest spiritual healing, Cynewulf depends upon the possibility of pain in the saint's experience to manifest her sanctity.[29] Pain presents an ideological specter upon which the construction of painlessness is dependent. Juliana's sanctity emerges from expectations that she could be physically impaired by torture and socially disabled by her female body, which remain prerequisites for the narrative of martyrdom despite the saint's rejection of these expectations. The poem is both resistant to Juliana's vulnerability and also transfixed by it.

Interactions between signifiers of bodily aberrance are revealing, particularly when positively and negatively coded aberrance come into contact. Juliana's torments are at the hands of Eleusius, whom we have seen depicted above as animalistic and mentally impaired. The death of Bartholomew alliteratively links the head ("heafde") that is removed from the saint with the description of his killer as thought-blind ("hyge-blind"). And in *Elene*, the conversion of Judas the Jew into Cyriacus the Christian bishop models mul-

29. An extended discussion of pain and suffering exceeds my scope here, but see, e.g., Lorden, *Forms of Devotion*, 18–43; Merback, *The Thief, the Cross, and the Wheel*; Spencer-Hall, "Chronic Pain and Illness."

tiple interacting relationships between the character and impairment; Elene's ahistorical conversion of not just a singular Jew, but implicitly all the Jews, gives *Elene* eschatological implications that Cynewulf fulfills when his epilogue later turns toward the afterlife.[30]

The capacity of the body to aberr both prompts and affirms Judas Cyriacus's conversion. Elene's torture persuades Judas Cyriacus to reveal the location of the True Cross and convert to Christianity; that the torture is primarily one of isolation and starvation would seem to set up a contrast of spiritual disconnection and hunger against the community and nourishment promised by Christianity, but we should recall that Judas's isolation and starvation are not inherent to his prior Jewishness. They are manufactured by Elene—St. Helen—for the purpose of torture and interrogation. The passage is brief, especially in contrast to Cynewulf's elaboration on Juliana's tortures; Judas's seven nights in the pit only span eight lines of poetry before he is "sarum besylced" ["exhausted with wounds"] (697a) and agrees to reveal the location of the Cross. The wasting away of Judas's body in the pit as he starves for seven days sets a gruesome stage for his body to be nourished anew.

Once converted, it is Judas Cyriacus, not Elene, who wields the True Cross as a miraculous means of healing. Three crosses are excavated, and in order to determine on which cross Christ died, Judas Cyriacus orchestrates a test: each cross is brought before a dead man in turn, and the True Cross resurrects him (876–89a). After Elene builds a reliquary for the Cross, Cynewulf emphasizes the healing powers of such a relic: "Pær bið a gearu / wraðu wann-halum wita gehwylces, / sæce ond sorge" ["There it will always be a ready support against each torment for those in poor health, sick and sorrowful"] (1028b–30a). This power for physical healing is then correlated with spiritual healing, as Judas's formal conversion and baptism immediately follow, including his renaming as Cyriacus, which the poem defines as "æ hælendes" ["law of the Healer/Savior"] (1062a).[31] Later, Judas Cyriacus is described as "se ðe to bote gehwearf / þurh Bearn Godes" ["he who was turned to the cure through

30. As Thomas D. Hill notes, the ahistorical conversion of the Jews in *Elene* (1093–1235) implies an eschatological anticipation, borne out by Cynewulf's subsequent turn to contemplate the Last Judgment; "Sapiential Structure," 222. Earl R. Anderson, furthermore, has argued that eschatological anticipation is a major theme throughout *Elene*; *Cynewulf*, 146–59.

31. As E. Gordon Whatley shows, "æ hælendes" ["law of the Healer/Savior"] is not a correct translation—Cyriacus simply means "of the lord"—but it provides a culmination of the text's ongoing fascination with *ǣ* (law) in the context of right law and false law; "Old English Onomastics."

the Child of God"] (1125b–26a). The representation of Christianity as cure medicalizes the process of conversion as the metaphoric healing of both body and soul.

The proof of Judas Cyriacus's new holiness comes through further aberrant bodies in need of healing. Judas Cyriacus himself eventually provides "bote" ["cure"]:

> Oft him feorran to
> laman, lim-seoce, lefe cwomon,
> healte, heoru-dreorige, hreofe ond blinde,
> heane, hyge-geomre; symle hælo þær
> æt þam bisceope, bote fundon
> ece to aldre.
>
> [Often from far away the lame, the limb-sick, the infirm came to him, the halt, the wound-ridden, the scabbed and blind, the shamed, sorrowful in mind; continually they found cure and health/salvation there with that bishop, evermore for life.] (1212b–17a)[32]

The language of injury and cure proves pivotal in characterizing Judas Cyriacus's conversion, even to the point of possibly punning *ēce* (evermore) on *ece* (ache, pain). The latter reading would translate: "they found cure and health/salvation there with that bishop, [changing] pain to life." Much like the anonymous recipients of healing miracles that populate Ælfric's *Life of St. Swithun*, these variously unwell bodies serve the narrative purpose of magnifying the holiness of the converted Judas Cyriacus. As Earl R. Anderson argues, "The explicit point of the catalog is that the bishop, in the charisma of his office, heals physical afflictions. The underlying idea, implied in 'ece to aldre,' is that the physical afflictions are outward manifestations of a spiritual condition, to which the bishop ministers."[33] Through this progression, Judas himself evolves from one in need of spiritual healing to one who performs physical and spiritual healing, manifesting a Christian eschatological fantasy of the conversion of the Jews: that it is true, complete, and demonstrated by miracles performed through the power of God. The fantasy of Judas Cyri-

32. If *Guthlac B* is indeed a Cynewulfian poem, then the less precise list of embodiments healed by Guthlac provides notable contrast, see Bjork 38, lines 881b–88a. Guthlac explicitly healed both "lic ond sawle" ["body and soul"] (Bjork 42, line 929a) of those who sought his aid.

33. Anderson, *Cynewulf*, 71.

acus's conversion is also a crip eschatological fantasy, made possible by the spiritual prosthesis of a system of aberrant bodies both within *Elene* and across the Cynewulfian corpus, demonstrating sin and sanctity through aberrant embodiments whose interpretive values both contrast and converge.

Composing Cynewulf's Eschatological Body

The bodies depicted in Cynewulf's poems form the scaffolding on which to interpret the body composed by the poem: that of the poet. Cynewulf's runic signatures compose the poet's identity out of fragmented parts, a rune for each letter of his name, which serves both as a letter and as a stand-in for a concept. For example, the rune ᚳ equates to C, but also means *cen* (torch).[34] The runes appear in line with the Latin-alphabet text, set off by points in both manuscripts, never using the same arrangement of runes twice; transliterated, and omitting the points and words between runes, the signatures are C Y N E W U L F (*Elene*), C Y N W U L F (*Ascension*), CYN EWU LF (*Juliana*), and F W U L C Y N (*Fates*).[35] Usually each rune/letter stands on its own, but in *Juliana* they appear in clusters; usually the runes/letters appear in order, though omitting the ᛖ—E in half the signatures, but the *Fates* signature jumbles the runes. As Jill Hamilton Clements argues, "the scattered

34. The typical corresponding meanings for the runes are: ᚳ—C—*cen*—torch; ᚣ—Y—*yr*—bow; ᚾ—N—*ned*—need/necessity; ᛖ—E—*eoh*—horse; ᚹ—W—*wynn*—joy; ᚢ—U—*ur*—bison/cattle (originally aurochs); ᛚ—L—*lagu*—water; ᚠ—F—*feoh*—wealth. See Elliott, "Cynewulf's Runes in *Christ II* and *Elene*," 282; Elliott, *Runes*, 60–78; Frese, "Cynewulf's Runic Signatures." As John D. Niles cautions, however, "there exists no list of 'correct' rune-names that one can consult to decode Cynewulf's signatures" and thus "anyone who sets out to construe these cryptic passages has to proceed inferentially, reach each and every word and phrase with care"; *Old English Enigmatic Poems*, 304, 305 (emphasis removed). Therefore, my reading of the runes is less concerned with interpreting the runes for perfect poetic style or grammatical concord and more with the ideas made available by plausible associations of the runes, both phonetic and ideographic. On runes in medieval England, see Page, *Introduction*. For a comparison of the use of runes between the Cynewulf signatures, see Birkett, *Reading the Runes*, 49–77; Symons, *Runes and Roman Letters*, 85–120.

35. Images of all four Cynewulfian signatures are available online with runes annotated through Foys, et al., *Old English Poetry in Facsimile*, as of December 2024; see fol. 19v of the Exeter Book for *Ascension*, lines 797–807 (ed. Carsten Haas and Martin Foys); fol. 76r of the Exeter Book for *Juliana*, lines 703b–9 (ed. Aaryn M. Smith and Martin Foys); fol. 54r of the Vercelli Book for *Fates of the Apostles*, lines 98b–105a (ed. Aaryn M. Smith and Martin Foys); and fol. 133r of the Vercelli Book for *Elene*, lines 1256b–70a (ed. Martin Foys, Aaryn M. Smith, and Alex Fairbanks-Ukropen).

letters of Cynewulf's name become a figure of his fallen human nature and decayed body," such that "the reassembled signature becomes a simulacrum of the wholeness that Cynewulf himself anticipates."[36] The text stands in for the poet's body, the dispersal and reassembly of runes cripping the path to the afterlife body. The runes perform disabling and prosthetic roles, containing both the certainty of fragmentation in the grave and the promise of the Resurrection.[37]

The signature in *Juliana* proves particularly revealing, because the clusters of runes form words with additional layers of meaning and connotations both bodily and eschatological. The physicality of sin and the Last Judgment are embedded in the lines that contain Cynewulf's runic signature in *Juliana*, interweaving Cynewulf's identity with an eschatological scene:

> Geomor hweorfeð
> ᚳ [C] ᚣ [Y] ond ᚾ [N]. Cyning biþ reþe,
> sigora syllend, þonne synnum fah
> ᛖ [E] ᚹ [W] ond ᚢ [U] acle bidað
> hwæt him æfter dædum deman wille
> lifes to leane. ᛚ [L] ᚠ [F] beofað,
> seomað sorg-cearig.
>
> [Mournful, humankind will wander. The King will be just, the Maker of victory, when stained with sins the anxious sheep await what he will judge with respect to their deeds, as a reward for life. The earthly masses will tremble, linger oppressed with grievous care.] (703b–9a)

Cynewulf here describes the melancholy of humankind as they approach Judgment for their deeds, weighted with fear and uncertainty, for no one knows how they will be judged. This passage participates in Cynewulf's consistent investment in a need to prepare for Judgment.[38] On the level of narrative, Cynewulf maps his own anxieties through those of all humankind.

The runes, however, provide further physicalized levels of interpretation. The first two clusters of runes in this passage form words: C, Y, and N become *cyn* (kin, which I read as humankind); E, W, and U become *ewu* (for

36. Clements, "Reading, Writing, and Resurrection," 136, 137.

37. On corporeal decay as a crip anticipation of the Resurrection, see Parker, "Crip Eschatological Anticipation."

38. See, e.g., Rice, "Penitential Motif."

eowu, sheep).[39] In addition to coming together to form the poet's name—CYNEWULF—each individual rune in the two clusters of three lends additional poetic detail through the names of the runes and the ideas they represent. "Humankind" (CYN) is composed of ᚳ—C—*cen*—torch, ᛇ—Y—*yr*—bow, and ᚾ—N—*nyd*—necessity or hardship, evoking a potentially quite dangerous experience of venturing into hardship with torch and bow at the ready.[40] Likewise, "sheep" (EWU) is composed of ᛖ—E—*eoh*—horse, ᚹ—W—*wynn*—joy, and ᚢ—U—*ur*—cattle.[41] The sheep, an animal with connotations of piety via the *agnus Dei* (lamb of God) motif, is literally (that is, with *literae*, letters) composed of other livestock, horses and cows, encompassing the prospect of joy between them. The occurrence of *ur* and later the F-rune *feoh*, words that carried meanings of both wealth and cattle or other livestock, alongside *eoh* (horse) and EWU (sheep), gives the passage a decidedly animalian tint, conceiving of human Judgment through nonhuman bodily forms.

If we read the runes ideographically—that is, with each rune representing a word—the syntax of this passage "makes no sense at all," combining objects and ideas that are illogical subjects for the fully spelled-out verbs in this passage, though Victoria Symons does note that reading the runes as their names is essential for the alliterative verse.[42] The primary interpretation of the CYN and EWU clusters has thus been to read them as those words, as I have done in my initial translation above, but scholars have recognized the need to read the runes in the *Juliana* signature on multiple levels: as parts

39. These sheep are specifically ewes, though as Christine Fell pointed out in a posthumously published essay, this is not logically problematic in Old English realms of grammatical and natural gender; the soul, after all, is grammatically feminine; "Runes and Riddles," 276–77.

40. The bow may also be another kind of war equipment; Lass, "Cyn(e)wulf Revisited," 19.

41. The ᚢ—U rune may also mean *ure* (our), and indeed that translation fits quite well in the epilogue to *Ascension*, wherein "ᚢ wæs longe / ᚠ-flodum bilocen, lif-wynna dæl" is more sensibly translated "our share of the life of joys was long, bounded by watery floods," compared to "the bison [scil. wealth?] was long bounded by watery floods, part of the life of joys" (805b–6). Both translations produce a sense of a bountiful life of material goods coming to an end as death and the Apocalypse approach; perhaps the duality of meaning is the point. The possessive pronoun "our" fits less easily in *Juliana*'s runic signature, and so I prefer the reading of "bison" or "cattle" for ᚢ. Niles, for example, reads ᚢ simply as U in *Juliana* and "our" in the remaining three signatures; *Old English Enigmatic Poems*, 305. On the homonymic shift from "aurochs" to "our," see Symons, *Runes and Roman Letters*, 95–96.

42. Lass, "Cyn(e)wulf Revisited," 22; Symons, *Runes and Roman Letters*, 32.

of Cynewulf's name, as ideographs, and as letters.[43] Roger Lass acknowledges that the use of the Tironian *et*, an abbreviation for "and" that Robert E. Bjork's edition spells out as *ond*, amidst each set of runes "makes [him] suspect this is not the way it was meant to be read, and that we're all missing the point."[44] That point may ultimately be lost to history along with any hope of reading Cynewulf's signatures as he intended them, as Jacqueline A. Fay argues.[45] But a crip eschatology permits some explanation for the pesky Tironian notae among the runes. Grammatically, the lines depend upon CYN and EWU functioning as words, but poetically and metaphorically the depiction of this eschatological scene of a distraught humankind, burdened by sin and the threat of damnation, is all the more effectively conveyed by the concepts ideographically embedded through the runes, even if that depiction defies syntactical logic because the syntax is itself fragmented. In other words, the ideographic signification of the runes contributes to Cynewulf's poetic depiction of the Last Judgment through a fragmented, aberrant textual body, regardless of how well it may or may not work grammatically. The inclusion of the Tironian notae for *ond* among the runes in the manuscript thus catches the reader who might otherwise only read the runes as initialisms and signals that there is an ideographic reading as well: the richly embodied experience of fear and physical danger alongside the anticipation of joy akin to material wealth, the bodies of animals and humans alike being used to depict poles of eschatological anxiety and hope.

The remaining runic L-F combination in the *Juliana* signature provides a challenge. Individually, the runes' multilayered meanings are ᛚ—L—*lagu*—lake/sea and ᚠ—F—*feoh*—wealth/livestock. In Cynewulf's time, *lagu* may have still held Germanic implications of the watery underworld, or at least a decidedly non-heavenly scene.[46] Since "LF" is "rubbish," as Lass observes, the best available option for interpretation is to take the two runes ideographically as a kenning, perhaps *lagu-feoh* or another combination of words beginning with L and F.[47] Frederick Tupper has suggested "watery estate" as a kenning

43. E.g., Clements, "Reading, Writing, and Resurrection"; Symons, *Runes and Roman Letters*, 94.

44. Lass, "Cyn(e)wulf Revisited," 24. On the layout of the runes on the manuscript page, see Clements, "Reading, Writing, and Resurrection," 134–36.

45. Fay, "Cynewulf as Author," 38.

46. See Elliott, "Cynewulf's Runes in *Juliana* and *Fates of the Apostles*," 302–3.

47. Lass, "Cyn(e)wulf Revisited," 23. Carleton Brown nominates *lagu-flod* for "sea-flood"; "Autobiographical Element," 199. Niles follows Moritz Trautmann's proposal of *lic-fæt* for "the vessel of the body"; *Old English Enigmatic Poems*, 296–97. Tamotsu Matsunami suggests that *lagu-feoh* indicates "sea animals"; "Runic Passages," 67. All

for "earth," which makes good sense as the subject of "beofað" ["tremble"], given the common geological effects of major events in Christianity, such as the earthquakes reported at the moment of Christ's death (Matthew 27:51) and anticipated in descriptions of the Apocalypse (Apocalypse 7:12).[48] Given the passage's investment in the fates of souls, and Cynewulf's dependence upon physical language to represent them, we might take the kenning "watery estate, i.e., earth" a step further, as a metonymic signifier of all humanity, such as Old English *eorðbuendas* (land- or earth-dwellers); I have thus rendered it above as "earthly masses."[49] This interpretation also does not disagree with Ralph W. V. Elliott's offering of "the wealth of the sea-realm" or "(Earth's) flood-bound wealth" for *lagu-feoh*.[50]

These letters, of course, are presumably predetermined by the happenstance of Cynewulf's name, but taking advantage of the letters of his name in this fashion to craft a scene of eschatological anxiety makes cohesive use of the fortuitous runic correspondences of the name's spelling. Other instances of the runic signature—*Fates of the Apostles* and *Ascension*—omit the ᛗ—E, and *Fates* even uses the runes out of order, suggesting that if all signatures are indeed by the same poet, then Cynewulf was willing to manipulate the representation of his name for the sake of the interplay between runic signature and poetic description.[51] The runic signature in *Juliana* is the only surviving instance of Cynewulf's name that groups runes—elsewhere they appear only singularly—creatively mobilizing the spelling of the poet's name into a vivid distillation of all humankind's eschatological terror and the anticipated experience of the Last Judgment. Grammatical concord does not work with every interpretation of the runes, but different levels of interpretation may have productively evoked eschatological ideas, even when the grammar is messy.

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three of these options fit with the passage's sense outside the runes of immense fear and hesitancy. *Lagu-feoh* would be a hapax legomenon, so no other context might confirm its interpretation.

48. Tupper, "Cynewulfian Runes," 136. Cynewulf anticipates an apocalyptic earthquake in *Ascension* 825b–72a.

49. This association between ᚠ—F—*feoh*—wealth/livestock and earth is supported by the F-rune's association with earth in *Ascension:* "ᚠ on foldan" ["wealth on earth"] (807a). For *eorðbuendas*, see, for example, *Christ in Judgment*, in which living without sin is motivated by one's hope "þæt he mæge fore eagum eorð-buendra / unscomiende eðles mid monnum / brucan bysmer-leas" ["that he may, unashamed before the eyes of the earth-dwellers, partake of the homeland among people without disgrace"] (457–59a in Clayton).

50. Elliott, "Cynewulf's Runes in *Juliana* and *Fates of the Apostles*," 303.

51. See Symons, *Runes and Roman Letters*, 87–88, on variation in spelling between Cynewulf's runic signatures.

By distributing the component parts of his name, as he does in the eschatological scenes of all four signatures, Cynewulf inscribes his identity, sundered by death and the division of the runes, a synecdochic substitution for the eschatological prospects of humankind. Maureen Halsall suggests that the runic signatures act as "the verbal equivalent of a Christian grave monument," evoking the presence of a decaying mortal body even as it constructs the hope of the Resurrection.[52] In contrast to the body marked by sins, this assemblage prefigures a body that will be resurrected and made whole, regardless of its ultimate judgment. Just as Cynewulf describes himself a few lines later as "synna wunde" ["wounded with sins"] (*Juliana* 710a), the whole of humankind is "synnum fah" ["stained with sins"] (*Juliana* 705b). The physical marking evoked by *fah*, used throughout the Old English corpus to describe both material and moral stains and decorations, carries the physicalization of salvation from healing to the cleansing of the body.[53] That hope of bodily wholeness aligns eschatologically with Cynewulf's hope for spiritual salvation; both states depend in the narrative upon representing Cynewulf's body as wounded by sins, fragmented by the grave so he can one day be resurrected. The oscillation between Cynewulf's eschatological hope as an individual and the eschatological prospects of any and all humans reveals the universality of Cynewulf's model: as for Cynewulf, so for all humankind.[54]

Wounded with Sins

Cynewulf's four epilogues all present a desire for salvation and a fear that the poet will not merit such. Cynewulf chooses predominantly physicalizing metaphors to characterize his spiritual state, using language that both aligns and contrasts him with the aberrant bodies in the main narrative of each poem. The epilogues thus document not only their poet thinking eschatologically through his own crip embodiment, but also the poet thinking eschatologically through the other embodiments in his poems.

In contrast to the wounds of saints that earn sanctity, Cynewulf depicts himself as wounded by sins that cause his concern over how he will fare in

52. Halsall, "Runes and the Mortal Condition," 484; see also Clements, "Reading, Writing, and Resurrection."

53. On the wordplay between different definitions of *fah*, in its moral and material designations, see Christiansen, "Reconsideration."

54. Hieatt, for example, observes that Cynewulf's *ic* "evolves into an application to *ælcum menn*"; "*Fates of the Apostles*," 72.

the Last Judgment. Following the runic signature in the epilogue to *Juliana*, Cynewulf laments:

> Sar eal gemon,
> synna wunde, þe ic siþ oþþe ær
> geworhte in worulde. Þæt ic wopig sceal
> tearum mænan. Wæs an tid to læt
> þæt ic yfel-dæda ær gescomede,
> þenden gæst ond lic geador siþedan
> on sund on earde.
>
> [I am mindful of all the pain that I, wounded with sins, before and since, worked in the world. For that I must weep with mournful tears. There was a time I was too late in feeling ashamed for my previous evil deeds, while soul and body together fared in health upon the earth.] (709b–15a)

Cynewulf describes his preoccupation with his sins as a preoccupation with pain (*sar*), suggesting that even as Juliana is unharmed and feels no pain throughout her martyrdom in the narrative, the pain is always there for the poet. Cynewulf's wounds come from his sins (*synna*) and the pain he has introduced into the world, materializing in metaphor the spiritual damage done to Cynewulf's soul at the time when "gæst ond lic" ["soul and body"] were still unseparated. Cynewulf calls the unity of soul and body a state of being "on sund" ["in health"]. The separation of soul and body (that is, death) is thus framed as an injury, in contrast to Juliana's death (669–70), which Marie Nelson has observed occurs with "a sense of extraordinary wholeness."[55] In Juliana's case it is a glorious instance of martyrdom, but for Cynewulf, who does not know where his soul will go (700b), the prospect of this separation inspires a significant amount of anxiety. While Juliana's soul eagerly departs for the afterlife, Cynewulf describes his soul and body as intimate partners, wishing to cling together but facing the inevitable separation of death and thus having need of Juliana's aid. Cynewulf's framing of his own soul's reluctance to depart from his body, as he depicts it, suggests that the relationship between soul and body, including the soul's willingness to cooperate with the soul-separation of death, is dependent upon the individual's confidence in their personal spiritual wholeness.

55. Nelson, *Judith, Juliana, and Elene*, 110; see also Clements, "Reading, Writing, and Resurrection," 144.

The language of injury in this epilogue shows how Cynewulf is different from Juliana in both body and soul. While Juliana is physically vulnerable, but not actually wounded until her final martyrdom, Cynewulf describes himself as spiritually "synna wunde" ["wounded with sins"] (710a). This half-line encapsulates the conflation of spiritual and bodily ability through the metaphorical substitution of physical status for spiritual status: the person has sinned and so both soul and body are also "wounded." Cynewulf's wounds function metaphorically, but the power of the metaphor comes from both author and audiences' real experiences of injury, as well as the pain and impairment to which injury might lead. Cynewulf's wounds manifest the spiritual threat that in death, where Juliana's soul was simply led from her body, Cynewulf's might be further injured through the spiritual disablement of damnation.

Cynewulf's poems repeatedly describe sinfulness in terms of wounds, a distorted echo of *Elene*'s emphasis, for example, on the wounding of Christ for positive purposes in the grand scheme of salvation history. For Cynewulf, in contrast, these wounds are spiritually impairing, evoking a distance from salvation and a worry about the aberrance of Cynewulf's Resurrection body as a result. And it is not only in reference to himself that Cynewulf frames sins as physical wounds. The demon in *Juliana* describes his manipulations of mankind as performed "synna wundum" ["through the wounds of sins"] (355a) and refers to his "wom-dæda" ["stained deeds"] (467a). In *Elene*, Judas Cyriacus recounts his father saying that Jews sin against Christ through the "synna wunde" ["wound of sins"] (514a); later he scolds a devil: "Ne þearft ðu swa swiðe, synna gemyndig, / sar niwigan ond sæce ræran, / morðres manfrea" ["You need not so strongly, mindful of sins, renew your pain and rear up with hostility, wicked lord of murder"] (939–41a). Cynewulf says in *Ascension*, "Forþon we a sculon idle lustas, / syn-wunde forseon" ["Therefore we must eternally forsake idle pleasures, sin-wounds"] (756–57a).[56] In this last instance, the wounds of sin actually become the compound word *syn-wunde*.[57] Cynewulf also writes in *Ascension* that humankind must keep God in their thoughts, "þi læs unholdan / wunde gewyrcen" ["lest fiends work wounds (in us)"] (762b–63a). And furthermore,

> Forþon we fæste sculon wið þam fær-scyte
> symle wærlice wearde healdan,

56. The sentiment, though not the phrasing, of avoiding the "wounds of sin" in *Ascension* stems from the poem's homiletic source; see Grosz, "Man's Imitation," 98.

57. This compound appears only once elsewhere in the surviving OE corpus, to my knowledge, in the *Handbook for the Use of a Confessor*; see Fowler, "Late Old English Handbook."

> þy læs se attres ord in gebuge,
> biter bord-gelac, under ban-locan,
> feonda fær-searo. Þæt bið frecne wund,
> blatast benna.
>
> [Therefore we must always firmly and cunningly stand watch against those sudden shots [that is, attacks of temptation], lest the point of poison, the bitter dart, sink in under the bone-enclosure, the fearsome work of fiends. That would be a horrible wound, a most ghastly sore.] (766–71a)

The triplicate emphasis on sin as a form of wounding in *Ascension* evokes Cynewulf's own wounding in *Juliana*. In the epilogue to *Ascension*, Cynewulf does not describe his sins as wounds, but he does express guilt at not following the commands of his *Hælend* (Healer/Savior), saying of himself, "Ic ne heold teala þæt me hælend min / on bocum bibead" ["I have not correctly held what my Healer/Savior commanded me in books"] (792–93a). Cynewulf himself, though "synna wunde" ["wounded by sins"] (710a) only in *Juliana*, thus shows himself here to be in need of both forms of a *Hælend*: both a Healer and a Savior.

Wounds are also not the only physicalizing metaphor Cynewulf uses to characterize a state of sinfulness. Uniquely among the four signed poems, *Fates of the Apostles* opens with a first-person statement, asserting that Cynewulf gathered these stories: "Hwæt. Ic þysne sang sið-geomor fand / on seocum sefan" ["Listen. I found this poem, sorrowful of travel, sick in soul"] (1–2a). The call to hear the story thus becomes also a call to hear Cynewulf's account of his own spiritual state. He describes the weariness of life as sickness in *Fates of the Apostles*, referring to being "seocum sefan" ["sick in soul"] (2a) as he gathered the stories of the Apostles. Extending the physical marking of the body, Cynewulf describes sins as stains and constraint in *Elene*: "Ic wæs weorcum fah, / synnum asæled, sorgum gewæled, / bitrum gebunden, bisgum beþrungen" ["I was stained by my deeds, constrained by sins, afflicted by sorrows, bound by bitterness, encompassed by affliction"] (1242b–44).[58] Thus both sickness and stains serve similar purposes: the physicalization of sin through the marking of the body.

These phrases tie the author-figure Cynewulf to demons, non-Christians, and indeed every earthly sinner who must renounce their sins in order to

58. On Cynewulf's use of rhyme, as in this passage, see Fulk, "Cynewulf," 14–15.

have hope at the Last Judgment. Cynewulf's circumstance aligns with those presented as sinners in the poems—the Jews of *Elene*, the victims of *Juliana*'s demon—in addition to resonating with the holy figures of the main poems.[59] Looking at this collective gives us one angle on the system of aberrance at play not just in one poem, but across the surviving Cynewulfian corpus. Wounds—and the possibility of becoming wounded—make it possible for Cynewulf to build his crip eschatological hope out of narratives flush with aberrant bodies.

Pleas for Prayer

That Cynewulf brings himself into this system of figures wounded by sins also brings us to the eschatological turn that each of his epilogues makes. Regardless of how eschatological a given poem might be, how focused on death and the Christian afterlife, each of Cynewulf's epilogues makes a pivot toward directly addressing the poet's own death, decay, and anticipation of the afterlife, particularly Cynewulf's concern that he does not know the fate he will face at the Last Judgment and his need for prayer and intercession from saintly figures in these poems.

The epilogues register a great deal of anxiety on Cynewulf's part as he prepares to face his death and afterlife. In *Elene*, Cynewulf begins the eschatological turn of the epilogue by tying the production of the poem to his own eschatological uncertainty: "Þus ic frod ond fus þurh þæt fæcne hus / word-cræftum wæf ond wundrum læs" ["Thus I, aged and hastening from this unreliable house, wove with word-craft and an allotment of wonders"] (1236–37). In the midst of his statement that it was by word-craft and wonders that he wove this poem, Cynewulf pauses to elaborate on "I," characterizing himself as advanced in age (as "frod," which can also mean "wise") and nearing the end of his time in the transient earthly life.[60] The prospect of imminent death is a departure from the "unreliable house" of the body, but not a journey *to* somewhere else; the destination his soul will seek is unknown to him.

Cynewulf repeatedly returns to his uncertainty regarding the destination of his soul. In *Juliana*, Cynewulf laments that his body and soul will soon separate, underscoring the close relationship between the two:

59. See Frese, "Cynewulf's Runic Signatures."

60. On Cynewulf's self-description as aging and its relation to the "aged author" motif, see Porck, *Old Age*, 88–91.

Is me þearf micel
þæt seo halge me helpe gefremme,
þonne me gedælað deorast ealra,
sibbe toslitað sinhiwan tu,
micle mod-lufan. Min sceal of lice
sawul on siðfæt, nat ic sylfa hwider,
eardes uncyðþu.

[It is a great need for me that the saint might give me help, when the dearest of all will separate from me: the kinsmen, the wedded pair, with their great heart-love, will be torn asunder. My soul from my body shall journey, I myself know not where, in ignorance to what land.] (695b–701a)

In *Fates of the Apostles*, Cynewulf further writes of the body's destination after death:

Huru, ic freonda beþearf
liðra on lade, þonne ic sceal langne ham,
eard-wic uncuð, ana gesecean,
lætan me on laste lic, eorðan dæl,
wæl-reaf wunigean weormum to hroðre.

[Indeed, I have need of gentler friends on the way, when solitary I shall seek the far-off home, the unknown dwelling-place, leave behind me the body, the portion of earth, battle-spoil, to abide as a pleasure for worms.] (91b–95)

These lines frame death not just as a journey of the soul to an unknown spiritual fate, but also as a journey of the body to a known fate: the decay of the grave.

Being a pleasure for worms in *Fates* immediately precedes the poem's misarranged runic signature. I follow Clements in reading these runes as a decomposed form of Cynewulf's name and identity, which the reader must reassemble into the whole personhood that the poet hopes to regain in the Resurrection.[61] Across the four epilogues, Cynewulf breaks himself up in different ways by textually encoding his identity in runes, even jumbling

61. See Clements, "Reading, Writing, and Resurrection," especially 135–37.

himself in the FWULCYN signature of *Fates*—as Daniel G. Calder notes, "illustrat[ing] his spiritual anguish in emblematic form"—before imagining the reuniting of soul and body.[62] It seems no coincidence that the signature in which Cynewulf dwells most directly on the decay of the grave (in *Fates*) is also the one in which his signature is most disordered; he is not just willing, but obligated, to think of himself, his corporeal body, in parts, misarranged and eagerly awaiting the Resurrection. This is also the most self-aware of Cynewulf's signatures, announcing itself as a riddle: "Nu ðu cunnon miht / hwa on þam wordum wæs werum oncyðig" ["Now you might know who in these words was unfamiliar to men"] (105b–6). The poet made known through his signature is the poet anxious about judgment, perturbed about decay, hopeful for salvation.

Making himself known through the runes as a figure with both body and soul serves Cynewulf's eschatological prospects. Cynewulf asks for the reader's prayers in *Juliana* and *Fates of the Apostles*, in which he also speaks of needing the intercession of saints like Juliana and the Apostles. In *Fates*, Cynewulf asks: "Nu ic þonne bidde beorn se ðe lufige / þysses giddes begang þæt he geomrum me / þone halgan heap helpe bidde" ["Now then I ask the man who loves the passage of this poem that he ask the holy group to help me from sorrows"] (88–90).[63] The runic signature provides what James L. Boren calls "an exhortation to participate in the poet's creation."[64] In *Ascension*, moreover, the need for the readers' prayers takes a democratizing turn: just as "forþon we a sculon idle lustas, / syn-wunde forseon" ["therefore we must eternally forsake idle pleasures, sin-wounds"] (756–57a), the epilogue in *Ascension* encourages all humans to be mindful of their souls and seek forgiveness "ær þam gryre-brogan / on þas gæsnan tid" ["before the horror of that lifeless time"] (848b–49a). Every earthly body must anticipate "that lifeless time" and thus participate in the system of aberrance through which Cynewulf is thinking about not just his own salvation, but any human's prospect of salvation.

The epilogue in *Juliana* is more personal; Cynewulf's eschatological

62. Calder, *Cynewulf*, 40. It should be noted that the FWULCYN signature is obscured due to a stain in the manuscript, so that only the F, U, and L runes are clearly visible; the remainder of the signature is reconstructed based on alliteration and sense. See Elliott, "Cynewulf's Runes in *Juliana* and *Fates of the Apostles*," 294.

63. Cynewulf also concludes *Juliana* with the request that all who read it pray on his behalf; see lines 718b–31.

64. Boren, "Form and Meaning," 62; see also Clements, "Reading, Writing, and Resurrection," 137.

anxiety creates an exigency filled by Juliana's aberrance, because the sanctity afforded by Juliana's martyrdom fuels Cynewulf's hope of salvation. Because the epilogue to *Juliana* begins, "Is me þearf micel / þæt seo halge me helpe gefremme" ["It is a great need for me that the saint might give me help"] (695b–96), all of Cynewulf's self-representation, his penitence and his authorial runic signature, are premised upon identifying himself as one who stands to benefit from Juliana's intervention. In those lines, Cynewulf intimately addresses his relationship to the saint. Both individuals are depicted in highly physicalized terms throughout the poem and epilogue, and yet here they are simply abstracted beings: *me* and *seo halge*. Cynewulf's challenge, however, is a problem of telling and showing: he can tell his reader that he needs Juliana's help, but he can only show his reader that need, as we have seen, through the figural language of the body.

After describing his past sinfulness in broad strokes and anticipating the Resurrection of his body through the sequence of his runic signature in *Juliana*, Cynewulf turns toward his closing: "Þonne arna biþearf, / þæt me seo halge wið þone hyhstan cyning / geþingige" ["Then I will need mercies, that the holy saint might intercede for me with the highest king"] (715b–17a). This second reference to Juliana's intercession links the present need that begins the epilogue with the need he will have at the time of the Resurrection, a need for the saint's help through her supernatural saintly ability, spiritually healing the wounds Cynewulf describes earlier in the epilogue. The shift in temporality, necessarily implicit in the Old English, collapses present and future need, making the need of the Resurrection body the need of the earthly body. Cynewulf's epilogue in *Juliana*, bookended with his hope of salvation, thus contains a crip eschatological worldview that depends upon the poem's system of aberrance.

The Wounded Poet

Cynewulf's four signed poems collect aberrant embodiments that contextualize Cynewulf's wounds. Some of the wounds in Cynewulf's poems are literal—Christ is crucified, Judas Cyriacus is tortured, Juliana is killed, the Apostles are martyred in their various ways—but much of the appearance of wounding in these poems is rhetorical. The language of wounding serves the eschatological purposes of asking for prayer and intercession, expressing anxiety over one's fate at the Last Judgment, and hoping for a positive outcome. The moral coding of wounded figures is always clear: Cynewulf's wounds

don't make him holy the way those of saints do. The contrast between holy wounds and the wounds of sin, however, contains within it the crip eschatology that Cynewulf thought through when he thought about his prospects for salvation.

Cynewulf's importance in Old English literature comes in large part from, as Calder writes, "the accident of manuscript transmission."[65] There may have been many similar poets in early medieval England who did or did not think about eschatological hope in their poetry through aberrant bodies, and it may be only luck that brought Cynewulf's name to the present day through his runic signatures in the Exeter and Vercelli Books. Moreover, we must not forget the possibility that "Cynewulf" was merely a shared fiction, a persona built by many poets, not a singular historical individual.[66] In that case, the system of aberrance I have traced across these poems reflects not the eschatological anxiety of one poet, but fragments of the anxieties felt by several. Whether one poet or many and whether representative of the period or not, Cynewulf is demonstrably important, because he reveals one way of using poetry in the period, poetry rife with embodied difference, to reckon with the fear and hope of both individual and communal eschatological prospects.

Cynewulf processes his eschatological anxieties through narrative networks of aberrant bodies. Whether or not Cynewulf felt these anxieties in reality, he took great pains to ensure that such anxieties were embedded in his poetry. Cynewulf places himself into a system of aberrance that includes Christ, martyrs, sinners, and non-Christians, as a way of articulating eschatological hope and fear. We cannot know whether an actual historical Cynewulf was himself disabled, though, of course, it is not unlikely that any given person will experience some form of disability in their life. We can, however, recognize that the language of disability, impairment, and healing held spiritual currency for this poet, such that he applied it to his own life, his own poetic body, and his own eschatological prospects. The system of aberrance across Cynewulf's signed poems serves a spiritually prosthetic function: it supports the poet's characterization of his fears about decay and the Last Judgment, but it also supplements his hopes for salvation.

Following Cynewulf's *Ascension* in the Exeter Book, the poem *Christ in Judgment* likewise thinks about Judgment and salvation though a system of aberrant bodies. Rather than drawing on selected narratives to support indi-

65. Calder, *Cynewulf*, 165.
66. See, e.g., Fay, "Cynewulf as Author."

vidual eschatological hope, as Cynewulf does, *Christ in Judgment* articulates a system of aberrant bodies that spans all of Christian salvation history, a theological system with the role of Christ's body in Redemption at its center, orbited by the Resurrection bodies of all humanity. The personal system of aberrance across the signed Cynewulfian poems thus exhibits an individual reflex of the apocalyptic system of aberrance in *Christ in Judgment*, to which we now turn.

Six

The Body of Christ

Seeing and Being Seen in the Apocalypse

As the Apocalypse sweeps earthly time into eternity in the Exeter Book poem *Christ in Judgment*, also known as *Christ III*, Christ himself appears before all of humanity, who have been sorted into the blessed and the damned, and directs the damned to look upon his wounds.[1] Christ tells them, "Geseoð nu þa feorh-dolg þe ge gefremedun ær / on minum folmum ond on fotum swa some, / þurh þa ic hongade hearde gefæstnad" ["See now the mortal wounds on my palms and on my feet, which you once performed as a reckoning, by which I hung firmly fastened"] (588–90).[2] Christ displays his wounds to the damned and explains what they symbolize: suffering as a reckoning (*swa some*) for humanity's sins, suffering for the sake of Redemption. Witnessing the truth of Christ's sacrifice punishes the damned, enhancing their own eternal torment through the knowledge of what they have forsaken.

1. The date of *Christ in Judgment*'s composition is not known with certainty, though it may have been written as late as shortly before the Exeter Book's compilation in the late tenth century; see Clayton xii–xiii. On the Exeter Book, see chapter 5, note 3. On the sources of *Christ in Judgment*, see Allen and Calder, *Sources and Analogues*, 84–107; Muir, *Exeter Anthology*, II:426–28. *Christ in Judgment* draws from a distinctive patchwork of theological, homiletic, and poetic sources, so many that connecting each passage I discuss here to a potential source would prove more tedious than informative. Suffice it to say that most of the images presented in the poem have analogues in other early medieval texts; while the assemblage in *Christ in Judgment* is distinct, it is drawing on quite widespread ideas.

2. All quotations of *Christ in Judgment* are from Clayton 33–87, cited parenthetically by line number.

The prominence of Christ's wounds in *Christ in Judgment* should be unsurprising. We have already seen in *Elene* a persistent emphasis on Christ as "the hanged God" and similar descriptors that emphasize the corporeal violence he endured, just as Christ's wounds were a crucial part of the Doubting Thomas tradition and martyrs' imitation of Christ. The wounds and suffering of Christ come up in many of the explicitly Christian Old English poems surviving in tenth-century manuscripts, ranging in emphasis from the Junius Manuscript poem *Christ and Satan*'s gloss of Christ, "seðe deað for us / geþrowode" ["who endured death for us"] (663b–64a), to the central theme of Christ's corporeal suffering in the Vercelli Book's *Dream of the Rood*, even as the poem also displaces that suffering onto the Cross.[3] The woundedness of Christ, the all-important literal vulnerability of his divine body, underwrites much Christian poetic discourse pertaining to salvation because the woundedness of Christ makes Christian salvation history possible.

It is not controversial to say that there is no Christian salvation without the Crucifixion. It is less common, however, to highlight what should be an obvious corollary: there is no salvation without injurious impairment, and the presence of impairment evokes the specter of disability, even if the body in question—Christ's—may not warrant the label of disability.[4] Early medieval English Christians did not read Christ as disabled, or any medieval parallel thereof, but they did put his wounded body in conversation with other forms of bodily fragmentation, injury, and even disability in order to collectively construct an eschatological imaginary of the embodied afterlife.[5]

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3. For both poems, see Clayton: for *Christ and Satan*, 301–51, in which, see also lines 507b–11a, 545–48; for *The Dream of the Rood*, which Clayton calls *The Vision of the Cross*, 159–73. The Junius Manuscript is Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 11. On the Vercelli Book, see chapter 4, note 4. On Christ's suffering in early medieval English literature and art, see Chase, "Early Christian Passion Piety"; O'Reilly, "Early Medieval Text and Image"; Raw, *Anglo-Saxon Crucifixion Iconography*. On the displacement of Christ's suffering onto both Rood and dreamer in *Dream of the Rood*, see Lorden, *Forms of Devotion*, 18–24.

4. Where some modern theologians do identify Christ as disabled, medieval Christians—for all that they recognized the importance of Christ's wounds—do not seem to have assigned stigma or impaired function to Christ. On modern theologies of Christ as disabled, see, e.g., Creamer, "Disability Theology"; Eiesland, *Disabled God*; Powell, *Disabled God Revisited*.

5. Indeed, as Robert Mills has argued, representations of Christ in the later medieval period could verge on the monstrous, the most compelling example of which are three-headed representations of the Trinity; "Jesus as Monster." That Christ's body is likewise multiple in *Christ in Judgment*, as I discuss below, suggests a touch of the monstrous in Christ's aberrance.

The conceptualization of Christ's body in conversation with impairment and disability makes his body crip.[6] As we have seen, early medieval English Christians thought about salvation through systems of aberrant bodies, crip and otherwise. *Christ in Judgment* reveals an early medieval way of thinking about salvation directly, envisioning the Last Judgment through relationships between blessed bodies, damned bodies, and the aberrant body of Christ himself. The system of aberrance in *Christ in Judgment* differs from those discussed previously in that it is less concerned with intersections between categories of embodiment—bodies marked by disability, religion, gender, and so on—and more concerned with degrees of marking and fragmentation, all of which verge in the direction of disability, whether the bodies in question are disabled or not. As a result, where previous chapters have discussed bodies that are aberrant and often but not necessarily crip, the aberrant bodies discussed here are all crip, and so, in this chapter's endeavor to understand the afterlife embodiment envisioned by *Christ in Judgment*, aberrance and cripness converge.

The crip body of Christ lies at the heart of any crip Christian eschatology. Christ's Resurrection in the Gospels set a theological precedent for what more ordinary bodies would experience in the promised Resurrection of the Apocalypse, as numerous scholars of Christian theology have noted.[7] The wounds Christ retained in his Resurrection also occupied early medieval English art and poetry, as in the Doubting Thomas episode briefly dramatized in *Christ and Satan* (lines 540–44) and visualized in the Benedictional of St. Æthelwold (see fig. 1). As we have seen, the torture experienced by martyrs would continue to signify on their bodies in the afterlife, as was the case for Christ; Augustine of Hippo asserted that martyrs would display marks of their wounds, like scars, "non enim deformitas in eis sed dignitas erit" ["for it will not be deformity in them, but distinction"].[8] Ordinary humans have a more complicated Resurrection to anticipate. Bodies would be perfected, made youthful and healthy, and yet poems like *Christ in Judgment* also reveal that the Resurrection bodies of the sinful were expected to bear new corporeal manifestations of stigma.[9]

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6. In reading the medieval Christ as crip, I am indebted to Alicia Spencer-Hall; see "Chronic Pain and Illness," especially 64.

7. On patterning the general Resurrection on Christ's Resurrection, see Bynum, *Resurrection*, 26; Daley, *Hope of the Early Church*, 44–64; Lehtipuu, *Debates*, 40–50.

8. Augustine, *City of God: Books 21–22*, XXII.19; Augustine, "*City of God* XXII.19," 160.

9. While *Christ in Judgment* should not be taken as representative of a universal and

Christian soteriology demanded justice in the assignment of salvation and damnation, such that the same body that sinned or not in the earthly life would receive a bodily punishment or reward, inscribing divine justice on the bodily forms of the afterlife.[10] The afterlife in early medieval English eschatology was thus very much a physical life, envisioned in terms of real, tangible flesh of the body. Where there is body, there can be disability, and so where there is body in the Christian afterlife, disability is both rhetorically and sometimes literally in play. Prioritizing the bodies in *Christ in Judgment* reveals that in the eschatological imaginary of early medieval England, the physical body of the afterlife engaged with bodily fragmentation, impairment, and even the effects of disability, recalling Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's phrase, "If we live long enough, we will all become disabled," with the further addition that in medieval Christianity, one did not need to still be alive to experience disability.[11]

Theories of disability and embodied difference provide a useful mechanism for understanding representations of postmortem physicality in terms of their cultural and theological context. In particular, as I have noted elsewhere, the medieval Christian desire for a body *without* the possibility of disability pursues a eugenic logic, which Garland-Thomson argues "tells us that our world would be a better place if disability could be eliminated. Enacted worldwide in policies and practices that range from segregation to extermination, the aim of eugenics is to eliminate disability and, by extension, disabled people from the world. [. . .] Why—eugenic logic asks—should

monolithic doctrine, it is far from unique in its interest in afterlife bodies both whole and fragmented. The Resurrection and Judgment are also depicted in, e.g., *Judgment Day I* (in the Exeter Book), *Judgment Day II* (in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 201), *Christ and Satan* (in the Junius Manuscript). Prose references to these topics, particularly in the homiletic tradition, are too numerous to list here, but see, e.g., Vercelli Homily VIII, which draws on the same tradition as *Christ in Judgment* of depicting Christ himself castigating the damned; see Scragg, *Vercelli Homilies*, 139–50. *Christ in Judgment* is undoubtedly instructional; as Jane Roberts has observed, the diction and style of *Christ in Judgment* evokes that of prose homilies (such as those in the Vercelli Book and Blickling Homiliary); "Metre of *Christ III*," 44. On the homiletic analogues of *Christ in Judgment*, see Hall, "Old English Religious Prose," 141–44; Shimomura, "Visualizing Judgement," 29–33. For an efficient survey of the visual tradition depicting the Last Judgment in early medieval England, see Jones, "Ways of Seeing," 263.

10. See, e.g., *Christ in Judgment* lines 746b–56 on the physical punishment of the afterlife.

11. Garland-Thomson, *Staring*, 46. On the persistence of impairment and disability after death, see Parker, "Crip Eschatological Anticipation."

the world we make and occupy together include disability at all?" (339–40).[12] Although Garland-Thomson connects eugenic logic to modernity, medieval Christian eschatology tried very hard to imagine an afterlife that would not include disability at all.[13] This eugenic eschatological imaginary ultimately fails, however, because it relies too heavily on the specter of disability, as well as both rhetorical and real instances of bodily impairment, in order to envision the afterlife. The intense physicality of early medieval eschatological poetry thus also produces its own *counter*-eugenic logic, which, to paraphrase Garland-Thomson, affirms the cultural and discursive contributions of disability and related forms of bodily difference as opening up new ways of being and making meaning in our lives, or, in eschatological terms, our afterlives.[14] The eschatological imaginary of early medieval Christianity compulsively employs the counter-eugenic logic of crip eschatology in order to pretend that disability could possibly ever be eradicated. The attempt to reject eschatological disability ultimately affirms its value in the earthly life.

Imagining embodiment in the afterlife is necessarily a problem of time because it anticipates a largely unknown and unknowable future. Throughout this chapter, the timeliness and untimeliness of embodied experience feature prominently within the apocalyptic timeline of eschatological expectation. "Apocalyptic time" refers to the anticipation of an imminent Apocalypse, one temporally near enough to inspire anxiety about and active preparation for the end times.[15] All texts in the medieval genre of apocalyptic or Doomsday literature urge audience members to prepare for Judgment, though by various means; for example, as Emily V. Thornbury has shown, *Christ in Judgment* prosodically enfolds believers in a state of suspenseful, urgent anticipation that the grand drama of the Apocalypse might begin at any moment.[16] In poetry, as elsewhere, Christian eschatology is by nature infused with eager anticipation of the Apocalypse, in both its imminence and its unpredictability. That anticipation required consideration of not only linear progress toward the Apocalypse, but also the cyclicality of typological time, laden with

12. Garland-Thomson, "Case for Conserving," 339–40. On what I have called premodern eugenic logic, see Parker, "Healing the Unborn." Elizabeth B. Bearden has similarly observed roots of eugenic thought in the early modern era; *Monstrous Kinds*, 63.

13. See, e.g., Augustine, "*City of God* XXII.19."

14. See Garland-Thomson, "Case for Conserving."

15. On apocalyptic time and expectation in early medieval England, see, for example: Carruthers, "Apocalypse Now"; Godden, "Apocalypse and Invasion"; Palmer, *Apocalypse*, 130–226; Webster, "Apocalypse Then"; and the essays in Landes, Gow, and Van Meter, *Apocalyptic Year 1000*.

16. Thornbury, "Form versus Catastrophe," 17.

figural relationships between historical persons and events, and the atemporality of eternal, divine time.

When thought in terms of bodies, apocalyptic time is crip time. In much the same way that we have seen narratives of St. Æthelthryth functioning through crip time because they convey narrative developments through marked embodiments, so too was the real-world timeline of salvation history—from Creation to Apocalypse—cripped by its reliance upon marked embodiments in medieval Christian thought. Impaired and empowered saintly embodiments, such as we have discussed in previous chapters, were certainly part of the system of aberrant bodies cripping the timeline of salvation history. As this chapter will demonstrate through *Christ in Judgment*, however, the bodies most prominently cripping the Apocalypse are those of all humanity, both the blessed and the damned, and the body of Christ himself. These bodies shape the crip time of eschatological anticipation through two processes in *Christ in Judgment*. First, the anticipation of the resurrected afterlife body shapes understandings of earthly embodiments. In a medieval Christian worldview in which all postlapsarian humankind is corrupted by sin, the aspirational, normative body is not earthly but eschatological, and so experiences of the earthly body in terms of disability and fragmentation could be interpreted in the earthly present through anticipation of the apocalyptic future. Second, salvation history pivots on the wounded body of Christ as the fulcrum of Redemption. Christ's bodily vulnerability in salvation history past makes possible both the promise of bodily wholeness and the threat of bodily blemish in salvation history future, to be hoped for and feared in the earthly present. The crip eschatology of *Christ in Judgment* thus hinges on the crip timeline of Christ's body in Christian salvation history.

Crip eschatology performs a desire for the afterworld, the afterlife, and the Resurrection body whose form and experience (either fragmentation or wholeness) will reflect a just punishment or a just reward. The medieval crip eschatology I describe here, however, is not so clean-cut as many modern eschatologies: fragmentation and wholeness are not mutually exclusive. Rather, both the anticipated afterlife and the earthly paths that promise that afterlife imbricate fragmentation and wholeness, marked bodies and perfect bodies, ability and disability. The association of disability with sin and damnation is there, to be sure, but disability is also part of the promise of the everlasting life. The medieval Christian concept of afterlife cannot come to pass without earthly disability, nor does the Apocalypse fully erase disability from the afterworld or isolate crip embodiments among the damned. The

same timelessness of eternity that collapses temporal progression between the Crucifixion and Christ's Parousia (i.e., Christ's reappearance in the Apocalypse) also collapses any bodily aberrance in the pre-Apocalypse past into the timeless experience of the afterlife. Predication of the life everlasting upon crip embodiments is poetically anticipated by a rhetorical reliance on crip embodiments in apocalyptic literature like *Christ in Judgment*.

Old English depictions of death and the afterlife, when read through the lens of disability, demonstrate a considerable dependence upon the experience of the body—and in particular the impaired and disabled body—as a means of understanding and anticipating the prospect of the Resurrection and salvation, as well as the relationship between body and soul. Eschatological poems such as *Christ in Judgment* reveal the extent of an all-encompassing system of aberrance, which verges on cripping all bodies by understanding them in relation to impairment and disability. This system concerns all of salvation history, spanning living, dead, and resurrected bodies and even including the body of Christ himself, whose wounds embed the divine judge into the bodily signification of salvation. Such texts promise an embodied afterlife that relies upon disability and bodily fragmentation in order to come into poetic or Apocalyptic reality. This system of aberrant bodies spiritually prosthesizes the representational impossibilities of the afterlife.

As the culmination of the Exeter Book's opening sequence of poems about Christ, *Christ in Judgment* describes the destruction of the Apocalypse through an all-consuming flame, the Resurrection of all humanity, and Christ's Judgment with speeches to both the blessed and the damned, all for the purpose of encouraging the poem's audience toward penance.[17] The poem foregrounds the Crucifixion as a key moment in salvation history by relating it twice: first in the narrative voice and again during Christ's speech to the damned. Attention to how Christ, as represented in *Christ in Judgment*, and the voice of the poem itself make reference to disability—particularly vision impairment and the wounded body—reveals that in the early medieval imaginary, the Resurrection of the body could be formulated through figurative language of disability, centering disability within concepts of the afterlife, even as the material change of the Resurrection attempted to elimi-

17. Several scholars have utilized *Christ in Judgment* to parse the eschatological doctrine of early medieval England. See, e.g., Arner and Stegner, "Voyeuristic Appeal"; Gatch, "Perceptions of Eternity"; Hall, "Medieval Traditions"; Hill, "Further Notes"; Hill, "Notes on the Eschatology"; Shimomura, "Visualizing Judgement."

nate bodily variation.[18] Through a persistent preoccupation with apocalyptic forms of seeing and being seen, *Christ in Judgment*'s rhetorical framework for the Resurrection body contemplates earthly disability in four ways: aestheticizing damnation with disabling effects, metaphorically tying proper sight to salvation, relating how one earns salvation to disability, and visualizing Christ's body in conversation with disability.[19] The resulting system of aberrance encompasses future resurrected bodies, the eternal body of Christ, and the past and present bodies of all humankind.

Seeing Damnation

Christ in Judgment characterizes the Resurrection as inevitable and inescapably a return to physical embodiment, an embodiment that makes legible the joy of salvation or the stigma of damnation; the aesthetics of the Resurrection prove disabling for the damned. The poem's first strategy for eschatologically contemplating disability contrasts the bodies of the damned as aberrant in relation to the resurrected bodies of the blessed. At the Resurrection, "eall hraðe Adames cynn / onfehð flæsce" ["suddenly all of Adam's kin will take up flesh"] (161–62a), because

> sceal þonne anra gehwylc
> fore Cristes cyme cwic arisan,
> leoðum onfon ond lic-homan,
> edgeong wesan.
>
> [each individual must then rise up alive, before the coming of Christ,
> take up their limbs and body, and become youthful.] (163b–66a)

The phrasing "anra gehwylc" ["each individual"] is vague about the moral rectitude of the individuals in question, suggesting that all are resurrected in this way, regardless of spiritual status. These bodies are described as "edgeong"

18. In Caroline Walker Bynum's words, the Redemption made possible by the Crucifixion is the triumph of the body "over fragmentation, digestion, and rot—over natural process itself"; *Resurrection*, 186.

19. The poem's concern with vision has frequently been noted; e.g., by Arner and Stegner, "Voyeuristic Appeal"; Hill, "Vision and Judgement"; Shimomura, "Visualizing Judgement." Natalie Jones argues that *Christ in Judgment* articulates not only a relationship between vision and Judgment, but also a relationship between seeing and knowing/learning; "Ways of Seeing."

["youthful"] here, and later they are "ece ond edgeong" ["eternal and youthful"] (204a), recalling patristic assertions that the Resurrection body would be neither aged nor infantile and would lack none of "quam decet" ["what is seemly"], in Augustine's words.[20] The Resurrection body of *Christ in Judgment* is thus a transformed body, one that is truly "cwic" ["alive"] (164b) but that will neither age nor die because it is now "ece" ["eternal"] (204a). Everyone is resurrected in this way as a precursor to being judged, and the poem shows an awareness that not all at this time will eagerly approach Judgment: the resurrected masses "ondweard gæð / neode ond nyde" ["come forward by desire or constraint"] (204b–5a) to learn their eternal fate.

Resurrection bodies, while uniform in the sense of eternal youth, are also necessarily individuated, with the moral encumberments or embellishments of each person clearly manifested upon the body. Immediately after stating that all humankind must return to their bodies, *Christ in Judgment* asserts the moral implications of returning to the flesh:

> Hafað eall on him
> þæs þe he on foldan in fyrn-dagum,
> godes oþþe gales, on his gæste gehlod,
> geara gongum, hafað ætgædre bu,
> lic ond sawle. Sceal on leoht cuman
> sinra weorca wlite ond worda gemynd
> ond heortan gehygd fore heofona cyning.
>
> [He shall have everything upon him, that with which on earth in days of old he burdened his soul through the years, [all] of the good or wickedness, he holds them both together, body and soul. It must come into the light, the shape of sinful deeds and memory of words and thought of the heart, before the king of heaven.] (166b–72)

These lines pair the youthful wholeness of the Resurrection with the moral history that flesh reveals.[21] The soul is clad in the flesh, laden with either

20. Augustine, *City of God: Books 21–22*, XXII.19; Augustine, "*City of God* XXII.19," 159. Thijs Porck observes that the hoped-for youth in the afterlife, as well as the occasional early medieval English claim that aging would be a punishment for the damned, serves as a rejection of the infirmity of old age; *Old Age*, 104–8.

21. The physical visualization of morality appears among angels and demons, as well, with the appearance "engla ond deofla / beorhtra ond blacra" ["of angels and devils, the bright and the dark"] (29b–30a), drawing on the metaphorical association of light with

good or wickedness, as that individual earned on earth. Such formulations are typically read as conventional, within the widespread notion in medieval Christianity that the behaviors of the body impact the future state of the soul, figuratively represented through marked differences of the body. Such readings, however, often neglect the persistence of the body into the afterlife, and especially the spiritual disability of the afterlife body as a direct result of the behaviors of the body in life. For example, in this passage the representation of sin evident upon the body is not just described as actions (*weorcas*) but also as a physical appearance (*wlite*). By physically revealing a history of sin, the damned Resurrection body takes on an eternal stigmatized embodiment, a body cripped by its relation to earthly disfigurement and stigma, that perpetually reveals the source of its own damnation. The contrast between these damned Resurrection bodies and those of the blessed schematizes a spiritually privileged embodiment against which the marked bodies aberr as part of their punishment.

The visibility of the Resurrection body, and the resurrected humans' ability to perceive everything about their own and others' bodies, feature prominently in how *Christ in Judgment* characterizes the joys of the blessed and the horrors of the damned.[22] Vision—proper vision—during the earthly life promises much more pleasant sights in the afterlife, both in how one is seen and in what one will see. Those who have earned salvation are resurrected in bodies that directly contrast the marked, stained bodies of the damned: "Đonne beoð bealde þa þe beorhtne wlite / meotude bringað" ["Then they will be confident, those who bring a clear countenance to the Measurer"] (210–11a). The poem later asserts that "þær bið on eadgum eð-gesyne / þreo tacen somod" ["there will be easily seen upon the blessed three signs together"] (368–69a). Two of these tokens are what the blessed see clearly in themselves:

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good and dark with evil that correlates sighted ability to spiritually positive activities. As in chapters 4 and 5, I prioritize human embodiments related to eschatological matters in my discussion of *Christ in Judgment*, although the relation of angelic and demonic bodies to disability would surely reward further attention. On the similarly moralized metaphoric connotations of whiteness and blackness in racial terms, see Momma, "Theater of Race," 417–22.

22. While *Christ in Judgment* makes much of perception and the ability of all to know everyone's deeds after the Resurrection, Thornbury compellingly shows that the poem also works to formally confuse its audience, implementing hypermeter at moments of revelation as a way of showing "that it is all too much to take in"; "Form versus Catastrophe," 30. Such confusion also serves to make poetically unknowable what is soteriologically unknowable, that is, whether an individual will be among the blessed or the damned.

they shine brightly before all others (371–75) and see in their eyes the grace of God (376–80). The third token for the blessed is what they see in the damned,

> hu on þystra bealo
> þæt gesælige weorud gesihð þæt fordone
> sar þrowian, synna to wite,
> weallendne lig, ond wyrma slite
> bitrum ceaflum, byrnendra scole.
>
> [how in the baleful shadows, the happy troop will see the forsaken ones suffer pain, punishment for sin, the welling flame, and tearing of worms with bitter jaws, the band of burning ones.] (381b–85)

The blessed see the physical torments to which damned bodies are subjected. The rhyming, uncommon in Old English poetry, of *wīte* and *slite* adds emphasis to the bodily nature of punishment: to be divided by worms is framed as an appropriate punishment for sins. The poem asserts that by seeing the damned's suffering in contrast to their own visual confirmation of salvation, "aweaxeð wynsum gefea" ["a winsome delight will grow"] (386) for the blessed and they will thank God all the more for their salvation (389–92).

Correspondingly, the damned also affirm their soteriological outcome through three visual tokens. First, they recognize the horrors of "grim helle fyr" ["the grim fire of hell"] (403a). Second, they endure the shame that the assembled host—including God, angels, demons, and all humanity—"man-womma gehwone / magun þurh þa lic-homan, leahtra firene, / geseon on þam sawlum" ["will see in their souls every one of the wicked stains, forcefully through the bodies [see] shameful sins"] (413b–15a).[23] The component *wamm* in "man-womma" carries a semantic range including literal and figurative scars, stains, and sins. The sins of the damned are visible "þurh" ["through"] their stained bodies, associating the visibility of these stains with an invasive violation of the body's boundaries: "Beoð þa syngan flæsc / scandum þurh-waden swa þæt scire glæs, / þæt mon yþæst mæg eall þurhwlitan" ["The sinful flesh will be penetrated shamefully, like the clear glass, that one might easily look entirely through"] (415b–17).[24] These second and third deployments of

23. Regarding shame and other affective responses to the "wounds of sin" in OE poems depicting death and the afterlife, see Lorden, *Forms of Devotion*, 80–109.

24. A similar phrasing in Blickling Homily X describes the Resurrection body becoming as clear as glass: "Biþ þonne se flæschoma ascyred swa glæs" ["Then the flesh-home will be made clear like glass"]; Morris 109.

þurh within five lines underscore the permeability of the resurrected body, its inability to obstruct the sight of Christ or those demons that punish the wicked. Unlike the earthly body, which is normatively constructed as an impermeable container, the Resurrection body is not just permeable, but also transparent.

In addition to seeing the joys of the blessed, the damned are further shamed because they see that the blessed can see their damnation. The third, and apparently worst, visual sign for the damned is "þæt hy on þa clænan seoð, / hu hi fore god-dædum glade blissiað" ["that they look upon the pure, how the glad rejoice because of their good deeds"] (419b–20). Sight features prominently in the experiences of the damned: "Geseoð hi þa betran blæde scinan" ["They will see their betters shine in glory"] (425), but also when they "swiciað on swiman; syn-byrþenne, / firen-weorc berað" ["sway dizzily; bear criminal deeds and the burden of sin"] (433–34a), their shame is all the more because "on þæt þa folc seoð" ["there the people will see it"] (434b). The suffering of the damned is both due to what they see (the horrors of hell and the joys of the blessed) and how they are seen (as marked by their sins). There is no hiding one's sinfulness in the Resurrection; the poem says again: "Hit þa weorud geseoð" ["The host will see it"] (445b).[25]

In this poem, who sees what takes on eternal stakes as a manifestation of soteriological outcomes eliciting either joy or despair. For the poem's audience, who cannot yet see with eschatological clarity and whose salvation or damnation is not yet seen by all, the poem urges caution and repentance (446–69). *Christ in Judgment* contrasts the transparent Resurrection body to the earthly body, which is capable of hiding one's moral state while alive:

> Ne mæg þurh þæt flæsc se scrift
> geseon on þære sawle, hwæþer him mon soð þe lyge
> sagað on hine sylfne, þonne he þa synne bigæð.
> Mæg mon swa þeah gelacnigan leahtra gehwylcne,
> yfel unclæne, gif he hit anum gesegð,
> ond nænig bihelan mæg on þam heardan dæge
> wom unbeted, ðær hit þa weorud geseoð.

25. The importance of sight at Judgment has parallels in early medieval English visual art. For example, as David F. Johnson has demonstrated, the New Minster Liber Vitae depicts postmortem Judgment in which the experiences of the blessed and the damned are augmented by their ability to see the opposite group; "Scene of Post-Mortem Judgment."

> [Nor may the confessor see through that flesh into the soul, whether a person truthfully or falsely speaks to him about himself, when he commits a sin. A person may yet heal each sin, unclean evil, if he says it to a single one, and may conceal on that harsh day no stain for which amends have not been made, when the host will see it.] (439b–45)

The earthly body is thus not yet spiritually transparent because the confessor cannot know whether one making a confession speaks the full truth. Sin is again a physical concern, one of stain ("wom") and a need to be healed ("gelacnigan"). *Christ in Judgment* thus makes use of disabling metaphoric structures we have seen elsewhere in the Old English corpus connecting judgment and sight, sin and physical impairment, salvation and healing, and the spiritual and the physical. Insofar as the poem manifests real theological belief, however, these metaphors take on aspects of the real: believers may expect to be judged by literally being seen. Sins may become literally staining and physically impairing in the afterlife, because in the afterlife the spiritual is no longer just metaphorically physical. The physical afterlife body can be literally impaired, and even disabled, within the sociality of Judgment Day, because all can see and condemn those stains of sin that the earthly body once hid.

Seeing Salvation

The second way *Christ in Judgment* ties salvation to disability is that the living must use their earthly sight—not of the eyes, but of the heart—to perceive what is good and righteous in order to obtain salvation:

> Nu we sceolon georne gleawlice þurhseon
> usse hreþer-cofan heortan eagum,
> innan uncyste. We mid þam oðrum ne magun,
> heafod-gimmum, hyge-þonces ferð
> eagum þurhwlitan ænge þinga,
> hwæþer him yfel þe god under wunige.
>
> [Now we must eagerly and prudently see through into our breasts with the eyes of our hearts to the faults within. With those other eyes, the head-gems, we cannot look through the force of our minds' thoughts at all, whether evil or good dwells within.] (461–66)

With these lines, the Exeter Book scribe begins a new section; though this passage continues the poem's ongoing interest in vision, the section break seems to indicate a pivot from concerns of vision in the afterlife to how one should prescriptively use vision in the earthly life—both normative physical sight and metaphorical spiritual sight—in order to attain salvation.[26] The "other eyes" here become secondary, with their perception of only earthly things displaced in favor of the all-important sight of the heart, which, like the eschatological sight of angels and demons, may see through ("þurhseon," 461b) one's own outer appearance. But the articulation of the "head-gems" as "other" eyes, separate from those that should perceive spiritual rightness, does not free them from the cross-pollination of stigmatizing tropes related to sensory impairment. Twice the poem calls nonbelievers and sinners some variation on *modblind*: "blinde on geþoncum" ["blind in thought"] (260b) and "mod-blinde" ["mind-blind"] (321a). We have seen such descriptors throughout this study as a shorthand for the spiritual consequences of figurative vision impairment, which cannot escape some transfer to attitudes toward literal vision impairment. Here in *Christ in Judgment*, seeing—and seeing rightly—becomes the central practice that assures salvation, making vision impairment a frightening and stigmatized prospect.

Christ in Judgment is quite concerned with proper perception in the earthly life as the path to salvation. When Christ shows his wounds to the damned as proof of his sacrifice, "geseoð him to bealwe þæt him betst bicwom, / þær hy hit to gode ongietan woldan" ["they will see as their own destruction what might have become best for them, had they been willing to perceive it as good"] (239–40). If the damned had properly perceived Christ's sacrifice and the truth of Christian doctrine, they would now be among the blessed, boldly delighting in their Resurrection, not despairing of the eternal torment about to commence. The poem's first account of the Crucifixion segues into signs that humanity should have recognized as confirmations of Christian truth, so that they believed and behaved rightly (286b–320a), though it would be too late at the moment of the Apocalypse to change one's ways. The horrors faced by the damned in *Christ in Judgment* and the gentler afterlife promised to the blessed drive the poem's reader to consider their actions in the present earthly life. After the poem asserts that "ne sindon him dæda dyrne" ["deeds may not be concealed from him [Christ]"] (183a), it shortly goes on to caution: "ær sceal geþencan / gæstes þearfe" ["one should think sooner of the

26. Bernard J. Muir notes that the use of spacing and majuscule "NU" serve "to set off the beginning of the new section clearly"; *Exeter Anthology*, I:98.

spirit's need"] (190b–91a). Refusal to see "rightly" will be punished by seeing just how wrong one was.

The metaphorical use of healing to depict salvation likewise becomes realized in *Christ in Judgment*'s depiction of the Resurrection body at Judgment. After narrating the sorrow of those who neglected to repent their sins before it is too late, the poem states,

> Ne biþ þæt sorga tid
> leodum alyfed, þæt þær læcedom
> findan mote, se þe nu his feore nyle
> hælo strynan þenden her leofað.
>
> [Nor is that time of care lessened for the people that would find remedy there, those who now do not wish to acquire health while they live here.] (705b–8)

The torments of punishment for sins—the "time of care"—forecloses any opportunity to seek remedy when one is already in the afterlife if one chose not to pursue "hælo" ["health"] in the earthly life. The medicalization of salvation thus meets a partial limitation: to be saved is still to be healed in one's Resurrection body, but the chance to be healed runs out at one's time of death or at the time of the Apocalypse, whichever comes first. The literal body might be reformed and recreated, but if it was not spiritually healed in life, it will be physically aberrant in the afterlife.

The poem's narrative of an apocalyptic future becomes of imminent present concern for believers in the poem's audience, aligning in crip time the hidden marks of sinful bodies in the earthly life and the marked bodies of the damned in the afterlife. If they do not seek salvation now, in life, then there is no hope for them on Judgment Day: "Þonan ænig ne mæg, / firen-dædum fah, frið gewinnan" ["Thereafter no one stained by evil deeds may strive for peace"] (133b–34). This passage carries with it a crucial temporal marker: "þonan" ["thereafter"]. Only *after* the advent of the Apocalypse may sinners no longer strive for peace; thus, only *before* the end times may those wishing for salvation "strive" for it. The anticipatory mode here is one of urgency, that at any moment the anticipated future might be upon us, locking in any stains of sin that remain hidden and unconfessed. The body that conceals the moral stains of evil deeds at the time of confession will at the time of Resurrection reveal those deeds; the body reveals the soteriological score.

Seeing Disability

In addition to characterizing the damned and earthly sinfulness through marked embodiments, *Christ in Judgment* also makes bodily impairment integral to representation of the blessed. This is the third way *Christ in Judgment* ties salvation to disability. When the Christ of the poem praises the blessed, he underscores their relationship to the sick and needy, not as sick themselves, but as those who help the sick. Christ invites the blessed into his father's kingdom, saying:

> Ge þæs earnedon þa ge earme men,
> woruld-þearfende, willum onfengun
> on mildum sefan. Đonne hy him þurh minne noman
> eað-mode to eow arna bædun,
> þonne ge hyra hulpon ond him hleoð gefon,
> hingrendum hlaf ond hrægl nacedum;
> ond þa þe on sare seoce lagun,
> æfdon unsofte, adle gebundne,
> to þam ge holdlice hyge staþeladon
> mid modes myne.
>
> [You earned that when you willingly took in the wretched person and the world-needy with a gentle heart. When they humbly through my name begged to you for mercy for themselves, when you helped them and gave them shelter, [gave] bread to the hungry and clothing to the naked; and those who lay sorely troubled with sickness, with hard labor, bound with disease, for them you graciously strengthened their thoughts with your mind's intent.] (483–92a)

To follow the path to salvation, in this framing, requires one to provide alms and care to the poor, the needy, and the infirm, the last of which seem to have been most important for the poet, because this passage gives much more descriptive space to those with sickness than the hungry and the naked.[27] In corresponding contrast, Christ later tells the damned that part of what doomed them was that they did not help—among others—the "werge, won-hale" ["weary, poor in health"] (641a). Yet Christ gives no

27. On the role of charity in medieval Christian soteriology, see, e.g., Dubourg, "European Medieval Disability History," 6–9.

allowance for the *ge* (you), either of the blessed or the damned, to include those infirm individuals who needed alms, rather than being able to give alms. As with the hanging of crutches and stools around the shrine of St. Swithun that Ælfric describes in the *Lives of Saints*, signs of disability are rhetorically central to illustrating the hope of salvation. The path to salvation is lined with disability—with the spiritual prosthesis of both literal and figurative "criccum ond sceamelum" ["crutches and stools"]—because the blessed attended to those in need, including the impaired and disabled.[28] At *Christ in Judgment*'s Judgment Day, though people with disabilities are still central to envisioning the afterlife, they are nonetheless omitted from the poem's construction of that afterlife and left behind on the path to salvation where they received their alms.

Although *Christ in Judgment* makes no allowance for the presence of actual disabled people in the afterlife, the concept of disability is nonetheless crucial to imagining the afterlife, contrasting earthly embodiments to those of the Resurrection. Christ's description of his own Incarnation defines earthly human existence through suffering.[29] When Christ describes the extent of his sacrifice on humankind's behalf, he says,

> Ic on magu-geoguðe
> yrmþu geæfnde, arleas lic-sar,
> þæt ic þurh þa wære þe gelic,
> ond þu meahte minum weorþan
> mæg-wlite gelic, mane bedæled.
>
> [In my youth I endured suffering, shameful body-pain, so that through it I would become like you, and you might become like me in familial resemblance, separated from shame.] (562b–66)

As part of the exchange to redeem humanity, Christ must become like humanity. Where editors commonly emend to "wære þe gelic" (564b), the Exeter Book reads "wære wege lic"; the change supports the sense of the passage, creating *gelic* to match the same word in 566a and supplying otherwise

28. Lapidge, *Cult*, 606, §27.

29. Thomas D. Hill argues that Christ's description of the Incarnation as suffering is novel in this poem, though it evokes visual traditions of the infant Christ on a bare stone, serving to elicit sympathy for Christ as having suffered simply by becoming human; "Baby on the Stone."

missing alliteration to line 564 on thorn (*þ*).[30] If we emend only to "wære we gelic," the inclusion of "we," even only as a scribal error in the wrong case (a first-person dative plural should be *us*, as in modern English), is evocative of the affinity Christ asserts here. With *þe*, the passage asserts on a specific, individual level that Christ became human and suffered to be more like a singular *you*, but slipping in *we* reveals the effect of that likeness. In the voice of Christ: *ic* (I) and *þu* (you) become *we*, and *we* are both human because of our suffering. "We" may be a scribal error having nothing to do with semantics; the *w* in the manuscript reading "wære wege lic" is a runically derived letter wynn (formed much like a modern lower-case *p*) in both *wære* and *wege*.[31] It would have been a simple error for the scribe to miscopy a thorn (*þ*) as a wynn, but nonetheless the error creates a poignant idea akin to the ungrammatical scenes of Cynewulf's runic signatures.

Reading *we* still requires emending the placement of a space between *ge-* and *lic*, but another reading is made possible by the Exeter Book witness. Without any emendation at all, as "þæt ic þurh þa wære wege lic," this line could provide a loose sense such as "so that through it I would take body as a way." Perhaps no emendation is needed, for to be more like humanity, to experience the suffering embedded in every earthly body, Christ indeed needed to "take body as a way." In this framing, to be human requires suffering; that is, the suffering is not only part of Christ's sacrifice in the Crucifixion, receiving the punishment for humanity's sins, but also one of the ways in which Christ becomes human enough to receive that punishment on humanity's behalf. For Redemption to be possible, Christ needed to take on a vulnerable body, one that could become impaired: a crip body.

Moreover, *Christ in Judgment*'s closing presents all earthly existence as defined by suffering. The poem's conclusion imagines the joys of the blessed in bodily terms, which warrant quotation at length:

> Đær is engla song, eadigra blis;
> þær is seo dyre Dryhtnes onsien
> eallum þam gesælgum sunnan leohtra.
> Đær is leofra lufu, life butan endedeaðe,[32]

30. See Clayton 70; Krapp and Dobbie, *Exeter Book*, 43; Muir, *Exeter Anthology*, I:101.

31. The similarity between thorn and wynn in the Exeter Book hand may be viewed in Foys, et al., *Old English Poetry in Facsimile*; see fol. 28v of the Exeter Book for *Christ in Judgment*, line 564b (ed. Alex Fairbanks-Ukropen and Martin Foys).

32. Where Clayton provides simply *deaðe*, I return to the manuscript reading of

glæd gumena weorud, gioguð butan ylde,
heofon-duguða þrym, hælu butan sare,
ryht-fremmendum ræst butan gewinne,
dom-eadigra dæg butan þeostrum,
beorht blædes full, blis butan sorgum,
frið freondum bitweon ford butan æfestum,
gesælgum on swegle, sib butan niþe
halgum on gemonge. Nis þær hungor ne þurst,
slæp ne swar leger, ne sunnan bryne,
ne cyle ne cearo, ac þær cyninges giefe
awo brucað eadigra gedryht,
weoruda wlite-scynast, wuldres mid Dryhten.

[There is the song of angels, bliss of the blessed; there is the beloved countenance of the lord, brighter than the sun to all the blessed. There is love of the beloved, life without death-end, the shining multitudes of men, youth without age, the host of the heaven-troop, health without pain, rest without strife for the righteous, day without darkness for the Judgment-blessed, brightness full of glory, bliss without sorrows, peace between friends henceforth without malice, happy ones in the heavens, unity without enmity in the crowd of saints. There will be neither hunger nor thirst, sleep nor painful sickness, nor the burning of the sun, neither cold nor care, but there the host of the blessed, the most beautiful kind of people, will ever enjoy the grace of the king, glory with the Lord.] (783–98)

These lines represent the heavenly bliss of eternal salvation more by what it is not than by what it is, inverting the *ubi sunt* (i.e., *hwær bið*, "where is") trope common in Old English elegy that highlights what has been lost, to instead anticipate what will be gained, with *ðær is* (there is).[33] The poem constructs the unobservable afterlife out of the observable world. The world of "gewinne" ["strife"] and "sorgum" ["sorrows"] fuels here a powerful assertion that in the afterlife of the blessed, these worldly cares will be no more. Thus the frequency of the word *butan* (without), occurring eight times in this pas-

endedeaðe; see Krapp and Dobbie, *Exeter Book*, 49; Muir, *Exeter Anthology*, I:110.

33. On the "ubi sunt" motif, see Cross, "'Ubi Sunt' Passages in Old English." The list employs the "Seven Joys of Heaven" motif, common also in homiletic contexts, including Blickling Homily II, discussed in the introduction; see Morris 25, as well as Hill, "Seven Joys."

sage, and *ne* (no/neither/nor), occurring six times (the first compounded with *is* as *nis*), represents not only the absence of a thing in the embodied afterlife, but also its centrality to the shaping of the embodied earthly life.

This imagining of eternal bliss dreams of a life without death, age, or pain. In doing so, it writes out of the blessed afterlife the intervening period of death, the realities of bodily aging, and the experience of pain in contrast to "health" or "wholeness"; that is, the *hælu* of the blessed afterlife exorcises any *unhælu* rooted in the earthly life. This passage, however, also writes those experiences *into* the anticipation of the afterlife, because even as the poem denies the presence of death, age, and pain in the afterlife, it nonetheless puts those words on the page to characterize the afterlife. The linguistic building blocks of the afterlife are negatively coded features of the present earthly life that will be eliminated, not solely positively coded aspects of earthly life (such as wealth or joy) that will be amplified. On the level of the text, every experience that the poem lists as abolished by salvation, as it is experienced on earth, becomes a necessary prelude to the afterlife, an earthly experience of the body that foreshadows by contrast the embodied afterlife.

The construction of an aspirational embodiment premised upon what it is not recalls the "normate," the culturally unmarked body defined by Rosemarie Garland-Thomson as "the veiled subject position of cultural self, the figure outlined by the array of deviant others whose marked bodies shore up the normate's boundaries."[34] The afterlife imagined by *Christ in Judgment* is likewise "outlined" by the very physical experiences of earthly life, including features of physicality that I have characterized in previous chapters as "aberrance," but also those, like hunger, that are common to virtually all bodies (and would be more aberrant not to experience). For *Christ in Judgment*, the earthly life contains death, age, pain, strife, darkness, sorrow, cold, and care. The earthly life—and indeed the earthly body—is mutable and vulnerable because of all these things. Such a perspective is in keeping with Augustinian anthropologies of disability, in which the infirmity and death of the human body originated as a punishment for Adam and Eve but became naturalized to the human condition, a physical and spiritual disability that only Christ may heal through his own sacrifice for Redemption and the general Resurrection.[35]

The audience of *Christ in Judgment* find themselves already participant in

34. Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*, 8.

35. Augustine discusses the eschatological timeline of the perfected body in *City of God: Book 21–22*, XXII.14; see also *Sermo* 87.13 in Augustine, *Sermons*; Claes and Dupont, "Augustine's Sermons and Disability."

the "everyplace and everytime of the end times," as Thornbury asserts, already experiencing an apocalyptic temporality with no certainty of their salvation.[36] The soteriological question that Thornbury says is left open is also an embodied question, making the Apocalypse a matter of crip time. An individual consumer of *Christ in Judgment* is shown that their body will certainly be resurrected as youthful and eternal, but they cannot know until that time how they will experience that body, whether it will be impairing or empowering. Regardless, the anticipation of that body, in addition to enfolding the audience member in having already been part of the time and place of salvation, makes it inescapably clear to the audience of the poem that their earthly body is by no means already the perfected Resurrection body.

Bodies that age, that feel pain and cold, aberr from the spiritual normate of the afterlife, an afterlife that was not just metaphorically, but literally physical. Aberrance thus encompasses not just saintly, sinful, and monstrous bodies, bodies distinguished by gendered, religious, or cultural stigmas, as I have discussed in chapters 4 and 5, but also the most ordinary, centered, privileged human bodies possible. Because experiences such as age and pain are virtually universal in this earthly life, every earthly body carries these physical signifiers of the spiritual fallenness of humankind. Every earthly body is spiritually aberrant by virtue of not yet being the perfected body of the Resurrection. It is a form of aberrance rooted in crip eschatological time through theological futurity: the certainty that comes with faith in the Christian afterlife—inclusive of Resurrection and Judgment—produces normative measures of bodily wholeness alongside spiritual wholeness that function in the present life. The body that is not physically or spiritually whole constitutes a body that is not desired. As a result, the aberrance of every earthly body constitutes an eschatologically inflected spiritual disability, which crips medieval bodies in their earthly present. Every earthly body is always already in some way crip because it is not the spiritual normate of the afterlife's resurrected body. The blessed's experience of salvation as an afterlife without such aberrance manifests yet another way in which aberrance, and its conceptual corollary disability, limn the path to salvation.

Seeing Christ's Wounds

The final way *Christ in Judgment* links salvation to disability is through the body of Christ, which makes the language of injury and impairment inte-

36. Thornbury, "Form versus Catastrophe," 35.

gral to the hope of salvation. The timeline from Creation to Salvation relies upon Christ's wounded body as a spiritual prosthesis, and upon the all-encompassing system of aberrance in which Christ's body participates, for its soteriological promises. For humanity to be redeemed and made eligible for salvation, Christ's body had to be wounded, impaired to the point of death, entombed, and then resurrected. Old English poems including *Dream of the Rood*, *Christ and Satan*, *Elene*, and the other *Christ* poems in the Exeter Book demonstrate that the all-important physicality of the Incarnation and Crucifixion was very much on the minds of early medieval Christians in England. In becoming human to enable Christian salvation, Christ's body itself becomes prosthetic.[37] Christ's body spiritually supplements, augments, and makes possible Christian salvation history. As we have seen of the bodies of Ss. Æthelthryth, Andrew, and Juliana, Christ's body must be a marked human body in order to be recognizable as spiritually elevated, in this case as divine. Moreover, Christ's miracles of healing are the archetype of healing miracles such as St. Swithun's, which demonstrate a relationship between spiritual impairment (i.e., sin) and bodily impairment through biblical exempla, exegesis, and homiletic extrapolation. In these ways, and in many more, the body of Christ spiritually prosthesizes the salvation history of humankind.

Christ in Judgment makes wounds integral to its depiction of Christ. In *Christ in Judgment*'s first mention of his Parousia, the poem describes the arrival of "wundorlic Cristes onsyn, / æþel-cyninges wlite" ["the wonderful sight of Christ, countenance of the noble king"] (39–40a), underscoring both his physical appearance (his "wlite") and his visibility (with "onsyn," which suggests both appearance and something to be seen). As the poem unfolds, however, it becomes clear that what is visible about Christ that is "wundorlic" ["wonderful"] includes the signs of his Crucifixion, perhaps even punning on the presence of *wund* (wound) and *lic* (body) in *wundorlic*. Christ's wounded body makes him wonderful to behold.

When Christ's body appears to the resurrected masses of humankind in *Christ in Judgment*, his body takes on divergent meanings, each of which relies upon its visibility. Christ appears "biter bealofullum, gebleod wundrum, / eadgum ond earmum ungelice" ["bitter to the baleful, wondrously beautiful, unalike to the blessed and the wretched"] (42–43). This is the vision of God "swylce swylce he ys" ["just as he is"] that the OE *Soliloquies* had promised, even to the point that the sight of him functions "to frofran" ["as a comfort"]

37. On the prosthetic role of Christ's body as both human and divine in late medieval Christian contexts, see Walter, "Fragments."

to the blessed and "to wite" ["as a punishment"] to the damned.[38] In the Parousia of *Christ in Judgment*, Christ's body is made hypervisual, both in the vivid description within the poem and in the poem's emphasis on the resurrected masses seeing Christ's body. When "blod ond wæter" ["blood and water"] (246a) spill from Christ's body—it is unclear in the text if they are actually spilling during the Apocalypse or if we are being shown what happened during the Crucifixion; it may be both—they emerge "fore eagna gesyhð" ["before the sight of their eyes"] (247b).

Christ's hypervisuality emphasizes the injury done to his body, much of which resonates between the narrative account of the Crucifixion and the account in Christ's own voice. The narrative foregrounds the puncture of Christ's hands and feet (243–44), the wound in his side (245–47a), and the crown of thorns (259–60a). The account of the Crucifixion in Christ's voice is emphatic about the details of his suffering as well:

> Þa hi hwæsne beag
> ymb min heafod heardne gebygdon,
> þream biþrycton, se wæs of þornum geworht.
> Ða ic wæs ahongen on heanne beam,
> rode gefæstnad; ða hi ricene mid spere
> of minre sidan swat ut guton,
> dreor to foldan, þæt þu of deofles þurh þæt
> nyd-gewalde genered wurde.
> Ða ic, womma leas, wite þolade,
> yfel earfeþu, oþ þæt ic anne forlet
> of minum lic-homan lifgendne gæst.
> Geseoð nu þa feorh-dolg þe ge gefremedun ær
> on minum folmum ond on fotum swa some,
> þurh þa ic hongade hearde gefæstnad;
> meaht her eac geseon orgete nu gen
> on minre sidan swatge wunde.
>
> [Then they bent around my head a hard and sharp wreath, impressed with threats, which was made of thorns. Then I was hung on a tall tree, fastened to a rood; then they quickly shed blood out from my

38. See chapter 1 above; Lockett, *Augustine's* Soliloquies, III.9, III.8. Additional ways of anticipating the sight of Christ at the Last Judgment were also available; in *Elene*, for example, Cynewulf writes of a tripartite Judgment after which the damned will not see God (in Bjork, lines 1286b–1308a).

> side with a spear, gore to the earth, so that through that you might be delivered from the tyranny of the devil. Then I, without stains, suffered pain, evil hardship, until I alone relinquished my living soul from my body. See now the mortal wounds on my palms and on my feet, which you once performed as a reckoning, by which I hung firmly fastened; again you may also see here the bloody wound manifest now on my side.] (577b–92)

The Crucifixion is an inherently bodily scene of torture and death, but Christ also makes explicit the exchange of the Crucifixion, of his life and bodily integrity for the Redemption of humankind, by asserting that the shedding of his blood was spilled upon the earth "þæt þu" ["so that you"] might be delivered. The second-person address in these lines speaks not only to the assembled hordes of the damned on the future Judgment Day, but also to the continuously present audience of the poem. The earlier lines speak to *þu* in the singular before expanding to *ge* in the plural, which moves from the Redemption of an individual "you" to the Redemption of all of "you," that is, all of humankind.[39] Putting this section in the first person of Christ's voice personalizes the exchange as an aural and visual relationship between the human bodies told to "geseoð" ["see"] Christ's wounds and the speaking embodied Christ gesturing to wounds upon his own body. The imagined sensory relationship between Christ and the resurrected damned thus constructs an intimate interaction between spiritually impaired bodies and the physically wounded, but spiritually empowered, body of Christ.

Crucially to Christ's embodiment in this poem and in Christian thought, Christ may suffer from his wounds (*Christ in Judgment* certainly suggests as much), but they do not harm him. There is no sense in calling Christ disabled for the medieval audiences of *Christ in Judgment*, but his wounds link him conceptually to the twinned eschatological specters of disability and damnation. In *Christ in Judgment*, the conceptual overlap between wounds and sin that we have seen in the works of Cynewulf is further mapped out throughout the poem; words for wounds (and semantically related terms like scars, marks, and stains upon the body) link the appearance of Christ and the sins of the damned.

A survey of the words used in *Christ in Judgment* to describe marked bodies reveals conceptual ties between the body of Christ and the resurrected bodies

39. The poet even notes that Christ speaks as if to one person, but it is directed to all of the damned; 510b–512.

of the damned. The poet applies the word *tacn* (token, sign) quite evenly, once each in relation to Christ (348b), the blessed (369a), the damned, who bear "facen-tacen" ["the sign of evil"] (699a), and to the Apocalypse itself (26b). This neutrality is unsurprising: elsewhere in the Old English corpus, signs denoted with *tacn* are wide-ranging and include Grendel's arm in *Beowulf* and the vision of the Cross seen by Constantine in *Elene*.[40] *Wamm* (stain, mark, blemish), however, clearly has negative connotations; the damned are described using *wamm* ten times (140a, 226a, 359a, 413b, 445a, 455a, 668b, 677b, 695a, 703b), while the word is only used in negative constructions for Christ (231b, 585a) and the blessed (598a), describing them as without blemish.[41] An important distinction is provided by the phrasing that Christ "no wom dyde" ["never committed a crime"] (231b), making "wom," a form of *wamm*, into an action not committed, rather than a bodily mark that is absent, because the twist of Christ's aberrant body is in part that he is indeed marked by his wounds. Similarly, the poet repeatedly uses *leahter* (crime, sin, disease) for the damned (414b, 442b, 448b, 612b, 672a, 692a), but only in the negative for Christ (232b). More curiously, *fah*—both decorated or stained and guilty or criminal—is used exclusively for the damned (134a, 216a, 672a, 694b, 748b, 750b, 766a). Other texts use both meanings of *fah*, so that it describes the negative state of guilt, but also decoration with both positive and negative valences.[42] Even though *Christ in Judgment* uses *fah* to mean decorated or, in negative terms, stained, it never uses *fah* to describe positively valanced decoration. The moral valences of these marked bodies are clear.

Nonetheless, Christ and the damned have their wounds in common. The poet refers to the damned with forms of *wund* (wound) twice (447b,

40. See *Beowulf*, line 833b, in *Klaeber*; *Elene*, e.g., line 85a, in Bjork.

41. In its negative verbal form, we have seen this term frequently: in Ælfric's *Life of St. Æthelthryth*, who remained "ungewemmed" and "unwemme" (e.g., *LS* II:194, lines 15, 18), in *Andreas*, when St. Andrew is healed after torture so that "næs him gewemmed wlite" ["his appearance was not marked"] (in Clayton, line 1471a), and in *Juliana*, in which the saint persists "ungewemde" during her torture (in Bjork, line 590a). *Wom* is also the word we have seen used in the OE *Pastoral Care* to describe blemishes that disqualify candidates for the priesthood; see Fulk, *Old English Pastoral Care*, 71, I.11.1.

42. Examples from *Beowulf* illustrate the range of *fah*, also spelled *fag*. While the *Beowulf* poet describes Grendel following the same formula that appears in *Christ in Judgment* (134a), as "fyrendædum fag" ["stained by evil deeds"] (in *Klaeber*, line 1001a), forms of *fah* more commonly describe corpses and halls as stained with blood (e.g., 447, 485, 934, 1111, 1128, 1286, 1594, 1631, 2060, 2974) and describe battle gear, warriors, and halls as richly decorated (e.g., 167, 305, 308, 420, 586, 716, 725, 780, 927, 994, 1038, 1444, 1459, 1698, 1800, 2811). On the word *fah*, including its polysemy and etymological relationships, see Christiansen, "Reconsideration."

455b), but for Christ uses *wund* three times (241a, 341a, 592b), always near an instance of *dolg* (wound, scar) (241b, 340b, 588a). The wounds are more overtly stigmatized for the damned, used in phrases like "synna wunde" ["wounds of sin"] (447b), the same formula we have seen in the signed Cynewulfian poems.[43] While Christ's wounds are clearly to be understood as literal, they also symbolize the way Christ's sacrifice is taken as an exchange on behalf of humankind, redeeming their sins for wounds despite having no sins of his own. Indeed, Christ's wounds forestall any wounds on the blessed: they are redeemed by his sacrifice. *Christ in Judgment* emphasizes the common characterization of Christ's sacrifice as an exchange: "laðlicne deað leodum to helpe" ["a loathly death to help the nations"] (307). Christ himself later says, "Þe mine deaðe deore gebohte / þæt longe lif þæt þu on leohte siþþan, / wlitig, womma leas, wunian mostes" ["With my death, [I] dearly bought for you that long life, so that you might thereafter live in light, beautiful and without stains"] (596–98), and that the purchase was "for lufan mid mine lic-homan" ["out of love, with my body"] (604).[44] Christ's literally wounded incarnate body has satisfied the debt incurred by figural wounds of sin.

Christ's purchase must be repaid by sinners who have squandered what the Crucifixion bought. Christ says that his Crucifixion bought for those who would follow him an afterlife "womma leas" ["without stains"] (598a), but to the damned who rejected him, Christ says, "Ðæs lifes ic manige þe þu mid leahtrum hafast / ofslegen synlice" ["I reclaim from you that life that you have sinfully slain with vices"] (612–13a). *Leahter*, the word used here and elsewhere in *Christ in Judgment* to describe what in context are clearly behavioral errors—vices, sins, crimes—frequently serves homilists and poets to describe sin. *Leahter*, however, also appears in Old English medical texts to describe marks of injury or disease, often of the skin, such as the "leahtras ðæs muþes" ["lesions of the mouth"] that the Old English *Herbal* indicates may be treated with licorice root.[45] The overlapping vocabulary of physical impairment and the markings of sin (*wamm*, *leahter*) produces a medicalizing valence for *Christ in Judgment*'s description of Redemption, which impacts both Christ's description of his own suffering and the embodiments the damned experience upon Resurrection. The medicalized use of *leahter* emerges elsewhere, when the poem notes that with confession, "mæg mon

43. "Synnum fah" ["stained with sins"] also appears in *Dream of the Rood*, followed by "forwunded mid wommum" ["wounded with blemishes"] (in Clayton, lines 13b, 14a).

44. The motif of Redemption as a "purchase" reappears elsewhere in *Christ in Judgment*; see, e.g., 229–33a.

45. Niles and D'Aronco, *Medical Writings*, 296, 145.3.

swa þeah gelacnigan leahtra gehwylcne, / yfel unclæne" ["nevertheless, each stain and unclean evil may be healed"] (442–43a), transferring the language of sickness and healing onto matters of sin and salvation. It is the lesions, not just the stains, of the damned that cause Christ's suffering, and likewise the lesions of the damned that mark their Resurrection bodies.

Christ's castigation of the damned continues, strengthening the correlation between wounds, stains, and sins for the damned. Christ says that while he "gestag, / willum minum" ["ascended, willingly"] (625b–26a) the Cross for the Crucifixion, in which he experienced literal physical harm, at Judgment he is "unwillum [. . .] gefæstnad" ["unwillingly fastened"] (624) to a (metaphorical) cross of the damned's willful sins since his sacrifice, and this, he says, "me þeos heardra þynceð" ["seems more severe to me"] (622b).[46] Christ continues, "Ic þec from helle ateah, / þær þu hit wolde sylfa siþþan gehealdan" ["I drew you out of hell, so that you would thereafter keep yourself out"] (627b–28). Having forsaken Christ's sacrifice—and not kept themselves out of hell—the damned are resurrected just like all humanity, but their resurrected forms are certainly not "womma leas" ["without stains"] (598a) as the blessed are and as Christ has been described (231b). The damned are instead "leahtrum fa" ["stained with vices"] (672a); the use of *leahter* in this moment, not *wamm*, medicalizes sinful behavior as a moral form of disease made visible on the body. As we have seen—indeed as *Christ in Judgment* expects all creation to witness—the visibility of these stains participates in the punishment of the damned that begins in the Apocalypse.

Sight of Christ's body becomes punitive for the damned. *Christ in Judgment* frames the sight of Christ's wounds as part of the suffering allotted to those who neglected their salvation:

> Swa þam bið grorne on þam grimman dæge
> domes þæs miclan, þam þe Dryhtnes sceal,
> deað-firenum forden, dolg sceawian,
> wunde ond wite. On werigum sefan
> geseoð sorga mæste, hu se sylfa cyning
> mid sine lic-homan lysde of firenum
> þurh milde mod, þæt hy mostun man-weorca

46. Compare the willing ascent of Christ here to a similar assertion of Christ's eagerness to ascend the Cross in *Dream of the Rood*—"Gestah he on gealgan heanne, / modig on manigra gesyhðe, þa he wold man-cyn lysan" ["He ascended up that high gallows, brave in the sight of many, so that he would redeem humankind"] (in Clayton, lines 40b–41)—and the leaps of Christ in Cynewulf's *Ascension* (in Bjork, lines 720–51a).

tome lifgan, ond tires blæd
ecne agan. Hy þæs eðles þonc
hyra waldende wihte ne cuþon;
forþon þær to teonum þa tacen geseoð
orgeatu on Gode, ungesælge.

[Thus it will be wretched for them on the grim day of that great Judgment, that one defiled by mortal sins, who shall see the scars of the Lord, wound and torment. In a weary mind, they will see the greatest of griefs, how the King himself, with his own body, redeemed [them] from sins through a merciful heart, that they might live free from sins, and obtain the eternal reward of glory. They did not know to give thanks at all to their master for that homeland; therefore in that place the miserable ones will see the signs manifest upon God as a cause of their suffering.] (338–49)

The promised appearance of Christ's wounds in the Apocalypse bridges from the historical moment of Crucifixion to the anticipation of future Judgment. Like the scars of saints, both those remaining uncorrupt on earth and those imagined in the afterlife, the marks of Christ's wounds serve as corporeal signifiers of his Passion. By memorializing the Redemption of humankind at the Apocalypse, these wounds link the Crucifixion and the Last Judgment as two not-quite-distinct moments in the crip time of salvation history.

The visual evidence of Christ's torment is central here: seeing these wounds serves as punishment to the damned. Some scholars have suggested that the blessed do not see Christ's wounds at all, but the introduction of the blessed and the damned's disparate visions of Christ—that Christ is "biter bealofullum, gebleod wundrum, / eadgum ond earmum ungelice" ["bitter to the baleful, wondrously beautiful, unalike to the blessed and the wretched"] (42–43)—does not require this reading. Neither do the following lines, which elaborate on the positive and negative experiences of the blessed and the damned, respectively, when they see Christ (44–54). I follow Timothy Arner and Paul D. Stegner's suggestion that "the poet's decision to pass over the blessed's vision of the wounds of Christ does not indicate that they are incapable of seeing them; rather, it demonstrates that they view the wounds as part of Christ's 'scynan wlite' (shining splendor, l. 914b) while the damned recognize their meaning for the first time and are filled with terror."[47] *Christ*

47. Arner and Stegner, "Voyeuristic Appeal," 438; the phrase "scynan wlite," line 914b

in Judgment only explicitly states the dissimilarity of how the blessed and the damned experience what they see, not that they actually perceive different things; what appears either bitter or beautiful can be Christ's wounds in both cases. Importantly, the word *geblēod* (42b) can indicate not just beauty, but also a literal variation of color (e.g., "colorful" or "variegated").[48] Such terms vary in valence based on context, much like the present-day English use of "colorful" to mean both multicolored and bright in one color.[49] While both "colorful" and "gebleod" clearly have metaphorical uses as well (e.g., modern "colorful" meaning "vivid" in positive contexts or "disreputable" in negative contexts; Old English *geblēod* meaning "beautiful"), the straightforward interpretation remains. Calling Christ *geblēod* might even suggest that he is beautiful *because* he is colorful, an effect that is amplified by the slanting pun of *geblēod* on *blōd*, and the bloody reason Christ's countenance would be variegated in color. Describing Christ as "gebleod" implies that even the blessed see a Christ streaked in blood; for them, though, Christ's wounds are beautiful, proving that they have lived pious lives for good reason, while the damned find them a bitter confirmation that they will be held to account for their sins.[50]

Salvation history, and here particularly the Last Judgment, thus functions through a system of aberrance: while human bodies are resurrected before receiving their just deserts of salvation and damnation, the body of Christ and those of some saints retain signs of wounding, with both negative and positive associations through the textual emphasis on the suffering and glory therein represented. These variations on embodiment shape the scope of the Apocalypse, in temporally and physiologically slippery terms, as when

in editions that lineate the three *Christ* poems continuously, appears at 48b in Clayton. See also Hill, "Vision and Judgement," 235. Jones discusses at length the scriptural and iconographic sources for depicting Christ as perceived differently by the blessed and the damned; "Ways of Seeing."

48. *DOE*, "ge•blēod." The *DOE* takes this instance from *Christ in Judgment* under the use of the word, with notable uncertainty, as "? beauteous ? formed, shaped ? or more generally: of aspect, of face."

49. *OED*, "colourful | colorful, *adj.*"

50. The blessed viewing Christ's wounds as beautiful would anticipate the fondness for depicting Christ's wounds and meditating upon them as a form of affective piety that has long been recognized in the late Middle Ages; see, e.g., Bynum, *Wonderful Blood*; Langum, "'The Wounded Surgeon'"; Priest, "Christ's Wounds"; Zimbalist, "Medieval Affective Piety." Recognizing the beauty of Christ's wounds in *Christ in Judgment* accords with, e.g., Jennifer A. Lorden's recent argument in *Forms of Devotion* that poetic topoi associated with affective piety emerged in England prior to the Norman Conquest.

the first recounting of the Crucifixion in *Christ in Judgment* asserts that the damned will see both "þa ealdan wunde ond þa openan dolg" ["the ancient wound and the open sore"] (241) on Christ's body. This phrasing blurs the temporality of Christ's injury: is it so healed that it is "ealdan" ["ancient"] or so fresh that the sores are still "openan" ["open"]?

The collapse of the Crucifixion as both recent and long ago through Christ's bodily representation in the poem compresses the centuries of earthly time passing between those moments. As Thornbury has recently commented, this scene "recounts the events of the Crucifixion in a way that leaves genuinely open the question of whether the Crucifixion prefigured the Last Judgment, or the Last Judgment recapitulated the Crucifixion, or if both were somehow the same event."[51] Since the moment of Christ's Parousia ends linear time, the temporal collapse of Christ's wounds is also an indication that time itself no longer carries meaning: Crucifixion and Judgment *are* in some ways the same event. The wounded body of Christ makes possible these temporal impossibilities, or at least concepts of time that are impossible in human terms but not divine terms. Thus the wounded body of Christ makes possible human apprehension of eternity. The early medieval Christians in the poem's audience are no longer so far away in time from the Crucifixion as they may have thought; they may even be much closer to the Apocalypse than they feared or dared to hope. Christ's is the crip embodiment around which linear historical time twists and folds, not for the eternal Christ but for the limited temporal affordances of human perception. Christ's body reveals the imminence of Judgment, through the collapse of the time between Crucifixion and Apocalypse, the collapse of the earthly present in which all Christians live.

Christ's wounds are the nexus of this temporal collapse. While OE *wund* clearly indicates its modern descendant "wound," the semantic slippage of OE *dolg* (also spelled *dolh*) to mean "sore" but also "wound" and "scar" encapsulates within it the temporal slippage of the fresh, bloody wounds Christ received in the Crucifixion and the scars that might memorialize those wounds once they have healed, that is, if an aberrant body such as Christ's would even need to have healed in the eternity of the afterlife.[52] As *dolg*, they

51. Thornbury, "Form versus Catastrophe," 29. Evelyn Reynolds similarly argues that *Christ in Judgment*'s depiction of the Apocalypse uses verbal repetition and parallel imagery to build a sense of temporal halt, making the events described feel simultaneous, even if they follow in poetic sequence; "Forms of Catastrophe," 56–61.

52. Though the *Dictionary of Old English* does not give "scar" as a possible translation ("dolg"), I take up *Bosworth-Toller*'s offering of "A wound, scar of a wound, cut, gash,

are both wounds *and* scars, both recent and long-standing signifiers of the act of Redemption. The promised appearance of Christ's wounds in the Apocalypse bridges from the historical moment of Crucifixion to the anticipation of future Judgment. Indeed, Christ's wounds become "tacen" ["signs"] (348b) that are "orgeatu" ["manifest"] (349a) upon Christ's body, the physicality of which is underscored through the characterization of the Crucifixion as a sacrifice of the body, performed by "se sylfa cyning / mid sine lic-homan" ["the king himself, with his own body"] (342b–43a). The poem's imagination of the Apocalypse is not just about how human Resurrection bodies will be marked in potentially stigmatizing ways; it is also about how the body of Christ himself is marked by signifiers of both suffering and salvation. Moreover, because it is only the damned, those "deað-firenum forden" ["defiled by mortal sins"] (340a), who see Christ's marked body with negative associations, the commission of those sins is also enfolded into the temporal interlace of this textual moment. The body of Christ is marked to signify both the sins of all humankind and his own sinlessness.

Importantly, though, the lesser emphasis in *Christ in Judgment* on the blessed viewing Christ's wounds suggests that the blessed see Christ's glory more prominently. The situation is the logical outcome of the correlation between sightedness and salvation that we have seen in chapter 1 and throughout this study, that at Judgment those who are blessed will see what others do not. If Christ's wounds are part of his splendor, then that would indeed be a recoding of impairment as spiritually empowering, as Augustine had written would also be the case for the wounds of the martyrs in the afterlife. Christ, like the Cross in *Dream of the Rood* that also recounts the torment of the Passion in a first-person voice, is multivalent, a vision of both

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sore" ("dolh"). Pairings of *dolg*/*dolh* and *wund*, moreover, suggest that the words were not synonymous in Old English; for example, *Judith* contains "dolhwund" as a poetic compound, perhaps meaning severely wounded, in the sense of being expected to leave a scar if healed; see Fulk, *Beowulf Manuscript*, 306, line 107. We have also seen *dolg* previously in this study in the compound "dolgswæð," the word used in the OE *Bede* to describe St. Æthelthryth's scar, translating Latin "cicatricis uestigia" ["traces of a scar"]; see chapter 3. Candida R. Moss argues that accounts in Luke and John of Christ's Resurrection are better read as describing scars on Christ's body as a "proof of life"; the wounds having healed is what proves Christ lives and is not a disembodied shade, because contemporary medical understandings expected the flow of blood to be necessary for healing; *Divine Bodies*, 26–40. The *Christ in Judgment* poet may have had similar thoughts, that Christ's marks were scars, or embraced a similar ambiguity to the Lukan and Johannine authors, since the poet's choice of vocabulary is ambiguous about whether Christ has wounds or scars.

bodily glory and bodily gore.[53] He is marked by signs of his suffering, which are simultaneously interpretable as magnificent and as horrifying. The sight of his body has the power to spiritually elevate the blessed and spiritually demote the damned.

Reward and punishment at the Last Judgment manifest through sight of Christ's body. The vision of Christ extends the metaphorical substitution of sight for faith because the faithful are rewarded with the sight of Christ's glory in all its brightness and splendor.[54] *Christ in Judgment*'s emphasis upon what the damned see—the wounds of Christ—expands the blessed privilege of sight to the damned as well. The system of aberrance in *Christ in Judgment* thus partially confounds the metaphor that sightedness signifies blessedness, because sightedness is not *always* blessedness. There is no room for blindness or vision impairment in this figuring of the Apocalypse: in the Resurrection and Judgment of the blessed and the damned, in order for all to be seen by one another and by God, all must be able to see. The construction of vision impairment as something that must be "fixed" at the Resurrection is quintessentially normativizing; that is, it constructs a spiritual normate out of the resurrected body. In the afterlife, the Resurrection body must be able to see, and so this mode of understanding sight suggests that any impairment to sightedness reveals a shortcoming in one's physical relationship to the Resurrection body, further stigmatizing any vision impairment experienced by the earthly body.

Because the sight of Christ's body contributes to the reward and punishment of the afterlife, Christ's body participates in a system of aberrance alongside all humanity, that contains within it the entirety of eschatological hope and fear. The medicalizing language attached to Christ's marked body crips his physicality: he cannot be seen as a whole, unimpaired, unmarked body, a body that is untouched by disability. Rather, in *Christ in Judgment*, as in much medieval Christian literature, Christ's body is a crip body. He must be crip in order to reward the blessed, punish the damned, and make Redemption possible for anyone.

53. Unlike in *Christ in Judgment*, the *Dream of the Rood* indicates that the Cross's actual appearance oscillates, rather than its perception depending on the viewer. In *Dream of the Rood*, the Dreamer says of the Cross: "Geseah ic þæt fuse beacen / wendan wædum ond bleom; hwilum hit wæs mid wætan bestemed, / beswyled mid swates gange, hwilum mid since gegyrwed" ["Then I saw that hastening beacon alternating its garments and appearance; sometimes it was moistened with wetness, drenched by the flowing of blood, sometimes bedecked with treasure"]; Clayton, lines 21b–23. For the comparison of eschatological topoi, see, e.g., Hill, "Vision and Judgement," 242n18.

54. As Sachi Shimomura avers, the poem allegorizes brightness as a means of representing both the figurative and literal closeness of Christ; "Visualizing Judgement."

Christ's Parousia, moreover, blurs earthly linear temporality into the atemporality of eternity. As Thomas D. Hill explains, the Judgment must occur in time, and yet the presence of Christ initiates eternity without time, and the *Christ in Judgment* poet "was acutely aware of the dissonance of human and divine time."[55] When Christ appears, time stops, or rather time extends into eternity, a kind of perpetual untimeliness. And yet the text of *Christ in Judgment* moves along, line by line, depicting this timeless untimeliness in alliterative meter as a linear sequence of events. *Christ in Judgment* resolves the dissonance between human and divine time by conceiving of it in recognizable terms of the earthly body—by making apocalyptic time crip—through a system of bodily aberrance made up of Christ's body and the resurrected bodies of the blessed and the damned. Relationships between aberrant bodies function as a spiritual prosthesis to convey the incompatible temporalities of the afterlife. When time becomes untimely, the poet bridges the impossibility of conceiving of eternity by representing the experience of those initial moments of eternity through familiar structures of bodily wholeness and impairment. *Christ in Judgment* addresses the representational difficulty of eschatological time through an apocalyptic system of aberrance, which projects earthly disability into the everlasting life.

Normative Eschatology

The eschatology of early medieval England was a crip eschatology. Promises of the Resurrection and the hope of salvation came through crip embodiments; bodies recognizable as disabled and bodies that were otherwise aberrant from asserted norms shaped the path to the afterlife for early medieval Christians. *Christ in Judgment* imagines the afterlife in terms of sensory ability and disability, corporeal vulnerability and wholeness, and the ascription of both guilt and glory to marked bodies. These poetic permutations of bodily form and function spiritually prosthesized salvation history, revealing the dependence of the universal narrative of Christianity upon disabled bodies, aberrant bodies, crip bodies.

Crip eschatology makes it possible for *Christ in Judgment* to narrate the temporal impossibilities of linear earthly time marching into the timelessness of eternity. I have been careful to describe the bodies wrapped up in this eschatology as disabled, aberrant, and crip, *not* as non-normative, because

55. Hill, "Vision and Judgement," 239. Hill suggests that *Christ in Judgment* resolves this tension through the sight permitted to the blessed in comparison to the damned. Margaret Jennings, moreover, finds resolution for this tension in structural similarities to the rhythm of the liturgy; "Structure in *Christ III*."

even though bodies become aberrant by deviating from expected norms, crip eschatology was exceedingly normative for medieval Christianity. Where today's notions of crip time transgressively resist temporalities of compulsory able-bodiedness, the crip temporalities of disability and bodily aberrance were at the heart of medieval Christianity.[56] The Exeter Book (and with it *Christ in Judgment*) generally adheres to the orthodox Christianity of late-tenth-century England.[57] A vital feature of the distinctly medieval Christian worldview was that salvation history organized all existence; the untimeliness of typology along a linear progressive timeline was also the normal, expected process of earthly temporality, made possible by the literal untimeliness—time*less*ness—of eternity. Eschatological time is inherently untimely, but it was the normative time of medieval Christianity. The use of aberrant bodies to depict eschatological time makes the central role of aberrant bodies in such apocalyptic anticipation normative as well. Making eschatology crip, by conceiving of eschatological time through aberrant bodily forms, paradoxically made participation in such an eschatologically inflected system of aberrance quite normative as well. In other words, poems like *Christ in Judgment* do not offer an alternative crip temporality; they reify a crip temporality of bodily aberrance in which their audience is expected to already participate.

Systems of aberrance enabled medieval writers to convey ineffable eschatological concepts as a spiritual prosthesis both for imagining the afterlife and for helping Christians in their audience to attain their own salvation. Disability sits at the heart of this medieval Christian worldview, making eschatological hope accessible to medieval followers of the Christian faith. Through such techniques, crip eschatology potentially suffused the embodied lives and afterlives of every individual medieval Christian by making every earthly body participant in a system of aberrance that spans the entirety of salvation history from Creation to the Apocalypse.

56. Meghan Henning similarly contrasts the marginalization of disability in modern narrative to late antique eschatological narratives, in which "the spectacle of bodily deviance is the whole show"; *Hell Hath No Fury*, 149.

57. See, e.g., Niles, *God's Exiles*, 240.

Conclusion

This study has articulated some of the ways Old English literature conceived of Christian eschatology through disability. This pervasive conceptual system, which I have called a crip eschatology, enfolded disability into its worldview in numerous ways, two of which I have explored here. Early medieval Christian eschatology relied upon disability as a spiritual prosthesis in at least three domains: those of rhetoric, as demonstrated through vision metaphors in the Alfredian corpus; narrative, as modeled by the healing miracles of St. Swithun; and theology, as reflected in promises about the Resurrection body supported by St. Æthelthryth's uncorrupt remains. Through systems of aberrance, relationships between marked embodiments, whether disabled, crip, or otherwise aberrant, function systematically as a compound spiritual prosthesis on the level of a single conversion narrative in *Andreas*, the level of multiple related texts in the signed poems of Cynewulf, and the level of all salvation history in the apocalyptic anticipation of *Christ in Judgment*.

Much of the literature of early medieval England participated in the period's crip eschatology, beyond what I have included here. Certainly there were other structures through which the afterlife was conceived; crip eschatology was not all eschatology. Indeed, many texts about the afterlife seem to deliberately avoid discussing the body at all, though one wonders if that may have been an aversive reaction to the limitations of models available for understanding embodiment, continued from threads of early Christian thought that saw no appeal in the messy human body persisting into eternity. When the body was involved in Christian eschatological thought, however, typically so too was disability, and often so too were various forms framed as aberrant made part of discursive networks constructing eschatological hope.

Recognizing crip eschatology as a prominent strategy for conceiving of the afterlife in texts as overtly interested in the body as those discussed here demands that we re-evaluate the impacts of crip eschatology on texts less interested in either the body or the afterlife.

Moreover, recognizing the impacts of crip eschatology in early medieval England calls for reconsideration of the history of disability, even in secular contexts, across the global array of cultures impacted by either Christianity or the English language. Characterizing the role of disability in early medieval eschatology facilitates our recognition—as scholars of the Middle Ages, as members of the disability community, as humans experiencing our bodies through cultural traditions deeply preoccupied with disability—of the part played by medieval Christianity in a long history of conceptualizing disability through eschatological hopes and fears. Crip eschatology surely shaped the thoughts and feelings that some—perhaps many—participants in the culture of tenth-century England held about their bodies. And while we cannot know how most individual medieval Christians thought about disability or what forms their eschatological hope took, the texts discussed here begin to collect snapshots of the ideas available to those crip ancestors: the scholar-king Alfred, more apprehensive about vision impairment than his own chronic illness; crutches of the putatively healed lining the walls of St. Swithun's shrine; the sometime scar of St. Æthelthryth, signaling the promised Resurrection body; the blood of St. Andrew miraculously sustaining cannibals toward their conversion; the wounds of sin that fueled Cynewulf's eschatological anxiety; and the wounded body of a crip Christ, presiding over the Last Judgment.

While it is novel to argue that medieval Christian eschatology relied so heavily on concepts relating to disability, a prominent strand of modern Christian theology recenters disability in its Christology as well. In a groundbreaking and frequently cited argument, Nancy L. Eiesland articulates the spiritual effects of viewing Christ as disabled:

> The disabled God repudiates the conception of disability as a consequence of individual sin. Injustice against persons with disabilities is surely sin; our bodies, however, are not artifacts of sin, original or otherwise. Our bodies participate in the imago Dei, not in spite of our impairments and contingencies, but through them. The conflation of sin and disability causes problems for the interpretation of the resurrected Jesus Christ. What is the significance of the resurrected Christ's display of impaired hands and feet and side? Are they

> the disfiguring vestiges of sin? Are they to be subsumed under the image of Christ, death conqueror? Or should the disability of Christ be understood as the truth of incarnation and the promise of resurrection? The latter interpretation fosters a reconception of wholeness. It suggests a human-God who not only knows injustice and experiences the contingency of human life, but also reconceives perfection as unself-pitying, painstaking survival.[1]

Eiesland's project imagines a new, liberatory theology, one that has continued to evolve, but Christians have a long history of reaching toward similar ideas. I hope that *Light of the Everlasting Life* has revealed that medieval Christians had their own version of a "disabled God," one I have chosen to call crip because they did not claim disability for him. They did, however, put Christ's body in conversation with disabled bodies. Instead of a "disabled God" whose embodiment resonates with an earthly identity group, the early medieval English had a "hanged God," whose physical vulnerability made salvation possible.[2] Old English texts examined throughout this study support Eiesland's assertion of disability's centrality in the Christian tradition.

I have here explored only a few examples of the disabled, crip, and aberrant bodies that have occupied both the margins and the centers of Christian eschatology. Because this book is the first examination of its length of disability in early medieval England, it is necessarily not the final word; much further work is needed, and indeed eagerly awaited by the author. I have considered these Old English texts as part of one crip eschatology, but it remains to be explored whether other distinct or overlapping crip eschatologies, medieval or otherwise, have shaped experiences of the body; what further genres and media shaped Christian eschatologies, crip or otherwise; whether there are crip eschatologies beyond Christianity, beyond the Abrahamic monotheisms; how Christianity's crip eschatologies have unfolded in times and places beyond my focus here on tenth-century England; and how these eschatologies have continued to shape understandings of the body in the centuries since the turn of the second millennium in the many global cultures shaped by Christianity and the English language up to the present day.

1. Eiesland, *Disabled God*, 101. See also Powell, *Disabled God Revisited*.
2. On phrases like "the hanged God" in *Elene* (in Bjork, e.g., line 687a), see chapter 5.

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